



News en Ville

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A newsletter published for and by the residents,
 staff, volunteers and supporters of L'Abri en Ville
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New volunteers cheerfully pitch in By Sue Purcell

The enthusiasm conveyed by our most recent volunteers is infectious. Sandra Hendlisz has always been close to people with mental illness, not least because her husband for years headed the Douglas Hospital. But she was touched to find a perfect haven for this community at L'Abri en Ville.



"L'Abri does just what's needed", says the former Westmount High School teacher and McGill education prof. "It's a very practical replication of family." Since joining the volunteer team at the new LaSalle apartment last summer, Sandra has enjoyed outings with the residents – two women and a man — and hosted them for dinner at her home. She has plans to form a book club for residents this year. Meanwhile she's been a big help to L'Abri with fundraising.



Norma Singerman heard about L'Abri from her cousin Joan Esar, who got Norma involved in our annual citrus fundraiser. She liked what she saw and last summer joined the

LaSalle team. "I love the people in our house, and what we do", she says. A self-employed interior designer, she put her skills to work giving the apartment some pizzazz, and was recently preparing for an Asian potluck supper to welcome a new resident, who is Chinese.

Norma's decorating skills have also made her a vital part of the team preparing all L'Abri's big social events, such as the Volunteer Appreciation Dinner.

Two university students have been meeting individually with residents in the past year. Ada Posner, a McGill graduate student who has ably formatted this newsletter since fall of 2013 while doing psychiatric research, has joined up with a resident of the Park apartment in Ville Emard for activities. Ada hopes to attend medical school, and would consider eventual work as a psychiatrist.



Jade Se hails from B.C. and just graduated from McGill in English lit and art history. At the same time, she volunteered



at the CARE activity centre for people with mental and physical handicaps, guiding craft events and helping in other ways. "That opened up my eyes to people with mental illness, and motivated me to apply to L'Abri", she explains. Jade joined the residents for a recent outing to Oka, and has been meeting a female resident to work on crafts.

Interested in volunteering? Just dial the number on the masthead above!

**HELP L'ABRI SAVE MONEY
 GET YOUR TAX RECEIPT ONLINE
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Your email address is urgently needed, as we will soon begin sending out tax receipts electronically. This will save us money on postage, which can be put toward better serving our residents.

Please email us today at info@labrienville.org , indicating your name, and whether you would also like to receive this newsletter online in glorious colour. Your help is most appreciated!

If you don't have email, or would prefer a paper copy, please contact us and we will continue to send your receipts by mail.

Presidents' Report

Fresh faces, new ideas for 2015 L'Abri board

By Dale MacDonald
with Gael Eakin

As we settle into our second year as co-presidents, we are pleased to welcome talented new board members who will help us do the work of L'Abri. We are struck by the variety of backgrounds and motivations that bring them to this wonderful organization.

Kosta Theofanos has served as chaplain at the Montreal Children's Hospital, Douglas Mental Health University Institute and St Andrew's Home. He enjoys leading Sunday worship in community churches around Montreal. When he heard a neighbour complain about a home in his area for persons — including his cousin — living with a mental illness, he had an epiphany. He decided his vocation would be “to search for constructive answers in addressing the needs of (this community) with care and compassion.” This led him to Project Embarque and now L'Abri. His long-term dream is to learn from his experience at L'Abri to launch a supportive housing project in Greece!

Caroline Harrison, who completed a degree in Fine Arts at Concordia, is a committed artist who shows her work in Montreal, the Eastern Townships and Newfoundland. She has also run her own interior design business for the past 25 years. Caroline has been an volunteer at the Park apartment for many years.



Chris Nielsen is a resident of our Lafayette apartment. A Montrealer who moved in his youth with his family to San Francisco, New York and Geneva, he completed a degree in management and marketing abroad. At age 23 he was stricken with mental illness. He returned to Montreal in 1996 and joined L'Abri twelve years ago. He likes reading, sports — he regularly bikes around town — and volunteering, currently as librarian at the Unitarian Church. Chris has dealt with some recent setbacks: a lot of dental work, and in 2012 a heart attack in the apartment, resulting in surgery to put in a pace-maker. A positive result of this — he has managed to give up smoking.

Heidi Paul has been a volunteer at the Park apartment for two years. Her academic work included studying drugs for treating psychosis. A full-time employee of a pharmaceutical company, she decided she wanted to do something in the helping field in her spare time. “I was appalled at the lack of services for people with mental illness,” she says, adding she finds the L'Abri concept “so neat.” She’s interested in a five-year plan for L'Abri, foundation funding, and how our surplus funds should be used.

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Heidi Paul
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Marc Laporta, M.D., FRCP
Marjorie Sharp,
B.C.L., LL.M.

Unseen hands

Editors: Sue Purcell, Cecily Lawson

Formatting: Ada Posner

Photos: Pierre Jodoin, Cheryl Lafferty, Sue Purcell, Jade Se

Help and advice: Mary Martha Guy, Denise Hudon, Cheryl Lafferty, Kate McKenna, Rick Ottoni, Stefan St-Hilaire

Network Workshop

Common purpose and shared excitement By Cecily Lawson

Every two years, L'Abri gets together with other groups that were established based on our model. They are Our Harbour in St Lambert, now in its tenth year, les Toits d'Émile in Chateauguay, and AnCoura in Ottawa. This year the meeting took place on November 29th and we were joined by a new group from Halifax, CaldY Grange.



shared their experiences of speaking in public. They spoke of the reactions they receive from audiences as diverse as students, church groups and community organizations. The fact that they are having an impact is clear. Invariably, people thank them for giving them a better understanding of mental illness and its implications.



A feeling of common purpose and shared excitement filled the room. Over 60 people attended — residents, volunteers, board members and coordinators. Mutual concerns were aired, new ideas were bounced around and solutions to problems proposed.

Financial support and fundraising are important concerns for all the groups and it was interesting for participants to see the surprising differences in funding sources for the groups. This prompted discussions on sourcing available government funding, and identifying possibilities for support in the community.

See tribute to Audrey Bean on P. 6



Another session focused on finding and retaining volunteers. It generated ideas ranging from networking to mentoring to ongoing training and education. The need to find the right fit and to make the volunteer experience a rewarding one was explored.

The emotional highlight of the day was a panel of four L'Abri residents who



As well, the residents explained how being spokespersons helps them to transcend their illness by giving them feelings of worthiness, dignity and connectedness. To quote one of the speakers, David Seymour, "The audience learns by listening to us and identifying with us that we are not so different. And we learn to unshackle the bonds of our illness and achieve freedom from it."

RESIDENT LIFE



Hallowe'en!

Burgers and fries, with decision-making on the side By Beverly Hartley

All the residents myself included look forward to our annual hamburger supper at the café in the QE Health Centre. After the supper we hold a meeting to decide how to spend money we have raised from the sale of hasty notes and holiday cards featuring residents' art. This year we met in February.

The delicious hamburgers are served along with homemade fries and a nice cold soft drink of our choice. Our chef is Giovanni – he's the best! This event is such a success that we all voted for it to take place again in 2016.



Following the meal two of our coordinators, Loraine and Cheryl, presented the past year's financial statements and reviewed some of the activities and outings we enjoyed with our earnings.

We decided on a few new things for 2015. One is the establishment of a Residents Committee to discuss resident activities and resident fundraising. Cheryl Lafferty, Jerome Kierans, Eileen Kelly and Anna Drienovsky will be



Oka Park outing



members. Outings we plan include a day trip to Oka in March and summer camp at Ile St-Bernard. Other ideas — a walk in Old Montreal, apple picking and a corn roast.

The money we receive from L'Abri en Ville donors supplements the funds we raise ourselves, and we would like to thank you deeply for your generous contributions.



Le plaisir de traduire pour L'Abri Par Caroline Audet

Traductrice et professionnelle en communication, voilà quelques années que je traduis occasionnellement pour L'Abri en Ville, ayant pris la relève de mon père, Charles-Henri Audet, qui a également fait carrière dans le domaine langagier.

Originaire de la ville de Québec où je réside à nouveau depuis environ un an, j'ai vécu de longues années à Montréal, ce qui m'a permis de rencontrer quelques personnes de L'Abri.

Ce que j'ai appris au fil du temps, tant par mes rapports avec des représentants de L'Abri que par les textes que j'ai traduits, me remplit d'admiration pour cet organisme qui procure tant de soutien et de chaleur humaine à des personnes souffrant d'une maladie mentale.

Les relations entretenues par les membres de cette communauté sont empreintes de solidarité et de

sollicitude. Je sais qu'ils ont vraiment à cœur de donner le meilleur d'eux-mêmes, et j'ai été particulièrement touchée par mes échanges avec Audrey Bean et Sue Purcell, qui mettent tant de soin à trouver les expressions les plus justes et les plus éloquentes pour les textes que j'ai le privilège de traduire, comme les lettres aux donateurs et le rapport annuel.

Je félicite tous ceux qui contribuent de près ou de loin au maintien de cette communauté, et j'espère que plusieurs autres groupes communautaires suivront l'exemple de L'Abri en Ville dans les années à venir.



Another great Holiday Party



Audrey was generous with her talent, time and affection

The L'Abri family was shocked and saddened at the death at age 67 of Audrey Bean, a dynamic volunteer central to our organization, and a caring friend to many.

Anyone who went to Audrey with a problem was offered wise advice and willing help. When a resident needed someone to care for his dog for several days, Audrey cheerfully opened her door. When ageing volunteers had to move to assisted living, she made a point of keeping them informed and involved.

“Her empathy, deep capacity to listen, loyalty, grace, hospitality, humour and luminous intelligence had become a touchstone for so many people.” These words from Audrey’s obituary are so true. Our residents loved to be with her. “She was such a lovely person, always calming us down, making us feel better,” says Anna from the H el ene apartment. Anna’s roommate Nithya recalls her “openness, love and respect for anyone who approached her, day or night.”

Only months ago Audrey was healthy and active. After finding it difficult to access certain words, she was diagnosed with a brain tumor. She hung on to life for several weeks, passing away at home on April 28 surrounded by family and friends.

Maurice Prendergast: a kind and loyal friend

Former board member Mary Martha Guy writes:

Maurice Prendergast, who died in November, was a close friend of our family for more than fifty years. Born in British Columbia, he was educated at Cambridge, and later earned an MBA from McGill. He worked in finance in Montreal, Paris and in the U.S.

In the many years he was on the board of L'Abri en Ville, he handled insurance for the staff and apartments. Although not on an apartment team, he was always ready to drive residents to events outside the city like camp or sugaring off. He took under his wing a resident who was a budding artist, and helped him show his work at a restaurant, where he sold two paintings.

Maurice was a very civilized man, well-read with a sharp sense of humour. More importantly, he was very kind and an extremely loyal friend.



Audrey first heard about L'Abri en Ville in the late 90s from volunteer Eleanor Beattie, when they were active in a group fighting cuts to the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. She joined the team at the Monk apartment, later known as H el ene after we moved its residents to a street of that name in LaSalle.

Before long Audrey agreed to be on our board of directors, where her energy and writing skills were valued, and later served for

a period as co-chair with Raymonde Hachey.

By the early 2000s L'Abri had grown to ten apartments housing thirty residents. Audrey was among a group who understood that further expansion could jeopardize the family spirit of L'Abri. She and Eleanor Beattie put their energies into a new initiative – reaching out instead to communities wanting to create groups based on the L'Abri model. Three supportive communities came to life; they have been tirelessly supported by Audrey and Eleanor ever since.

Audrey will be missed for many reasons, but most of all, for her generosity of spirit. Nithya expressed it well: “She was an example of loving-kindness.”

–Sue Purcell

A memorial service was held on May 10. The family would appreciate donations in Audrey's memory to L'Abri en Ville.

A word from Rick

I would like to take this opportunity to express my heartfelt thanks to the L'Abri en Ville community and all my friends and family for their kind support and well wishes on the occasion of my mother's death in January. L'Abri saved my life by giving me a home, and I am so grateful for all the donations to L'Abri in my mother's memory. I was especially surprised to see so many people show up at the funeral despite the severe weather conditions. It reassures me that we are a caring community of friends and that we are not alone in time of need.

Riccardo (Rick) Ottoni

Coordinators' Corner

Our residents can live full lives, students learn By Cathy DeChambeau

Did you know that our residents play a vital role in contributing to the training of university and college students studying about health care services? L'Abri residents educate these future professionals on what recovery means in 2015. It used to be that health care professionals were quite pessimistic when it came to the quality of life people with mental illness were told they could expect. But with better supports and medical treatment, things have changed. People with mental illness can and do live a full life despite some chronic symptoms. And who wouldn't be a better example than our residents?

Every spring our Benny residents, Rick, David and George lecture to McGill University's School of Occupational Therapy on living with mental illness. They speak about how living in a supportive community such as L'Abri en Ville has contributed to their quality of life. They also gave a talk at Dawson College where they received a standing ovation. Every year they are invited back to Bishop's University where they speak to students studying community resources for people living with a mental illness.

Our residents love the chance to contribute and really look forward to the day they spend in the Townships or downtown, and the lunch out is a real treat for them. This is all possible with the help of our volunteers. They have the contacts at the universities and the time and effort to arrange the talks.

L'Abri is also involved with more hands-on training of McGill social work students. This year we have the pleasure of supervising a second-year student and one of McGill Redmen hockey players, Mathieu Pompei. Our male residents really appreciate having a guy to discuss the Habs games with, and have even gone to see Mathieu play at his hockey games. Mathieu is also learning about how individuals with serious

mental illness can lead fulfilling lives with the support of a loving community and affordable housing. Mathieu has been meeting individually with our residents and has successfully helped many of them receive the Housing Allowance, a bit of extra money which helps cover rising costs of groceries and rent.

Caring atmosphere fondly remembered

My experience at L'Abri en Ville this year has taught me more than I could have imagined. L'Abri is a loving and caring organization for everyone who is part of it — resident, volunteer, staff or interning student. During this, my first experience working in mental health, I could not have felt more comfortable with the people I was surrounded by. Having spent some real quality time with certain residents, I saw how attached you can get, to the point where I had to remind myself this was a working environment.



Mathieu with Loraine at a Redmen game

Having the chance to work with such amazing people has been a life-altering experience. It has not only enlightened my views on mental health, but has taught me life can change dramatically and unexpectedly. Sudden illness can be devastating. Any support offered to a resident can make a big difference in their lives.

I have cherished my experience at L'Abri, and hope to stay in touch with the staff and residents in the years to come.

-Mathieu Pompei

Jolicoeur apartment celebrates with Stefan and his bride By Richard Tobin

Wedding bells rang in late January to the delight of many at L'Abri – although we were sorry it meant the departure of one of our residents. Stefan St-Hilaire had moved into the new Jolicoeur apartment in August 2013, joining Pierre and Bronko. He got along well with them and with us volunteers, so it was a shock for all of us when he announced last fall he had met someone online, and was soon to be married!



Stefan married Julie Simard in a delightful

ceremony in a Baptist church near Ste-Hyacinthe, not far from her home in Marieville, QC. Pierre, Bronko, Campbell Stuart and I were in attendance.

There were over a hundred people at the ceremony including Stefan's mother. After the wedding cake was cut, Stefan and Julie made the rounds of each table, happily sharing the news that their friends had given them a surprise Cuban honeymoon as a gift! Everyone had a great time – especially the bride and groom.

Donations made in memory and in honour

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