



# News en Ville

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A newsletter published for and by the residents,  
 staff, volunteers and supporters of L'Abri en Ville  
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## Busy fingers, happy minds

By Susan Purcell

From NDG to Ville Emard, busy fingers are at work. Time flies as brushes swish on canvas, needles click and pencils scratch. Hooray for the artists of L'Abri en Ville!

"I've always been a crafty one", says Beverley Hartley with a chuckle. Ever since she was a little girl growing up in Sudbury, Ontario, she's been transforming scraps of paper, material and clay into pretty things. "There was no TV then, so you had to keep yourself busy."

Today her bedroom and many other corners at the Bahama apartment sparkle with her imaginative creations.

Beverley had gotten away from crafts in the period before she was hospitalized several years ago, but was encouraged to draw as a patient. When she came to L'Abri, a special volunteer named Julie began visiting her to work on art projects, and her old enthusiasm returned. Now Beverley raids the dollar store for dried flowers, sparkles and ribbons she turns into eye-catching treasures. And she knits. "I've made scarves for my sister and nephew, headbands, and slippers for my son. I just knitted a slipcover for a bedroom pillow."



*Beverley's old enthusiasm for crafts is back.*



*Eileen's painting is displayed on a patient's ceiling.*

Karen Bassett at the Park apartment likes to knit scarves. She also enjoys working crossword puzzles, and once hooked a rug with her roommate Terryann. At the Bessborough apartment lives Nancy Grundy, who has a degree in fine arts. For years she's been weaving gorgeous hues into scarves and blankets that are much in demand among members of the L'Abri family.

Men at L'Abri can be artistic too. Jerome Kierans writes poetry, Benny apartment resident George Harris does architectural drawings and Rick Ottoni enjoys painting.

Eileen Kelly is another accomplished painter. The third roommate at the Park apartment, her vivid patterns have been attracting attention on residents' hasty notes. She is so adept at working with acrylics, it's hard to believe she was 36 before she did any art! Eileen attends weekly classes at the downtown Centre d'apprentissage parallele (CAP), which last fall launched a project to decorate a residence for the handicapped. Each student created a 24-inch square painting (see photo). Since many residents at the center were confined to bed, Eileen explained, "our work would go onto the ceilings above them."

Eileen looks forward to her painting class. "It's good to have something to go to every week. I need structure in my life." Above all, "painting distracts me from my anxieties."

## Dale and Gael share board leadership

By Sandra Baines

A spirit of collaboration and a wealth of experience make for good leaders. L'Abri en Ville is delighted to find these qualities in our new co-presidents, Gael Eakin and Dale MacDonald, who assumed responsibility for our board at the AGM on March 17th. Both have been active volunteers at L'Abri for a number of years, serving on the board and the executive. Their wisdom and commitment will assure us of strong leadership in the coming year.

Gael is a gifted artist. For many years, she has helped guide and supported residents in expressing their creativity in the design of the hasty notes and greeting cards that are sold each year. In addition to this, Gael welcomes residents and volunteers to her home for a potluck supper and games night several times a year – by all accounts a fun-filled night for everyone. On the administrative side, Gael has served on the executive and several other committees over the years, always contributing solid and practical ideas.

Dale, a more recent arrival to L'Abri's family, is a second-generation volunteer. Her late father, Gerry MacDonald, was an apartment volunteer for many years - a friend to the residents of the Benny apartment. Dale has served as vice-president for the past two years, and has been a key member of the Personnel Committee. A social worker by profession, Dale works full time at the Montreal Children's Hospital, where she is responsible for facilitating the transition of patients with chronic illnesses from the pediatric sector to adult hospitals. She is also mom to a daughter of 18. We look forward to working closely with Gael and Dale as they embark on their roles as co-presidents.



*Campbell, rear, second from left, Gael, rear, fourth from left, Dale, rear, third from right.*

Campbell Stuart remains on the executive as immediate past president. A lawyer and community activist, he has provided exceptional leadership in his tenure as president, in particular guiding us through complex organizational and personnel changes. In addition to this, he has become a key part of the volunteer team at the Jolicoeur apartment. Campbell organized the last-minute move of the three men from Verdun to Ville Emard with apparent ease. In spite of his busy job, he somehow finds time for regular movie outings with the residents. We are delighted to have Campbell as such an integral member of our community.

## L'Abri and Embarque announce affiliation

By Cecily Lawson

L'Abri en Ville has entered into an exciting new collaboration with Fondation Embarque. Details were announced at a symposium held at the Douglas Hospital on April 5, 2014.

Fondation Embarque was created to address the spiritual needs of persons suffering from mental illness. Since the year 2000 it has organized five symposiums and made grants to a number of organizations dedicated to providing human and spiritual support to those with mental illness, including SSABO (Services spirituels à bras ouverts), Our Harbour, and L'Abri itself.



*George Bastien with Campbell Stuart*

Stuart, "and we are very pleased to be associated with a group like Fondation Embarque."

Fondation Embarque takes a very broad view of the word spiritual. It is not affiliated with any religious organization. But it believes that it is important to address the spiritual dimension in helping persons suffering from mental illness. "We chose to affiliate with L'Abri en Ville because of their caring for people in a way that embraces both human and spiritual dimensions," commented Embarque president George Bastien.

The foundation's directors recently decided to affiliate with another organization with which they felt an affinity. They opted for L'Abri and in so doing have signaled their intention to donate Fondation Embarque's assets to L'Abri. "We are delighted to be the recipients of what is a very generous donation," commented L'Abri past president Campbell

L'Abri en Ville and Fondation Embarque have agreed to affiliate in a form which preserves Embarque's mission of integrating a spiritual dimension with the support of people with mental illness. The foundation will be maintained and renamed, changing its mandate to focus solely on L'Abri and its network. The process will be subject to the agreement of the charities division of Canada Revenue Agency and of Revenu Québec.

# Cute firemen and lots of green



Choosing a decorating theme for this year's Annual General Meeting was easy, given that it took place on St. Patrick's Day. The talented team of Carolyne Harrison, Susan Pahl and Joan Esar applied their considerable talents to creating a real auld country atmosphere that would warm an Irish soul.

AGM proceedings can be less than exciting at times, but this year's meeting was far from dull. Just as we were getting close to an important vote, with our leprechauns quietly preparing food in the kitchen, the fire alarm went off, scattering all concerned into the Unitarian Church's foyer and the

chilly outdoors. After what seemed like a long wait (our outgoing president was just about resigned to calling a later meeting to hold that vote), a team of handsome firemen rolled up in full regalia and filed through the fascinated crowd. Before long they gave the all-clear: it had just been a smoking oven.

Besides green and orange potato chips in keeping with the day, we were treated to delicious shrimp ring, bruschetta, sausage rolls and other tasty morsels. Everyone stayed around for quite a while to enjoy this opportunity to socialize.

*-Sue Purcell*



# RESIDENT LIFE

*Sun, snow  
and good company*



Our trip to Oka lasted one full day. There were no problems driving there and back. We enjoyed our morning with walks on snowshoes and cross-country skiing. Lunch was delicious: vegetable soup, a choice of boeuf bourguignon or pasta with a rosée sauce, vegetables and salad. For dessert, we had marble cake with ice cream, and coffee.

After lunch, we warmed ourselves in front of the fireplace. Some of us went for a walk down the road. Others took in the gorgeous sunshine while sitting outside in easy chairs. We chatted, and Armand let us listen to his music tape with soothing words for people with schizophrenia.

The time had arrived for goodbyes. Everyone felt we had had a great time. We look forward to next year's winter trip to Oka.

-Anna Drienovsky

## *Sweet times at the sugar shack*



## Bringing our story to new friends out east By Jerome Kierans

Last November, David Seymour and I, representing L'Abri en Ville, and Maureen Ramsay and Brian Harrison from Ancoura in Ottawa, travelled to Halifax to attend the 25th Annual Conference of the Schizophrenia Society of Nova Scotia.

We flew in on a beautiful clear day, which enabled us to see much of this province's magnificent landscape, including many parks and lakes.

On our first night we attended a dinner party at the home of an organizer. We became acquainted with other presenters, including an Ottawa leader in adolescent mental health and a research psychiatrist at Dalhousie University in early childhood interventions.

At the day-long conference there were 160 attendees. We were spellbound by each presentation and were given a standing ovation after our own! We relaxed that evening at a nice restaurant close to the Halifax harbour.

The next morning ten people, including the four of us, met for breakfast to discuss the possibility of starting a housing project in Halifax. The Halifax group was keen on learning about both L'Abri and Ancoura, and we learned a lot about them.

That afternoon, David, Maureen and I strolled down the boardwalk as far as Pier 21. I realized this is where the famous vessel, Aquitania, docked in 1949, bringing my mother and her family to a new life in Canada.



We stopped over briefly in nearby Dartmouth, and later watched Haligonians converge on downtown Halifax for the annual Festival of Lights.

On our last day, we had a tour of the city, including Point Pleasant Park, and were driven to Peggy's Cove, further down the coast. We left Nova Scotia in the fog, and arrived back in Montreal in the rain, after a very satisfying stay.

## Une visite touchante à McGill

**Raymonde Hachey**

Depuis quatre ans, les résidents de l'appartement Benny et moi-même sommes invités à relater notre expérience aux étudiants d'ergothérapie de McGill.

Ce printemps, je suis la première à parler. Je décris le modèle de L'Abri en Ville. Par la suite, Rick retrace son parcours psychiatrique et lit un poème qu'il a écrit lors d'une hospitalisation antérieure. Cette lecture émeut les étudiants. Par ailleurs, lorsque David mentionne ses perceptions des professionnels de la santé et des autres personnes qu'il côtoie, tous les étudiants sont à l'écoute et le silence règne.

Les résidents sont fiers et se sentent valorisés d'avoir l'occasion de communiquer directement leur quotidien en espérant que cela aide à mieux comprendre ce que vit une personne souffrant de maladie mentale.

A la période des questions, plusieurs mains se lèvent. Un étudiant demande qu'est-ce qu'ils aimeraient que le psychiatre ou l'équipe traitante fasse différemment pour aider leur rétablissement? Rick répond qu'il faudrait se centrer davantage sur les processus internes plutôt que sur les manifestations externes. Enfin, il souhaiterait plus d'empathie et de compassion. Un autre étudiant souhaite comprendre comment les résidents gèrent leurs interactions avec autrui. A ce moment, David sort de son portefeuille un papier qu'une infirmière lui a donné il y a très

longtemps. Ce papier indique qu'il faut être ancré non seulement dans la réalité mais aussi au plan spirituel.

Pour les étudiants; ce sont les témoignages vivants et les émotions exprimées librement qui les touchent plus que tout. Ils en retirent aussi une plus grande compréhension de la personne qui souffre de maladie mentale et note la présence d'un sentiment d'espoir chez les résidents. La libre interaction entre Rick et David et leur expérience client/ thérapeute les a aussi étonnés. Le soutien considérable apporté aux résidents dans un contexte comme celui de L'Abri en Ville les a surpris. Leur intérêt était très grand puisqu'ils sont demeurés vingt minutes de plus après le cours.

### **SAVE THE DATE**

Sunday October 5

### **Montreal Walks for Mental Health**

October is also the month

we take orders for

our Annual Citrus Sale!

# Roni Simco: interested in everyone she met By Trudy Michielsen

Last December L'Abri en Ville lost a dear friend, Roni Simco, who served on our board and was a long-time volunteer with our team at the Crescent apartment. Roni incorporated in her actions L'Abri's ideals of inclusiveness and outreach.

I first became aware of Roni some years back at our Holiday Party, listening as she spoke before members of the L'Abri family about Hannukah. She took this on willingly every year, enhancing everyone's joy in the season by explaining this Jewish tradition.

At her funeral, packed with friends, the depth of Roni's commitment to her faith became evident. In her eulogy the rabbi noted that the guiding principle of Roni's life had been "to treat others as you would want to be treated" and that Roni "had an amazing ability to relate to people, no matter who they were, to *dan l'chaf zechut*, to judge them favourably from the outset."

Central to her life was Roni's devotion to her husband David, and her children, Michael and Lauren. Some of their happiest times were spent at their cottage in Vermont. When the family dog, a huge white Cuvac, fell into icy water this winter, Roni jumped in to save him without a second thought.

She never took the easy road. Through her synagogue Roni reached out to Argentinian immigrants, inviting them to her home. Before visiting Italy she taught herself enough Italian to converse with the local people, and after her stroke she challenged herself by visiting Prague on her own. She decided to become a French-language guide at Chateau de Ramezay,



"Got it!" Roni was always game for whatever needed doing

preparing by acquainting herself with the museum's artefacts and history.

When I think of Roni, I remember her as listening and thoughtful, smiling and accepting, questioning and engaging, laughing and understanding. Being simply who she was, was her greatest gift. Roni taught me two things: how to tie my shoelaces, so that they wouldn't undo on their own, and how to make truly tasty hummus. Now, whenever I tie my laces or use her recipe, I think of Roni. My memories of her give me strength.

## Intern salutes L'Abri



*Thank you L'Abri en Ville, for a wonderful stagiaire experience this winter. Cathy, Cheryl, Loraine and the volunteers and residents that I was lucky enough to meet offered me a tremendously supportive learning environment full of energy and opportunities to participate in the organization in every aspect. Because of this experience I have seen how important it is to have a service that supports people who face the challenges of mental illness, both in their everyday lives and in offering security for their future. My time with the folks at L'Abri has definitely developed my knowledge on the subject and has given me an incredibly memorable experience.*

**-Michelle Regnier-Davies**

## Unseen hands

**Editor:** Sue Purcell

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**Help & advice:** Audrey Bean, Susan Charlebois, Eileen Kelly, Pat Smart and all the coordinators

The newsletter is also available by EMAIL. Please contact [info@labrienville.org](mailto:info@labrienville.org)

Building ties in the community

By Cheryl Lafferty

**Coordinators' Corner**

I had the immense pleasure during the month of March of attending the *Habiter Autrement* conference, marking the 125th anniversary of the Old Brewery Mission. But first some background to explain how we came to take part.



The new friendship between our two resources led this past winter to an invitation from Ms. Portes for L'Abri to speak at the *Habiter Autrement* conference. Participants came from France, the United States and elsewhere in Quebec to speak about housing and support for those less fortunate.

Our four representatives were warmly received as they described their personal feelings about L'Abri en Ville. Eleanor Beattie, a co-founder, board member and long-time volunteer, gave an eloquent introduction outlining L'Abri's beginnings. David Seymour, a resident at the Benny apartment, spoke from his heart about what L'Abri means to him. Juan Vera, who has volunteered for many years at the Crescent apartment, spoke with conviction on what he has gained from being a volunteer.

My colleague Loraine Jacmain completed the presentation by accurately describing the role of a coordinator at L'Abri en Ville. Our four presenters did a great job, whether in English or in French.

It was a stimulating, exciting conference, and we were proud that L'Abri contributed to making it a success. David summed up the experience this way. "What impressed me the most at the ..conference was how some programs assisted and rehabilitated people to adapt to a lifestyle of social and mental health, (replacing a life) on the fringes of society, such as alcoholism, mental illness and homelessness." I couldn't have said it better myself!

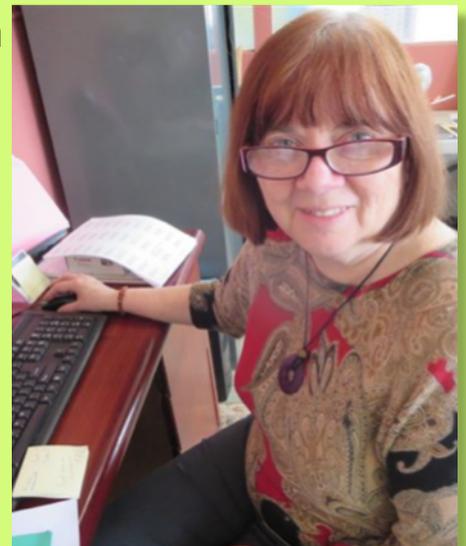
Last summer we accepted Marie-Josée, our first resident from the OBM's Patricia Mackenzie Pavilion, into L'Abri; she has settled in very nicely. The PMP is the largest shelter for homeless women in Canada. The OBM opened this shelter 25 years ago, transforming an abandoned parking garage into housing for 70 women.

There are four levels of the Pavilion, and Marie-Josée was part of their Escale and Etape programs, reserved for women who need temporary housing as they prepare for reintegration into society, with support from counsellors.

PMP's manager Florence Portes wanted to know more about L'Abri, so we invited her to our office to meet our coordinators to find out more about our wonderful housing resource. Since then I have visited the Pavilion on de Maisonneuve east to speak with Ms. Portes and her staff, and toured the facility.

### Susan shuts down her computer

After ten years helping us with every computer and organizational problem under the sun, our dear Susan Charlebois is leaving her job as L'Abri's office assistant. She is ready to devote more time to her church and other interests. Best of luck, Susan. We'll miss you!



# Donations made in memory and in honour of

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