

Drawing *anime* figures helps Vanessa cope

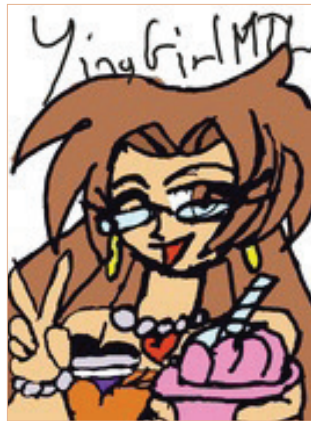
By MICHELLE MILLS



MICHELLE MILLS

L'Abri resident **Vanessa Perez** loves to draw, whether by hand or on her tablet using a stylus. In elementary school, she was assigned a history project on Jacques Cartier, and asked her father to draw a picture of the Canadian explorer. After seeing his poorly-drawn version, Vanessa gave it a try and liked the results. "This became the spark of why I wanted to draw," she says now. Drawing is not just her favourite way to pass the time, but also a go-to coping mechanism in difficult situations.

Vanessa's drawings often depict colourful characters in action, in the popular *anime* ("AH-nee-meh") style originally from Japan. She says she



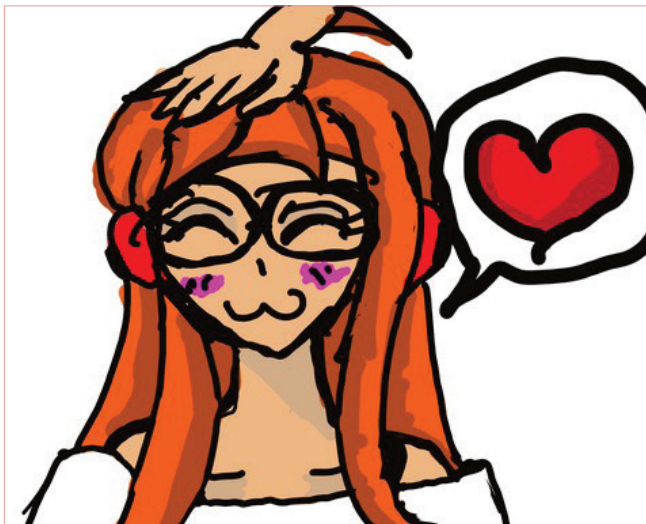
tends to "obsess over" the characters she sees on *anime* websites, and finds that drawing the tiny figures is "the one thing that I can count on." She likes to work with soothing music playing in the background.

In addition to her action figures, Vanessa creates comics that reflect her view of world events. She says her artwork calms disturbing thoughts and "cuddles the voices."

Her sketchbooks are filled with hand-drawn work, coloured in with pencil crayons. For her digital art, Vanessa draws on her iPad with an electronic pencil, using an application called Sketchbook, which allows her to colour in the pictures.

Reflecting the confidence drawing gives her, is a button Vanessa wears on her book bag featuring her rendering of a favourite *anime* figure. She likes getting drawing requests from friends and family, and would be delighted if she could make extra money from her hobby. Meanwhile, she gets a lot of satisfaction knowing "my art seems to make people happy."

Art calms disturbing thoughts and "cuddles the voices"



V. PEREZ

VANESSA SHOWS SOME OF THE DRAWINGS SHE CREATES ON HER IPAD (AT TOP), LIKE THE ONES ABOVE AND AT RIGHT

MICHELLE IS A COORDINATOR AT L'ABRI EN VILLE

Teamwork makes complex apartment upgrades possible

By STAR GALE

COURTESY: R. DUFOUR



VOLUNTEER
RICHARD DUFOUR
(ABOVE) SUPERVISED
CONTRACTORS AND
NEGOTIATED WITH
PROPERTY OWNERS

THIS FALL, the staff and board decided to capitalize on the rare occurrence of three vacancies between two NDG apartments. We saw an opportunity to upgrade the apartments and, in doing so, better meet the needs of the current and future residents. This experience turned into a great example of our innovative approach to collaborative community care.

One of the apartments, which needed only a new coat of paint and minor updates, is our most accessible and largest, located on a ground floor — ideal for aging L'Abri residents with mobility challenges. The other needed deep cleaning, painting and significant repairs,

Hard work and community collaboration

and was poorly suited to the needs of the two aging residents who had lived

there for over twenty years. We decided to switch the residents of the two apartments.

Richard Dufour, a contractor and new board member, not only sourced and supervised contractors and scheduling for the renovations, but negotiated with the property owners to access vacant units free of cost, facilitating storage of the residents' belongings while work was being done.

DAVID (LEFT) AND GEORGE ARE
HAPPY IN THEIR CLEAN AND
ACCESSIBLE NEW APARTMENT

Where would the three residents — one woman and two men — go while the apartments were being upgraded? Two community partners from the *Table de concertation en santé mentale et dépendance*, came to the rescue.

The two male residents stayed at transitional resource Tracom, where they found comfort in care received from staff, and support from other residents. **Hugues Laforce**, Tracom's director, was happy to help. "We're all for these connections between community agencies," he said.

The female resident stayed downtown in the Nazareth Community, where **Jennifer Willard**, manager for client services, shared similar sentiments. "Community helps community. We understand how difficult displacement can be."

None of this would have been possible without our three coordinators — **Leah Dagham**, **Lori Goodhand** and **Michelle Mills** — going the extra mile to provide the residents with reassurance and support, and help with packing, moving and cleaning. We cannot thank them enough. We're also grateful to board members and special volunteers, such as our president **Pepita Capriolo** and her husband Dr **David Morris**, who helped troubleshoot last-minute emergencies when residents moved back.

Knowing we may face more housing challenges in future, I am heartened and proud of how L'Abri and its community partners make these difficult projects possible.

STAR IS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF L'ABRI EN VILLE



LORI GOODHAND

New president takes on issues affecting mental health

By CECILY LAWSON

L' (at right) has been on the job for eight months and she's enjoying it. "We're a strong, resilient organization," she says, "and we have our share of challenges. But our staff is incredible, they definitely go above and beyond. And our residents are amazing people."

A lawyer and retired judge of the Quebec Superior Court, Pepita is a graduate of McGill's Faculty of Law and has a Masters degree from University of Oxford. She has taught at the University of Ottawa and worked for the Human Rights Commission of Quebec and the Allied Jewish Community Services of Montreal. In 2019, she was commissioned to investigate its handling of complaints against a priest found guilty of sexual assault, and to make

recommendations.

Five years ago Pepita joined L'Abri as an apartment volunteer, drawn to the organization by its focus on mental illness. "As someone who suffers from chronic depression," she explains, "I wanted to fight the stigmatization of mental illness, and help people struggling with their mental health."

Pepita believes L'Abri needs to recruit a new generation of volunteers. She also notes the board's concern about the affordability of housing in Montreal, and the potential impact this could have in coming years. She points to the very real problems currently being experienced in the delivery of mental health services in Montreal, and how the resulting lack of support makes it difficult for L'Abri



DR. DAVID MORRIS

Pepita wants to fight the stigmatization of mental illness...

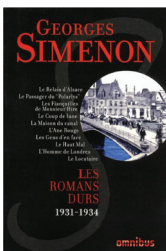
to recruit residents autonomous enough to thrive in our model. We have formed a special board committee to address these issues, and involved the L'Abri community in a wide-ranging discussion last May at a special community meeting. This work will occupy us in the months and years to come.

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

CRITIQUE DE LIVRE

Aucun Maigret dans ces histoires !

Par SEÁN CAHILL



LES ROMANS DURS
VOL. 1 : 1931-1934

par Georges Simenon

1 020 pp., Éditions Omnibus, 2012

C'EST BIEN CONNU que Georges Simenon est l'auteur du fameux personnage de l'Inspecteur Maigret, qui figure dans 75 romans, dont 70 ont été adaptés au cinéma et plusieurs autres créés pour la télévision. C'est moins connu que Simenon, décédé en 1989, est le quatrième auteur francophone le plus traduit dans le monde. Mais il n'a pas écrit que des romans policiers. Il est aussi l'auteur de 117 romans qu'il appelait ses « romans durs » où ne figure pas le commissaire Maigret et dont j'ai eu la chance d'en lire une douzaine cet été.

Simenon écrit ses « romans durs » dès le début des années trente jusqu'à la fin des années soixante. Le premier des douze volumes de la collection Omnibus regroupe les dix premiers romans, que Simenon écrit au début des années trente. Chaque histoire comporte environ 100 pages. Elles se déroulent pour la plupart en Europe, mais il y en a une qui se passe en Afrique, et une autre en URSS.

Avec quelques mots seulement, Simenon nous fait ressentir les atmosphères les plus diversifiées : de la jungle africaine à la passerelle d'un navire dans les eaux de Norvège, à une chambre d'hôtel bruxelloise. Les protagonistes sont souvent des hommes et des femmes qui tentent d'établir des liens affectifs entre-eux, mais c'est souvent la perspective de l'homme qui prévaut. Une exception serait peut-être le personnage féminin d'Edmée qui mène l'intrigue dans *La Maison du canal*. Il y a aussi les personnages d'Adèle dans *Le Coup de lune*, et Mme Pontreau dans *Le Haut Mal*, qui sont à l'origine d'un crime. Dans toutes les histoires du premier volume, sauf une, il est question de meurtre.

SEÁN EST UN ANCIEN RÉSIDENT DE L'ABRI EN VILLE

Wildlife visitors welcome us to summer



The sun was shining and the ducks were waddling as we gathered for a **picnic in Westmount Park** in late July. Residents, staff and volunteers were in a celebratory mood after many long months of pandemic shutdown. President Pepita's big white sunhat added a garden party vibe.

TURN TO PAGE 7 TO LEARN
MORE ABOUT OUR HOST,
THE MANOIR D'YOUVILLE.



SAM BEITEL

During our annual **two-day getaway** at Île-Saint-Bernard's Le Manoir D'Youville in mid-August, chickadees flocked to the fingers of residents standing still on the nature trail offering them seeds. Some residents enjoyed a dip in the pool, while others relaxed in the sun or enjoyed ice cream. Beautiful sunsets heralded the coming of night.

Cooler days bring art & the enticing aroma of smoke



Visiting the **Montreal Museum of Fine Art**

in September, residents split into two groups to take part in guided tours of contemporary art in the museum's permanent collection. It was fascinating to get the inside info about the many imaginative paintings and sculptures.



Sweaters and even some toques were out when we gathered at Angrignon Park September 28 for our annual **hot dog barbecue**. Staff and volunteers donned gloves and masks to dole out the eats. A smiling Chris (far right) was clearly ready to feast on his dogs, dressed just the way he likes them, and with chips on the side.

Ordinary people

~ Sam's favourite photo subject

DEB BEITEL



L'ABRI VOLUNTEER **Sam Beitel** (at left) brings his Nikon D7100 camera everywhere he goes, in case he sees a good subject to capture. Eternally hatted, he can be spotted in and around Westmount or downtown, waiting inconspicuously for the perfect shot of dreamers or passersby. On trips abroad, his finger is never far from the shutter as he

watches for that telling pose or expression.

In recent years, L'Abri and this newsletter have been proud to have Sam as our unofficial photographer. He rarely fails to attend resident outings and social events, where he takes candid shots of community members as they mingle.

Sam retired nine years ago after 40 years teaching high school, including 15 as head teacher at an alternative school. He was the staffer who went the extra mile for his students, picking up food for the undernourished at Costco, and sometimes driving kids to school so they wouldn't fall behind and drop out.

Now as a volunteer at our Bessborough apartment in NDG, Sam is just as devoted, keeping in touch with the residents and always ready to talk about recently-read books or ideas, or just to listen.

These photos are a minuscule sample of the thousands of memorable images Sam has snapped over the years. They show his sensitivity to those alone moments in life, whether of reflection or serendipity. | **SP**



Sam has an eye for those alone moments



SAM BEITEL

The friendly face of a caring foundation



COURTESY A. MASON



ANGELA MASON (ABOVE) LIVES JUST A TEN-MINUTE DRIVE FROM THE MANOIR, AND IS ALWAYS READY TO HELP L'ABRI DURING OUR STAYS

ANGELA MASON is the energetic sales director of the Manoir D'Youville on Île-Saint-Bernard in Châteauguay. For the past nine summers, she has warmly welcomed residents and staff of L'Abri en Ville to the Manoir for a two-day stay, generously subsidized by La Fondation Compagnom, which manages the facility. (The Charles Johnson Charitable Fund also generously donates to this annual holiday.)

The Fondation Compagnom sets aside \$100,000 profits from its affiliated commercial activities each year to help persons living with mental health problems

— and their caregivers — to afford a stay at the former Grey Nuns' convent on the shores of Lac-Saint-Louis.

Angela lives just a ten-minute drive away from the Manoir, in Châteauguay. Formerly employed downtown with the Hilton hotel chain, 13 years ago she was relieved to find work nearby, after years stuck in traffic on the bridge to Montreal. "One and a half hours each way — the traffic was just too much," she recalls. Not to mention that she and her husband had recently started a family, which now consists of three boys aged 12 to 15!

THE MANOIR (AT RIGHT AND BELOW) IS SURROUNDED BY TREES. GRASS AND SPARKLING VISTAS



COURTESY LE MANOIR D'YOUVILLE



A relaxing place for aging residents

Cheryl Lafferty, predecessor to our executive director **Star Gale**, was excited when she heard about the foundation's mission. The idea of an affordable getaway close to a nature reserve, private rooms, elevators, and hot meals in a bright cafeteria, seemed perfect for our aging residents. It was becoming harder for them to sleep in bunk beds in shared cabins, as they had for years at a camp in the Laurentians. It was also harder to find volunteers to prepare early breakfasts, and remain on duty much of the day.

Cheerful and bilingual, Angela first welcomed L'Abri in 2015 and looks forward to our return each year. "Whether it has been with Star, or Cheryl before her, it's always a pleasure to work with L'Abri," she says. "They're so organized, pleasant and on the ball." The feeling is mutual! | **SP**

Welcoming new staffers, seeking new volunteers

By STAR GALE

a S I WRITE THESE NOTES, our staff is preparing to host a Halloween get-together at the L'Abri offices (*below*), and brainstorming plans for our first winter holiday get-together since the pandemic. We've recently welcomed some new team members. **Leah Dagelman** has joined us as a part-time coordinator. Leah was previously an intern and Canada

Summer Student at L'Abri, and has replaced **Vishaka Ratnayake**, who stepped down from her position in September. We wish Vishaka well for the future and thank her for all her work.

In addition, student **Iva Avramov**, from McGill's School of Social Work, and **Britney Similian**, from Dawson College's Social Service program, began internships with us in September. Britney is supporting coordinator **Lori Goodhand's** work reviving our volunteer recruitment and integration.

Keep on the lookout for more on our need for new volunteers, and if you or someone you know is interested in joining as a volunteer, please contact us at labrivolunteer@gmail.com

Finally, we would like to offer our congratulations to Our Harbour, one of our sister organizations, celebrating its 20th anniversary this year: what an accomplishment! The seeds planted by the L'Abri model so many years ago continue to flourish.

STAR IS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF L'ABRI EN VILLE



LEAH DAGELMAN (LEFT), AND
IVA AVRAMOV SHOW OFF THEIR
SPOOKY VEGGIE DISPLAY

MICHELLE MILLS

REMEMBERING & HONOURING

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

IN MEMORY

Donald Cherry
Robert Foxman

IN HONOUR

Eleanor Beattie
Christine Burt
Eric Philips-Oxford
Mary Martha Guy
Sean Lafleur
Cecily Lawson
Sally McDougall

UNSEEN HANDS

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Susan Purcell

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Star Gale

Cecily Lawson

Michelle Mills

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L'Abri Times

is a publication of

L'Abri en Ville

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

Please send your
comments or
suggestions to:

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*"I would like
to support
L'Abri."*

We thank you
sincerely for your
generosity.

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MY GIFT OF \$	<input type="checkbox"/> IN MEMORY OF <input type="checkbox"/> IN HONOUR OF
4 ways to make a donation to support L'Abri en Ville	
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TELEPHONE	CALL 514 932-2199 TO DONATE BY CREDIT CARD
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ONLINE	Secure donations may be made on our website through "Canada Helps" at labrienville.org