

L'Abri apartments go virtual with iPads

By CECILY LAWSON

EARLY IN THE PANDEMIC, L'Abri staff realized our residents would need tools to alleviate the inevitable social isolation ahead. They wouldn't be able to meet a volunteer for coffee, get together with other residents at



MICHELLE MILLS

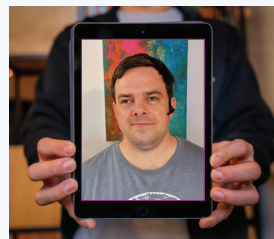
L'Abri activities, or see their coordinators weekly. As the world logged on to Zoom, we decided to provide digital connection by equipping each of our apartments with an iPad tablet.

Executive Director **Star Gale** worked with IT specialist **Andrew Martin-Hugessen**, at right, to make this happen. Andrew and his company Logitek have provided L'Abri with IT support since 2009. He set up our computer system, and later helped to move all the equipment to our offices on Duvernay. Over the years he has responded to countless emergencies and glitches, and to quote Star, "He's always so calm. He's able to deal with the sheer panic that tech problems tend to generate, and reassure you that everything's going to be okay." Andrew was able to purchase the iPads at a discounted price through contacts at Apple.

ABOVE: GULAM SOHRAB (CENTRE) LOGS ON TO THE NEW BESSBOROUGH APARTMENT IPAD AS LUC BELLEAU (LEFT) AND JEROME KIERANS LOOK ON.

His next step was to configure them for easy use by all of our residents. The tablets have been up and running for a couple of months, and have proved **invaluable for meetings between residents and coordinators**. Residents have also used them for virtual meetings with their medical teams and for keeping in touch with family. To help ensure even wider use in future, a team of McGill Occupational Therapy students is working with L'Abri to develop an iPad manual for the apartments. They foresee residents using the tablets for easier planning of bus and metro trips, and to enjoy virtual chats with friends in other L'Abri apartments.

Early in 2020, Andrew told L'Abri that henceforth he wanted to donate his time to L'Abri. "I wanted to ensure that financial considerations wouldn't prevent L'Abri staff from calling and asking for help." **Andrew feels the world of mental health is underserved**, and that we can all have an impact on the world around us. Having people like Andrew contribute their time, energy, effort and goodwill definitely makes our world a better place. 🌍



COURTESY OF A. MARTIN-HUGESSEN

CECILY IS PRESIDENT OF L'ABRI EN VILLE'S BOARD OF DIRECTORS, AND AN APARTMENT VOLUNTEER.

Staying strong and holding onto hopes in a COVID-19 world

By STAR GALE

IN LATE OCTOBER I had the pleasure of interviewing several L'Abri residents about how COVID-19 has affected their lives, the supports that help them cope, and their hopes for the future.

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Jerome Kierans spends his extra time at home **connecting with friends and family** in Ontario, and various L'Abri community members via phone and online, using the apartment's iPad. The iPad actually allowed him to attend his niece's engagement party! He has appreciated regular calls from L'Abri volunteer **Sam Beitel**, and looks forward to these chats as the weather gets colder.

SEE STAYING STRONG, P. 3

labrienville.org

Visit our newly revamped website for current and past online copies of the **L'Abri Times** newsletter. Our thanks go out to **Shift8 Web** for their kind volunteer work on the site's redesign.

La méditation m'aide à décrocher du stress

Par ALYSS NORAH CHASSAGNE

DEPUIS UN AN je participe au Programme d'aide et d'accompagnement social Action d'Emploi-Québec, au Carrefour Populaire de St-Michel.

J'ai des activités et des cours pour apprendre à gérer les émotions. **J'apprends à m'outiller pour mieux faire face à la vie de tous les jours.**

Une technique offerte dans le programme, est la méditation pleine conscience. Durant l'été nous faisons de la méditation dans un parc. Nous nous asseyons en indien, et fermions les yeux. Cela durait un petit quinze minutes au maximum. Il fallait écouter le bruit des feuilles dans les arbres, sentir le gazon sous nos pieds, et essayer de se laisser transporter par la brise du vent, tout en prenant de longues et profondes respirations et expirations. Maintenant que l'hiver est à nos portes, je continue à pratiquer la méditation chez moi. J'écoute de la musique sur mon téléphone à partir d'une application qui s'appelle « Calm ». C'est vraiment génial. Je ferme les lumières de ma chambre, décroche du stress et je relaxe tout simplement. Je vais bientôt ajouter à cela un diffuseur d'huile essentielle, ou une chandelle pour agrémenter le tout. Je peux me concentrer sur la musique et je fais le vide dans mon esprit. Chacun peut en faire et à sa manière puisqu'il existe plusieurs sites de méditation sur YouTube, avec ou sans parole. 🍎

ALYSS EST RÉSIDENTE DE L'APPARTEMENT BAHAMA.

Outdoors together, a welcome diversion



MICHELLE MILLS

TO REPLACE our regular two-night trip to Île-Saint-Bernard this year, L'Abri arranged for residents and volunteers to return to the island in September for apple-

picking and relaxation. Divided into two groups, and travelling by bus on separate days with appropriate social distancing, 10 residents, six volunteers and three staff members picked the pesticide-free apples in orchards once tended by the nuns of the convent at Manoir D'Youville. The rest of the visit was spent resting on the beautiful grounds overlooking Lac St-Louis. Pictured here, Park apartment residents (L to R), Karen Bassett, Terryann O'Neill and Eileen Kelly bundled up against the cold. 🍎



Des brownies à base de... quoi ?

Par AMINA NAJIBOVA

LA SANTÉ passe par de saines habitudes de vie — une alimentation de qualité, une activité physique optimale, un sommeil réparateur, une bonne gestion du stress et des pensées positives et optimistes. Pour ce qui est de l'alimentation, santé ne rime pas avec privation, mais bien plutôt avec des aliments sains consommés avec modération. C'est dans cet état d'esprit que je vous présente une recette originale et délicieuse : des brownies à base de... haricots noirs ! Dégustez un petit morceau de ce gâteau pour que plaisir se conjugue avec santé. Voilà, je vous souhaite un bel automne malgré la pandémie qui sévit. | Cette recette, légèrement modifiée, est tirée du livre « Végane mais pas plate ! » de P. Caron-Cantin et J. Nadeau. 🍎

AMINA EST RÉSIDENTE DE L'APPARTEMENT HÉLÈNE.

Brownies « surprise »

- 1 Préchauffez** le four à 350° F. Huilez et enfarinez un plat de cuisson carré de 23 cm. Déposez dans un petit bol :
 - 1/2 t. de **dattes** dénoyautées
 - 1/2 t. d'**eau bouillante**
- 2 Laissez** reposer 2-3 minutes, et égouttez les dattes. Déposez dans le contenant du robot culinaire, et mélangez jusqu'à obtenir une texture lisse :
 - 1 boîte de (540 mL) de **haricots noirs rincés, égouttés**
 - 2 **oeufs**
 - 1/2 t. de **sucre**, de préférence du sucre de coco
 - 1/4 de t. de **farine de blé entier**
 - 1/4 de t. de **cacao**
 - 3 c. à soupe de **beurre de noix**
 - 1/2 c. à thé d'**extrait de vanille** ou d'**amande**
 - 1/2 c. à thé de **poudre à pâte**
 - 1/4 de c. à thé de **bicarbonate de soude**
- 3 Ajoutez** à cette préparation :
 - 1/2 de t. de **chocolat noir 70%**, coupé en petits morceaux
- 4 Versez** la préparation au chocolat dans le plat de cuisson préparé, égalisez la surface, et parsemez de :
 - 1/4 de t. de **pistaches hachées**, ou autres noix
- 5 Cuire** au four 30 minutes. Retirez du four et laissez tiédir avant de découper.



Residents give thanks for Giovanni's cooking

By SUSAN PURCELL

FOR SAFETY REASONS, Thanksgiving get-togethers were few this year, but our favorite cook **Giovanni Monti** made sure L'Abri residents enjoyed a special meal. "I reached out to Star



SAM BETTEL

JOAN ESAR PICKS UP HOT TURKEY DINNERS FROM GIOVANNI MONTI FOR DELIVERY TO L'ABRI RESIDENTS.

[Star Gale, our executive director]," says Giovanni, who owns Café Monti in the Queen Elizabeth Health Complex, and has catered our holiday parties and volunteer appreciation dinners for years. He offered to prepare **a full turkey dinner for each resident**, complete with

stuffing, cranberries, mashed potatoes and gravy. Star jumped at the chance to give residents a treat during this difficult time of confinement.


Giovanni is a master organizer. Arriving at his cafe on Saturday, October 10 at 6:00 A.M., he set to work, and by 10:30 had 28 hot meals (including three vegetarian) cooked and ready for pickup by volunteers **Joan Esar** and **Maxene Rodrigues**. They drove the dinners to our four apartments in LaSalle and Ville Emard, and to one in north NDG. Giovanni himself delivered to our five apartments in NDG's Benny Crescent complex.

"He was so kind to come over," says Bahama apartment resident **Alyss Chassagne**. As residents approached his pickup truck, one apartment at a time, Giovanni was "in the back handing out the meals, smiling and wishing each of us a Happy Thanksgiving."

Joan Esar ordered three extra meals, for herself and two elderly residents at her Outremont high-rise. "Let me tell you, it was delicious!," Joan says. "Nice portions,

lovely little green vegetables."

Feeding large groups is old hat for Giovanni, who draws on previous experience as banquet manager at Sheraton and Hilton hotels in Laval. When he's off work, he enjoys time with his wife and daughters, 11 and 13, at their home in Dorval.

In his 20 years at the café, Giovanni hadn't offered take-out before this Thanksgiving. With the waiting rooms closed due to the pandemic and no sit-down customers, he now opens just three days a week. But in October he took orders for over 100 turkey dinners, the majority from clinic staff and tenants blocked from getting together with their families. Now Giovanni's expanding his new venture with a complete take-out menu. "2020's about survival," he remarks. "You do what you gotta do." 




STAYING STRONG CONT'D FROM P. 1

••• **Shmoal Loterman** shared some difficult personal challenges COVID-19 brought into his life. "I couldn't visit family who had to go into the hospital, and I had to be tested myself." The test was uncomfortable, but he was relieved to get negative results quickly. Shmoal passes time by **keeping in touch with other residents**, and hopes for a COVID vaccine soon.

••• **Amina, Anna** and **Nithya**, who share an apartment, find that **daily walks** are an easy and safe way to stay active. They use email to keep in touch with their volunteers, who joined them for a socially-distanced picnic over the summer. Amina, who follows events in the news, says "I hope we can come out of this [pandemic] with more attention and care to social justice issues and the environment."



••• **Michel Verstichelen** is a survivor of both cancer and mental illness. He has received clear continuity in care and messaging from mental health and oncology professionals, and L'Abri staff, informing him of the heightened vulnerabilities he would face if exposed to the coronavirus. "I already know what it's like to be in '*fighting-for-my-life*' mode, and thinking of COVID as just another challenge has helped." In September Michel received the good news his cancer is in remission, leaving him ready to "live in the present, and be grateful for little things," like wishes of kindness and support from his family in Nova Scotia and from his L'Abri roommates. "Myself and my roommates make a pretty solid team," Michel says. "The virus has challenged each of us in different ways, but we **talk about it and support one another.**" 

STAR IS L'ABRI EN VILLE'S EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR.

Special thanks

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

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Suzanne Herscovitch

GERRY LEGROVE

Frank LeGrove

MARTHA LEIVA PLASKI

Frits & Petronella Beran

LINDA

Florence Dobson

TONY PERKINS

Susan Purcell

Honouring...

CYNTHIA FISH

Mary Martha Guy

GEORGE HARRIS

John MacLennan

A word from our president

Funders offset loss of citrus earnings

By CECILY LAWSON

fOR THE FIRST TIME in many years, we have been forced—for safety reasons—to cancel our annual citrus fruit fundraiser. Fortunately the anticipated loss of revenue has been offset by funders who stepped up to support us in these unprecedented times. Some foundations made their donations earlier in the year than they normally do; others increased their grants. All of this has helped at a time when we

are faced with added expenses such as protective equipment for residents and staff, and transportation for coordinators. All of this to say: **thank you for your support**, and please keep us in mind when you are making your annual donations during the holiday season. 🍊



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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L'Abri en Ville

2352 Duvernay Street

Montreal QC H3J 2X1

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

Notes from the office

Adapting to pandemic demands on the job

By STAR GALE



the COVID-19 pandemic and the evolving public health and safety measures we continue to navigate meant cancelling the summer picnics, community kitchens and other activities we've come to enjoy. Nevertheless, the challenges of staying connected online have been



SAM BEITEL

STAR GALE (LEFT) DISCUSSES WORK MATTERS WITH OFFICE ADMINISTRATOR SALLY COOPER IN STAR'S THIRD-FLOOR LOFT-OFFICE. HAVING OUR STAFF ON THREE FLOORS MAKES PHYSICAL DISTANCING EASIER.

met with enthusiasm this fall by our new placement students: **Leah Yrastorza-Daghman** from McGill University's School of Social Work has begun hosting one of our virtual book clubs, among other tasks, and **Alexandra Bachand** and **Léa Marie Duguay**, from McGill's School of Physical and Occupational Therapy, have been creating a users' manual for the apartments' iPads. L'Abri staff continue to meet on the Zoom-video conferencing platform, while working on staggered schedules in the office to respect physical distancing. Coordinators are maintaining a hybrid schedule — wearing personal protective equipment for in-person house meetings one week, and hosting virtual meetings on Zoom the next. We know the winter months will bring new challenges, but as the articles in this newsletter show, the **creativity and generosity of community members** make our task much easier. 🍊