

35  
YEARS

## Home stories: looking back, looking ahead

*L'Abri en Ville has been home to many of our residents for much of their adult lives. Several joined in the '90s, when we were gradually opening new apartments. This spring saw the first of those "pioneers" make the move to long-term care.*

### Memories of a loving home at L'Abri

*Due to failing physical health, GEORGE HARRIS could no longer live independently. To mark our anniversary, George shared his memories of his 30 years at L'Abri, gathered in a recent talk with L'Abri times designer Jennifer Morrison.*



LORI GOODHAND

I HAD MY FIRST SCHIZOPHRENIC EPISODE in my late 20s when I was working in an architectural firm in California. I returned to Montreal where I was hospitalised for six weeks, eventually moving to a rooming house and starting a new job. I was in and out of hospital four times in about 12 years.

In 1996 when I was about 40, I moved into a new L'Abri apartment along with a man named Rick Ottoni. He became my

**Rick became my closest, dearest friend – when David joined us we formed a harmonious trio**

and harmonious trio. I was very pleased with the apartment and remember how early volunteers like **Judith Pressner** helped us get organised for groceries. Weekly meetings with coordinator **Marianne Metrakos** and others kept us on track.

One sweet memory is of Rick bringing me chocolate in the morning to tempt me out of bed, and making us freshly-brewed coffee. Over the years wonderful volunteers like **Afric Eustace** visited often, driving us to get groceries and helping in many ways.

A couple of years ago I began having difficulty taking care of myself. I had mobility challenges which led to an accident with my walker. After a lengthy hospitalisation, it became clear that returning home to independent living was not feasible. Supported by my family and L'Abri, I found a new home at the Glenmount Residence in time for my 70<sup>th</sup> birthday. I'm happy here. I continue to attend L'Abri activities, and have really appreciated visits from Afric and David. I will miss L'Abri. It was nice living in a group of three, sharing meals, and having someone there with me to greet the day.

closest and dearest friend. When **David Seymour** joined us 10 years later, we formed a comfortable

### Enfin chez moi

*Nouvelle résidente BARBARA CURCIO nous raconte son trajet difficile et son arrivée à L'Abri.*

À CAUSE DE LA STIGMATISATION de la maladie mentale—et le conséquent isolement que beaucoup d'individus expérimentent—je me



MARIE-JOSÉE PICHÉ

questionnais si je trouverais jamais une place accueillante où je pourrais vivre. Pendant mon mariage, j'ai été plusieurs fois hospitalisée. À cause de ma faible santé mentale le mariage n'a pas survécu, et j'ai été

**On nous assure une bonne qualité de vie**

de la misère à m'intégrer.

Grâce à une travailleuse sociale de mon hôpital qui a été touchée par mon histoire de vie, j'ai fait la connaissance de l'Abri, où j'ai rencontré des intervenantes compatissantes. En octobre 2025, je suis devenue résidente; c'est à ce moment-là que j'ai compris que L'Abri en Ville est en mesure, chaque jour, de relever le grand défi de nous assurer une bonne qualité de vie.

Je veux saisir donc l'opportunité de remercier l'équipe de L'Abri en Ville qui m'aide à avancer grâce à beaucoup d'initiatives et de rencontres; les bénévoles qui offrent leur temps et leurs énergies et qui m'ont soutenue avec une grande générosité; et finalement mes colocataires **Irène** et **Marie-Josée**, avec lesquelles je partage une très belle aventure de vie.

aliénée de mes quatre enfants.

En plus, quand je

# UNSEEN HANDS

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## We'd love to hear from you!

Please send your comments or suggestions to:  
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## If you are interested in volunteering:

Please get in touch with us at:  
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# AGM '26

At our Annual General Meeting on March 30, outgoing President **Pepita Capriolo** highlighted these points:

### Achievements of the past year

- The Special Planning Committee worked hard to plan for future resident housing.
- Renovations were made to both apartments and the office.
- Our banking system and bylaws were updated.
- Several new residents were welcomed.

### Looking ahead

We plan to celebrate our 35<sup>TH</sup> anniversary with a networking day at Île-Saint-Bernard in August with our sister organisations.

Pepita requested a moment of silence in memory of members of our community who recently passed away: former residents **Wanda McRae** and **Karen Mitchell**, and psychiatrist **Marc Laporta**, a member of our advisory committee. | SP



## 2026-27

### Executive Committee

- PRESIDENT**  
Maxene Rodrigues
- VICE PRESIDENT**  
Richard Dufour\*
- SECRETARY**  
Ingrid Kiffmeyer
- TREASURER**  
Karine Simoes\*
- PAST PRESIDENT**  
Pepita Capriolo

### Members

- Sandra Baines  
Tetiana Gerych  
Alyona Hausvater  
Darlene Johnstone  
Cecily Lawson\*  
Howard Perlman

\*Missing from photo



## Dynamo + friend to all

By STAR GALE

IT WAS MY PLEASURE to work alongside **Pepita Capriolo** in her tenure as president of the board. I've said it before—and it remains true—L'Abri en Ville has a *working* board of directors. From the moment she accepted the role, Pepita got to work; she wanted to know what the role entailed and, in the years to come, wasn't afraid to ask difficult questions or find outside help, when needed. More than once these requests led to new L'Abri community members, volunteers and even board members (*see profiles, p. 3*). Pepita was also a leader that looked for as many opportunities as possible to just enjoy time with residents, hosting meals at her home, joining an activity or outing or sharing a laugh at a community get-together. Luckily for us, Pepita remains as a board member and volunteer!

STAR IS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF L'ABRI

# A busy new president and... six newcomers to our board

By SUSAN PURCELL

By CECILY LAWSON

*Greater responsibilities ahead  
for already-busy volunteer*

**Maxene Rodrigues** was sworn in as President of the board of directors for a two-year term, at our Annual General Meeting. She replaces **Pepita Capriolo**.

Maxene is a longtime Montrealer and former high school science teacher at FACE, MIND and elsewhere in the English Montreal School Board. She has been a volunteer at L'Abri since 2016, and



previously served as board Secretary.

Always willing to help out where needed, Maxene is on the support team at two apartments, a rare occurrence. Not only does she volunteer at both the Lasalle and Maurice apartments

in the south-west, baking cakes and ferrying residents to activities; she also attends occasional events at the Bessborough apartment in NDG near her home.

Maxene finds time for many other activities, including aquafitness and chair yoga at the YMCA, and working on her garden. She loves to travel, and took two sabbaticals while teaching—one year in France, Southeast Asia and India, and another in Latin America. An avid hiker, she is proud to have completed the Annapurna Circuit, a two-week,

## Always willing to help out where needed

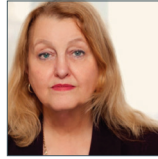
158-kilometre trek through the mountains of

Nepal. She continues to travel most winters, and recently visited New Zealand.

As President, Maxene favours a collaborative approach. She says she's still "feeling her way" and has been grateful to Executive Director **Star Gale** for "keeping her in the loop" in recent months. With apartment rents rising dramatically, she expects to focus on "figuring out housing in this market". As President she aims "to continue to serve the community".

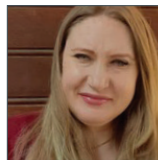
SUSAN IS EDITOR OF THE L'ABRI TIMES

**Tetiana Gerych**, a lawyer specialising in litigation and employment law, describes her job as "arguing for a living". She and her husband, both of Ukrainian heritage, have three daughters and a granddaughter. Since 2014 Tetiana has served as an election observer in Ukrainian elections.



A clarinet player, she is a director of Canadian Amateur Musicians, Musiciens amateurs du Canada (CAMMAC).

**Alyona Hausvater** is one of two residents on our board.



She was a massage therapist and esthetician until three years ago when, at age 38, she was hospitalised. She volunteers in the kitchen at UP House, and writes weekly for their podcast. In addition, she is conducting interviews for a writing project on how to deal with mental health challenges.

**Darlene Johnstone** has been in private practice as a **psychotherapist** since 2022, after working for over 20 years as a social worker in psychiatry at the Jewish General Hospital. A mother of three and grandmother of two, Darlene and her husband enjoy spending time in the Laurentians where they both sing in a choir. She is also a knitter and likes to read, write and paint.



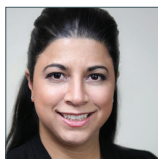
**Ingrid Kiffmeyer** enters her second year as L'Abri's board **secretary**. She is a freelance production designer specialising in packaging for the advertising industry. An avid lover of music, she once played in a band and is also an aficionado of ballet and opera. She balances the arts with athletics, spending winters downhill skiing and summers cycling.



**Howard Perlman** is the second resident on our board. He joined L'Abri in January 2025. He enjoys walking, and two days a week works the cash in a café at the Institut de gériatrie on Queen Mary. But his real passion is hockey — and more specifically, the Montreal Canadiens.



**Karine Simoes**, our new **treasurer**, is legal counsel and assistant secretary at Groupe Optimum. In addition to a degree in law and an MBA, Karine has a certificate in horticulture, and cultivates bonsai. She also has a passion for fibre: she knits, crochets, spins and weaves!



CECILY IS A BOARD MEMBER AND APARTMENT VOLUNTEER

# L'Abri family celebrates the season

Everyone was in a festive mood for our December Holiday Party at the Unitarian Church. We prepared for dinner by singing the traditional Newfoundland grace, then headed for the food when our table number was called. Serving tables were decked with sides and desserts made by the guests, and organised by **Maxene Rodrigues**, while our favourite chef **Giovanni Monti** laid out hot ham and turkey. Tummies full, we listened as **Pepita Capriolo** and resident **Shmoal Loterman** told the Chanukah story, followed by a round of carols. Everyone went home with something from the big bin of gifts contributed by the guests.



SAM BEITEL

## Volunteers fêted by residents, staff

L'Abri's many volunteers received warm thanks from residents and staff at our Volunteer Appreciation Dinner, following our Annual General Meeting in March. A straw bunny with candy-filled eggs holding a tiny basket of flowers graced each table, Executive Director **Star Gale** (FAR R. AT R.) presented a springy bouquet to outgoing President **Pepita Capriolo** (see *tribute Page 2*), and a resident from each apartment in turn praised the kindness of their apartment team. At our catered dinner, **Giovanni** (AT R.) of Café Monti served up lemon and herb chicken pasta, salad and cake; old friends caught up with each other; and an Easter bunny hopped home with a lucky guest from each table.



JENNIFER MORRISON



# Fresh air + sticky delights

A favourite rite of spring is our annual trip to a maple syrup farm in the Eastern Townships. A rented bus took a mix of residents, staff and volunteers to Érablière La Goudrelle in Mont-Saint-Grégoire. It was chilly as activities kicked off with a motorised tour through the maple grove to learn how syrup is made. Appetites whetted, the group returned to a family style, all-you-can-eat syrup-themed lunch, then back outdoors for maple toffee on snow and a visit to the farm's animals.



SAM BEITEL



## An evening of crêpes + creativity

By MICHELLE MILLS

### Our second annual art sale and dinner

on May 4 featured savoury crêpes. Art created by residents in recent months was laid out attractively for auction or sale. CLOCKWISE FROM UPPER L., artists Eileen Kelly (CENTRE) and Marie-Josée Piché (R.) helping a visitor choose art; Karen Bassett, Christian Nielsen and Barbara Curcio came early to prepare spinach, mushroom, ham, cheese and onion toppings; Star Gale, pictured here, was on stove duty with Maxene Rodrigues, while former staffers Cathy DeChambeau and Cheryl Lafferty enjoyed a chin wag. It was hard work, but 70 hungry guests went home well fed, and the residents' activity fund was nicely replenished! | SP with Michelle Mills



SAM BEITEL

# Goblins lure audience into the action of Macbeth

In early March, several residents went with coordinator **Michelle Mills** to see *Goblin: Macbeth* at the Centaur Theatre. Here, new resident **ALYONA HAUSVATER** describes her experience.

WALKING INTO THE THEATRE we saw the three goblins on stage with bald heads and pointy ears. They didn't seem to be men or women and they dressed all in black. The Goblins went on to perform *The Scottish Play*, as Macbeth is known. (You are not supposed to say the name of the play, or something terrible could happen.) It was a thrilling and interactive performance. The goblins really embodied their characters, sounding like they were back in the 1800s in England. The play was about an hour and a half long. At one point the audience was integrated into the play and we had to clap and make funny noises. That day the audience was mostly students from different high schools. The players put a lot of effort into engaging them to be part of the production. At one point they had a pretend dog that they played with on stage. It was really cute. One of the goblins was in charge of the music and it was fun to see. The lights were very theatrical and complimented what was happening on stage. At the end of the play we chatted with the goblins a bit. They answered our questions and gave us donuts. I thought the play was wonderful. I really enjoyed my time watching and interacting with the goblins.

CENTAUR/ ANDRÉE LANTHIER

Thrilling  
interactive  
performance

Checkmate!



SAM BEITEL

ONE OF OUR YOUNGER RESIDENTS is an enthusiastic chess player. **Daphné Roussin**, 25, learned how to play from a friend about four years ago when she was living with her parents. That summer, she was dazzled by giant chess boards arrayed on the sidewalk in front of downtown Complexe Desjardins, where humans hop between squares impersonating kings, rooks, knights and so forth. Daphné jumped in and, before long, was part of the regular gang that meets to play inside the complex year-round. She spends full days with friends there several days a week, and is ready to hop into the outdoor game soon. Daphne joined L'Abri last year and likes living in NDG with her roommates **Vanessa** and **Alyona**. | SP

Notes from the office

## Celebrations for our 35<sup>TH</sup> are in the works

By STAR GALE

**STRATEGIC WORK** | The past few months have been active as always here at the L'Abri offices! In December we closed for the holidays with no vacancies, for the first time in many years. This was the culmination of strategic work, primarily led by coordinator **Michelle Mills**, to refine our communication of vacancies and application processes to our community partners. **RESIDENT ACTIVITIES** | Staff kept busy and connected with the residents, hosting community kitchens and art classes throughout the long winter months. In February, **Mary Martha Guy**, a talented artist who facilitated art workshops with residents for years, organised a vernissage and auction of her artwork with proceeds going to L'Abri. Thank you Mary Martha! **SUMMER PLANNING** | As I write this, I am working on our programming calendar for this summer. We are threading together a list of activities that celebrate our 35th year, provide opportunities to reflect on what our community has been, and plan for what we will become. We hope to see you there!

STAR IS L'ABRI'S EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

## Une nymphe féministe

Par MARIE-JOSÉE PICHÉ

CIRCÉ EST LA FILLE-NYMPHE du Dieu-soleil Hélios et de la nymphe Perseis. Dans ce roman fantaisiste, l'histoire d'Ulysse est revisitée du point de vue de Circé, devenue symbole de féminisme et de liberté.

Contrairement aux divinités, Circé ne possède pas de dons. Mais elle découvre qu'elle peut métamorphoser les êtres à son gré, transformant même un mortel en dieu par amour.

Un jour, son père l'exile à vie sur une île déserte, la punissant pour avoir par jalousie transformée la nymphe Scylla en monstre marin. Là-bas, elle va vite développer ses talents en concoctant des potions magiques grâce aux fleurs et aux herbes de son archipel. Si des visiteurs inopportuns la menacent et la violent, elle les change en porcs.

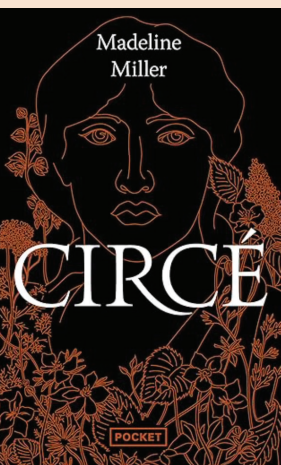
Mais elle est sensible auprès des mortels, tel Dédale dont elle fut l'amante.

De même, un jour, elle reçoit l'équipage d'un capitaine, Ulysse, ruse et prudent, duquel elle tombe amoureuse. Circé, toutefois, se méfie de ces marins aux regards pleins de désirs pour son or et son corps. Alors elle les transforme en pourceaux, jusqu'à ce qu'Ulysse les défende.

Circé ne dépend de personne et d'aucun dieu, et mène sa vie à sa guise. Elle devient même enceinte d'Ulysse. L'histoire continue jusqu'à l'adolescence de son fils, quand il part chercher

son père avec des conséquences tragiques.

Ce roman sublime est rempli de métaphores poétiques sur la nature. Si vous cherchez un bouquin captivant et facile à lire sur la mythologie grecque et la sorcellerie, alors l'autrice Madeline Miller vous charmera avec ses mots.



« CIRCÉ »  
ROMAN DE  
MADELINE MILLER  
ÉD. POCKET  
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RÉSIDENTE MARIE-JOSÉE A REÇU CET OUVRAGE EN CADEAU DE SA FILLE, CHARLOTTE, À NOËL 2025.

## Resident says OTs are a big help — so is the Zoom app!

L'Abri resident VANESSA PEREZ addressed occupational therapy (OT) students at McGill in February, participating virtually at her own request. Executive director Star Gale was present in the classroom, while coordinator Michelle Mills accompanied Vanessa. She describes her experience here.

MY INTERVIEW WITH MCGILL OTs was done from home by Zoom. I have issues speaking in person because I don't do well in crowds. With my iPad and Zoom Meeting app, I was able to talk with confidence.

I told the class that occupational therapists have been a big help to me. In the Day Program at the Jewish General Hospital, the OTs showed me how to plan ahead using the SMART method [an acronym for: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound] – five boxes we check when setting goals.

The OTs showed us how to use websites on things like brain-training and nutrition. Working this way frees your mind. My iPad and my Bluetooth keyboard help me to use these methods.

I wanted the therapists to know that they really help people with mental health issues. I was glad to have a chance to speak, and glad I had Michelle with me so I didn't freak out. I wish the best for the students who want to become occupational therapists in their future.



(L. TO R.) L'ABRI EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR STAR GALE MET THE STUDENTS IN PERSON, ALONG WITH LISA BELLEVUE AND DANIELLE NDEZE FROM UP HOUSE AND OT PSYCHOTHERAPIST AND COURSE LECTURER LORI ISAIF.

COURTESY D. NDEZE

