

Awards announced

The Quebec Community Groups Network (QCGN) has announced the winners of the 2016 Sheila and Victor Goldbloom Distinguished Community Service Awards. They are **Gerald Cutting, Miriam Green** and **Oliver Jones**.

Gerald Cutting, a former educator, has become an eloquent spokesman for the English-speaking communities of the Eastern Townships and champion of anglophone rights in the fields of health care and education in Quebec.

Miriam Green was cited for her professional and volunteer work that has helped bolster the English-speaking community of Quebec and its institutions. Now president of the Queen Elizabeth Complex board, she was the first woman to head up a regional social services network, Ville Marie Health and Social Services.

Oliver Jones, one of Canada's best known jazz pianists, was honoured for his continuous support of his native Little Burgundy community and his many benefit performances for a wide range of other community endeavours.

The annual Young Quebecers Leading the Way Award, co-sponsored by the QCGN and the CBC, was won by **Dafina Savic**, a young Montrealer active in the defense of minority rights, and who founded Romanpipe, an organization dedicated to fighting for the rights of Roma people. The Awards jury also extended a special honour to federal MP **Mauril Bélanger** for his lifelong commitment to linguistic duality and his groundbreaking work on the Official Languages Act.

More mergers?

Further merging of healthcare institutions serving the English-speaking community of Montreal seems likely. It is proposed that the McGill University Health Centre (MUHC) be joined with the new health centres of central Montreal and West Island.

REISA at ten

The East Island Network for English-language Services (REISA), which was created in 1996 to improve anglophones' access to health and social services in eastern Montreal, has more than achieved its goal. Not only has it become a vital centre of advocacy for the right of 95,000 East-enders to health care in English, but it has also become a valued partner with the public institutions that deliver those services.

"When we started out there was a dire lack of services here," explains **Fatiha Gatre Guemiri**, executive director. "But over time, as we developed sociodemographic data and field knowledge of the community, we were able to share that information with the public service providers and work with them to develop the best way to deliver services. They were only too happy to partner with us. And within the new reorganization of the healthcare system, there is even more cooperation."

REISA has made its mark in improving and developing health care services, particularly for youth and the elderly. Health promotion and prevention in the schools and improved homecare for seniors are current priorities.

Another significant success is participation in the McGill retention program whereby internships for students in healthcare professions are arranged with REISA's five community partner organizations. There are 14 interns on duty this year.

Outreach is also an important aspect of REISA's operations. "We work with French organizations in our territory on mutual interests, which gives the English community more visibility," says Guemiri. "And we organize forums that bring anglophone community groups from across greater Montreal together to meet with delegates from public institutions. We're also involved provincially as a lead member of the Community Health and Social Services Network. But I believe our most significant accomplishment is being recognized as the voice for the English-speaking community in the East End."

Tyndale ageing well

The Tyndale-St Georges Community Centre in Little Burgundy will soon be 90 years old. Founded in 1927 as Tyndale House by Montreal industrialist Charles Johnson, and supported by Montreal's Presbyterian community as a "settlement house" to keep children off the street, it was named after William Tyndale, an English scholar known for translating the Bible. In the 1970s, the Anglican community came onboard, and the facility was given its present name.

"The churches still provide strong support," says **Liz Falco**, new executive director, "but we're totally non-denominational. Our fundamental focus has always been on youth, but we have a tradition of supporting learning at all age groups. We now serve about 70 families a year with a variety of programs for families and seniors and for adult employability."

The Centre's after-school and high school programs have been particularly successful. There are waiting lists for classes that help children with learning and build their self-confidence. "Last year we had a 100-percent success rate," says Falco. "All our students went on to post-secondary education. I credit the one-on-one attention they receive and that our approach is not just academic, but holistic. We plan to start a similar program for kids in grades 7 and 8. At their age, a lot of cognitive development and emotional change is taking place, so that would be a preparatory step towards high school success."

Falco emphasizes the important collaboration of the Centre's staff and volunteers. "Many are long-term," she says, "so they have decades of experience working with people development as well as in understanding the Little Burgundy community. That's a powerful combination; it makes everyone more effective, and has a powerful impact."

As for the future: "We'll be working with other community, educational and business organizations to solidify our future role," affirms Falco. "Forming partnerships that are beneficial, both within our own community and outside it, is the way to go."

Stronger Black families

A unique program for supporting Black English-speaking families in difficulty has met with such success that there are now waiting lists of families wanting to participate. Introduced ten years ago by the African Canadian Development and Prevention Network (ACDPN), the original pilot project has evolved into what is now called Empowering Parents and Families. Its aim is two-fold: to help families better cope with at-risk children who have been flagged for youth protection and to prevent the situations that give rise to such concern.

"We've shown that improving the functioning of these families reduces the need for intervention by youth protection authorities," says **Tania Callendar**, executive director. "Helping them develop positive parenting strategies and open up communication on troublesome family issues is key. So is our follow-through: after families graduate from the program, we make very targeted efforts to plug them into community resources, so that they're comfortable with accessing the support network in their own neighbourhood."

During the past year, 90 participants from 31 families were involved in the program in Lachine, Côte-des-Neiges, LaSalle and on the West Island. "We're so pleased with the popularity and success of this program," says Callendar. "It's way more than we had hoped for or expected. It's been awesome."

Seniors in isolation

Seniors Action Quebec (SAQ) is launching a new project aimed at reducing the social isolation of English-speaking seniors. It was one of the pressing issues highlighted during SAQ's recent province-wide survey in anglophone communities. Called Getting to Programs and Services for Seniors, the project is being carried out in collaboration with four community organizations in three regions of Quebec: the North Shore, the Gaspé, and Montreal, where the African Canadian Development and Prevention Network is the participating partner.

Federal funding...

Health Canada is consulting Canadians on its program of funding local efforts to improve access to health services in minority-language communities. Launched in 2003, the Official Languages Health Contribution Program has to date directed some \$60 million to English-speaking community groups across Quebec to promote and implement healthcare services in English. The Community Health and Social Services Network has been the pivotal partner in the Canada/Quebec funding agreement.

Consultation results will be used to determine the parameters of the next phase of the contribution program, from 2018 to 2023. The consultation will help to identify any new measures that should be put forward. Consultation deadline is November 4 at: www.healthycanadians.gc.ca/healthsystems/officiallanguages-renewal.

Catholics counting...

The Roman Catholic Diocese of Montreal has drawn up a comprehensive statistical portrait of the 34 English-speaking Catholic parishes in Montreal, one that could well be adapted for other religious communities. It will be available in November.

The new document not only presents such demographic information as religious affiliations, age groups, and language, it also contains geo-spatial data on local transport networks, neighbourhood institutions and service providers. These are important tools to assist in decision-making by churches on what are parishioners' needs and what the churches are doing to meet them.

The document's geographical information is presented in visual map form. Statistical data were garnered from Statistics Canada's 2011 National Household Survey, and from individual parishes. Data can be extracted onto spreadsheets using free downloadable Statistics Canada software. Datasets for both Montreal and Quebec are available from the Office of English Pastoral Services: 514 931 7311.

Grace Dart gone

When Ste Anne's (Veterans) Hospital was turned over to Quebec last April 1, 450 additional long-term beds became available to the broader community. A hundred are now occupied by former residents of Grace Dart Extended Care Centre in the East End of Montreal who chose to make the move, most of whom have families on the West Island. The old Grace Dart pavilion has been closed; the 200-bed Montreal Extended Care pavilion remains open.

These changes mark the close of a historic chapter for Montreal's English-speaking community. The Extended Care pavilion has been serving elderly anglophones since 1863; the Grace Dart, since 1907. The two were merged in 1999, and then became part of the West Island Health and Social Services Centre under the 2015 restructuring of the province's healthcare system. Ste Anne's opened in 1917 as a veterans' care facility to handle soldiers from the First World War and has won renown for its quality of care and geriatric expertise. It now serves some 300 resident veterans, with an average age of 93.

The nine-year gap

East End Montrealers have a life expectancy rate nine years lower than that of West-enders. This startling statistic has recently been released by the CIUSSS de l'Est-de-l'Île de Montréal. The health and social services centre is calling on community organizations and members of the public to join forces in overcoming this discrepancy.

Several factors are cited as contributing to the situation. Living conditions are inferior: housing is dilapidated and air pollution—not from the refineries but from the two autoroutes that cross the territory—is severe. The number of cancer cases is superior to the Montreal average, and one-third of the half-million people served by the centre suffer from a chronic illness. Nearly 40 percent have two life-threatening habits associated with chronic illnesses: alcohol consumption, smoking, fast food consumption and lack of physical exercise.

Drug calls are up

The lines at the Information and Referral Centre of Greater Montreal have been busier than ever with inquiries concerning drugs and addiction. During the past year, some 15,000 people have called for information concerning abusive use of alcohol and drugs or to find community-based resources that will help an addicted person. Two-thirds of callers have been the consumers themselves. “Only a quarter of the calls came from people close to a drug consumer,” says **Hélène Hamel**, coordinator of the Centre’s Drugs: Help and Referral program. “We would like to encourage them to use our services more.” Service is free, bilingual, and offered 24/7 throughout the province at 1 800 265 2626.

Natives, veterans use shelters

Canada’s homeless shelters are ten times more likely to be used by Aboriginals than the population in general. And, according to new data released by Health Canada, this figure rises to 20 times more for Native seniors. In addition, the number of veterans seeking recourse to such shelters is steadily rising -- close to 3,000 veterans now. They are for the most part men, who used to have an average age of 40, older than other users. The study notes that now over half the veteran users are under 30 years of age. As for the population in general, fewer Canadians frequent shelters, but they are staying longer.

AMI offers new workshops

AMI-Quebec has introduced three new one-time workshops dealing with coping skills and stress reduction. In addition to providing information, these workshops will provide hands-on experience. They will be held in Montreal, but made available to other participants via tele-workshops and counseling by phone and Skype. Topics to be covered are Enhancing Resilience, Mindfulness, and Coping through Art Expression. Upcoming sessions will be held in October, November, April and March. For information: 514 486 1448.

In brief

Mitch Garber, president and CEO of Caesar’s Acquisition Co. and chairman of Cirque du Soleil, and **Isabelle Marcoux**, Board chair of Trans-continental, are co-chairing the 2016 fund-raising campaign of Centraide of Greater Montreal.

Pierre Morrissette is new executive director of the Volunteer Bureau of Montreal.

Howard Nadler has been elected to the board of governors of International Social Services.

Lili-Anna Pereša, president-executive director of Centraide of Greater Montreal, received the Mercure Leadership Germaine Gibera Award from the Fédération des chambres de commerce du Québec.

Michael Udy was named executive director of Seniors Action Quebec.

AMI-Quebec’s 2016 Edith and John Hans Low-Ber Lecture will be held on October 27 at 7 p.m. at the Oscar Peterson Concert Hall. Dr. Dolores Malespina, professor of Psychiatry at New York University School of Medicine, will speak on The Nature-Nurture Puzzle: Risk and Protective Factors in Mental Illness. Admission is free.

The Coalition of Collective Kitchens is offering training workshops on how to start and run collective kitchens. For information: 514 529 3448.

This year marks the 30th anniversary of the *Red Feather Forum*. This newsletter on health and social services was introduced by the Red Feather Foundation in 1986 as a networking vehicle for the English-speaking community of Greater Montreal.

The story of Red Feather is available online at <http://redfeathermontreal.ca>.

The editor welcomes story ideas: 514 937 4309.

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