

## A look back at our *first* thirty years

"We know, from our success, that **community building** is at the heart of developing a project like L'Abri en Ville."

**T**HESE WORDS – taken from our guide *Creating Community-Supported Housing: The L'Abri en Ville Model* – aptly describe what readers will find in this special 30th anniversary edition of L'Abri Times: a loving tribute to 30 years of community building.

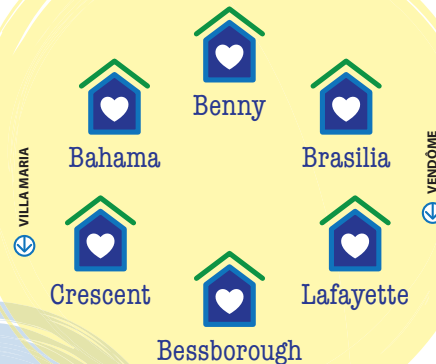
If you have been with our community for a while, the following pages will be a walk down memory lane, full of familiar faces and fond remembrance. If you are a newer member of our community, these articles document a rich history of welcoming the newcomer with warmth and purpose. We extend that welcome to you and look forward to building our future together.

It is our community's future, after all, that lies on the other side of this momentous anniversary and if there is one thing I have learned about the future this past year, it's that uncertainty does not necessarily mean unmanageability. Indeed, L'Abri en Ville began as a collective response to the uncertainties faced by some of our most vulnerable community members.

So, I invite you to read these reflections on the past 30 years feeling pride in the successes we have enjoyed, and inspired for those to come.

*K. Staggali.*

### Notre-Dame-de-Grâce



### LaSalle



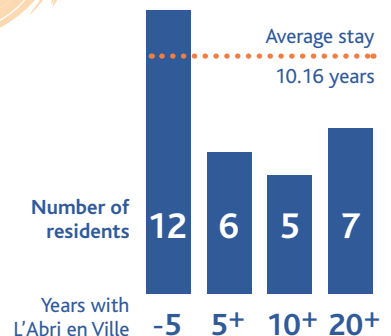
### Duvernay St.



### Ville-Émard



WE HAVE  
**30**  
residents  
LIVING IN  
**10**  
apartments  
WITH A TOTAL OF  
**305**  
years  
AT L'ABRI  
EN VILLE



## WEBINAR SERIES | Join us in a walk through our history

Throughout this 30th anniversary year, L'Abri is running a series of webinars centred around key events in our history. We opened in April with *Finding a Home in the City: The Beginnings of L'Abri en Ville*, and followed in mid-May with *30 Years of Community Support: The Special Relationship Between L'Abri Volunteers and Residents*. The two remaining webinars will take place in coming weeks: On 16 June 2021 (5–6 PM) we will look back at our annual citrus fundraiser. The final webinar, on networking with our sister organizations, is set for 14 July 2021 (5–6 PM). Watch for further notice by email closer to the date, or check our website at [www.labrienville.org](http://www.labrienville.org)

# BUILDERS

## A salute to our builders

### THEN & NOW

By CECILY LAWSON  
& SUSAN PURCELL

TODAY'S VIBRANT L'Abri en Ville community owes its success to the devotion of many people. So much work over so many hours, and so many great ideas went into creating the foundation we stand on today. Here are some of our builders.

CECILY LAWSON IS PRESIDENT OF L'ABRI EN VILLE'S BOARD OF DIRECTORS. SUSAN PURCELL IS EDITOR OF L'ABRI TIMES

Eleanor  
Beattie



DUE TO HOSPITAL POLICIES in the 1990s, many people with mental illness were poorly housed or lived on the street. **Eleanor Beattie** was one of a group of Montrealers allied with faith communities who saw the need for supported housing for this vulnerable population. Inspired by a West Island group already operating a successful housing project, she and several others **began the work that led to the creation of L'Abri en Ville**. L'Abri opened its first apartment in 1991 with Eleanor as president; she soon joined the support team at our second apartment, where her intense interest in residents was appreciated. Meanwhile with L'Abri coordinators, she reached out to churches and synagogues, inspiring members to join apartment teams or serve on our board, to help us furnish apartments or to support us financially. Though health problems in recent years have limited her participation in the life of L'Abri, Eleanor remains our beating heart.

Edith  
Low-Beer



EDITH LOW-BEER was deeply involved in L'Abri en Ville from its earliest years until her death in 2009. In memory of their son, she and her husband **created one of Canada's leading foundations supporting research into mental illness**. A few years after her husband's death in 1993, Edith was awarded the Order of Canada. The EJLB (now Echo) Foundation continues to provide crucial financial support to L'Abri, but Edith's contribution went far beyond philanthropy. She served on our board for many years and was a founding volunteer at our first apartment, visiting the Ville-Émard flat regularly and welcoming its three women residents for annual visits to her Vermont country home. Edith hosted regular Scrabble evenings at her city home for L'Abri residents and volunteers. Members of our community continue to attend the annual Low-Beer Lecture on recent advances in understanding and treating mental illness.

Allan  
Fielding, MD



COURTESY OF ALLAN FIELDING

IN OUR FIRST DECADE an important aspect of recruiting "advocates" – as apartment volunteers were then called – was teaching them about mental illness. Diagnoses like schizophrenia and bipolar disorder were feared and poorly understood in the nineties; stigma led to isolation for people with such illnesses. **Allan Fielding**, a psychiatrist at the Allan Memorial Institute and an award-winning educator at McGill School of Medicine, made himself available to L'Abri en Ville and continues to this day to train our volunteers. In simple words **he explains how the brain reacts in these illnesses, and their effect on behaviour**. Aided by illustrations he shows how psychiatric medications relieve symptoms, but can cause side-effects. Dr Fielding did the same for our sister organisations in the early 2000s. We owe him big thanks for this important work.

## Audrey Bean



AUDREY BEAN was a caring apartment volunteer, a dynamic board member and, for ten years, board president. Her sudden death in 2015 from a brain tumour came as a body blow to the L'Abri community. Audrey was a major player in one of our most important initiatives. By the early 2000s we had grown to ten apartments for 30 residents. Eleanor Beattie and Audrey were convinced that expanding further would jeopardize L'Abri's family spirit. So they spearheaded a new project — **helping other communities create groups based on our model**. With help from government and the McConnell Foundation, a L'Abri team spread out to promote our concept in faith communities. The energy and creativity that had previously gone into opening apartments had a new outlet, resulting by 2008 in three new communities, in Saint-Lambert, Chateaugay and Ottawa.

## Campbell Stuart



**"Let's get Campbell's input."** Any legal, political or generally tricky discussion among L'Abri en Ville's executive committee usually includes asking **Campbell Stuart** to contribute his expertise. From basic contracts with suppliers to more complex discussions with government funders and local politicians, Campbell's hand is on the tiller. He served as L'Abri's president in 2012-14. A man of many talents, he has a terrific sense of humour and a wonderful singing voice, often heard leading the L'Abri community in carol singing at the annual holiday party. He's also the guy who, pre-COVID, instigated regular Sunday night outings to the Dollar Cinema for residents of the Jolicoeur apartment. No film was too silly or too outlandish for the group to contemplate. They just loved going to the movies.

## Sharyn Scott



COURTESY OF SHARON SCOTT

SINCE THE LATE 1990s, L'Abri has been blessed to have **Sharyn Scott** as its treasurer. Whether **preparing financial statements, working out budgets or applying for grants**, Sharyn always has the facts and makes sure we get it right. Sharyn owns a clothing store on Sherbrooke Street in Westmount, a friendly, chatty place where she advocates for L'Abri and encourages clients to become supporters and volunteers. But her reach extends well beyond the store to her wide network of friends and acquaintances. In celebrating her major birthdays, Sharyn sends out word that gifts should take the form of cheques to L'Abri. While balancing our books Sharyn has formed friendships with many of our residents. When she attended our overnight camp she would delight everyone by turning up before dinner to prepare a big batch of spaghetti, or rising at dawn to bake muffins.

## Suzanne Herscovitch



WITH OTHERS from the Reconstructionist Synagogue, **Suzanne Herscovitch** joined the volunteer team for the new Crescent apartment in 2001. Before long she had created button bracelets for sale at a Westmount shop to generate funds for L'Abri. But her sights were set higher, and in 2009 **she envisioned a walk for mental health, partly as a fundraiser and partly to challenge the stigma around mental illness**. Once L'Abri was on board, Suzanne recruited other organisations and the first walk attracted a few hundred people to a west-end park. In the years to follow, Montreal Walks for Mental Health moved downtown and grew to include thousands of marchers raising funds for several organisations. It drew considerable media attention, putting the spotlight on mental health. Suzanne remains a volunteer at Crescent and has regularly helped with our citrus fundraiser.



# RESIDENTS | Life at L'Abri forges enduring links

**L'**ABRI EN VILLE has many long-time residents, but the prize for longest stay goes to **Anna Drienovsky**. Anna joined L'Abri in our founding year of 1991, moving into our first apartment, a second-floor flat in Ville-Émard. Thirty years later she lives happily in one of our apartments in LaSalle. Other first-decade "pioneers" include **Karen Bassett, George Harris, Jerome Kierans, Chris Nielsen, Terryann O'Neill** and **Rick Ottoni**.

## Three long-time roommates describe themselves as a "band of brothers"

Sometimes lasting friendships develop among roommates. The three men at our Benny apartment – **Rick, George and David Seymour** – call themselves a "band of brothers", and have for years spoken publicly to university classes and faith communities about their experience of living with mental illness. **Florence Kastner** and **Marie-Josée Piché**, Brasilia apartment residents and long-time friends, beat the pandemic blues by taking chatty walks together in their neighbourhood.

With ten apartments scattered across west and southwest Montreal, residents mainly meet others beyond home base at group activities, like our community kitchen, Hallowe'en party or art workshops held at the L'Abri

[ CONT' ON P. 5 ]



Resident activities keep the connections strong: **Community kitchen** **Hallowe'en party** **Art workshops**





## RESIDENTS | Cont'd

office. The apartments' iPads have become useful substitutes during the current lockdown. At the Bessborough apartment, Jerome has created his own yearly event to bring people together over the winter holidays. For many years (not last year!) he has invited residents – and even volunteers – to his home on Christmas for a complete turkey dinner he buys and cooks himself. It's a major undertaking but Jerome loves doing it, it makes the day for his guests.

We invite individuals who move out of L'Abri to return for our holiday party, or our overnight stay at Île-Saint-Bernard. Two former residents who join in regularly are **Sean Cahill** and **Renée Drouin**, a married couple who met while living in L'Abri apartments; others are **Nancy Grundy** and **Noah Wohl**. Moving out is not always final: at least two residents have returned after several years' absence for a second stay. With half our apartments located in a complex, several residents who moved out of our homes in the area have chosen to rent in the complex. It's a great way to stay connected! ~SP



**Holiday dinners** **Barbecues** **Games nights** **Cabanes à sucre** **Country outings...**



## UNSEEN HANDS

### EDITOR

Susan Purcell

### EDITORIAL TEAM

Sam Beitel

Star Gale

Cecily Lawson

Jennifer Morrison

### DESIGN

JAM Design

### PHOTOS

All photos are courtesy of L'Abri en Ville archives, unless otherwise labelled

### Special thanks to

Sally Cooper, for hunting down the oldest and most obscure photos in the blink of an eye!

### L'Abri Times

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### We'd love to hear from you!

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

To obtain your copy of our  
**2020 Annual Report**



Telephone

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or email us at

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# VOLUNTEERS | A bridge to belonging

**A** LOOK BACK on volunteering at L'Abri over the past 30 years shows that the role is anything but one-size-fits-all.

**Richard Tobin** cooked dinner once a week with the men at our Wellington (now Jolicoeur) apartment. **Pepita Capriolo** and **Julie Faulkner** went to shops or markets with the women of Bahama apartment. Now, **Ellen Moore** and **Wilma Goodman** have a regular Zoom chat with the women from Hélène apartment, followed by exercise.

Not all volunteers are on apartment teams. Board members bring lifetimes of experience to the table, informing important decisions. **Mary Martha Guy** and **Gael Eakin** guide residents in art workshops to create cards for sale. **Raymonde Hachey** headed a choir that entertained at our holiday parties. **Sister Anne Leonard** brought organisation to our archives. **Carol De Koven** and **Pat Hamilton** laid the groundwork for our annual citrus fundraiser. And designer **Jennifer Morrison** and I continue to produce this newsletter.

In the early years, advocates (as volunteers were then known) did some heavy lifting. The repairs, upkeep and deep-cleaning of our first apartments were met with gusto by volunteers and – up until the last decade – a member of each apartment team helped manage the apartment expenses for residents. Nowadays, we have established partnerships with other organisations to manage apartment repairs and cleaning, and finances are coordinated by the office.

But volunteering at L'Abri has always been primarily about being a friend. As former resident **Céline Fréchette** said many years ago, "Our volunteers help us create a bridge between our illness and normal life. They have become an important part of our lives. It is comforting to have someone witness our efforts towards wellness." ~SP

## Three decades of caring

**WE** OFFER a special salute to a small group of pioneering volunteers still with us after 30 years, for the many ways they have enriched residents' lives.

**Bob Bassett Jim Cullen**  
**Pat Hamilton Aldyth Irvine-Harrison**  
**Marjorie Sharp Dorothy Sims**



**"Volunteers help us create a bridge between illness and normal life"**



A special thank  
you to our editor  
*extraordinaire* ■



OUR BI-ANNUAL newsletter brims with heartwarming recollections and insights into the daily life of our community. This is made possible in no small part by **Susan Purcell**, our multi-talented editor.

A former reporter and documentary researcher, Sue gained in-depth knowledge of our culture and history from many years of dedication to L'Abri. In 1995 she became a social worker and briefly worked as a L'Abri coordinator, returning as an apartment volunteer while on staff at the Allan Memorial Institute. She eventually joined the board, where she served in recent years as secretary, and streamlined writing of our annual report. For 11 years starting in 2002 Sue wrote a column for the newsletter called *Just Wondering*, on living with mental illness. She became editor some 11 years ago, and continues to balance the responsibilities of board member and editor.

The editorial team behind L'Abri Times is only as good as our leader. Luckily for us, we have a great one. From all of us at L'Abri:

**"Thank you, Sue!"**

~SG

## COORDINATORS | Warmth & efficiency

Two common features of L'Abri leadership

*The spirited leadership of our coordinators and, more recently, our executive directors has always been outstanding.*



**Maureen Ramsay and Marianne Metrakos** were particularly memorable in their commitment to establishing a warm and welcoming environment for early residents. Maintaining the high quality of caring stewardship they had set as lead coordinators seemed a daunting task, but we were fortunate to find this in **Cheryl Lafferty** and, more recently, **Star Gale**.

Maureen joined us in year two, in time to lead in the opening of our second apartment. Before long Marianne came on as second coordinator. Every year, Maureen – and later Marianne – rose to the challenge of opening another apartment, recruiting residents and building a volunteer team for each one. Like their successors, they managed an active social life for the L'Abri community with potlucks, games nights, outings and barbecues, while keeping tabs on residents' mental health.

In the wake of Maureen's departure to Ottawa after 14 years, and Marianne's retirement in 2012, we welcomed two new employees: Cheryl and Star. L'Abri's

leaders have always benefitted immensely from the mentorship and guidance of their predecessors and colleagues. L'Abri coordinators **Loraine Jacmain** and **Cathy DeChambeau** supported Cheryl's arrival as lead coordinator in 2013. Cheryl worked closely with the board to modernize our structure, and eventually a new executive director position was created to accommodate the increasing administrative work of L'Abri. In this role, Cheryl guided us through the purchase of our property on Duvernay, the updating of our computer systems and streamlining of fundraising, all with strong support from Star, who joined us in 2016 as a coordinator.

Upon Cheryl's retirement in 2019,

Star moved seamlessly into the responsibilities of executive director, opening the doors of our office to host a community kitchen for residents, managing staff and aptly handling administrative tasks. Since the pandemic hit a few months into her new job, Star has made an impressive effort to ensure residents and staff stay healthy, safe and connected. ~SP

**A warm welcome  
and high quality of  
caring stewardship**

ABOVE, FROM LEFT, FORMER COORDINATORS MARIANNE METRAKOS (L.), AND MAUREEN RAMSAY ESTABLISHED A WARM AND WELCOMING ENVIRONMENT FOR EARLY RESIDENTS | FORMER L'ABRI STAFFERS (L. TO R.) EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CHERYL LAFFERTY, WITH COORDINATORS CATHY DECHAMBEAU AND LORAIN JACMAIN | STAR GALE CARRIES ON THE LEADERSHIP ROLE AS OUR CURRENT EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR.





## Sad news: Mary Bassett

WE WERE SADDENED by the death on May 22, 2021 of **Mary Bassett**, beloved wife of **Bob**, a L'Abri

volunteer since 1991. Mary took part in many of Bob's activities with residents of the Lafayette apartment, hosting them for dinners at their Westmount home and at the family cottage. Mary also helped to find and open our first apartment with volunteer **Pat Hamilton**. A spirited member of the Unitarian Church, Mary enlisted her vast network of friends as customers for our annual citrus fundraiser. "She had a great sense of humour," recalls Lafayette volunteer **Aldyth Irvine-Harrison**. "She got everything going." Sincere condolences to Bob, his daughter Karen, a L'Abri resident, and family. -SP

## DONORS

## Gifts to L'Abri en Ville in recognition of loved ones

### Remembering

**JACQUIE ANGUS**

Margot Adair

**AUDREY BEAN**

Anonymous

Martha Bell

Joan Ivory

Diane Marie Plante

**SYBIL CARSELEY**

Barbara Kelly

**CONCETTA CHIACCIARELLO**

Nicolas Chiacchiarello

**IVAN & LYDIA DAVY**

Avril Davy

**RAYMONDE HACHEY**

Ursula Kraye-Krauss

Serge Meyer

**RAYMONDE HACHEY & AUDREY BEAN**

Maureen Lafreniere

**RICK HAUGHIAN**

Brian Harrison

**ARTHUR HERSCOVITCH**

Mary Louise

Sacconaghi

Merle Wolofsky

**GREGOR HUTCHISON & PAUL HUTCHISON**

Beverley Hutchison

**GERRY LEGROVE**

Frank Legrove

**GREGORY LIPSCOMBE**

Joanne Lipscombe

**GERRY MACDONALD**

Reda Macdonald

**JOHANNIS MEYERS**

Nancy Grayson

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