

Gifts of protection from a thoughtful volunteer

By SUSAN PURCELL

I'll do it for you



MIGUEL BURNIER

AS WE ASSEMBLED THIS ISSUE, NORA FOUND SOME NEW MATERIAL AND WAS HARD AT WORK MAKING MASKS FOR FORMER L'ABRI RESIDENTS NOW LIVING ON THEIR OWN

TRANSLATED INTO PORTUGUESE, that's the name of an online project started by a woman in Brazil. She shows people how to sew cloth masks to protect against coronavirus – and encourages people to give them away for free.

Volunteer **Nora Burnier**, a native Brazilian herself, saw the video here in Montreal, liked the idea, dusted off her sewing machine and set to work. "I found some leftover fabric, and when that ran out, a couple of old tablecloths."

After outfitting herself and husband **Miguel**, Nora gave a mask to the janitor of her apartment, and a few to her daughter and her children. Next she approached L'Abri, and Executive Director **Star Gale** was delighted with her generous offer. Soon **Florence** and **Marie-Josée** at the Brasilia apartment, where Nora is on the volunteer team, were wearing her designs when they went out for walks, or to get groceries. Then Nora went back to work and kept her machine humming until she had enough masks for all 30 residents.

In mid-May Nora and Miguel took time on their 46th wedding anniversary (Congratulations!) to deliver the masks to Benny Crescent. Residents of our five apartments there came down to the street, one apartment at a time, to make their selection.

"It's nice to give them away, as a good will gesture," Nora says. Our L'Abri family would agree! 🎧

Staying together/apart amidst the pandemic

By STAR GALE

MEMBERS OF THE L'ABRI en Ville family are good at staying connected and supporting one another, but the outbreak of the COVID-19 virus has presented us with a challenge: How do we stay together/apart?

Because many of our community members are older adults and/or manage pre-existing health conditions, we agreed to refrain from in-person get-togethers. In their place L'Abri coordinators and volunteers found ways to reach out to L'Abri residents and one another. The new normal became weekly meetings with residents facilitated by coordinators over the phone or through video chat, and friendly phone calls from volunteers. In addition, Logitek information services set to work configuring tablets for those L'Abri apartments not equipped to connect virtually.

Since March, L'Abri staff has met bi-weekly on the Zoom video-conferencing platform, and since April, our board has also been holding virtual meetings. Zoom will also be the medium for for our Annual General Meeting, postponed in March and now set for Monday, June 22 at 4 PM.

In addition, Zoom has allowed us to share ideas with members of our sister organizations,



COURTESY OF L'ABRI EN VILLE

SCREEN SHOT OF A STAFF MEETING SHOWING, ON LEFT, COORDINATORS MICHELLE MILLS (TOP) AND VISHAKA RATNAYAKE, AND AT RIGHT, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR STAR GALE (TOP) AND OFFICE ADMINISTRATOR SALLY COOPER

Our Harbour and Les Toits d'Emile on Montreal's South Shore, and Ancoura in Ottawa. Hearing about the different approaches each group has taken to meet residents' needs during these challenging times has been both inspiring and helpful.

Since March, we have learned how resilient and adaptable the L'Abri community truly is. We are so grateful for the much-needed support made available to us from funders and clinical and community partners. We know many of the new supports and modes of communication we have put in place will only enrich our regular service delivery when we are able to return to it. 🎧

FAMILY ALBUM

Citrus and carols are reminders of bygone times

CITRUS FUNDRAISER



Last December, distribution days for our annual citrus fundraiser went without a hitch. Thanks to the students from Loyola College for their valuable help.

HOLIDAY PARTY

Everyone enjoyed feasting and carolling at our Holiday Party last December. The evening included goodbyes to coordinator **Cathy DeChambeau**, who retired (*left*), and a warm welcome to new coordinator **Vishaka Ratnayake**. >



< Even after desserts were gone and gifts opened, some celebrants lingered to chat. Resident **Luc Belleau** (*left*), a pianist, and former resident **Noah Friedland**, a cellist, kept up a lively musical discussion outside the Unitarian Church as people headed home.

WHEELS TO FREEDOM

Christian Chavez-Rogers of the Lafayette apartment is one of several residents who take a break from confinement by riding their bikes around town.



RECRUITING AT THE "Y"

The pool at the Westmount YMCA has been an amazing place of recruitment for new L'Abri volunteers. At the Holiday Party in December, we grabbed some members of our aquafitness gang for a quick photo. Over the years, veteran volunteers (*in centre*) **Susan Purcell**, **Sandra Baines** and **Nancy Grayson** have brought in new volunteers from the pool, including **Maxene Rodrigues** (*left*), **Jennifer Morrison** and **Assieh Fazel**, *on right*. Not in the photo were **Suzanne Herscovitch** and recruits **Afric Eustace** and **Pepita Capriolo**. Nowadays, all of us dream of the day we're back in the water.



SAM BEITEL

Residents sing their thanks on video

By SUSAN PURCELL



A SCREEN SHOT FROM THE VIDEO OF BESSBOROUGH APARTMENT RESIDENTS (L TO R) LUC, JEROME AND GULAM BELTING OUT THEIR LINE OF THE SONG

WHEN THE DECLARATION of a pandemic cancelled our Volunteer Appreciation Dinner set for March 16, *The Golden Girls* came to residents' rescue.

Instead of expressing their thanks to the volunteers in person, residents worked over a period of weeks with staff using computer technology to create a musical message of gratitude. Each apartment sang a line from *Thank You for Being a Friend*— the theme song from the *The Golden Girls*, a popular TV sitcom from the late '80s and early '90s.

The tribute was actually in the works long before COVID came to visit. The original idea was to present the video as a surprise at the annual dinner. It was formatted such that the residents would be singing the theme song, with lines of the song displayed between

clips of their singing, karaoke style, for volunteers to join in. Instead it was emailed out to all volunteers on April 25, which appropriately fell during Volunteer Appreciation Week.

Making the video, the brainchild of Executive Director **Star Gale**, was a team effort involving **Jayme Persiko**, our McGill social work intern, and coordinators **Michelle Mills** and **Vishaka Ratnayake**.

"The videos we took were all texted to Jayme, and she put the video together," Michelle adds. Unfortunately Jayme's internship was cut short by the pandemic, so Star did the rest of the editing.

"I had a fun time filming them," Michelle adds. "I know my apartments had fun too." The dozens of quarantined volunteers who received the video certainly enjoyed watching it. 🎶

COURTESY OF L'ABRI EN VILLE

READING TO CHASE OUR TROUBLES AWAY...

Short story groups replace spring outings

By CECILY LAWSON

OUR L'ABRI coordinators were looking for a pandemic activity that would bring residents together and provide stimulation. They hit on the idea of short story discussion groups in English and French, with meetings taking place online on Zoom.

Seven residents joined coordinator **Michelle Mills** in late April to talk about Ernest Hemingway's *Cat in the Rain*, a short story set in a small hotel on the coast of Italy on a rainy afternoon. The group talked about the setting, the characters – an American husband and wife – and what was happening beneath the surface. Was there conflict between the man and the woman? Did she feel ignored? Was she seeking affection, and was that why she wanted to rescue a cat sheltering from the rain below her window? "We speculated

about the woman's motivations – maybe she wanted a baby and that's why she was drawn to the cat," said Bessborough apartment resident **Jerome Kierans**, who welcomes the discussion groups: "We can't do any of



the things that were planned for the spring, like our outing to the *cabane à sucre*, and this allows us to get together." He planned to take part in both the French and English groups.

The French group was led by new coordinator **Vishaka Ratnayake**. Only one resident took part in the first session, but more planned to join in next time. They discussed the short story *Pourquoi les éléphants ne parlent-ils pas?* by Gillibert Frag, a math prof and mother of 12. It is a short parable about a time when elephants spoke, and all the knowledge of the tribe was passed on by the dying leader to one young elephant. But the older elephants were too busy to learn from the wise youngster. Finally one day he was shot by hunters, and the knowledge was lost. The elephants were so ashamed they stopped talking.

Both groups met again in late May, and plan to do so regularly. Reading ideas are welcome. Feel free to suggest short stories in either language by emailing michelle@labrienville.org or vishaka@labrienville.org 

CECILY IS PRESIDENT OF L'ABRI EN VILLE AND AN APARTMENT VOLUNTEER

CRITIQUE DE LIVRE

La crime et la politique se confrontent


Par MARIE-JOSÉE PICHÉ

Les courants fourbes du lac Tai, de Qiu Xiaolong, Éditions Liana Levi, traduit de l'anglais, *Don't Cry, Tai Lake*, an Inspector Chen Cao novel (2012)



L'histoire se situe à Wuxi, une ville dans l'est de la Chine, installée au bord du lac Tai, l'un des plus grands lacs d'eau douce du pays. Malheureusement, les nombreuses usines y déversent leurs déchets toxiques pour maximiser les profits. Les eaux du lac, désormais recouvertes d'algues vertes puantes, rendent impropres à la consommation l'eau et les poissons autrefois très purs.

L'inspecteur principal Chen Cao de la police criminelle de Shanghai, poète et bon vivant, se trouve en vacances au lac Tai dans un hôtel fréquenté par les grands du Parti Communiste. Quand Mr Liu, directeur d'une usine local sur le point de s'introduire en bourse, est trouvé mort, l'inspecteur se met à chercher le coupable – Est-ce Mme Liu, trompée par son mari avec la petite secrétaire Mi ? Est-ce la belle ingénieure en environnement Shanshan, qui dénonce la pollution, ou bien l'activiste écologique Jiang ? Comme l'inspecteur s'en mêle incognito, sa logique, comme celle de Sherlock Holmes, nous rapproche de la vérité peu à peu. Au milieu d'une intrigue amoureuse avec Shanshan, l'inspecteur se rend compte que ses investigations le place dans une position de plus en plus dangereuse en tant que membre du Parti.

Né à Shanghai, l'auteur avait étudié la littérature chinoise et anglaise. Passionné de la poésie de TS Eliot, il a transféré à la ville de naissance de celui-ci, St Louis, Missouri, pour continuer son éducation; il y est resté. Il publie en langue anglaise et est traduit dans une vingtaine de pays. Toute la trame de son livre, septième dans une série, se joue sur une couleur des droits fondamentaux en écologie. Un roman à dévorer. 

MARIE-JOSÉE EST RÉSIDENTE DE L'APARTEMENT BRASILIA ET TITULAIRE D'UNE MAÎTRISE (MSc) EN PSYCHOLOGIE ENVIRONNEMENTALE

No camera for Sam in quarantine

By SUSAN PURCELL

When **Sam Beitel**, a volunteer at the Bessborough apartment, tested positive for COVID-19 in March, the fever, complete loss of appetite, and constant need to sleep were bad enough. But the worst part was not being able to go out with his camera and take pictures.



"I was in a bathrobe for a month. My energy level was down to nothing – I'd sleep 18 hours a day," says Sam, a normally energetic man who takes most of the photos for our newsletters and annual report. He'd get up, eat "a quarter of a bagel" and fall back to bed for another six hours. "What I really missed was going out to the park every day with my dog Max, and taking interesting people shots. That's an important part of who I am." Above is a sample of Sam's work since he left quarantine.

Another pleasure denied to Sam and his wife **Deborah**, also grounded by COVID, was visiting their grandsons, aged five and seven. "We have a strong bond with them, and they often sleep over," says Sam. "We missed them tremendously."

His advice to anyone afraid of catching the virus? "The key is, the majority of people get their health back, so I'd tell them not to go off the deep end in fear," and to keep busy but safe doing the things you enjoy, he might add – like photography in Sam's case. 📷

A NOTE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Hard times are here

By CECILY LAWSON

THESE ARE DIFFICULT TIMES for L'Abri, and now more than ever we need our community. While we ended 2019 with a successful fundraising campaign, COVID-19 has brought so many new and unanticipated expenses: transportation to and from residents' medical appointments, delivery of groceries, and purchase of protective equipment for residents and staff.

Some of our funders have generously stepped forward to help. We are particularly grateful to the Echo Foundation and the Hylcan Foundation, who made recent contributions in addition to their regular support.

Please keep us in mind when you are looking for ways to help out during the pandemic, by sending a cheque payable to: L'Abri en Ville, 2352 Duvernay Street, Montreal, QC H3J 2X1.

Alternately, you can donate by credit card, providing us with the name on the card, the number and the expiry date; or go to our website www.labrienville.org and donate through Canada Helps.

CECILY IS PRESIDENT OF L'ABRI EN VILLE AND AN APARTMENT VOLUNTEER

UNSEEN HANDS

EDITOR

Susan Purcell

EDITORIAL TEAM

Sam Beitel

Star Gale

Cecily Lawson

Jennifer Morrison

DESIGN

JAM Design

HELP & ADVICE

Sally Cooper

Michelle Mills

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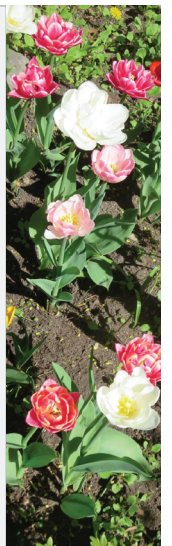
514 932-2199

info@labrienville.org

labrienville.org

We'd love to hear from you!

Please send your comments/suggestions to the Editor at: suepurcell@videotron.ca



SUSAN PURCELL

REMEMBERING & HONOURING • GIFTS TO L'ABRI EN VILLE IN RECOGNITION OF LOVED ONES

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