

Community leaders honoured

The Quebec Community Groups Network named the recipients of its annual awards in September. Winners of the Victor and Sheila Goldbloom Distinguished Community Service Award were Murielle Parkes, Olga Melikoff and John Rae. Haley Campbell was tapped for the Young Quebecers Leading the Way Award.

Olga Melikoff and **Murielle Parkes** were cited for their leadership in establishing Canada's first French immersion program, in St. Lambert, Quebec, over 50 years ago. Their group, St. Lambert Parents for Bilingual Education, pioneered a movement that eventually changed the face of English-language public education across Canada.

John Rae, Power Corporation executive, was cited for his long-standing and exceptional commitment to community causes and for his philanthropic endeavours in educational, medical, and cultural fields. These include his chairing the funding campaign that raised some \$300 million for the McGill University Health complex.

Hayley Campbell won this year's Young Quebecers Leading the Way Award for her involvement and leadership in several areas of youth activities. She won the Women's Institute International Peace Gardens Scholarship for young women interested in leadership, inspiring others and social change.

Watchdog committee named

Eleven English-speaking Quebecers have been newly appointed to serve on the language watchdog committee known officially as the Provincial Committee for the Provision of Health and Social Services in the English language. This group is tasked with advising the government on access to healthcare services in English and overseeing development of regional access programs. Montreal members are **Ella Amir**, **Terry Kaufman**, **David Morris**, and **Sara Saber-Freedman**.

Seniors network under way

Seniors Action Quebec (SAQ) is on the move. With a three-year grant of \$400,000 from the Secretariat for Relations with English-speaking Quebecers, SAQ will create an interactive network of all the organizations working with English-speaking seniors across the province.

"We want this network to become an important centre of knowledge about our senior population," says **Michael Udy**, SAQ president. "In particular, we want to answer two key questions: what's different about Quebec's English-speaking seniors, and what must we do to address those differences?"

SAQ was formed in 2012 to advance the interests and advocate on behalf of English-speaking seniors. Its first undertaking was to consult with seniors across the province on their concerns and priorities. Six main issues emerged from that consultation: access to information in English on health and social services and legal matters, housing, transportation, financial concerns, isolation and elder abuse.

"We believe that a well-constructed network can become an important voice about policy and other measures to improve the wellbeing of English-speaking seniors," says Udy. "So we'll be involved with building links at all levels of government and searching for other sources of funds."

Black group gets new funding

The Côte-des-Neiges Black Community Association has received a federal grant of \$2.8 million to support and expand its Strengthening Families program over the next three years. The first of its kind in Canada when introduced in 2005, the program provides training sessions for both parents and children to develop communication skills and interpersonal relationships. It has proven so successful in assisting Black families in difficulty that the agency is now looking to expand the program into the Filipino community in the Côte-des-Neiges neighbourhood.

Training together

A series of training workshops has begun for staff and volunteers associated with 10 organizations serving English-speaking seniors in Montreal. Organized by Catholic Action Montreal (CAM), the Father Dowd Foundation and the English-speaking Catholic Council, the workshops are the culmination of many discussions on how the organizations could collaborate in meeting the needs of their client base.

“We learned a lot from each other,” says **Judy Wong**, CAM executive director, “and we saw the advantage of coordinating and sharing resources to handle issues that were common to all of us. First on the list was the plight of isolated seniors. We all felt the importance of helping staff and volunteers to develop skills necessary to deal with their issues.”

The first workshop, held in September, focused on listening with compassion and responding to grief, the importance of empathy, emotional boundaries, and trust building. The November session will address differences in the roles of staff and volunteers, ethical parameters, and identifying and responding to such issues as elder abuse.

Batshaw wants volunteers

Batshaw Youth and Family Centres is looking for volunteers. The child welfare agency operates 11 group homes in the Greater Montreal area for children placed under youth protection. These are children aged from seven to 18 years caught up in family difficulties that have caused the court to find that security and development of the child has been compromised. So they are temporarily lodged in group homes under professional supervision.

Volunteers can help out by tutoring youth who need homework support, and act as mentors for youngsters needing a big brother or big sister relationship. They can also become involved in such recreational activities as arts and crafts, music and singing, playing games, and so on. For information: 514 989 1885, ext. 1234.

Sexual counselling the key

The West Island Youth Action Organization (AJOI) has received a grant of \$20,000 from the Canadian Women’s Foundation for a 12-month project to provide school- and community-based workshops on topics related to preventing sexual exploitation. Topics will include healthy relationships, sexuality, social media recruiting and, in particular, sexual exploitation.

“According to police reports, the West Island is the Montreal neighbourhood where there is the most recruitment of young girls into juvenile prostitution,” says **Tania Charron**, executive director. “There is an urgent need here for education and prevention. It is equally important to reach young people who are already in the sex trade.”

The new program will build on the one that AJOI launched 11 years ago that offers street worker intervention services to young people aged 12 to 25 years who are at risk or in difficulty. It is to inform and sensitize adolescent girls and young women about available resources and demonstrate that a network is in place to address their needs; and to facilitate communication and referrals between community resources partners so as to complement their activities and interventions. Last year AJOI assisted 1545 young people in difficulty.

AMI adds to aid

AMI-Quebec has been modifying its programs to better serve the changing needs of those supporting family members with mental illness. In response to increasing participation in its information workshops, AMI has created a “Hot Topics” series of live, online videos in which doctors from McGill’s Psychiatry Postgraduate Program discuss trends in mental health and interact with participants directly. The first two topics covered are Social Media and Internet Addiction, and Marijuana and Mental Illness. Registration is not necessary, nor is having a Facebook account. For information: amiquebec.org/learnonline.

Children loved park program

Children in Verdun turned out in impressive numbers for a special project organized by CCS (Community Collective Services) this past summer. Over 1200 of them, aged three to 15, participated in Art and Science in the Park, a pilot project aimed at reducing youth isolation in that community. Feedback from both parents and children was so overwhelmingly positive that plans are now under way to expand into other locations next summer.

“It obviously filled a need,” says **Craig Sweeney**, manager of Child and Family Services. “The activities not only brought children together – many friendships were formed over the summer – but also gave them an opportunity to use their creativity, and to learn about the world around them.”

Three science students with artistic flair designed a wide range of projects and animated the different age groups. Activities were meant to be enjoyably educational, and usually included an art project and a science experiment. They ranged from very simple exercises to more challenging projects, such as a forensic sciences mystery game and exploration of the five senses. The project was set up in English, but when French-speaking families began showing up the animators started hosting activities bilingually. For information: 514 937 5351, ext 240.

New monies for nonprofits

Quebec’s new Secretariat for Relations with English-speaking Communities has introduced a broad support program for organizations serving English-speaking communities. In addition to \$6.8 million announced in August, the Secretariat has further added another \$9 million in available funding over the next three years. It is to offer operational support as well as support for local, regional or province-wide projects. It is intended for nonprofits, social economy enterprises, municipal entities and public institutions in the education and health and social services sectors. For more information: <https://www.mce.gouv.qc.ca/srqa/index-en.asp>.

Making it a family matter

The Volunteer Bureau of Montreal has added a category of family volunteering to its roster of people willing to help community organizations. An immediate benefit for the organization is that a family group provides an intergenerational involvement that gives another perspective to a situation. For the Bureau, a family’s long term commitment can provide a steady bank of volunteers to call upon, particularly when it is most busy. An added bonus is that the children involved tend to stay with volunteerism into adulthood and continue what can become a family tradition.

There is another impetus to setting up the family volunteer unit. The Bureau has been receiving more and more inquiries from potential volunteers 12 to 17 years of age – over 600 so far this year. However, there are not many opportunities for these young people to be posted on their own. Within a family volunteer group, they would be able to participate.

To promote the family concept, the Bureau created an annual prize for family achievement. The 2018 winner was the Choquette family. For over 20 years, they have been implicated with Les petits frères, a venerable charity dedicated to breaking the isolation of elderly people living alone. The Choquettes make friendly visits and help with housekeeping. The senior Choquette provides free hearing tests. They all help prepare and serve Christmas dinner. For information: 514 842 3351.

Canadian children at risk

A report just released by Children First Canada accuses this country of seriously neglecting its children’s welfare. High rates of suicide – among the top five in the world; child abuse – one in three Canadians report suffering some form of child abuse before the age of 16; and mental health issues – mental health-related hospitalizations have soared 66 percent in the last decade, place Canada among the lowest performing affluent countries in the world. The report is available at childrenfirstcanada.com.

A Tuesday for giving

November 27 is to be a global day of giving and volunteering. It is the first Tuesday after the massive retail indulgence known as Black Friday in the United States. Although American in origin, the idea for a Giving Tuesday has now spread around the world to some 98 countries, Canada included.

Giving Tuesday was designed to counter consumerism with concern for others. It is a day for charities, companies and individuals to join together and rally for their favourite causes. Community groups can sign on as partners and be included in the list of potential benefactors as people look for places to donate their time or money. The Canadian platform for donating and fundraising online for charitable causes is canadahelps.org.

The Douglas and WHO

The World Health Organization (WHO) has renewed the mandate of the Douglas Mental Health Institute to collaborate in the study and transfer of knowledge on mental health expertise within the Americas and throughout the world. Collaboration within the Americas will occur within the themes of aging and dementia as well as suicide prevention within indigenous communities.

Check out the charity scams

Charity scams are a very profitable business – for the scammers. Donors should beware of fake websites or false crowd-funding appeals. Charity scammers usually pose as agents of well-known charities or create fake ones. When approached, the cautious donor should confirm that the supposed charity's tax registration number is legitimate by calling the Canadian Revenue Agency at 1 800 267 2384. Anyone targeted by a scammer should make a report to the Canada Anti-Fraud Centre at 1 888 495 8501, the RCMP or local police. To avoid problems donations should not be made in cash; a cheque or credit card provides a tangible record of a donation.

In brief

Janet Faith and **Liane Thibodeau** were elected co-chairs of the Batshaw Foundation.

Assunta Gallo was appointed director of Youth Protection at the CIUSSS du Centre-Sud.

Linda See was named interim director of Youth Protection at the CIUSSS West Island.

Norman M. Steinberg was elected chair of the McGill University Health Centre Foundation board of directors.

Aki P. Tchitakor is new executive director of Youth Employment Services (YES).

Michael Udy was re-elected president of Seniors Action Quebec.

The Montreal Chest Institute is 110 years old.

The West Island Association for Intellectually Handicapped is 60 years old.

A new directory of foundations and funding sources for nonprofits in Quebec is now available from the Centre Québécoise de philanthropie. For further information: info@cqp.qc.ca.

The Foundation of Greater Montreal will hold a panel discussion on philanthropy in Quebec on November 4 at Le Gesù. Contact: 514 866 0808.

The Foundation of Greater Montreal has created a new website for its report on the state of wellbeing of Montreal children: www.signesvitaux.ca.

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

The editor welcomes story ideas: 514 937 4309.

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