

Birdwatchers open residents' eyes to feathered friends

FOR FOUR YEARS now, a trip to Manoir D'Youville on the South Shore Île Saint-Bernard has been the focal point of summer for many residents and volunteers of L'Abri en Ville. We escape from city life for two nights, and enjoy walks, exercise and relaxation in the fresh air by Lac Saint-Louis. This year we had a special treat: a birdwatching outing conducted by volunteer and board member **Sheila McCarthy** and her partner **Charlie Nims**. Sheila is an experienced birder, and Charlie has been birding intensely since the '90s. He has led many trips, and given numerous talks to organizations. Below, in their own words, Sheila and Charlie describe the August outing, and resident **Shmoal Loterman** tells us how much everyone enjoyed it.

~ Susan Purcell

GUIDES SHEILA & CHARLIE

SHEILA MCCARTHY



THE DAY WAS BRIGHT and sunny. We joined the residents for breakfast, and then met the group in the lobby, where we passed out binoculars to those who needed them, went over some birdwatching protocol, and headed over to the nearby Refuge Faunique Marguerite-D'Youville. With us were residents **Gulam, Jerome, Marie-Josée** and **Schmoal**, along with volunteers **Brent Laughren** and **Maxene Rodrigues**, and coordinator

Star Gale. The terrain we covered was a mix of forest, marsh and a small pond, providing an opportunity to see various types of birds. On the pond, we saw several ducks including a colourful male wood duck. A splendid pileated woodpecker put in a brief appearance. Feeders along the path helped us find the birds. With pieces of granola bar in our open palms, we enjoyed feeding the sociable chickadees. Charlie set up the spotting scope several times, allowing for close-up views. We answered the many questions about migration, feeding and habitat as best we could. The outing lasted two hours — much longer than the hour or so we had anticipated. At noon we turned around, and headed back to the Manoir in time for lunch.

RESIDENT SHMOAL

MY EXPERIENCE on the bird watch was great. Some of us were able to see the birds easily, and for others it took longer. Altogether we saw 25 species: sparrows, robins, Baltimore orioles, cardinals, woodpeckers, chickadees, and more. I would like to thank Charlie and Sheila for sharing their knowledge with us. The outing was well-liked by all of us who went on the tour. I hope we can do it again next year. 🌿



SAM BEITEL



FEATHERED FRIENDS SPOTTED INCLUDED A WOODPECKER (left) AND A CHICKADEE.

SHEILA MCCARTHY



Concordia players are all-stars when it comes to unloading citrus

By SUSAN PURCELL



SAM BEITEL

EVERY YEAR, on a Monday morning in early December, a transport truck from Florida arrives shortly after sunrise at a Westmount church, loaded with tons of citrus fruit. Before long, cars begin to fill the parking lot, and out pile a bunch of healthy, young men, ready to unload the boxes and set them up indoors.

Whatever the temperature, members of the Concordia Stingers hockey team get up in the dark and make their way to the top of a hill in Westmount, to help ensure that distribution days for L'Abri en Ville's annual citrus fundraiser get off to a good start.

"It's a nice thing to do for the community", says **Philippe Sanche**, 23, a third-year student who this year will be driving in from South Shore Mercier for his second time helping out. In first year he signed up, but was blocked by a major snow storm from getting across the bridge.

Head coach of men's hockey, **Marc-André Élément**, has accompanied his players to Mountainside Church for years, and remembers helping unload when he too was a player. "The

guys are in good shape. We use our arms", he says matter-of-factly.

It's definitely a workout, both for those unloading the truck and those piling up the boxes indoors. "I remember last year it was really cold. We were freezing outside, but sweating inside," says **Alexandre Gosselin**, also 23 and on his third year helping. "We're glad to take a break and grab a muffin and a coffee."



The 20- to 40-pound boxes are hefted hand-to-hand onto a conveyor belt moving from the parking lot into the church, where it snakes through the church hall and into the central work space. "There's

THANK YOU STINGERS FOR YOUR THOUGHTFULNESS!

one guy who takes charge of setting the pace, getting the pallets unloaded efficiently", Philippe says. "We challenge ourselves to do the whole job as fast as we can." Last year it was done in two and a half hours. Then it's back to studying for end-of-semester exams, only days away. 🍊

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VOLUNTEER PROFILE



Suzanne's walk for mental health challenges stigma, raises funds

By CECILY LAWSON

THE WALK – Montreal Walks for Mental Health – is very much Suzanne Herscovitch's baby. Today it attracts hundreds if not thousands of participants, and involves dozens of organizations, but ten years ago it was just starting to germinate as an idea in Suzanne's mind. She wanted to find ways to raise funds for L'Abri and at the same time to challenge the stigma against mental illness. She approached L'Abri suggesting a walk for mental health, received a positive reaction, and immediately started knocking on the doors of other organizations. Slowly momentum built and in the



SAM BEITEL

SUZANNE HERSCOVITCH (ABOVE, LEFT) HEADS THE MONTREAL WALKS FOR MENTAL HEALTH FOUNDATION, WHICH RECENTLY DONATED \$18,000 TO VARIOUS MENTAL HEALTH ORGANIZATIONS.

a career as coordinator of the Shalom help line for Federation CJA. L'Abri was opening its tenth apartment, the Crescent apartment, and Suzanne signed on as a member of its first volunteer team. She's still there 17 years later, and still very involved with the three male residents.

Members of the volunteer team get together with Crescent residents every Wednesday. "We search out anything that's free in Montreal," says Suzanne. "Sometimes we go shopping. One summer we went on a hunt for the best ice cream shop in Montreal."

The residents value Suzanne's involvement with them and the apartment. "She's always there for us," says resident Warren.

Fellow volunteer Sandra Hendlisz loves working with Suzanne. "She's empathetic, strong, and is very encouraging and supportive of the residents. Suzanne really listens to them and is very positive. People like her."

It's great to have Suzanne as a member of the L'Abri family. 

CECILY IS VICE-PRESIDENT OF L'ABRI'S BOARD AND A VOLUNTEER AT THE LAFAYETTE APARTMENT.


Le pair aidant : un guide sur le chemin de la guérison

Par LUC BELLEAU

DEPUIS DEUX ANS, je bénéficie d'un suivi à la Clinique des troubles de l'humeur de l'Institut Allan Memorial. En plus du psychiatre et de l'ergothérapeute qui me suivent régulièrement, j'échange chaque semaine avec un ex-patient qui travaille comme pair aidant. Plusieurs ex-patients ont été entraînés pour ce rôle dans le cadre du Recovery Transition Program, mis sur pied il y a deux ans à l'hôpital de jour pour faciliter notre retour dans la communauté.

Ces rencontres, dans mon cas avec le responsable du programme de mentorat, sont fort intéressantes et profitables.

J'en retire plusieurs éléments positifs. Il est inhabituel d'avoir un lien thérapeutique si informel avec des membres de la clinique tel que psychiatre, psychologue, ergo ou service social. Avec le pair aidant, nous avons plus de temps pour discuter—il a vécu plus les mêmes expériences—et l'atmosphère est plus intime. Ce programme m'apporte un complément thérapeutique que je ne peux qu'encourager.

Comme le nom du programme le dit, il s'agit d'un support transitoire offert aux patients ayant récemment reçu leur congé de l'Hôpital Général de Montréal. Mais ce support aussi accessible à d'autres types de patients, comme c'est mon cas. La particularité de ce genre de suivi est la neutralité du pair aidant. Il n'est pas question ici d'ordonnances ni de prescriptions, mais bien de partage d'une expérience personnelle de santé mentale dans le but d'aller sur le chemin de la guérison. 

LUC EST RÉSIDENT DE L'APPARTEMENT BESSBOROUGH; IL EST TALENTUEUX EN PIANO AUSSI BIEN QU'EN ÉCRITURE.

FAMILY ALBUM

Boating adventure

ADDS DRAMA TO OKA VISIT



SAM BEITEL

Thanks to the Charles Johnson Family Foundation for making this trip possible.



FOR THE FIRST TIME this year, residents chose a summer rather than a winter day trip to Oka National Park. Wind and snow were replaced by June's warm sunshine, perfect for walking in the woods and along the beach, or boating on the lake — though one pédalo was carried away by strong currents, forcing Warren, volunteer Lili Gao and student Stéphanie Racicot (at far left) to jump out and pull it back to shore! All the activity worked up healthy appetites for a picnic lunch prepared by our friend Giovanni of Café Monti. Former volunteer Trudi Michielsens, now living in Toronto but back visiting family, was a welcome addition to the group.

"Country" feast just a few Metro stops away

A LATE AFTERNOON trip on the Metro orange line—and there we were in beautiful Angrignon Park, following our noses to the aroma of grilled weiners on the fresh fall air. In late September, everyone enjoyed a last chance to have supper from the barbeque, while catching up with friends old and new.



SAM BEITEL

Pontoon tour
A POPULAR FEATURE AT GETAWAY

THE GUIDED PONTOON RIDE during our trip to Île Saint-Bernard was in high demand this year! To accommodate everyone interested, L'Abri booked three separate tours along the Chateauguay River out to the Saint Lawrence River and Lac Saint-Louis, guided by our friend Captain Jonathan (below, right). Along with our first-ever birdwatching tour (See P. 1), it was a special treat for our residents, who rarely have opportunities to get out on the water to enjoy nature.



The Charles Johnson Family Foundation and the Fondation Compagnon again enabled us to enjoy this annual two-day holiday in August at Manoir D'Youville.



STAR GALE

FAMILY ALBUM

Smiling faces

GREET WALKERS ON NEW ROUTE

PEOPLE INVOLVED with dozens of organizations, families and friends turned out on 14 October at a new location for the annual Montreal Walks for Mental Health. L'Abri residents, staff and volunteers were out in force at downtown Place Émilie-Gamelin opposite the Grande Bibliothèque. After grooving to live rock music and warming up on coffee, we set off in bright Sunday sunshine along Saint Catherine St. East in the Gay Village, returning along de Maisonneuve Blvd. It was a pleasant change for placard-carrying walkers to be greeted by residents waving and smiling from their balconies as we passed.



SAM BEITEL



Simplicity of volunteer's painting style evokes tiny haikus

By JEROME KIERANS

IN LATE SEPTEMBER, I had the pleasure of visiting an art exhibit in Westmount featuring the works of a long-time friend of L'Abri en Ville, **Mary Martha Guy**, and those of another painter.

Mary Martha is a talented artist who regularly directs art workshops for L'Abri residents, along with fellow painter and board president, **Gael Eakin**. She is very gifted in bringing out the best of our own artistic flair. The results can be seen on the hasty notes and holiday cards we sell at the citrus pickup days and elsewhere, to raise money for social activities.

The exhibit featured twenty-one paintings by Mary Martha — from abstracts to depictions of places, mostly in Newfoundland, and things. A shape seen in many of her works was a simple dory — a flat-bottomed boat. Other subjects were part of a totem pole and a leaf. Most paintings were acrylic on canvas or monoprints. The simplicity of the paintings reminded me of Japanese haiku — each poem a tiny gem made from very few syllables.

My favorite painting was an abstract titled 'Red and Ochre', a large square canvas in warm colours that looked other-worldly, like a Martian backdrop. 'House on Pale Water' — another large striking work — showed a simplified white house seen as if from a boat. I left the exhibit with my mind filled with serene images of sheer beauty. 🍷



SAM BEITEL

JEROME LIVES AT THE BESSBOROUGH APARTMENT, AND IS VERY ACTIVE IN THE LIFE OF OUR COMMUNITY

Hallowe'en party!



CHERYL LAFFERTY

IT WAS THE SECOND YEAR hosting the L'Abri Hallowe'en party at the office, and McGill student **Tyler Tompsett** organized it from start to finish. The walls were covered with Halloween decorations, and residents enjoyed playing pin the spider on the cobweb and pumpkin toilet paper bowling. Jerome guessed the accurate number of chocolates in the jar. (No surprise: he is a whiz with numbers!) The pizza, pop and chips, always popular with our residents, are all paid for through their own fundraising efforts.

5 ways L'Abri residents contribute to community

By SUSAN PURCELL

LIVING WITH A MENTAL ILLNESS certainly can take a lot of energy, which makes the various daily activities of our residents quite impressive. Some get up early for work, and others travel long distances without complaint. Though few are paid, all are glad to make their contributions to the community. Here's a sampling of how some of them keep busy.

Alyss

BAHAMA
APARTMENT



SINCE AUGUST this year, Alyss has been crossing town three times a week to tidy up at the popular east-end Haitian restaurant Agrikol. One of the co-owners is her sister Régine Chassagne of the musical group Arcade Fire. Alyss recently completed a job training program, and hopes to join the team as a paid worker as soon as there's an opening.



François

JOLICOEUR
APARTMENT

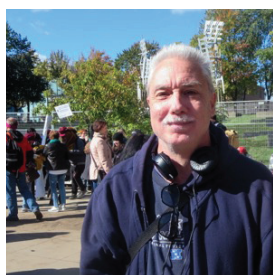


A VARIETY of health problems keeps François busy visiting doctors, but every Monday he turns up at La Maison d'entraide St-Paul & Émard, a food bank near his home. There, François rolls up his sleeves, and takes up his job unloading the truck from Moisson Montréal, a distributor that supplies free food to community organizations. Then he sets to placing the food on shelves. Two or three days a week, François also visits a sick friend to help him clean his home.



Glen

LASALLE
APARTMENT



EVERY WEEKDAY morning, Glen gets up at 7:00, and travels across the city by subway to a laundry service in the east end. He is paid to work a four-hour shift, starting at 8:30, packing laundry into machines, taking it out, and folding it. Glen communicates with fellow workers with ease in French, and enjoys the weekday routine.



Jerome

BESSBOROUGH
APARTMENT

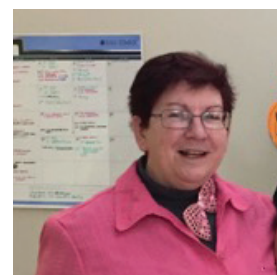


FOR THE PAST 23 years, Jerome, who trained as an accountant, has given his time in various departments at the Jewish General Hospital. He currently works three and a half days a week in the payroll department, filing, handing out pay cheques, and helping employees understand their deductions. Fellow workers have become Jerome's friends; last year he attended the bar mitzvah of one of their sons.



Terryann

PARK
APARTMENT



ONCE A WEEK, Terryann helps the hairdresser at a downtown seniors' residence, Manor l'Age d'Or. She zips up and down in the highrise's elevator to pick up wheelchair-bound residents, and accompany them back to their rooms when their hair is done. She sweeps up hair clippings, and sometimes supports a client's head if they lack muscle tone. Terryann also spends every Saturday helping out an old friend who is visually impaired. ♿



TRIBUTE

Long-time volunteer always had time for Lafayette residents

By ALDYTH IRVINE-HARRISON

PHOTO COURTESY OF ALDYTH IRVINE-HARRISON



SARALA PATEL, one of L'Abri's earliest and most faithful volunteers, passed away in August 2018, at St-Margaret Residential Centre in Westmount.

Since the early nineties, Sarala had been a good friend to residents of the Lafayette apartment in NDG.

Born in Kampala, Uganda in 1947, Sarala worked as an elementary school teacher until 1972 when dictator Idi Amin expelled the large East Indian population. After a brief period in England, Sarala arrived in Montreal, where she had a successful career

A QUIET, GENTLE WAY WITH THE RESIDENTS

working at the Peter Hall School with intellectually and physically handicapped children. She loved to travel and visited nearly every country in the world.

Sarala had a gentle, quiet way and always had time to talk with the Lafayette residents, mostly men over the years, whether she was serving them Indian food at her home, or joining with her volunteer team in shared activities. 🍕

ALDYTH HAS BEEN A VOLUNTEER AT THE LAFAYETTE APARTMENT SINCE THE 1990s.

NOTES FROM THE OFFICE

New faces, new approaches

By CHERYL LAFFERTY

One enthusiastic summer student...

L'Abri was able to hire a social work student for eight weeks this summer. **Stéphanie Racicot** joined us from McGill, having just completed the second year of her Bachelor of Social Work degree. With her enthusiasm and penchant for organizing, Stéphanie arranged in September for three L'Abri residents to present to her third-year mental health class. Off went **Rick, David and George** (pictured at left) to do their usual good work making connections with students, while describing life with a mental illness.



STÉPHANIE RACICOT

...plus one active intern!

A new McGill intern joined us this fall. **Tyler Tompsett**, in his second year of Social Work studies at McGill, is working with us two days a week until April 2019. Besides visiting apartments to get to know the residents, Tyler has cooked on a L'Abri picnic, walked with us at Montreal Walks for Mental Health, and planned our resident Halloween party at the office.

Changing of the guard

L'Abri's office assistant, **Denise Hudon**, took on other challenges in March of this year and left us for new horizons. We wish Denise much success and fulfillment in her new government position, and with her art. In early May, **Sally Cooper** (at left) joined L'Abri in a part-time role as office administrator. Sally has an Master's in Business Administration from McGill, and a Certificate in Technical Communication from Concordia. In addition to corporate and government experience, she brings



with her many years of administrative experience in the non-profit sector, having worked at Thomas More Institute as well as McGill Community for Lifelong Learning, where she continues to volunteer each week. We are pleased to have Sally working alongside us at the L'Abri office! 🍕

CHERYL IS L'ABRI'S EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR.



My whirlwind residency amid BC beauty

By STAR GALE

IT IS WITH EXCITEMENT and gratitude that I report on the first summer residency of my Master's degree in Community Development (MACD) at University of Victoria. I say this, not only because of how supportive the L'Abri en Ville community has been while I pursue my graduate studies, but also because of the key role L'Abri played in my undergraduate degree. While I am now a full-time coordinator at L'Abri, I was introduced to the organization during a second year placement from McGill's School of Social Work. I feel doubly lucky to have been immersed both in the practicum of social work, and in community development. The successful completion of my Bachelors degree in social work, and my current studies at UVic, are testaments to the unique mentorship students receive here at L'Abri.

The two-week residency itself was a whirlwind. Participants in the MACD are a small cohort, and we were engaged each weekday in intensive workshops and seminars. Contrasting pleasantly with this hectic work schedule was the majestic serenity of British Columbia's scenery. On my bus ride to campus



each day it was not uncommon for me to see a fawn grazing by the side of the road, and the June weather was spectacular. The MACD curriculum, partially correspondence- and project-based, is carefully structured to provide us with the knowledge needed to undertake applied community-related research. It is my intention to utilize this new skill set to the benefit of the L'Abri community.

I look forward to my research, more residencies on campus, and celebrating my future successes within our one-of-a-kind community! 🍷

STAR WAS RECENTLY AWARDED THE TED WHELEN GRADUATE ENTRANCE SCHOLARSHIP. THIS IS A GRADUATE MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP AWARDED TO AN ACADEMICALLY OUTSTANDING STUDENT WHO IS DEDICATED TO COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT, DISPUTE RESOLUTION, AND/OR SERVICE TO THE PUBLIC.

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PHOTO COURTESY OF STAR GALE



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