

Our coordinators ~ creative, kind, flexible

By STAR GALE

"The coordinator's role involves flexibility and creativity. It requires them to work with numerous people in various capacities."

~ L'ABRI EN VILLE GUIDEBOOK

When these words were written, no one could have foreseen how the last two years would test the flexibility and creativity of our coordinators. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic forced us to radically reimagine how coordinators would support L'Abri residents, we were in the midst of some big changes, beginning 2020 with two coordinators recently hired and adjusting to their new jobs. **Michelle Mills** (*top*) was hired in September 2019, after her work here as a summer student, and **Vishaka Ratnayake** (*bottom*) joined us in January 2020, after **Cathy DeChambeau's** retirement.

As our guidebook states, the "coordinator is an advisor, a source of information, a planner, a counsellor and a friend to both residents and volunteers." In no time, Michelle and Vishaka became advisors and sources of information for residents and volunteers alike during the pandemic, when nuance and caution were vitally important, and health advice changed rapidly. They were tirelessly creative in coordinating plans for house meetings, meetings with volunteers, and activities. They also had the grace and patience to extend a hand of friendship to community members in need. L'Abri cannot

thank them enough for their commitment and perseverance.

Our coordinators' role has expanded to require more digital literacy skills and an ability to navigate an ever-burdened healthcare system. Meanwhile they continue to contribute to every aspect of L'Abri's functioning. As we recover from the pandemic's effect on our community we are exploring the possibility of hiring a third coordinator to lighten Michelle and Vishaka's workload. To our delight, Cathy has come back to provide welcome support as we map the way forward. No matter what the future brings, we remain heartened by the strong legacy of L'Abri coordinators past and present!

STAR IS THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
OF L'ABRI EN VILLE.



Namaste

Les bienfaits du tai chi

Par MARIE-JOSÉE PICHÉ

MODÉRATION ET MODESTIE, voilà les lois pour pratiquer le tai chi. Pas question de yoga ici. Cette gymnastique est une répétition de gestes lents et ronds.

Je suis depuis près d'une année un cours de tai chi tous les mardi matin sur Zoom, grâce à la générosité de **Petronella Beran** et de **Pat Hamilton**, nos très chères bénévoles, qui couvrent le prix de 5 \$ par classe. Puisque **Fritz**, le mari de Petronella, et Pat participent aussi, je peux donc leur dire un bonjour virtuel juste avant le début de chaque classe.

Notre enseignante **Vinnie** guide nos mouvements, issus de cette école d'une ancienne tradition chinoise. Sa voix chaleureuse s'accompagne d'un autre principe, celui d'inspirer et d'expirer : « Breathe in, breathe

out ». Le tout se veut comme un doux massage des articulations. La série d'exercices, d'une durée d'une heure, demande de la coordination et parfois un peu d'équilibre, mais dans l'ensemble c'est l'harmonie qui règne. Pas besoin, en un mot, de force physique.

Les bienfaits d'une séance de tai chi contribuent à réduire le stress et à accentuer la concentration. Pour moi c'est plus pour le plaisir d'être avec la joyeuse Vinnie et de suivre ses mouvements gracieux.

Pas d'âge ni de lieu spécifique, on s'habille comme on veut, le tai chi a le cœur ouvert. Placez vos mains ensemble au niveau du cœur et saluez en remerciement à vous-même.

MARIE-JOSÉE EST RÉSIDENTE DE L'APPARTEMENT BRASILIA.

Of students & webinars

By STAR GALE

LIKE EVERYONE ELSE, L'Abri staff members have been busy establishing our "new normal." While our presence in the office remains carefully scheduled to respect public health and safety measures, we see much more of one another these days – which is a welcome change!

On Tuesdays, **Catalina Gonzales**, a McGill School of Social Work student, joins us in our office, and on Thursdays she works remotely via Zoom. **Norah Ioannou**, a Dawson student in her final year of the Social Services program, also has a hybrid in-person/remote schedule. Both Catalina and Norah have integrated quickly into L'Abri's routine, coordinating house meetings for apartments and planning and facilitating virtual activities.

Speaking of webinars, L'Abri en Ville's 30th Anniversary Webinar Series is available for viewing on our new L'Abri YouTube channel! You can search for "L'Abri en Ville" on youtube.com, and find our new channel and all four videos in the series. They focus on L'Abri's beginnings; the special relationship between volunteers and residents; our citrus fundraiser; and the L'Abri network, made up of L'Abri and three sister organizations.

STAR IS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF L'ABRI EN VILLE.

L'Abri's online activities are fun and informative

By MAXENE RODRIGUES

L'ABRI RESIDENTS AND VOLUNTEERS got together for a wide variety of Zoom activities during the pandemic. Some joined with volunteer **Pat Hamilton** to **make Irish soda bread**, while others listened to **Pepita Capriolo's bone-chilling mystery stories**, or took in a **self-improvement talk**.

Friends and family members generously pitched in as well. **Greita Morse**, a friend of **Campbell Stuart**, led two **cooking sessions**. **Nora Burnier's** husband **Dr Miguel Burnier**, a professor of ophthalmology, offered **tips on eye care**. Student interns animated sessions on basic computer skills and Zoom.

I host an **online storytelling** group, which began last winter with one of the Chinese legends I like to tell. Before long it morphed into a **show-and-tell** and **sharing activity**. **Angus** told us about his *Flesh and Blood* card collection, and showed us his favourite cards. **Luke** read us a short story by Tolstoy, and **Karen** displayed some of her paintings. Anything goes! Poems and short stories are read, personal experiences shared. At each meeting, Angus updates us with news on his card-playing. Each time, something unexpected makes it fun to be there.

Fall sessions have been mostly instructional, ranging from **environmental practices** to **oral health care**, to the **importance of wills and mandates**.

MAXENE IS AN APARTMENT VOLUNTEER.

Praise for our 30th anniversary issue



What a great newsletter. I was just going to glance at it and read it later, but I ended up reading every word and mulling over all the photos right away!

~ NANCY GRAYSON

Brilliant, a true anniversary memento. I congratulate you.

~ PAT HAMILTON

It was a pleasure to read the commemorative newsletter, as well as to look at the photos. What a great perspective of the last 30 years of L'Abri!

~ CHERYL LAFFERTY

Your newsletter brought back many fond memories. It was so beautiful and well done.

~ MARIANNE METRAKOS

Can't believe it's been 30 years and going stronger than ever.

~ NANCY MONTGOMERY

A wonderful issue: a beautiful, warm tribute to what is obviously an incredible, caring community.

~ PAT SMART

Gorgeous work! Thanks to the newsletter committee.

~ CAMPBELL STUART

Roommates provide perspective

By LUKE GRUBER



MICHELLE MILLS

IT'S BEEN ALMOST A YEAR now since I moved into my new home with L'Abri, and it's been great! Before this I was living with my parents, after an attempt to live on my own didn't work out. Living with two new roommates was daunting at first, but the ice broke quickly and **Chris** and **Cristian** made me feel welcome right away. Now we go for walks together and I plan to go on a camping trip with Cristian.

The social aspect of L'Abri has helped me through the pandemic. The weekly house meeting keeps me accountable with my chores and general plans, and just having people to talk to in the apartment is immensely helpful. I've gotten to meet other residents and enjoyed their company on outings, even virtual ones — walks around the neighborhood, watching an orchestra perform live on TV, pizza dinners, a trip to the museum.

Living with people who have difficulties puts my own situation in perspective, and I get to see what works for others. I'm looking forward to the next year with L'Abri; I've even joined the board of directors as a resident board member!

LUKE LIVES IN THE LAFAYETTE APARTMENT.

Welcome back fresh air & sunshine!



PAGODAS & PLANTS

< After months spent mostly indoors, residents enjoyed a July visit to the Chinese Garden at the Jardin Botanique.

LEAH YRATORZA-DAGHMAN



RETURN TO OUR LAKESIDE GETAWAY

< The August heat was intense during our overnight stay at Île-Saint-Bernard. Tired after a hot day of nature walks and outdoor fun, everyone watched in awe as the sun set over Lac St-Louis.



STAR GALE



MAKING ART OUTDOORS

< On a beautiful September day, volunteers **Mary-Martha Guy** (standing) and **Gael Eakin** conducted a painting workshop for residents near the L'Abri office. A selection of the new designs will be used on hasty notes residents sell to raise funds for activities.

GAEL EAKIN

STAY-AT-HOME THANKSGIVING

While delivering his annual Thanksgiving dinner to residents on Benny Crescent, chef **Giovanni Monti** (left) paused to show us one of his meals. **David Seymour** stood by holding the makings of a welcome feast for the Benny apartment men. >



SAM BEITEL



STILL MARKING THE YEARS

< Covid-19 hasn't prevented our wonderful volunteers from helping celebrate residents' birthdays. At left, **Grant Goldsbrough** blows out a candle on a brownie cake made by volunteer **Maxene Rodrigues**. Other birthdays have been recognized during the pandemic in various ways by thoughtful volunteers including **Diana Bennett**, **Petronella Beran**, **Nora Burnier**, **Pepita Capriolo**, **Joan Esar**, **Afric Eustace**, **Julie Faulkner** and **Pat Hamilton**.

MAXENE RODRIGUES

Art helped Renée overcome obstacles

THE DEATH OF RENÉE DROUIN in October at the age of 50 came as a shock to many at L'Abri. As a former resident, Renée remained an active member of our extended family. She and her husband **Sean Cahill** (pictured here with Renée) – also a past resident – regularly attended our holiday and Hallowe'en parties, and signed up for our overnight stays at Île-Saint-Bernard. Renée helped out at La rue des femmes, a women's service centre, and was a prolific artist. Her abstract paintings have been featured on some of our hasty notes, and others are on display in our offices. Renée always had a bright smile, even as she dealt with a recurring cancer diagnosis. She once said, "Painting helps me to express myself and to beat anything that gets in my way. It makes me a stronger woman! I have survived mental illness and cancer through art." Our deepest sympathies to Sean and family.



SAM BEITEL

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UNSEEN HANDS

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REMEMBERING & HONOURING | Gifts to L'Abri en Ville in recognition of loved ones

In memory of...

MARY & ROBERT BASSETT



BASSETT FAMILY

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Rev JSS & Margaret Armour
Diana Bennett
John Bishop
Lynn and Darren Bonk
William Bonnell

& Kari Cullen
Lois Boswell
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