

# INSPIRATIONS

A Snapshot of Our Special Needs Community

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## Music overcomes all obstacles

By Richard Wills



Samir Gouin at the piano

a small disk microphone in place against the outside of his head. This microphone is attached by a wire to a processor he wears on his belt. The unit picks up sound vibrations and transmits them directly into his auditory nerve.

Samir received a second implant, on his left side, when he was eight. The newer one is a smaller, self-contained unit that looks much like  
(Continued on page 21)

Like most 12-year-old boys, Samir Gouin relies on technology to gain access to the things he enjoys most in life.

One of the things he enjoys most is music. Unfortunately, Samir was born totally deaf. "I have no hearing at all," he says. "Nothing." This is because the cochlear hairs in his inner ear which convert vibrations into electrical signals to the brain do not move.

But Samir has not let that hold him back. The Selwyn House student plays piano as an active member of his Grade 7 music class, plays other instruments at home, and listens to a variety of music. He accomplishes all this with the aid of a cochlear implant.

"I got my first cochlear implant on the right side of my head when I was one year old," he says. "They cut open my head and put a magnet in."

The surgically-implanted magnet holds



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# The Canaccord Wealth Management Caregivers of Inspiration

## The Early Intervention Centre aides at Crestview Elementary School

● *By Stephanie Winterford*

The Sir Wilfrid Laurier School Board's Crestview Elementary School Early Intervention Centre (EIC) aides Cora Amenta, Murielle Beaulieu and Marilyn Silverman are the recipients of The Canaccord Wealth Management Caregivers of Inspiration Award.



*Caregivers Cora, Murielle and kids at Crestview Elementary School.*

An intake classroom for children with Autism, PDD and other disabilities, the EIC is led by teacher Gloria MacLean, who has been with the board for 33 years. To speak with her is to understand that the aides represent an essential part of a multidisciplinary team. "The success of this centre is based on the dedication of this team and its ability to work cohesively," she says "These women define determination – their work ethic is outstanding. They're the reason I can do my job."

Murielle Beaulieu has been with the

SWLSB for four years, Cora Amenta since 2001. When asked what inspires them to work in a special needs classroom, the ladies answered: "The children teach us about determination and hope. They teach us that sometimes the smallest actions make the biggest difference. They teach us patience; that there is no such thing as failure, rather,

lyn Silverman is the behaviour technician but her function is so much more than her title. She has worked alongside Gloria for 27 years to develop and implement all of the aspects of the program, including finding resources, gathering interest, rallying parents – she gets things done. Murielle and Cora consider her contributions as essential to the success of the program. "When faced with a difficulty, we think of how Marilyn would advise us and we realize what a wonderful mentor she has been."

The aides don't only assist with academics - they help the kids socialize; put on their shoes and coats. It's easy to overlook these skills and it takes a devoted caregiver to recognize the importance of learning to do these things independently. The diligence demonstrated by Cora, Murielle and Marilyn has resulted in milestones being met by students who previously were functioning at levels that made the consideration of these goals unimaginable.

No salute to this team would be complete without mentioning the Christmas Room, a delightful display that is set up in the winter. For me, as a parent of a former EIC student, this is Miss Marilyn's place. It is filled with snowflakes and lights, and it is spectacular. Decorations aside, Marilyn has made this room enchanting. "Marilyn brings magic to the children," says Gloria. "She wants those kids to have memories – all of them, no matter what their backgrounds; she wants them to experience magic."

Nearly a year after graduating from the class, my own son carries with him what he learned from the EIC. If I rush him, I'm reminded: "Miss Cora said to do it properly!"



*Gloria and Marilyn in the Christmas Room*

Every day I'm thankful that he experienced this remarkable team. I asked Zachary if he could tell me what his favourite part of the EIC was. Without hesitation, he referred to the Christmas Room. He told me: "If Mary Poppins came to the Christmas Room, she would be so happy, she wouldn't ever fly back to the clouds in London." And I think that's about as magic as it gets.

*Sam Mahler and Canaccord Wealth Management are proud to be sponsoring the Caregivers of Inspiration award, and are proud to recognize Crestview Elementary School and their Early Intervention Centre Team.*

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# Understanding the child with selective mutism

● By Lori Rubin

“Selective Mutism” is indeed an interesting term! Imagine the following scenario: a young, healthy kindergarten student with an above average I.Q., no known learning disabilities or other diagnosable disorders (such as a language disorder or autism), refuses to speak out loud to any adult at school.

Although this child speaks freely and coherently to her family and close peers, she will not verbalize her thoughts, feelings, ideas or needs to her teachers or other staff members, and will not answer questions or participate in class discussions that require talking. She will however, nod, shake her head, point to certain items (like the bathroom, or the water fountain), in order to have her needs met. She has always been a very shy child and even though she is well-liked by her classmates and enjoys playing with them, her body language and tone of voice suggest that she is more comfortable in familiar situations.

Selective Mutism (SM) is the term used for someone who demonstrates selectivity in choosing to whom they will speak. The onset of this unusual condition usually occurs before the age of five, although it becomes much more noticeable when the child is expected to interact in social situations, such as daycare, school, or community events or activities. Children with SM will either completely refuse to speak to certain individuals, or may whisper or give one-word answers in some cases. Associated behaviours may include lack of eye contact or facial expressions, pronounced nervous fidgeting when in public situations, and in some cases, a dislike of being touched in any way. Considered to be an anxiety disorder, the condition may only last a few months, and then disappear completely once the child becomes familiar with and comfortable in his surroundings, or may continue for several months (and in some cases, years), unless effective treatment is provided.



*Selective Mutism is the term used for someone who demonstrates selectivity in choosing to whom they will speak.*

It is important to note that a child with SM is not acting willfully, nor is he trying to be disobedient, oppositional or defiant. Rather, it is now understood that the individual with SM is trying to control their anxiety. In the past, it was widely assumed that children with SM had suffered some form of physical or sexual abuse, but with better understanding of the disorder, it is now known that although it is something to consider, it is often not the case. Unfortunately, the shadow of “blaming the parents” still looms strong, and this can result in many parents not seeking diagnosis and treatment, for fear of reprisals.

One of the most important factors in diagnosing the child with SM is that she has the ability to both understand and speak in her mother tongue. When trying to decide when and if treatment should be provided, professionals (psychologists, psychiatrists, other mental health professionals) look at age and severity. If the symptoms persist for more than a few months, and there are no verbal responses coming from the child

whatsoever, treatment should begin immediately. But for the child who experiences milder symptoms (such as speaking to some people in a soft voice or whisper, while interacting appropriately with others), treatment can be delayed, or even avoided altogether if things improve on their own.

Various forms of conventional treatment include different forms of behaviour therapy, such as anxiety reduction, graduated exposure to anxiety-provoking situations, praise and rewards for increasing verbal communication, the use of audio and/or visual recordings for self-monitoring purposes. Teachers and support staff are an extremely important component of helping the child to move forward at his/her own pace. In some extreme

cases, anti-depressant medication may be prescribed in order to allow the person with SM to adjust to a new situation, or to relax enough to be able to respond favourably to the various behaviour techniques.

Although a relatively rare disorder, Selective Mutism requires careful and consistent attention due to the tremendous social and educational ramifications this condition may have on a child's life if it is allowed to persist. The future for children with SM is extremely bright when all the conditions for success, together with an effective plan, are put in place. Watching a child with SM speak their first words out loud to their teacher or daycare educator, is a beautiful thing!

*Lori Rubin is a Behaviour Management Specialist for the English Montreal School Board.*



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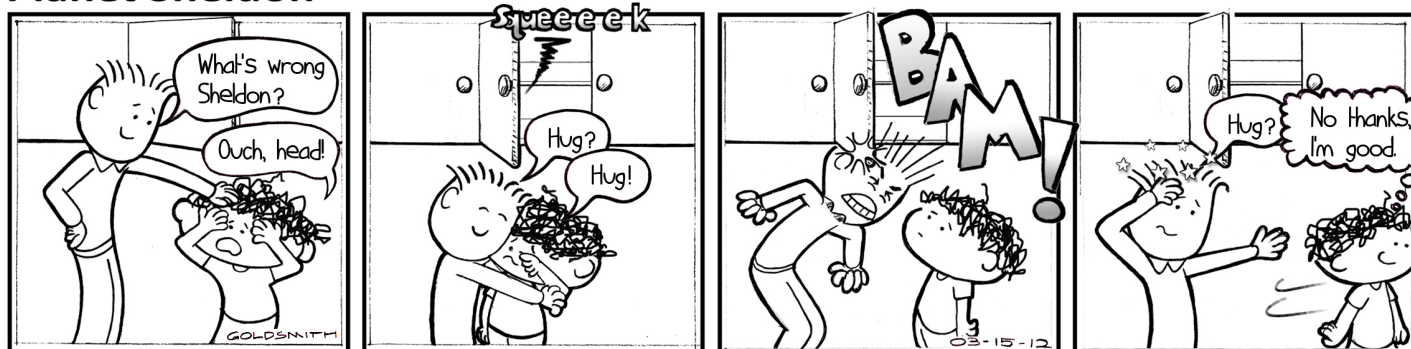
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## Planet Sheldon

By Jason Goldsmith



Jason Goldsmith is the founder of *The Big Blue Hug* autism art project. Planet Sheldon is loosely based on Jason's experiences being a single dad and raising his autistic son Ellis. Jason would love your feedback about Planet Sheldon. Contact him at: jgoldsmith@thebigbluehug.com or visit [www.thebigbluehug.com](http://www.thebigbluehug.com)

## Drawing out communication

### How you can support communication one scribble at a time

By Jason Goldsmith

anybody else working with language delayed individuals. And thanks to the people I met at my trainings over the years, I discovered, to my delight, I am not alone in my mission.

Sheila Bell is an Ottawa speech language pathologist who draws with all of her ASD clients. Her epiphany with drawing happened much the same way mine did with my son. "Drawing was a strategy born of desperation," Sheila explains. She discovered the power of drawing with her client Adam when he was three years old. "I would start drawing stuff for him and he would stay in one place... any small sound he would make, I would try to match that and then he would try to make more sounds so that I would draw more things for him," she said.

Adam is 21 now and draws beautifully, ex-

have kids who've done it ever since they were very little, now they are young adults and you know what, they are flexible problem solvers!," Sheila shares.

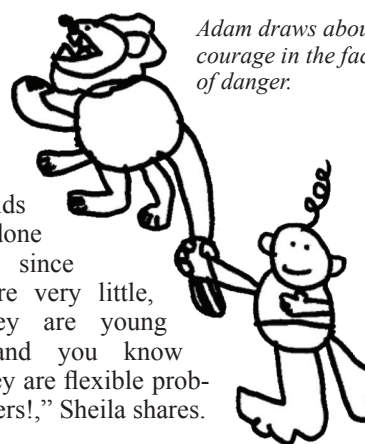
I am perpetually amazed with how drawing allows us to dig deeper into the hidden meaning behind behaviours. Nothing is more important when working with an autistic population than understanding the unique perspective of an individual. As Sheila points out, "One of the most interesting things that comes out of drawing as communication is that you get that picture of what they think is going on and when you know what their perspective on the situation is, then you can start figuring out what you might do."

The fact is, drawing works and anybody can learn to do it! Here are a few pointers to get even the most reluctant scribbles scribbling for communication:

-Keep your drawings simple and quick. For younger children, start with large drawings on chalkboards or large format paper. Draw stick figures to represent people. Draw simple shapes to represent any object. A rectangle with two circles under it is all you need to draw a car. My rule is: if I draw a blob with a bunch of squiggles on it and I say it is a unicorn, then that is exactly what it becomes. With this rule, anybody can draw!

-Draw only what you want to say. If you

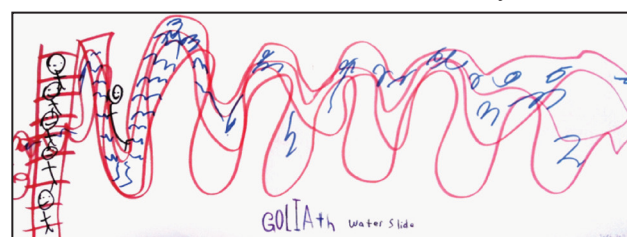
Adam draws about courage in the face of danger.



Jason and son Ellis  
Photo credit: David Babcock

Ellis is my 13 year-old son with autism. He likes water, he loves roller coasters and he fantasizes about going on a "water roller coaster" with his classmates. I know about his first two preferences because he is able to express simple ideas verbally. However, Ellis cannot "tell" me about his inventive water roller coaster adventure. He does not have the verbal language to express such complex and detailed notions. I only know because he is able to tell me through his drawings.

Ellis and I converse through drawing conversations. They allow us to go beyond his limited ability to understand and express ideas verbally. It all started when I began drawing to Ellis out of a desperate attempt to connect to him. Four short months later, he drew back! Thanks to Ellis, I founded Picture Talking; a drawing communication strategy I teach to parents, professionals and



Ellis and his classmates play on an imaginary "water roller coaster" that Ellis thought up.

pressing ideas he is 'not supposed to understand' and yet his drawings prove otherwise. On her blog [www.autismandheartofcommunication.com](http://www.autismandheartofcommunication.com), Sheila has many examples of her drawing adventures.

But does drawing help children who are verbal? Sheila observes that even verbal ASD children often have significant comprehension problems. Drawing is a great tool for visual problem solving, especially for verbal children such as those with Aspergers. "I

# INSPIRATIONS

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(Continued on page 8)





Wendy Singer

## Inspirations Notebook



**INSIDE THIS EDITION:** The collaborative spirit of Montreal's special needs community is truly inspiring. I am most impressed with the collaborative efforts that occur on a daily basis, all with the goal of improving the lives of people with special needs. This column celebrates just a few of these partnerships.

Let's get into the Paralympic spirit! Inspirations has partnered with The Canadian Paralympic Committee to bring you hot-off-the-press news in preparation for the London 2012 Paralympic Games. Take a look to see the many ways to get involved in Paraspport or invite a Canadian Paralympic athlete to visit your school.

**STUDENTS PARTNER WITH INSPIRATIONS:** Under the supervision of Jesse Heffring, students Alex Berdebes, J.C. Curry, Steven Atme and Nathan Amar took time off from their Summit School Copy Centre duties to distribute Inspirations to your doorstep. The Copy Centre specializes in school agendas and custom-made copybooks that help teachers address their unique needs. It is one of Summit School's Transitional Education Career Centre's (TECC) innovative initiatives. This 'learn-to-work' program prepares youth aged 17 to 21 with special needs for life and the workplace. These four students WOWed us with



Summit School TECC students do their part for Inspirations and receive Cinema Guzzo certificates.

their friendly service and top quality work, done in record time. We highly recommend them for all of your copy work! They welcome new contracts: 514-933-4464.

**STUDENT PARTNER WITH STUDENTS:** The Ambassadors are a group of people with learning disabilities and/

or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) who share their personal journey with various audiences, from governing boards to students at all levels, tutors and counselors. By relaying their stories, they help those experiencing similar difficulties overcome their obstacles. Seeing a need to support students at the CEGEP level, teacher Cindy Blauer started a sister initiative called The Vanier Ambassadors for Student Success at Vanier College. Sponsored by a student success grant, these Ambassadors mentor students and inform them about services and technologies available to students, amongst other things. The Ambassadors is one of the many programs offered by The Learning Disabilities Association of Quebec, Montreal - Chapter 1 (LDAQ). They are ready to sensitize your group: <http://ldaqmontreal.org>.

Best Buddies Canada is a national charitable organization that is grounded in the belief that friendship is important to the development of people with intellectual disabilities and a great way for them to become active in their communities. They establish chapters in high schools, colleges and universities. In Quebec, Pierrefonds Comprehensive High School, Lauren Hill Academy, John Abbott College, Dawson College and McGill University have created chapters. Student volunteers are matched one-to-one with people with intellectual disabilities in hopes that these partnerships evolve into strong friendships. The 'Buddy Pairs' are asked to contact each other once a week, and hang out with each other twice a month. Chapters meet several times a year. Check out [www.bestbuddies.ca](http://www.bestbuddies.ca) to see how your school can begin a chapter.

**PARTNERS IN THE COMMUNITY:** We recently visited The Miriam Foundation's ABILI-T and Trampoline programs, servicing families living in the greater Montreal area with children aged 18 months to six years with autism spectrum disorders (ASDs) and other developmental disabilities. These not-for-profit, subsidized, evidence-based services are designed to allow children at diagnosis to obtain specialized interventions immediately. Dr. Nathalie Garcin and her team of specialists focus on the unique strengths of every child to help them succeed in a nurturing and supportive environment. Using empirically-validated procedures, they help children to increase

and maintain desirable behaviour, learn new skills, diminish undesirable behaviour, and maintain and generalize learning across situations and environments.

Under the direction of Alexandra Rothstein, ABILI-T uses Applied Behavioural Analysis (ABA) while the Trampoline program, under the direction of Ginette Bernier, primarily uses the TEACCH (Treatment and Education of Autistic and Related Communication Handicapped Children) model while integrating other teaching strategies. I was surprised not to find a trampoline in Trampoline's playground! Bernier ex-



The Miriam Foundation's ABILI-T and Trampoline programs.

plained that 'trampoline' represents children reaching new heights. For information: [www.goldlearningcentre.com](http://www.goldlearningcentre.com).

**GIANT STEPS:** Congratulations to The American Hellenic Educational Progressive Association (AHEPA) for raising over \$130,000 for the Giant Steps School and Resource Centre at their 2012 For the Love of Children St. Valentine's Ball. Event Co-Chairs Helen Hiotis and Peter Scoufaras hosted a spectacular event that surpassed their fundraising expectations.

The Patron of Honour for the event, Senator Leo Housakas, was joined by honorary Chairman Tony Loffredo and honorary committee members Senators Jacques Demers, Jim Munson and the Honorable Francis Fox. Among the over 350 guests on hand were Chairman of the Board of Giant Steps, Principal of Pierre de Coubertin Elementary School and Special Advisor to Inspirations Nick Katalifos, Sir Wilfrid Laurier School Board Chairman Steven Bleas and Vice-President of Giant Steps Francois L'Heureux. AHEPA's mission is to promote the ancient Greek ideals of

education, philanthropy, civic responsibility, and family and individual excellence through community service and volunteerism.

**PARTNERS AT LARGE:** A new support group has begun for partners of people with an ASD. While all relationships have their challenges, many partners of those with an ASD experience increased levels of anxiety, confusion, and even depression at times. Family and friends may not always understand the added stresses that can occur in such partnerships. Social connection and support by those who share similar experiences can help, and teach positive strategies to improve the quality of their interactions. This support group provides an opportunity to learn new tools, receive support and get validation for all involved. No diagnosis needed. Led by a sex therapist and a sexuality educator. Contact Dr. Laurie Betito at 514-984-5910 or Stephanie Mitelman at 514-983-9600.

LEARN, Giant Steps and the Sir Wilfrid Laurier School Board will present two webinars for parents on ASD. On May 8, Behaviour Management Specialist Lisa Levy will present 'The Power Struggle'. On May 31st, Child Psychologist Gail McCoubrey will discuss reading comprehension. For information email [conference@learnquebec.ca](mailto:conference@learnquebec.ca).

When Team Inspirations walks, it's time to walk with them! Join our team on May 27th, 2012 as we participate in the 2nd Annual Walk Now for Autism Speaks Canada walk to change the future for the Canadian and global autism communities. [www.http://events.autismspeaks.ca/](http://events.autismspeaks.ca/)

*If you have tidbits to share, send them to [info@inspirationsnews.com](mailto:info@inspirationsnews.com).*



From the American Hellenic Educational Progressive Association gala. First row: Giant Steps Foundation Henriette Angers, Marie Brouillet, Nick Katalifos, Francine Langan, Senator Jacques Demers, Linda Lessard, Senator Francine Fox and Nathalie Leclerc. Second row: Robert-Charles Longpré, Mathieu Gauvin, Andre Pagé, Senator Leo Housakas, Francois L'Heureux and Jean-Pierre Morello. (Photo credit: Dimitri Papadopoulos)





# Community member inspires a fund for Inspirations Introducing The Côte Saint-Luc Kosher Inspirational Fund

● *By Wendy Singer*



*Avi Brook*

Avi Brook took one look at Inspirations and knew he wanted to be involved. Owner of Côte Saint-Luc Kosher Meat Market, Avi was first sensitized to children with special needs at his synagogue. "My Rabbi's daughter was disabled. I realized that if I made the effort, I could communicate with her," he explains.

This insightful caterer was instantly drawn to Inspirations because of the information it provides. "People often lack understanding of other people's problems or are afraid of them," he states. "Inspirations informs us about various disabilities and how we can adjust to them."

Avi took it upon himself to sell chocolate bars and give all the proceeds to the **Côte Saint-Luc Kosher Inspirational Fund**. His strategy includes asking friends and business associates to buy chocolate bars in exchange for a donation.

Avi's generosity reaches well beyond Inspirations. Brought up sharing his father's philosophy of 'whatever I have is not mine', he actively gives back to his community by ensuring families in crisis have food.



*Allan Bernstein*

Côte Saint-Luc Kosher Meat Market is known for its fresh meat, cut on the spot. They are also expert caterers, specializing in Sephardic, Eastern European and Chinese food.

We are grateful to Avi for believing so strongly in Inspirations, and his commitment to supporting families and children with special needs.

Allan Bernstein from **People's Shop 'N Save** is also contributing to the **Côte Saint-Luc Kosher Inspirational Fund**. With the mission to make an impact on peoples' lives by implementing aggressive cost-cutting measures and passing the savings along to consumers, Allan organizes sales that offer high-end items at significantly reduced prices.

His first sale catered to EMSB staff, and saw coats and additional favourites like 'Not Your Daughter's Jeans' fly off the racks. The sale was so successful that it spawned a second one at Elizabeth Ballantyne Elemen-

tary School. A portion of each sale was put towards the fund.

Allan was delighted to be so well received by school board staff exclaiming, "I take great pride in my relationship with Inspirations and giving back to the community."

The Inspirations Team extends a heartfelt thank you to Avi and Allan for their support.

**Côte Saint-Luc Kosher Meat Market Inc.**  
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If you would like to raise funds for Inspirations, or make a donation to the Côte Saint-Luc Kosher Inspirational Fund, contact us at [mcohen@inspirationsnews.com](mailto:mcohen@inspirationsnews.com).

## Bais Chaya Mushka College: Diploma in assisting people with intellectual or physical deficiencies

● *By Linda Mahler*

Chaya Mushka College is affiliated with Campus Notre-Dame-de-Foy which is accredited by the Quebec Ministry of Education, Leisure and Sports. Over the years, the college has provided post-secondary education of the highest caliber for hundreds of young women. As of January 2012, BCM is offering a Diploma in Assisting People with Intellectual and or Physical Deficiencies.

This program, leading to an Attestation of College Studies, seeks to train people prepared to help individuals with physical, sensory, and psychological deficiencies, mental difficulties and other health related issues. This assistance applies to all ages, including children, adolescents, adults, and the elderly. The person trained in this program will be able to observe and assist persons who have difficulty with learning and daily life activities.

Administrator Judy Brook has been working at BCM for the past 15 years. Ms. Brook acts as a liaison between the teachers and students of BCM and the administration at Campus Notre-Dame-de-Foy. She explains the program as a wonderful opportunity for students to learn about "helping people in difficulty."

"The graduates of this diploma will be prepared in leading, creating and planning activities as well as demonstrating a sense of open-mindedness and the capacity for adaptation," says Ms. Brook. "If you are looking for a job in the health networks, social services agencies, school boards, rehabilitation institutions or family settings, this would be the perfect program to pursue. Students, upon completion of the program can find employment as aides for people with physical and intellectual deficiencies, shadows and special education assistants as well as agents for foster families."

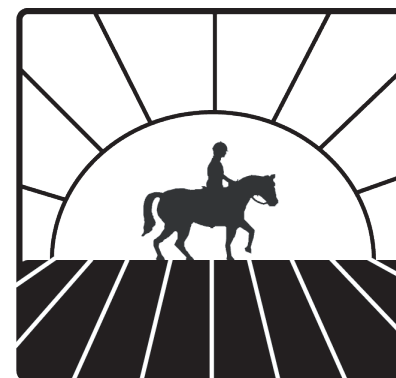
Recently, a group of BCM students taking a Psychomotricity course visited Yaldei Developmental Centre. The students were impressed to witness a place committed to helping children with developmental challenges reach their full potential. Yaldei provides the most advanced and unique program of intensive early intervention, using a broad range of trans-disciplinary approaches.

For information regarding BCM College Diploma in Assisting People with Intellectual or Physical Deficiencies, contact : Judy Brook BCM College at 514 733-3777.

The Donald Berman Yaldei Developmental Center, contact : Stephanie Meunier Clinical Office Manager at 514 279-3666.

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# Yoga gives children a moment to breathe

• By Wendy Singer

Over the past few years, yoga has become trendy, even with the younger set. This ancient Hindu discipline, comprised of breath control, simple meditation and specific bodily postures, has been known to improve concentration and focus, and decrease stress and anxiety.

Yoga is easily adaptable to children and teens. With a few modifications, kids of all ages are finding their bliss. Just imagine how quickly a pose called "downward dog" can become kid-friendly by simply calling it "downward diggity dawg!"

Two Montreal-based yogis specialize in teaching yoga to children. Both see tremendous results with children with special needs, including attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADD/ADHD), anxiety and eating disorder, autism spectrum disorders (ASDs), cerebral palsy, dyspraxia, Down syndrome, learning disabilities or visual and hearing impairments.

After teaching many classes and reading numerous books and documented studies regarding yoga and children with special needs, Certified Hatha Yoga Instructor Angie Continisio, also a YogaKids instructor and trainer, felt it was her duty to inform parents about the healing and learning powers of yoga.

Owner of Studio Kids Butterfly Yoga, Angie's stance on the positive effects of yoga is



Lukas enjoys yoga. Photo credit: Angie Continisio

clear. "The goal through yoga is not to 'fix' children but to support their development toward balance and harmony," says Continisio. "These children are not only working on their flexibility, they are focusing and concentrating and activating neurons in the brain."

Angie has found that several modifications make small group or private yoga classes for special needs children successful such as: providing verbally set goals with one step commands; consistency in the class, especially for students with Aspergers, ASDs and ADHD; tightening and releasing muscles so children experience the difference between tension and relaxation, benefitting

with visualization and relaxation and lots of encouragement.

Certified Hatha Yoga Teacher Ondine Guralnick began integrating children with special needs into her yoga classes at Elizabeth Ballantyne Elementary School (EBS) in Montreal West and subsequently at her camp "A Lot of Art, A Little Yoga." Currently teaching yoga classes at EBS, and kids and teens at Shri Yoga, Ondine believes that yoga allows all children to be who

they truly are.

"Yoga is not a quick fix for anybody," states Ondine. "Integrating breathing and relaxation into their life is a process, and it has to be fun! It's a great way to develop body awareness, celebrate self-expression and individuality, build self-confidence. Kids learn not just who they are on the outside but who they are on the inside, and begin to trust their instincts."

Glenda Caplan's 12 year-old daughter has been practicing yoga with Ondine for many years. In that time, this mother has noticed positive changes, including calmness, more focus, consciousness of breath, less frustra-

tion when it comes time to do homework, and better sleeping habits. "The beauty of yoga is that the kids do what their body allows them to do, and whatever that is, it's perfect," Glenda explains. "There's no competition. It's the only time and place where the kids can be themselves and be proud of who they are."

Namaste!

***It is imperative that, prior to enrolling your child in a yoga class, you verify that the instructors are certified and/or licensed to teach children with special needs.***

Please visit the Inspirations website, online extra section to read more about yoga for children with special needs by Angie Continisio.

Contact information: [art@ondine.ca](mailto:art@ondine.ca), Kids Butterfly Yoga: [angie@kidsbutterflyyoga.com](mailto:angie@kidsbutterflyyoga.com).

(Continued from page 5)

want to address your child's fear of dogs, then draw about the right way to approach one. Adding a lot of details that don't address the issue (trees, buildings, buttons and shoe laces) will slow down the conversation and may over stimulate or distract your child.

-Pay attention to your child's interest. If he shows little engagement, then stop. Try again for only five minutes at a time and draw according to what is important to him.

-Draw regularly. After school is one of the best times because there is a lot that your child has on their mind at the end of the day, and you have up to five opportunities every week. For starters, choose one specific theme and draw only about that. For example: draw about lunch time or about your child's favorite moment of the day and then expand later. The more you invest, the better your return...I promise!

***Jason Goldsmith is a Communication Artist, teacher and the founder of Picture Talking, a subset of The Big Blue Hug autism art project. Picture Talking is hosting two workshops on May 20 and 27, focusing on stimulate learning, language and literacy skills through the integration of drawing as a communication tool. To register, visit Picture Talking at [www.thebigbluehug.com](http://www.thebigbluehug.com).***

## Individualized Educational Plan workshop for parents of students with special needs

A workshop on understanding the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) process was recently organized by the English Montreal School Board's Student Services Department. This session was part of a series of workshops offered by the Advisory Committee on Special Education (ACSES), and was primarily geared to parents of students with special needs.

The team of special education consultants, made up of Joanne Assaly, Nancy Price and Liliane Yiptong, delivered valuable information on IEPs. Parents were well informed on what an Individualized Educational Plan is, their role in the process and how to be an effective participant at their child's IEP meeting.

An IEP is a document that is drafted by the resource team, which may consist of:

- the school principal (or his representative);
- the student's parents/guardians;
- the classroom teacher;
- the resource teacher;
- the integration aide;
- the special education consultant;
- the speech and language pathologist;
- the occupational therapist;
- the autism consultant;
- the school psychologist;
- other professionals from outside the school board working with the student.

The IEP is an intervention strategy for students who have been identified as experiencing learning difficulties. This collabora-

• By Linda Mahler

tive, constantly evolving working document is intended to help the school and parents plan for, monitor, evaluate and communicate the student's growth.

All the people who are, or will be, providing services to the student work together in establishing a plan adapted to the needs of the student. The principal and the resource teacher implement and periodically evaluate this educational plan and inform the student's parents on a regular basis. The IEP is kept in the student's confidential file at the school.

To access all the information that was discussed at the meeting, you can find the document "Individualized Educational Plan Parent Contribution Making the IEP Work" at [www.inspirationsnews](http://www.inspirationsnews), online extra section.





# The John Abbott College Learning Centre: A link to academic (and life) achievement in the West - Island

By Jeff Bergman

The John Abbott College Learning Centre provides a safe environment where students can discover new skills or build on existing ones. This Centre recognizes that learning is a developmental and lifelong process that leads students towards becoming better thinkers. Their role is to facilitate this process and to support all students in their academic achievements.

"Our services are here for the students because our goal is their success!" states Brenda Rowe, chairperson of the Learning Centre and Special Needs Services.

With over 30 years of educational experience, Ms. Rowe has developed and implemented many workshops in learning/life skills and human development. Her leadership and devotion to the John Abbott students, along with her eight dedicated staff members, has made the Centre a great success. Indeed, the Centre is a hub for student



Student Ashley Tritt (left) and Sue McCarthy of Special Needs Services.

enrichment and personal growth within the college; it's a valuable asset for the students and a resource for the teachers.

Throughout the semester, the Centre provides study skills workshops, such as time management strategies, comprehensive reading and writing proficiency, science and math strategies, and preparation for the English Exit Exam. Moreover, if students need personalized guidance, they can consult with a student tutor (about 75 student tutors are available to help students in every subject) to go over class material or one can make an appointment with a Centre staff person.

Working in collaboration with the Centre - and just as important- is Special Needs Services. Rowe is also involved with assessment and implementation of programs and strategies to assist students with learning and physical disabilities, chronic medical conditions, and all those who just need academic support. Their services include: individual mentoring, tutoring and any necessary accommodations within the college (i.e., with staff, peers, departments, and teachers).

Thus, the question becomes: how can a student recognize the signs when they need the support of these services? Usually, a student will take the recommendation from their teacher; however, sometimes they just take it upon themselves to go to the Centre. Indeed, all students use the Centre, even those on the Dean's list, in order to improve on their studies. Due to this, the Centre demystifies the notion that all resource centers

(Continued at page 10)

By Robin Bernstein

**//**The whole purpose of education is to turn mirrors into windows." This is my mantra. In a time when our society is designed around immediate gratification and instant everything, looking outside yourself seems almost ancient, like a tradition that only took place in the 'olden' days. Instead, we live in a time where everything should be happening for us right now. And if it's not right now, then it had better be in 30 seconds! People are not looking to put time, energy or emotion into things that are bigger than themselves; instead they are looking for easy fixes. People are in need in third world countries? No problem; let's quickly donate some money and move on. There are human rights violations happening all over the world? OMG—it's worse than I realized; I want to be part of this fad and 'do' my part to help so I'll re-post some videos/links on Facebook. What is going on in today's society? Whatever happened to good-ol' hard-work, dedication and giving for the sake of giving?

When I look in the mirror, all I see is myself; my likes and dis-

likes, strengths, weaknesses, wants and needs. Through this tunnel-vision perspective, children only see themselves; the 'me-world' revolves around instant gratification and quick fixes. As a result, I regularly receive telephone calls from parents seeking support in controlling and setting limits for their children. Completing tasks, household chores, homework and even sitting at the dinner table are difficult. My response: "your child is not following instructions because he wants what he wants and he wants it NOW. You must not give in to him. Stand firm even though it will be painful for you. As a matter of fact, it will be more painful for you than for your child. You have to trust me on this. Do not give in to him or this will never change."

Putting your foot down and creating boundaries is the first step in helping to transform your child's perspectives into windows and enhance his/her life. Limits on the 'me-world' create opportunities for us to learn about acceptance, hard-work, consideration, kindness and caring. When I am truly educated in morals, values and citizenship, I will be a contributing member of society; I will be worldly and see outside of myself. The world will make sense, even though I may not be instantly gratified; I will work to my greatest capacity and derive happiness and self-fulfillment from positively influencing others. And I will love doing it! I will feel a sense of satisfaction that will define me. Isn't this something that all parents want for their

children?

As a student, I was very confused about where my life was going. I knew that I wanted to make a difference but I did not know exactly how, until attending a volunteer fair that would change my life. I began working as a volunteer tutor at an inner-city community centre, and eventually, working part-time as an Educator in their elementary afterschool program. My goal was simple: I wanted to make a difference and positively impact the lives of the children I was working with. Little did I know that they would be the ones to greatly impact me; I was about to see the world clearly for the first time.

One year later, I attended the children's graduation party. I had been away in Ottawa completing my studies and had been out of touch with them. Upon arrival, I was warmly welcomed and given a box of tissues (it is no secret that I am overly emotional). A video began to play: each child reminisced about their favorite memories. I watched as many of the children described the impact that I had made on their lives. Of course, I was beaming with pride—and crying non-stop. Had I actually made a difference?

When I got home that night, red-faced and puffy-eyed, I sat on my balcony staring at the stars. I was relishing the feeling of fulfillment and satisfaction; I felt complete and peaceful. That's when I realized that

hard-work, dedication and perseverance do actually pay off. That moment is when the world became clear and I was finally able to see through the windows around me. In that moment, everything made perfect sense because I had made a difference.

Brightside Learning is based on my personal ideology of making a difference and positively impacting the lives of children. My goal has never been to simply provide subject-specific tutoring, since my experience tells me that it does not work. Instead, I use methods that help students attain academic success and feel a sense of pride and accomplishment. In a safe and trusting environment, students are provided with motivation and encouragement—I am their personal cheerleader, coach, teacher, mentor and role-model. They feel that I care and that I am on their side; the windows that I look through are vividly apparent.

**To give your child the gift of academic excellence, please contact Robin Bernstein at (514) 242-5162 or visit [www.brightsidelearning.com](http://www.brightsidelearning.com).**

*Brightside*  
• L E A R N I N G •



## Julie René de Cotret

### Les Olympiques spéciaux

#### Un bel exemple d'accomplissement de soi...

Cet hiver, j'ai participé en tant que bénévole aux cours de ski offerts par les Olympiques spéciaux. J'assistais les moniteurs pendant qu'ils enseignaient aux jeunes. Je peux vous dire que j'ai adoré mon expérience. J'ai eu la chance de rencontrer des jeunes vraiment intéressants ainsi que des moniteurs dévoués au développement athlétique de leurs élèves. J'attendais avec impatience chaque lundi soir. Chaque cours était planifié rigoureusement et les techniques enseignées permettaient aux jeunes de progresser chaque semaine.

Les jeunes inscrits aux cours de ski ont également participé à deux compétitions régionales durant l'hiver; des équipes venant des quatre coins de la province y participaient. J'ai eu l'occasion d'accompagner des jeunes durant l'une de ces deux compétitions en tant que monitrice bénévole. C'est vraiment lors de cet événement que j'ai saisi toute la signification de l'accomplissement de soi. Il ne faut pas imaginer que la pente destinée à la compétition était de calibre débutant. La compétition se tenait dans une pente ayant une dénivellation assez prononcée et le défi était de taille pour certains.

Quelques jeunes ont eu de la difficulté à descendre la pente la première fois. Certains ont même eu recours à un accompagnateur pour les aider à suivre le parcours. Toutefois, peu importait le temps consacré à la descente, l'objectif principal était de terminer la course. Lors de leurs deuxième et troisième descentes on constatait, chez les athlètes, une meilleure assurance et une évolution dans leur performance.

Ce que j'ai trouvé admirable, c'est la fierté de ces jeunes à l'arrivée, la joie de lever les bras en signe de victoire. Leur sourire était beau à voir. La fierté d'avoir réussi quelque chose qui, au début, ils croyaient impossible. Les familles étaient présentes pour les encourager tout au long de leur descente. J'étais émue de voir combien ces jeunes étaient heureux et satisfaits de leur exploit. Quelle leçon de vie! Je constate que cette expérience me fut autant bénéfique qu'aux jeunes athlètes.



L'organisme Olympiques spéciaux traite les jeunes avec beaucoup de respect. Ils savent reconnaître le potentiel chez le jeune et le mettre à jour. Chaque cours, chaque compétition est un moment où l'apprentissage est au premier rang. Ces jeunes adolescents et adultes ont tellement à offrir et la pratique d'un sport les aide à se valoriser. J'ai eu la chance de rencontrer des jeunes fantastiques avec lesquels j'ai eu de belles conversations.

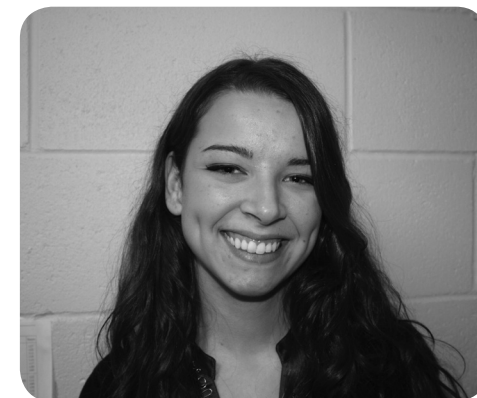
En tant que mère, j'ai vu l'évolution de mon garçon tout au long de la saison, pas seulement dans ses performances de ski mais aussi en tant que personne. Croyez-moi que lorsqu'il a gagné la deuxième place lors de sa première compétition, j'étais si fière de lui... fière de le voir sur le podium arborant le sourire d'une personne ayant accompli un grand défi.

**Julie René de Cotret est la directrice adjointe des services aux élèves à la Commission scolaire English-Montréal.**

## Le défi de vivre avec l'arthrite juvénile

Par Audrey Lalonde

Simone Cavanaugh, 19 ans, a reçu un diagnostic d'arthrite juvénile à l'âge de huit ans. Cela a pris plus de deux ans avant d'être diagnostiquée et de recevoir une médication appropriée. Atteinte d'une maladie que la plupart des gens associent aux personnes âgées, elle a dû faire l'usage de béquilles, puis d'une chaise roulante pour l'aider à se déplacer avant d'être diagnostiquée.



Simone Cavanaugh

« Cela a été une période très difficile pour moi, se rappelle Simone. J'avais toujours mal aux chevilles et aux hanches. Par moments, la douleur était si atroce que j'avais du mal à dormir. Je pouvais difficilement me déplacer sans fauteuil roulant. Tous les soirs, au coucher, ma mère devait me prendre dans ses bras pour monter l'escalier et m'emmener au lit. J'étais très frustrée de ne pas avoir le même genre de vie que mes amis ou ma petite sœur. »

Puisque son école primaire n'avait pas les équipements nécessaires pour permettre à Simone de se rendre en classe au deuxième étage, elle a dû passer plusieurs années à faire seule ses devoirs et ses lectures à un pupitre qui avait été installé spécialement pour elle dans l'aire du secrétariat de l'école, au rez-de-chaussée.

Après avoir épuisé diverses options de traitement, Simone s'est enfin vu prescrire un médicament qui a soulagé sa douleur. « Ce fut une réelle libération pour moi. En quelques semaines seulement, je suis passée de ma chaise roulante et d'un monde isolé à une vie normale. Je n'ai maintenant plus mal du tout et j'ai même souvent tendance à oublier que je vie encore avec la maladie. »

À l'âge de 16 ans, le système immunitaire

(Continued from page 9)

are for students who need help to survive in CEGEP; the reality is it's for all those who need the little extra support, or have a quest to succeed academically.

"It was a second home at John Abbott," blissfully says John Abbott student Ashley Tritt, who has worked with Special Needs Services worker Sue McCarthy. "I knew that if I was having a rough day, I could always pop in for support. The staff accommodated my needs, ensured that I was okay, and supported me in whatever academic

de Simone a commencé à rejeter son médicament et elle a dû revivre pendant quelques jours les douleurs d'autrefois. « J'étais effrayée. Juste le poids d'un drap sur mon corps me faisait hurler de douleur. Je ne voulais pas croire que j'aurais de nouveau à vivre avec les douleurs constantes de l'arthrite juvénile. »

Heureusement, Simone a rapidement trouvé un autre médicament qui lui convenait. « Je suis heureuse d'avoir vécu cette crise. Cela m'a rappelé la chance que j'ai d'avoir trouvé une médication qui me convient. C'est à ce moment que j'ai décidé que je voulais me servir de mon expérience avec la maladie pour venir en aide à tous les enfants atteints d'arthrite juvénile. »

Aujourd'hui, Simone travaille avec les enfants en chaise roulante, s'implique dans l'organisation du Camp Articulation (camp de vacances spécialement conçu pour les enfants atteints d'arthrite juvénile) et donne de nombreuses présentations pour la Société de l'arthrite.

**Audrey Lalonde est la responsable de Communications et Relations Médias pour la Société de l'arthrite (Québec).**

choices I had made. They celebrated my victories with me and were always ready to lend a helping hand."

The Centre's doors are always open to help students determine their individual needs, and to help them develop the skills and strategies they need to succeed - so don't be shy to drop in. "I always felt every student has the ability to fly; however, some just need a longer runway," states Rowe.

**For more information call 514-457-6610 ext. 5300, or visit [www.johnabbott.qc.ca](http://www.johnabbott.qc.ca).**





## Les espoirs du Québec à Londres

● *Par Isabelle Sinclair*

La présence de plusieurs Québécois aux Jeux paralympiques de Londres 2012 a déjà été confirmée. Toutefois, quelques athlètes attendent toujours leur laissez-passer. Du côté de Parasports Québec, huit athlètes de trois sports ont déjà obtenu leur billet pour Londres.

C'est avec beaucoup de fierté que l'Association suivra les exploits de ses nombreux athlètes durant ces Jeux. À ce jour, des athlètes en basketball, en escrime et en tir à l'arc ont confirmé leur place en Angleterre. Quelques sportifs attendent néanmoins leur

sélection dans des disciplines comme le rugby, l'athlétisme et le paracyclisme.

En basketball, il y aura trois Québécoises au sein de l'équipe nationale féminine. Maude Jacques (19 ans) en sera à sa première expérience paralympique, alors que Cindy Ouellet (23 ans) et Éline Allard (34) en seront à leur seconde présence. Toutes deux avaient terminé en cinquième position avec la formation féminine lors des Jeux de Pékin en 2008. Du côté masculin, David Eng (35 ans) et Yvon Rouillard (39 ans) seront de l'alignement pour l'équipe masculine.

En rugby, deux Québécois sont en liste pour obtenir leur place au sein de la formation qui représentera le Canada aux Jeux de Londres. Patrice Simard (33 ans) et Fabien Lavoie (29 ans) seront les deux athlètes du Québec à surveiller. Les deux athlètes espéreront cette fois rapporter l'or, après être montés sur la troisième marche du podium lors des Jeux de Pékin en 2008.

Pour sa part, Sylvie Morel (56 ans) rivalisera avec les meilleurs escrimeurs de la planète. À sa première expérience aux paralympiques en 2000 à Sydney, en Australie, elle avait terminé au 10<sup>e</sup> rang à l'épée et au 11<sup>e</sup> au fleuret. Lyne Tremblay (49 ans), espère quant à elle vaincre les tireurs les plus redoutables du monde, et revenir au Québec avec une médaille en tir à l'arc autour du coup.

Parasports Québec représente un pilier important pour le développement des parasports au Québec. L'Association est donc très fière d'apporter son soutien et souhaite la meilleure des chances à tous les Québécois présents à Londres pour les jeux paralympiques d'été de 2012.

*Isabelle est la coordonnatrice aux communications et sports pour Parasports Québec. Pour plus de renseignements, contactez Isabelle à [isinclair@parasportsquebec.com](mailto:isinclair@parasportsquebec.com) ou visitez le site web : [www.parasportsquebec.com](http://www.parasportsquebec.com).*



## Introducing RAPID- Supporting Anglophone families and services on the South Shore



development and facilitate the delivery of vital local resources that provide support and enable children and adults with special needs to participate in community life on the South Shore."

RAPID advocates, refers and links parents and caregivers to English-language service providers and organizations on the South Shore, be it for education, day care, babysitting, health care, therapies and early intervention, social integration and recreation. "We work with people of all ages with moderate to severe disabilities," adds Shacter.

They also assist therapists who would like to work on the South Shore find a venue for their service.

RAPID is running several important programs. Langmobile Learning Centre, run by Nicole Bianco, has created a branch of its fun-filled summer day camp in Saint Lambert specifically for children with special needs.

They offer a certified Red Cross babysitting course to train teenagers to work with children with special needs. Their hope is to create a database of babysitters for parents in all areas of the South Shore.

RAPID also offers 'Saturday Mornings in the Park', a free social time where parents can mingle while children are cared for by trained monitors from l'Association de la Rive-Sud pour la Déficience Intellectuelle (ARSDI).

Since its inception, RAPID has seen an increase in services provided in English. "In

the last two years, lots of kids are attending the ARSDI's bilingual programs like yoga, art and music therapy," Shacter states.

Secretary of RAPID Carole Briggs spoke highly of the support RAPID has provided her: "RAPID has helped me find resources such as respite, and get contacts for activities for my daughter."

Briggs sees RAPID playing an important role in transferring information to parents and expanding services and programs to other areas of the South Shore like Chateaugay, where she resides.

RAPID's long-term vision includes providing, administering and maintaining a multi-use facility for the English speaking community with special needs living on the South Shore. This facility will offer: a clinic with specialized services such as speech and physiotherapy; a drop-in centre where people with special needs can take part in supervised activities that promote recreation, socialization, community life and vocational training; a living unit that offers short-term respite; a safe and comfortable long-term living facility for adults with special needs who can no longer live at home.

This organization recently launched a capital campaign to support existing services, develop new ones, and work toward fulfilling their long-term vision. One of their fundraising vehicles is a touching music project called POEMS, created by RAPID Board member Antoinette Salera. The video 'A Father's Promise' on YouTube depicts a father reaching out and keeping a promise he made to his special needs son. The song 'I WISH', written and sung by the late Don Hastings, can be purchased on iTunes or CD Baby. Proceeds go towards fulfilling

RAPID's long term vision of a Centre.

A dream is only as strong as the dreamers behind the project. "It's a pleasure and a true privilege to work on such a motivated and creative and professional committee," Shacter shares. "What we're all doing is coming from everyone's heart. RAPID has passion and it's making things happen."

If you are a parent or caregiver, a service provider, or would like to attend RAPID's monthly meetings, please contact them at 450-465-7450, or [rapidmontreal@gmail.com](mailto:rapidmontreal@gmail.com).

**Donations to RAPID can be made at [www.CanadaHelps.org](http://www.CanadaHelps.org), by contacting RAPID or visiting their website at [www.rapidsouthshore.org](http://www.rapidsouthshore.org).**

**To view 'A Father's Promise' go to <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ejXKdNHKcaM>**

**To purchase the song go to iTunes or "http://cdbaby.com/cd/donhastings"**

**For information about Langmobile's summer camp, contact [info@langmobile.com](mailto:info@langmobile.com) or 514-352-4762, or visit [www.langmobile.com](http://www.langmobile.com).**



The Anglophone population on the South Shore numbers over 50,000 and is spread across a wide area, making it difficult to obtain adequate services for families with children and adults with special needs.

A group of concerned parents, professionals, educators and community members have created RAPID - Resources for the Anglophone Population with Intellectual Disabilities - to address this gap in services.

When founded in 2008, RAPID conducted a survey to understand where services were lacking. Caryn Shacter, member of RAPID, retired Principal of REACH and special education teacher explains, "The biggest gaps were in babysitting, respite and daycare services, and not having services like occupational therapy and speech therapy in English."

Under the leadership of President Peter MacMillan, the mission of this purely voluntary, not-for-profit registered charitable organization is "to promote the



# Celebrating Teacher Chrissy Mohammed

## The DundeeWealth Teacher of Inspiration 2011 Award Ceremony

● By Wendy Singer

On November 7th, teachers and students assembled in the St. Johns Elementary School library in St. Jean-sur-Richelieu to celebrate the DundeeWealth Teacher of Inspiration, Chrissy Mohammed.

Principal Tim Mahoney warmly welcomed the Inspirations Newspaper team and introduced his vice principals Brad Morley and Vicky Roach, Riverside School Board (RSB) Commissioners Pierre D'Avignon and Pierre Chouinard and RSB Director General Sylvain Racette.

EMSBS Assistant Director of Student Services and Consulting Editor of Inspirations Julie René de Cotret began with thoughts about the newspaper and the award. "Chris-

sy exemplifies everything that Inspirations is about," she remarked. "She is dedicated to providing the best possible education to children with special needs, is innovative in her classroom, and is a learner herself."

This vision matches that of award sponsor DundeeWealth, whose culture of success focuses on collaboration and innovation. They actively contribute to a full range of health, education, arts, social welfare and community reinvestment activities, with a special focus on supporting at risk youth in Canada.

Colleen Lauzier, principal at St. Lawrence School, nominated Chrissy for the award. Lauzier emphasized the fact that while teaching during the day, Chrissy was working towards her Masters of Education full time. She explained: "The learning Chrissy did outside of school directly benefitted her



Chrissy Mohammed is presented with gifts from Cinémas Guzzo, Tim Hortons, Rosemount Technology Centre, and The Big Blue Hug. With Jason Goldsmith (left) and Wendy Singer (right).

Photo Credit: Nathalie Brault.

## Lakeshore Super Sonics Soccer

### Without limitations – Le soccer sans limites

There are no limits to learning basic soccer skills, getting fit and having fun, whether it be during a soccer game or our fun-filled mini skill challenges, which help strengthen cognitive and gross motor skills. Our ambitions are to develop and fine-tune each individual child's abilities so they discover their inner athlete and live life to the fullest.

Our program is open to all children aged 5 - 15 years who are intellectually challenged, or who suffer from poor social skills or low self-esteem due to behavioral or learning difficulties.

- Summer outdoor season - Saturday mornings from May to August.
- Winter indoor season - Saturday mornings from January to April.
- Cost is \$50 per season.
- Ratio of coaches to children varies between 1:2 and 1:4 – depending on the needs of the participants.

Our **Young Coach Mentoring Program**, run by Super Sonics Head Coaches Martin and Barbara Cheetham, teaches coaches and players alike valuable life skills by sharing an appreciation for the great effort needed to overcome any life challenge. For aspiring young coaches 14 - 20 years old.

S'investir au sein des **Super Sonics**, c'est magique!

Kelly-Anne Soutter – Club Manager  
[www.lakeshoresoccer.ca](http://www.lakeshoresoccer.ca) or [info@lakeshoresoccer.ca](mailto:info@lakeshoresoccer.ca)  
 514-697-6973 or 514-943-9868



students, myself and all of the other teachers because she certainly is one that is willing to share."

Colleague and parent of one of Chrissy's students, Veronique Lemay, shared an emotional tribute: "As a colleague – thank you for everything you've taught me. As a parent – thank you for everything you've taught me and everything you do for my daughter on a daily basis. And as a person – thank you, because I don't think a better newspaper could have chosen a better person. You truly are an inspiration to me and to all of us who know you."

There was a video presentation, in which students thanked Chrissy for so many things, including the "calm down chair," being a good teacher, hugs, helping with problems, caring and making them feel special. The students also serenaded Chrissy with three songs. With sweet voices singing, "Tu es très unique, tu es magnifique, il n'y a un autre comme toi," there wasn't a dry eye in the room! They also gave Chrissy cards and flowers.

Inspirations presented Chrissy with a handmade chessboard from The Rosemount Technology Centre thanks to Principal Harry Michalopoulos, a gift card courtesy of Tim Hortons, and movie passes courtesy of

Cinémas Guzzo. Jason Goldsmith, founder of the Big Blue Hug, presented Chrissy with the painted glass gift "50 Smarties and a Fish." He paralleled the message of this painting with Chrissy's work: pushing hard, exceeding expectations and doing your best in order to achieve the needed results.

Chrissy thanked Inspirations and her colleagues, family and friends, sharing: "When I decided to go back for my Masters, it was something I really needed, not only for me, but for others. I see myself as a resource for others. Receiving this award is an honour."

Sylvain Racette closed the ceremony stating: "You are truly a source of inspiration and I'm so glad I came all the way here to see you being celebrated! It's touching, and reminds us of our mission. Congratulations to you Chrissy!"

*Special thanks to Nathalie Brault, Communications Consultant at RSB for organizing this event and her participation in the success of Inspirations. Thanks to Tim Mahoney, Linda Mahler, Tim Hortons, Cinémas Guzzo, Rosemount Technology Centre, The Big Blue Hug, Heritage Television and Jordan Swift, and CTV News for their support.*

*If you have a Teacher of Inspiration to nominate, email [mcohen@inspirationsnews.com](mailto:mcohen@inspirationsnews.com).*





Steve Bletas

Guest Columnist

## Putting my disability into perspective

While life has certainly sent some challenges my way, I have always considered myself to be a very fortunate individual. The youngest of nine sons, I was born in Greece in 1954 and my parents, having lost six children, sought out a new life in Canada, a country that would not only become my home, but offer myself and my family the level of opportunity my parents dreamed of. After our arrival to Montreal, my two surviving brothers and I were eventually enrolled at Guy Drummond Elementary School and Outremont High School (part of the former PSBGM). My life-long experience within the public school system had begun.

I have always been passionate about education, as a student, parent and ultimately, as an elected representative. My journey within the official/formal world of education began in 1996 as the proud father of two great kids who became a parent commissioner within the then Chomedey de Laval School Board. In 1998, I successfully ran for office as a school commissioner with the newly constituted Sir Wilfrid Laurier School Board, a privilege that was enhanced when my fellow commissioners elected me to the position of chairman of the board, a post I still hold.

As chairman of a school board, I have faced many challenges and I still look forward to them on a daily basis, regardless of their complexity. One challenge that I never expected, indeed, my greatest challenge, involves a serious health issue that developed several years ago and affected my mobility. This began with a series of ailments affecting my knees, resulting in a complete knee replacement that required the use of at first one and eventually two canes to walk. More recently, I also developed a condition known as spinal stenosis, or severe narrowing of the spinal column. An MRI showed evidence of a serious inflammation of the discs in the thoracic section of my spine. Combined, these issues affected not only my ability to walk but to stand. As a result, my doctors recommended the use of a wheelchair – hopefully, as a temporary measure while treatment options continue to be considered.

One can easily assume that this situation has weighed heavily upon me and that I have endured difficult moments, to say the least. On the other hand, I made a very conscious decision to put my disability, temporary or not, into perspective. The initial news of

what I was facing was devastating and I rapidly discovered that people with mobility issues have a great deal to contend with. Even in a society as modern and advanced as our own, we have not done enough to facilitate individuals with physical impairments and most locations are not wheelchair friendly. My choices were clear, allow my disability to defeat me, or not. With the help of the local CLSC, I immediately made arrangements to move to a more suitable home for a better quality of life. My co-workers and friends, too many to mention, rallied around me and strengthened my resolve. This factor was critical as my belief that any obstacle can be overcome never wavered. Tenacity and determination are the characteristics that keep me going, and this is why I have not stopped doing what I love, namely, working for the Sir Wilfrid Laurier School Board and all of its constituents. With the assistance of cherished family, friends and colleagues, I have adapted my life and continue to play what I hope is an important role not only in our board but for the English speaking community of our province. In essence, I have had to adapt and even give up certain things that others may take for granted, but the core aspects of my life continue to drive and inspire me.

My situation has definitely heightened my awareness of what people with disabilities live with on a daily basis. It has also strengthened my belief in the integration of physically and/or intellectually challenged students in our school system. This belief is based not only on what I have endured but on the inspiration I have experienced in my professional dealings with the dedicated personnel at the SWLSB as well as my personal experience with the medical professionals, CSSS workers and the team of practitioners at the Jewish Rehabilitation Hospital in Laval. At this special institution in particular, people with far more serious conditions than my own continue to work for a better quality of life with dignity and perseverance.

Being in a leadership position in what I proudly consider to be one of the most progressive school boards in our province, I intend to continue advocating for all our students as well as people with disabilities. While the road ahead will not always be an easy one and indeed, may be an uphill battle at times, it will nonetheless always point forward.

*Steve Bletas is the chairman of the Sir Wilfrid Laurier School Board.*

## Movie review: Giota's Journey

● By Jay Jones-Doyle

**G**iota's Journey, a film by Garry Beitel, explores the world of a severely disabled Montreal woman named Giota who has cerebral palsy and is unable to care for herself. She lives with her parents and attends C.A.R.E., a day center for adults with severe disabilities where she has developed close relationships with her attendees and peers.

sometimes unable to fulfill them. One such dream, her childhood dream to visit Paris, was fulfilled in 2008 when she was accompanied by one of her caregivers. They visited all of the places Giota had always wanted to see, and Giota chronicled her feelings daily with the help of her caregiver. One entry described her initial impressions of Paris: "This morning our airplane did touch down before noon. My eyes had water because I had many feelings, happy and



*Giota and caregiver Lindsay Cuff.*

For many years Giota was unable to communicate her thoughts, desires, and wishes in any way more complex than responding to yes or no questions – to the point where her parents were unaware that she fully understood them in either English or Greek. Giota was then taught to use a communication system based on the Blissymbolics system called "Bliss", which relies on the communicator pointing with their eyes at invisible numbers in the air and an interpreter reciting the numbers back verbally for confirmation. The interpreter then checks which of the 520 words and concepts the number sequence referred to on the "Bliss vocabulary" printout. This system has allowed Giota to communicate with people trained to understand her eye movements and enabled her to show the world that she is intelligent, although she does find the limited lexicon frustrating at times.

The documentary affords the watcher a rare glimpse into the life of someone trapped in their own body. Giota is an intelligent woman who expresses herself honestly and is not depressed or unhappy. She has the same dreams and desires as many other individuals, such as the wish to get married, but is

sad, because my dream feel true. I was very touched from Eiffel Tower. Little make cry in heart. I am living in a dream."

Understanding what Giota lives through on a daily basis gives those of us with even limited motor control reason to take a step back and reflect on our perceived limitations. When exposed to the smiling face of someone with such a passion for life, keen intellect, and acute sense of humour we must all wonder if we could be that strong in Giota's situation. Watching this documentary reinforces that happiness truly stems from within, and that we all have the capability to face each day with an attitude of strength and determination – limitations be damned!

*Giota's Journey will be screened as part of Films That Transform, a series of films presented by The McGill Programs in Whole Person Care on Tuesday May 15 (7 p.m.) at Moyse Hall, Arts Building (853 Sherbrooke Street West).*

*Access: 24 bus, Metro McGill. Follow the road straight up from the Roddick Gates, at Sherbrooke and McGill College. <http://www.mcgill.ca/wholepersoncare/film-series/>.*





# Part 1 of 2 : An overview

## Anxiety: The monster under the bed

By *Despina Vassiliou*

Anxiety is a basic human instinct. It is an arousal state that helps us become mobilized to react in the face of a real or perceived threat. This can be beneficial as it can help us remain alert enough to pull an all-nighter and study for an exam or it can be debilitating when we freeze and cannot speak in specific social situations. A disorder occurs when we have three important conditions: a) the anxiety remains even in the absence of a fear stimulus; b) this state has impacted our life for a significant period of time (i.e., more than 6 months); and c) the anxiety is so excessive that it hinders our ability to function academically, socially and personally.

Today we (including our children) are bombarded by technology while we live in greater isolation from the community than ever before. Thanks to technology we can be plugged in 24/7 where we can hear and see images of devastating occurrences from anywhere in the world. For instance, last year during the earthquake in Japan we had a constant stream of images that plagued us, re-traumatizing the world over and over again. We are also isolated more than ever before from supporting loved ones. Grandparents live in other cities, we often do not know or do not interact much with our neighbours, thus we have limited interactions with others – attachments that are so vital in helping us cope with life are missing. We



*The prevalence of anxiety in children is believed to range from six to 20 percent.*

separation anxiety disorder, social phobia/selective mutism, generalized anxiety disorder, post traumatic stress, and panic disorders (Magill, 2011). It is important that a careful evaluation be conducted to have the right diagnosis even when looking at other diagnoses. Anxiety can be manifested in a great deal of different ways that can include physical, cognitive, emotional, and behavioural characteristics. A restless or overactive child that has difficulty concentrating because of their many worries and intrusive thoughts may be thought to have an Attention Def-

icit Hyperactivity Disorder. A student who is so anxious that they wish to close out the world by saying no to everything and everyone may be mislabelled as oppositional. Some children who are constantly anxious and who feel that they are constantly in a state of threat may perceive the benign actions of others as a threat and react impulsively thus are labelled bullies. Other children may be so worried about making mistakes that they cannot begin their work or it takes them forever because everything must be perfect. The symptoms also tend to change as children develop (Magill, 2011). For instance children around the age of 12-18 months develop separation anxiety, whereas up to the age of eight children can have fears of specific identifiable events such as animals or imaginary monsters under the bed. Adolescents, on the other hand, can worry about sexual issues or how they fit in. Only by clarifying the cause of the symptoms can we set out a specific plan for the child that would be effective.

In a recent survey of English Montreal School Board staff (e.g., teachers, administrators, and professionals) anxiety was identified as one of the top concerning issues of student mental health. Teachers are looking for help and information on how to deal with anxiety in their classrooms and in their day to day interactions with their students. As a result of this, the EMSB held a workshop for its professionals (psychologists, guidance counsellors, and behavioural specialists) with Dr. Chandra Magill, a child psychiatrist specializing in anxiety, in November of 2011.

The prevalence of anxiety in children is believed to range from six to 20 percent. It is a very high rate. There are several different types of anxieties that can include specific phobias, obsessive compulsive disorders,

Please see [www.inspirationsnews.com](http://www.inspirationsnews.com) and go to Online Extra for the second part of this series.

*Despina Vassiliou is an EMSB psychologist. If you suspect that your child has an anxiety disorder, please speak to your pediatrician, a psychologist, or psychiatrist.*



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West Montreal Readaptation Centre (WMRC) is a rehabilitation centre for individuals with an intellectual disability (ID) or pervasive developmental disorder (PDD), which includes autism spectrum disorder (ASD).

Some of WMRC's users also have developmental disabilities, challenging behaviours or medical needs.

We are currently seeking caregivers interested in offering their home and services to children or adults. The prospective caregiver should have experience and skills related to special needs.

WMRC caregivers must offer users a welcoming home environment and may host as many as four users at a time. The specific needs of each user must be met in collaboration with WMRC employees. Please note that the caregiver is responsible for providing the home, which must be located in the West Island or central/southwestern Montreal.

**If you are interested in promoting the well-being and social integration of our users, please contact us:**

**514 363-3025, ext. 2256**







# Generosity and sensitivity define Lacey Cammy

● *By Stuart Nulman*

When Beverly Cammy was five years old, the landlady of the apartment building where she lived with her family on Birnam Street in Park Extension invited her to visit their upstairs unit. It was there that young Beverly found the landlady's adult son, who spent all of his time sitting on a chair and staring out the window.

"It was later on that I understood this young man was a man of special needs. And 50 years ago, that's what you did ... you kept your kid at home and they stared out the window," she said.

Nearly 25 years ago, when Beverly and her husband Harold were told that their newborn daughter Lacey was diagnosed as being permanently delayed with her global development, that haunting recollection that she witnessed at five years of age came to mind. "I vowed that my intellectually dis-



*Lacey Cammy with her parents Harold and Beverly.*

abled child deserved to live a life beyond that living room window," she said. "It's the inspiration that any parent should have. That our kids have a right to have a life."

When a child is diagnosed as being globally delayed in all aspects of their development, it means that they do everything physically and intellectually towards their development, but much later than the average child. "At six months (of age), when most developed children sit up, Lacey was flopping over like a raggedy doll, and she didn't walk until she was 16 months," said Beverly. But the reality of Lacey's developmental situation really set in for Harold and Beverly when she was two and a half years old. "Our neurologist told me that we better start making plans to have Lacey placed in a special school. When we were told that, I sat in my bedroom and cried for an entire day," said Beverly. "However, when that reality set in, I knew that Harold and I had to personally

*(Continued at page 19)*

## CNIB changes the future of Canada's vision health one pair of shades at a time

**S**hades of Fun is a CNIB (formerly known as Canadian National Institute for the Blind) event that's all about having a good time for a great cause.

"Thousands of Canadians from coast to coast will be participating in Shades of Fun this May (Vision Health Month) by wearing their shades, raising awareness about UV damage and raising funds for our vital services for Canadians who are blind or partially sighted," says Steve Lutz, vice-president of Fund Development at the CNIB.

According to CNIB, few Canadians know that, without protection, UV rays from the sun can damage your eyes and lead to permanent vision loss. A recent CNIB study shows that half of all Canadians don't realize they should wear sunglasses in the shade.

The best line of defense against UV damage is prevention. "Wear quality, UV-protected sunglasses year-round, even on cloudy days," adds Lutz. "Shades of Fun is all about spreading that critical message across Canada."

Your class or school can get involved! Download the Shades of Fun kit which contains everything you need: simple tips for taking care of your vision; engaging in-class activities to educate your students about vision health and challenge misconceptions about vision

loss; an activity zone; a quick list of common eye conditions; tips and ideas of activities to put the 'fun' in fundraising; a poster to motivate your students to achieve their fundraising goals.

May 24 is CNIB's official day for Canadians to don their best sunglasses and show the country their shades of fun. But you can choose any day in May for students to wear shades in school. Help them learn about vision health with fun in-class activities, from decorating sunglasses to holding a wacky shades contest. Raise money for the vital rehabilitation services that help Canadians with vision loss lead independent lives.

CNIB is a registered charity, passionately providing community-based support, knowledge and a national voice to ensure Canadians who are blind or partially sighted have the confidence, skills and opportunities to fully participate in life. Visit [cnib.ca](http://cnib.ca) or call the toll-free CNIB Helpline at 1-800-563-2642.

**For information, contact Marie-Eve.Tanguay@cnib.ca or 1-800-465-4622 #231.**

**To download the Shades of Fun Kit, go to [www.shadesof-fun.ca](http://www.shadesof-fun.ca).**

**Let us know what you did to celebrate Shades of Fun at [info@inspirationsnews.com](mailto:info@inspirationsnews.com).**

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**Changing the future of Canada's vision health.  
One pair of shades at a time.**

Throughout the month of May, join Canadians from coast to coast in CNIB's Shades of Fun. Help raise awareness and money in support of CNIB, and on **May 24, 2012** show us your best shades!

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**CNIB will be happy to support your fundraising activities in any way they can!**





# London Games set for this summer

## Canadian Paralympic Movement – A sport for everyone!

### Courtesy of the Canadian Paralympic Committee

● *Courtesy of the Canadian Paralympic Committee*

They left to fight in WW II as vibrant young men, but many returned from the battlefields permanently injured from combat, unsure what their future would hold. Sports seemed out of the question, until a doctor named Ludwig Guttman at England's Stoke Mandeville Hospital forever changed the perception of what people with a disability were capable of achieving.

Guttman, who has since become known as the "Father of Sport for People with Disabilities," recognized that sports could play a vital role in not only physical rehabilitation, but also in patients' social and mental well being.

In 1948, Guttman created the Stoke Mandeville Games – a forerunner to today's Paralympic Games – with a goal of enhancing the quality of life for soldiers injured in the war, among them 55,000 Canadians. Sixteen athletes participated in those first Games, which offered just one event, archery.

The Games became international when athletes from the Netherlands competed in 1952, then became officially known as the Paralympic Games in 1960 and have since grown to include thousands of competitors from every continent. The Paralympics are now one of the world's largest international, multi-sport Games!

Canada made its first appearance at



## Introduce your students to a Canadian Paralympic Athlete

**Are your students searching for the key to personal success?**

Help them find it during a motivational moment with Canada's Top Paralympic Athletes! Learn about their journey as some of them prepare for the London 2012 Paralympic Summer Games this Aug. 29 – Sept. 8.

Paralympic Athletes bring their stories of determination, focus and success directly to your school.

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**To learn more or to book an athlete presentation:**

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Phone: 613-569-4333 x225

Visit: [paralympic.ca/heroes](http://paralympic.ca/heroes)



the Paralympic Games in 1968 in Tel Aviv, Israel, where our athletes earned 19 medals. Four years later, at the 1972 Games in Heidelberg, Germany, Canada improved to win 20 medals. Then in August 1976, the Games came to Canadian soil, to Toronto. The event, called the Torontolympiad, yielded a historic medal count for Canada – 77 medals, 25 of them gold – and even more powerful, these Games produced a surge of national pride.

Fast forward to 2012, and London is calling. Canada has become a world power in Paralympic sport, sparked in large part by hosting the Vancouver 2010 Paralympic Winter Games, where our team placed third in the gold medal count and the Canadian Paralympic Committee secured unprecedented support for the team.

And now, the 2012 Paralympic Summer Games are just months away, scheduled for August 29 to September 9 in London, England – the same country where it all began. Canada will bring a highly-competitive squad to London, approximately 150 athletes, all aiming to make

their country proud and inspire fellow Canadians with a disability to participate in sports.

To date, Canadians have won 1,117 medals in Paralympic competition, including 414 gold.

From humble beginnings to prodigious podium performances, in just four decades! An impressive showing. And an inspiration to keep on pushing!

*Follow Team Canada at the London 2012 Paralympic Games! At [www.paralympic.ca](http://www.paralympic.ca), [Facebook.com/CDNParalympics](https://www.facebook.com/CDNParalympics), on Twitter @CDNParalympics and at [YouTube.com/CDNParalympics](https://www.youtube.com/CDNParalympics)*

### **Who are our Paralympians?**

Competition at the Paralympic Games is open to six disability groups, including athletes with amputations, visual impairments, cerebral palsy, spinal cord injuries, intellectual disabilities and "les autres," which includes disabilities such as spina bifida, multiple sclerosis, and more.





## MESSAGE DE LA VICE-PREMIÈRE MINISTRE ET MINISTRE DE L'ÉDUCATION, DU LOISIR ET DU SPORT

Que nous représentions le personnel enseignant, les directions d'école, les commissions scolaires, les partenaires ministériels ou les parents, nous poursuivons toutes et tous le même objectif : celui d'offrir à nos enfants une expérience scolaire stimulante, qui leur permette de se développer, de s'épanouir pleinement et d'aborder la vie avec confiance, quels que soient leurs besoins et leurs capacités.

C'est donc avec grand plaisir que je m'associe à la publication de cette revue, qui fait la lumière sur les moyens les plus inspirants d'aider et d'encourager les élèves handicapés ou en difficulté d'adaptation ou d'apprentissage dans leur projet de réussite.

En tant qu'artisans de la revue Inspirations, vous faites partie des acteurs de la réussite de ces jeunes. En effet, le travail que vous réalisez témoigne d'une volonté manifeste de les aider à persévérer dans leurs études, de favoriser leur accès à des formations qui correspondent à leurs intérêts et de développer leur goût d'apprendre afin qu'ils puissent atteindre des sommets à leur portée. Je vous en remercie.

## MESSAGE FROM THE DEPUTY PREMIER AND THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION, RECREATION AND SPORTS

As representatives of teachers, school administrators, school boards, ministerial partners and parents, we are all striving to attain the same objective: to offer our children a stimulating school environment that will enable them to develop their full potential and to approach life with confidence, whatever their needs and abilities.

I am delighted, therefore, to be associated with the publication of this magazine, which features some of the most inspiring means available to help and encourage handicapped students and students with social maladjustments or learning disabilities to succeed in school.

As the team behind the magazine Inspirations, you have joined forces with all those who are working toward these young people's success. Indeed, the work you do shows that you clearly wish to help them persevere in their studies, foster their access to the kinds of education best suited to their needs and interests, and develop their taste for learning so that they can reach the heights that lie within their grasp. For this, I thank you.

*Line Beauchamp*

LINE BEAUCHAMP

Québec



## INTRODUCE SOMEONE WITH A DISABILITY TO PARASPORT!



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Intercultural High School  
175 Metcalfe, Westmount





(Continued from page 15)

delve into Lacey's development; there was no other choice."

Their personal intervention on behalf of their daughter began when Beverly requested an application form for Giant Steps School. Instead of ticking off the boxes on the form, Beverly wrote a lengthy, meaningful essay on why Lacey should be at the school. "I wrote it from my heart," she said. "(As a result), the director then wanted to meet the person behind the pen; we were accepted at once."

While at Giant Steps, Lacey underwent a series of therapies, such as speech, occupational and physio. When she was eight, Lacey was accepted as a student at Carlyle Elementary School in T.M.R., and thanks to the efforts of former principal Doris Beck, was integrated within the mainstream student population. In 2000, she became the first special needs student in the school's history to graduate with her fellow students. From there, Lacey attended Summit School (without the aid of a personal educator), where she learned how to be independent and was taught job vocational skills; since 2008, she has been involved with the Miriam Home's "Miriam on Campus" integration program at Dawson College, where as part of its work program, she does such tasks as recycling and laundry folding.

And as part of her parents' dedication to expose Lacey to what the outside world can offer her, she has been involved with several special needs-oriented recreation programs. She takes yoga classes twice a week with her fellow Dawson students; she was a participant with Concordia's Center for the Arts in Human Development for three years, where she benefitted from therapeutic self-enhancement through fine arts (and performed onstage in 2010 in the group's production of "The Frog and the Princess," where she also performed a drum solo and a dance number); she also participated in McGill's Best Buddies program, where she was paired with a student volunteer for chats and social outings on a monthly basis; and she is currently a member of Concordia's Friendship Circle, which meets every second Sunday.

However, it was during her time as a student at Summit School in which a type of therapy to help Lacey improve her pincer grasp abilities with her hands quickly evolved into her passion. She was taught the art of beading (making beaded bracelets on a string) and her penchant for creating decorative, colorful bracelets of different sizes became more

than just a means of fine motor therapy.

"When her time at Summit School was finished, she came home one day and asked me 'Mommy, how come I don't bead anymore?'," said Beverly. That's when Harold and Beverly decided to establish a small venture called "Creations By Lacey," in which Lacey continues to make beaded bracelets by herself in her bedroom of their T.M.R. home. The hundreds of bracelets that she creates by hand are not only a source of pride for her, but she also gives them out as gifts to her parents, friends and her teachers at school.

"It's amazing how Lacey can take a tiny piece of string and do what she does," said Harold. "In fact, there were a couple of retailers who saw her work and offered to sell her bracelets in their stores; however, Beverly didn't want Lacey to do that, because it was more like a hobby to her."

"At this point ... I didn't want making the bracelets to be something stressful for Lacey. I wanted it to be an enjoyment for her. When she gives them out as gifts to her friends and teachers, it's her way of saying 'thank you' to them," added Beverly.

An important value that Harold and Beverly has successfully instilled in Lacey is the sense of giving back. At the City of Côte-Saint-Luc - where Harold has been a long time employee of the municipality, and currently serves as the Manager of Sports and Special Events for its Parks and Recreation Department - Lacey works as a dedicated volunteer at the annual Côte-Saint-Luc Winter Carnival, in which one of her duties is to be one of the servers at the pancake breakfast. Another vivid example of that sense of giving back occurred in May of 2003, on the occasion of Lacey's 16th birthday. An English-style tea was held in her honour at the Ritz Carlton Hotel, and a table of honour was set up for those people who made a difference during the course of Lacey's development (such as Ms. Beck, Lacey's first teacher at Giant Steps, the director of Camp Carowanis, one of her Best Buddies, etc.). At the end of the event, Lacey and Harold gave monetary donations (which were raised earlier that year at a surprise 50th birthday party for Harold, from donations made by his fellow municipal employees in lieu of gifts) to each of the organizations that were instrumental and helpful to her.

These days, Lacey is a very happy, cheerful person with dynamic social skills, who enjoys life to its fullest. She also has a strong sense of tradition within her family, espe-

cially every Friday night, when she lights the Shabbat candles and does the prayers in Hebrew. Another asset is her inclination towards self-discipline and establishing a routine for herself. The latter two qualities certainly became very helpful to her in 1996, when she was diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes. Although Harold and Beverly fill her needles with the required amounts of insulin, Lacey administers her own injections, tests her blood glucose levels regularly and with a simplified meal plan, knows to stay away from eating any foods with sugar.

"Lacey is very disciplined. She learned what her new routine was with her diabetes within two weeks. It was amazing," said Harold.

And like any young adult, Lacey is looking forward to that time when she can independently live on her own, a goal that all three Cammys hope will come to reality. "Every parent wants to see their children live their own life," said Beverly. "Everyday, she asks me 'when can I live in my group home?' Harold and I know that we will not be around forever. We would like to see Lacey settle into an appropriate group home, so that we can have peace of mind. And then maybe we can enjoy chapter two of our lives together and see Lacey start her

own new chapter of her life."

Recently, Lacey celebrated her 25th birthday. And after successfully facing the obstacles and challenges that played a major part of her life, Lacey optimistically looked back by saying "I am really proud of myself. I am a very hard worker and very generous with other people, which is important to me."

Harold and Beverly believe that a saying which they saw on a poster during a visit to the Constance Lethbridge Rehabilitation Centre defined their special roles as parents to Lacey: "God chooses special people to parent special needs children ... ones He knows can handle it."

"I believe in destiny, that things happen for a reason and that poster was there for us," said Beverly. "Yes, it was difficult and it wasn't the life we chose, but God chose us and it put things into perspective. We are not defined by what we have but by who we are, and Lacey is defined by who she is, not by what she has."

"In every person - adult or child - a weakness is compensated with a strength," said Harold. "And no question in Lacey's case, her greatest strengths are her generosity and sensitivity. It compensates for a lot."

## Francis SCARPALEGGIA

Member of Parliament for Lac-Saint-Louis  
Député de Lac-Saint-Louis



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# Inspirational Book Review

By Stuart Nulman

## Standing Tall by Spencer West (Me To We, \$19.95)



town of Rock Springs, Wyoming, of Greek and Italian background (one grandfather established and ran a successful musical accessories business, while the other grandfather ran a successful oil and gas company, where many of Spencer's relatives – including his dad – worked at, if they were not working in the coal mines of the area). With his physical difficulties aside, Spencer's dad Kenny and mom Tonette felt that they were lucky to have him, and instilled in him the value of optimism that made him believe that he was no different than any other child growing up in Rock Springs.

And although Spencer refused to wear the metal prosthetic legs that were given to him in order to be mobile (he found them cumbersome and too painful to wear after several hours' use each day), he never feared about growing up different from the rest of the kids in his neighborhood. This became evident on his first day of kindergarten at Overland Elementary School. Although he was getting around in a wheelchair or walking with his hands, a classmate instantly introduced himself to Spencer, shared his super hero figurines with him and quickly became good friends.

Spencer's optimistic, free-spirited attitude about himself carried over to high school with great success. He established two very close friendships, was involved with the drama club on stage and behind the scenes, and was a member of the school's champion cheerleading squad, and yet he never let his disability be a hindrance to him or a curiosity to others. However, Spencer did endure some episodes of bullying while in high school (for example, a member of the school's football team practically threw him off his wheelchair; an act for which he later apologized to Spencer). In 1998, Spencer learned a valuable lesson from his grade 12 mythology teacher Ms. Jasper, who told him – in the wake of the brutal homophobic murder of Wyoming college student Matthew Shepard – to "live your own journey ... Be on guard, but live your own life ... Don't cower because you feel unworthy, or self-conscious about being different. Be great. Show others what greatness can be, so they

can find it inside of them, too."

Those words of inspiration came in handy for Spencer when he left the familiar confines of Rock Springs to go to college in Salt Lake City, Utah and major in computer science. The culture shock of living in a new environment hit Spencer hard; his course load was difficult and he was getting failing grades, and he felt a great sense of isolation. That rapidly changed when he changed his major to communications, got involved with a local theatre company and got a job as a seasonal employee at an Old Navy store in downtown Salt Lake City. It was his hard work, dedication and friendly service to the customers that attracted the attention of Reed Cowan, the anchor of the local newscast for the ABC affiliate in Salt Lake City. He was so impressed with Spencer, that he made him the subject of the newscast's "Overcoming Adversity" segment in the spring of 2002. It also led to an interning job at the ABC station, where he excelled there as well.



After graduating from college and about to embark on a new life in Arizona, a phone call from Reed Cowan was about to change his life forever. He was invited to accompany him to Kenya, where he was going to help build a school for underprivileged children in the Maasai Mara region of Kenya. After an arduous journey to the area, Spencer became the subject of curiosity for the local children, who peppered him with questions about his origins and his disability. One young girl, who was impressed with his ability of getting around in his wheelchair (not to mention popping wheelies in it), boldly told him "I didn't know that

things like this happened to white people."

For Spencer, that became an epiphany-like moment for him, in which he taught the children of the Maasai Mara a valuable life lesson that no matter where you come from or what the color of your skin is, everyone has obstacles that they have to face in life.

His experience building the school in Kenya led to his hiring as a travelling motivational speaker for the Toronto-based organization Free the Children in August of 2008 (and later for Me To We). Every week he speaks to elementary and high school-aged kids about his life story, how they can overcome obstacles and how they can make a difference. Basically, the message he preaches to them in his speeches is that "it doesn't matter what color your skin is, where you come from or what your gender or sexual orientation is. We all have the ability and the responsibility to lend a helping hand to someone who needs it."

Spencer's book is an extension of that inspiring message that he tells his audiences regularly. He writes with a great deal of sensitivity and clarity, and is filled with that extraordinary sense of optimism and humour that he's known for without being overly preachy.

It also contains useful background information on the two organizations Spencer works for (Free the Children and Me To We), how to invite Spencer as a guest speaker for your school and even how you can accompany Spencer as a participant on a Me To We trip, where you can help build a school or assist with a clean water project.

*Standing Tall* is an enjoyable and quite inspiring memoir. Spencer West simply wants to convey to readers through his life story that having a disability should not make you an object of revulsion or prejudice. In fact, it should not be treated as an obstacle towards pursuing one's personal goals and ambitions, as well as taking it to the next level by making a difference for the less fortunate in your community and throughout the world.

**To book Spencer as a speaker contact Bryan Lipscombe at 647-259-3545, [Bryan@metowe.com](mailto:Bryan@metowe.com) or log on to <http://www.metowe.com/speakers>.**

In their foreword to Spencer West's memoir *Standing Tall*, brothers Craig and Marc Kielburger of Free the Children and Me To We, the latter a charitable organization where Spencer works as a travelling motivational speaker, remark how he has tackled all the challenges and obstacles throughout his life and career with a smile.

They recall one incident when they first saw him do one of his speeches in front of a large gathering of students. Spencer was born with a rare disorder called sacral agenesis, which gave him little control or use of his legs. By the age of five he had his legs amputated below his pelvis, in order to help him get around much better. When he was introduced to the audience, he zipped onto the stage in his wheelchair. The first thing he told the students – with his trademark sense of humour – was that he lost his legs in a freak accident ... a magician sawed them off!

"After that speech," write the Kielburgers, "The line up to meet Spencer rounded the corner."

Spencer was born 31 years ago in the small





# South Shore based Autism support group formed by motivated mom

By Nathalie Brault

What strikes one right away, upon meeting Audrey Burt, other than her friendly and engaging smile, is her energy and determination. This Riverside School Board teacher is also a mother to two children, daughter Manisha, 10 and son Keyan, 8, who was born with Autism Spectrum Disorder.

Diagnosed at 18 months, Keyan is, for the most part, non-verbal. "When we got the diagnosis, it felt like we were drowning. But I was determined to spin it into something positive." And that she did. In 2009, Audrey founded S.Au.S (Soutien Autism(e) Support) in Candiac, where she and her family live. Audrey felt that there was a lack of available activities for her son and family to participate in. "So instead of waiting for them to happen, I created them," she says.

S.Au.S.'s mission is three-fold: 1) raise awareness of autism; 2) offer leisure programs for these children and their families; and 3) the iPad Donation Program to schools.

The first goal is largely accomplished with the Annual Autism Walk/Run held in Candiac at the end of April. Since its advent in 2009, the event has grown with each passing year (this year's expected turnout was over 1,000 people. This article was written prior to the walk). The event, which is geared to all families and features blow up games, face painting and other fun activities for families, funds goals two and three of the mission. Last year, S.Au.S. donated iPads to four local schools on the South Shore. Audrey came up with the idea of the iPad Donation Program after Keyan received one for Christmas. They saw results with Keyan right away. "We could never go out as a family to a restaurant; Keyan just didn't have the capability and attention span to sit quietly at the table for that length of time. After we got the iPad, for the first time ever, we went out to eat in a restaurant as a family! The iPad is a great tool and has allowed us a bit more freedom and the ability for us to do things we couldn't do before." The iPad Donation Program has been a launch pad for increased media attention for S.Au.S., and Audrey is grateful. "I love being able to make a difference in these students' lives, and the teachers of these kids appreciate them just as much."

However, she feels that the true spirit of S.Au.S. is in the leisure activities it offers



Nancy Burt (teacher at Harold Napper), Audrey Burt, Myra Kestler (Principal at Harold Napper) and Wendy Maher (Special Education Consultant at RSB).

families. "The iPads are great, but at the end of the day, this is what's real," says Audrey as we watch the children playing at a recent Sunday morning free play group. "It's about the families. I see parents who have just received the autism diagnosis. They look lost and feel so alone. But the great thing is learning that they are not. We're here to help make it a bit easier." The free play group on Sunday mornings allows the children to just be - to play, run around, laugh and be themselves. Soft music is heard in the background while the kids play with a great line of quality toys, all in bright colors. Extended family and even close friends are encouraged to attend. Audrey greets every family by name, and though she is usually there with her own family, she has hired a supervisor to oversee the group and organize group games if the kids are up to it. I spoke with one mother who said the group offered her the chance to feel less isolated and that it is a helpful pathway to finding precious few resources available to them in the area. A grandmother, there with her son and autistic grandson, told me the free play group was a great opportunity for her grandchild to socialize with others.

The free swim activity offered on Saturday mornings is much of the same. The activity offers families and children with autism the chance to enjoy the local pool exclusively.

With the exception of the music program,

all of the leisure programs are offered free of charge and are open to all, even families still in the process of receiving a formal diagnosis. "I've had some families come from Boucherville and even Montreal. It's really great because we all get each other. When one child has a meltdown, no one judges because we've all been there before," says Audrey.

And S.Au.S is a family affair; with Audrey's sister on the Board of Directors, her husband as Treasurer and organizing committee member for the Autism Walk/Run, and daughter Manisha seems a natural to take over the reins of the organization one day. "She works so hard. She knows all the kids, she plays with them, and it all comes from her. We've never forced her to be involved." But for Audrey, it came full circle recently when Manisha told her how proud she was of her and all the work she's done with, and for, S.Au.S. "Does it get better than that?" asks Audrey. "It doesn't. This will be my legacy."

S.Au.S. will be offering a one-day workshop to Candiac day-camp teen "shadows" (to autistic children). The goal is to educate the teens on how best to work and interact with autistic children. The workshop will be given by a psychologist and occupational therapist and will be held in late spring before summer camps begin.

For more information on available programs, or to make a donation to S.Au.S., visit [www.s-au-s.org](http://www.s-au-s.org).

**Nathalie Brault is the Communications Officer at Riverside School Board.**

(Continued from page 1)

an ordinary hearing aid.

With the help of these devices, Samir can participate in most activities the same as someone with ordinary hearing ability. He says he finds it easier to watch movies with subtitles, but he has stopped asking his teachers to wear a special microphone that transmits their words directly to his implant processor.

The more he gets used to relying on his implants, the less he needs the skills that hearing-impaired people have traditionally used. "I don't even know sign language," he admits. He says he used to be "amazing" at reading lips, but his skill level has fallen off because his implants make lip-reading unnecessary.

He began playing piano five years ago. "My dad encouraged me to play it, and practiced with me," Samir says. He also played trombone in Grade 5. "This year, I picked up the guitar. I would like to take up the drums and maybe violin. I'm good with rhythm and theory."

How about singing, where he has to rely on his hearing—and not his fingers—to find the note? "I'm okay but not amazing," he says modestly. "I can sing on pitch." Obviously so, because he was chosen to be a member of the Selwyn House team in a recent Glee competition.

His guitar teacher makes him identify the notes of a scale by ear, just as with any other student.

He can tell the differences in the quality of musical sounds as well as the pitch. His family has a grand piano at home, which Samir prefers to the electronic piano he uses at school. "The grand piano has a natural, nicer sound," he says.

Just as with all natural musicians, it's the infectious feeling of playing music that motivates Samir and makes him enjoy jamming with the boys in music class at Selwyn House. "It's good to hear the band so you can sway with the beat and keep time," he says, smiling.





## Jay Jones-Doyle

### Summer employment opportunities

Having an education is one piece of the puzzle when it comes to eventually landing your dream job. However, academic performance alone has been shown to have very little correlation with job performance. Relevant job experience, on the other hand, can play a pivotal role in increasing the chances of being hired. It is your historically demonstrated ability to positively interact with colleagues and sustain quality performance that is the true indicator of whether you will make a good employee.

As students, especially full-time students, we are usually only able to take on full-time work during the summer. Finding summer jobs that provide meaningful work experience can be hard for anybody, however depending on the nature of your disability you can be further limited. I, for one, would never have been able to work a job like McDonald's that relies on manual labour, dexterity, and speed. This is why there are several federal and provincial programs in

place to help disabled students find summer work by offering incentives to employers.

If you are part of a business / non-profit and would be prepared to hire a student with a disability for the summer (or know of a someone who would), I recommend that you look into the Canada Summer Jobs Wage Subsidy Program: <http://www.serviccanada.gc.ca/eng/epb/yi/yep/programs/scpp.shtml>. This program allows businesses to apply for a 50 percent refund on wages if students are hired, and it allows for the pre-selection of disabled candidates. Amazingly, non-profits are able to apply for a 100 percent wage subsidy. Unfortunately the application period for this is during February of each year; however, it is definitely to be kept in mind for 2013. A similar program called PRIIME applies to the first 30 weeks of employment for disabled individuals and will cover up to \$10,000 in adaptation costs. The program is expanded upon here: <http://emploi.quebec.net/entreprises/recrutement/diversite/priime.asp>

Further resources can be found here:

1. <http://www.youth.gc.ca/eng/audiences/disabled/index.shtml>
2. <http://www.mcgill.ca/files/caps/Summer-Jobs.pdf>
3. [http://www.jobpostings.ca/disabilities\\_all](http://www.jobpostings.ca/disabilities_all)
4. <https://www.abilityedge.ca/en/job-seekers/ability-edge>
5. <http://lotoquebec.com/corporatif/nav/en/careers/students-internships/handicapped-students>

When applying for jobs, the choice to disclose your disability is always a personal one. Personally I feel lucky that I am unable to hide my disability, and as such I am forced to demonstrate how I have turned it into an asset, rather than a liability. Which ever path you take, realize that acceptance of diversity is permeating the Canadian job market like never before. My advice: don't pigeonhole yourself as a "disabled person" – if you find a job that you think is a great match, apply for it regardless of whether the organization advertizes the position as "for a disabled candidate" or not. When you get an interview, you can always mention the subsidies above at the end of the interview. Trust me, no business in their right mind would turn down a capable candidate for half the cost!

*Jay Jones-Doyle is an intern with the UN's Business and Biodiversity programme and is completing his M.ScA in marketing and environmentally-friendly behaviour at Concordia's John Molson School of Business (JMSB). He was the 2010-2011 President of the John Molson Graduate Students' Association, and was named one of Quebec's top three graduate students of 2011 as well as Concordia's Outstanding Student of the Year. He sits on the Board of Directors of the Concordia University Alumni Association, as well as on the Inspirations Editorial Board. He is an accomplished motivational speaker, having presented both locally and at the National Stuttering Association's annual conference seven times in eleven years. He is a championship-winning junior hockey coach, enjoys golf, has cerebral palsy, and is the proud father of a seven year old boy.*

### Introducing Dear Jay

*Starting in the next issue we will introduce a column titled "Dear Jay." In each issue I will select one, or several, questions or comments received at [Jay@inspirationsnews.com](mailto:Jay@inspirationsnews.com) and will respond to them in print. Anonymity will be respected, and no contact information will be provided without your consent. The floor is open, so fire away!*

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# Kindergarten and the student with an Autism Spectrum Disorder

By Tania Piperni M.Ed

Johnny will be starting kindergarten in September. He has a diagnosis of autism and his mom is making her final decision regarding the school he will attend. Mom has looked into the various levels of integration and curriculum programs offered so that his new school environment will best suit Johnny's needs.

This is a common dilemma that parents have to go through when deciding on a school for their child with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). There are several levels of integration available depending on the particular school board. A student with an ASD can attend a regular school and be in a regular classroom, fully integrated. Some school boards offer self-contained classrooms, where children with an ASD are classed together and partially integrated into regular classes within the school when appropriate. School boards have "ententes," or agreements, with outside public or private schools as well; this can include schools such as Giant Steps, Peter Hall, and Summit. It is important to note that the final decision regarding admittance rests with the school itself, not the school board.

The first step for a parent is to visit their community school and inform the school about their child's needs. A student with an ASD is legally allowed to be integrated into any school setting. A case conference can be held at the school where the school administration, school board personnel, and parents discuss the individual needs of the student. A visit to the child's current educational placement (i.e. daycare, pre-kindergarten, etc.) can be expected by the school board personnel in order to get a more comprehensive picture of the student's capabilities. A level of integration other than what the parents have chosen may be recommended by the school team, but ultimately it is the choice of the parents.



*A student with an ASD is legally allowed to be integrated into any school setting.*

The integration support is decided upon by the school board. An integration aide can be offered to students with an ASD but that aid is clustered, namely an educator assists more than one student within the school. This allocation of support is dependent on the level of integration (i.e. regular classroom vs self-contained classroom) as well as the actual needs of the student. Therefore, this support is allocated on a case by case basis.

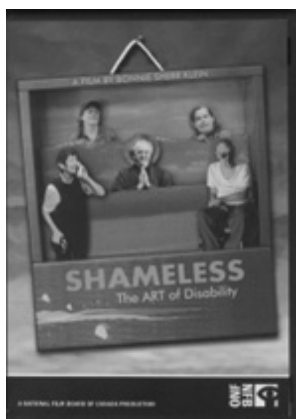
As a parent, it is important to share all the information regarding your child's needs, strengths and challenges, as you are the expert. In this way you become an important part of the school team and greatly assist them in finding the most suitable placement and making kindergarten a successful school experience.

*Tania Piperni is the Autism Spectrum Disorder consultant at the English Montreal School Board.*

## Shameless: The ART of Disability (2006)

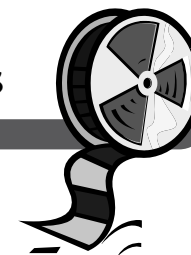
A group of disabled and socially active artists overcome seemingly impossible obstacles to find or maintain their identity, self-respect and place in society. This funny, shocking and energetic film follows the lives and daily struggles of five artists, each with different disabilities. An honest and truly in-your-face film helps you get to know the person behind the disability, their struggles, sorrows, loves and losses.

**Rating:** 16-A  
**Watch it on:** [www.nfb.ca](http://www.nfb.ca)



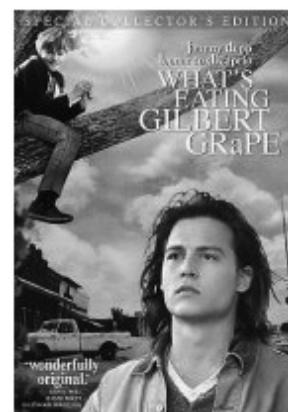
## Inspirational Movies

Andrea Di Tomaso



Sit back, grab some popcorn and lose yourself in these amazing films that feature inspiring and heart-warming characters with special needs or disabilities.

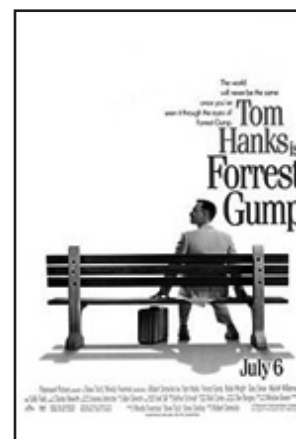
### What's Eating Gilbert Grape (1993)



This bizarre and quirky film begins when young Gilbert Grape (Johnny Depp) is forced through circumstance to take over his father's role as head of the household. He works at his small town's local grocery store to support his entire family which includes his severely obese mother (Darlene Cates) who cannot move from her place on the couch and two lazy and ungrateful sisters. He also has to look after his developmentally challenged 17-year-old brother, Arnie (Leonardo Di Caprio). Everyone seems to need the constantly patient Gilbert, whose future seems lost until he meets the free-spirited and straightforward Becky (Juliette Lewis) when her camper breaks down.

**Rating:** PG-13  
**Buy it on :** iTunes

### Forrest Gump (1994)



Everybody loves this movie, and it is worth it to watch it over and over again. This multiple Oscar winning film follows the life of Forrest Gump (Tom Hanks), a simple-minded man with an incredible story to tell. Referencing pop-culture and music mainly from the 1960's and 70's Forrest does everything from teaching Elvis Presley his moves, to opening a profitable shrimp business. Forrest lives an amazing and heroic life, never once forgetting his one and only love, the troubled Jenny (Robin Wright Penn).

**Rating:** PG-13  
**Rent it on:** Pay-per-View  
**Buy it on:** iTunes

### A Beautiful Mind (2002)



This is the true story of renowned mathematician and economist John Forbes Nash Jr. (Russell Crowe). The arrogant university professor Nash was on the brink of international success and fame after making remarkable advancements in game theory strategies and mathematics. Shortly after, Nash is approached by a CIA recruitment agent William Parcher (Ed Harris) to work in the CIA as a code-breaker. However, all is not as it seems as Nash's perceptions of reality are slipping from his grasp and he is diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia.

**Rating:** PG-13  
**Buy it on:** iTunes  
**Watch it on:** Netflix





# The role of a child-care worker: supporting students with special needs

By Brent Brodtkin

Teacher's aide, baby-sitter, shadow, and even professional assistant. Those are just some of the words that have been used by teachers, parents, and students alike, while attempting to describe what the role of a child-care worker exactly is.

In short, child-care workers, also known as CCWs, are present in the class to support a child who has special needs, as well as the child's teacher(s) in the classroom.

CCWs have been in the elementary and high school system all over North America for roughly the past 25 years. They are divided into two categories. The first category is called Handicapped Pupil Attendant, or simply "attendants." Child-care workers that fit into this group predominantly specialize and work with children who suffer from intellectual and cognitive impairment, physical disabilities, and students who fall in the autism spectrum.

The second group of CCWs are called special education technicians. These workers, who are also labelled as "techs," focus more on children who suffer from social-emotional, psychological, and serious behavioural issues. One of the main differences between the two positions is that while attendants usually work with a smaller number of students (typically one to three) in one or two classrooms, techs typically work with several children in different classes throughout the school.

At first glance, many people make the wrong assumption that the sole responsibility of a CCW is to simply make sure that the child or children they are assigned to go to class, do the work that is required, and follow the rules. While making sure those three objectives are accomplished, there are many other factors that may hinder those goals from becoming reality.

Some of those factors include the student's inability to adapt to a larger classroom setting, or simply just moving from classroom to classroom and topic to topic throughout the school day. Others range from a student becoming angry or upset when an activity is over, or a small



change in their routine occurs, to a child simply not wanting to listen to the teacher. The implementation of tools by the CCW such as social stories, visual aids, reward charts, and student tracers, help the student overcome these issues. Besides the aforementioned tools, one of the most important things that must take place to ensure that the child experiences success inside the classroom and in the school setting as a whole, is the establishment of relationships.

The first relationship that must be established is one between the CCW and the parents of the child that they are assigned to. Developing and maintaining a strong line of communication between both sides is important, because not only does it allow for information and ideas to be passed back and forth more easily, but more importantly, it helps in identifying problems, and finding their solutions that more quickly.

Danielle Roth, whose eight year-old son Nathan was diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder at the age of two, feels that the relationship is essential in making sure that her child is as productive as possible, both academically and socially, in school.

"Continuous communication, follow-up and collaboration between the CCW, the school and the parent are important," she remarked. "When we drop our child off at school every morning, we hope and trust that they are in the best care possible, surrounded by qualified caregivers who can assist Nathan in coping with his condition as smoothly as possible. Maintaining open lines of communication between both sides will undoubtedly ensure that, despite the inherent conditions of this disorder, my child can learn to adopt similar coping mechanisms in every

environment he frequents. On-going collaboration allows all parties involved to work together in concert to encourage positive behaviours, to enhance Nathan's academic potential and to minimize some of his negative behaviours."

The next relationship that

must be solidified is one between the teacher and CCW. Outside of the home, the two most important people that the special needs student will be in contact with during the day are their teacher(s) and CCW. Something that cannot be overlooked is the ability of the teacher and CCW to collaborate; to establish a plan with strategies which will help the student succeed.

Former special education technician Natalie Dolphy feels that the relationship is not just important for the special needs students, but for all of the children in the class. "I think that the relationship between the two sides is extremely critical for the dynamics of the classroom. Personally, I feel it's very important for all the kids in the class to know that they can come to me if they have any questions or concerns just like they would the teacher," she said. "It's also important for the kids to know that my opinions, directions, answers, and position in the classroom, should be respected just as much as the teachers. In my experience this is key, and having an open line of communication between the CCW and teacher allows this to happen."

The most important relationship of them all, however, is the one between the child and the CCW. On average, they spend about six to seven hours a day with each other during the week. In most cases, due to the amount of time spent with one another, a connection between the two occurs. Whether it be helping a child read an entire page for the first time, playing with them in gym class, or simply giving them encouragement and praise when they get a good grade on a test, the bond that develops between the two usually lasts long after the school year has ended.

Marsha Alexander, who has been working at Batshaw Youth Services as a social worker, and at the English Montreal School Board for the last six years as a CCW in both the tech and attendant positions, feels that making the aforementioned connection last is equally important. "Just like adults, kids take time to trust people," she said. "With some children it's a fast process, and with others not so much. If the child doesn't feel comfortable with you, he or she won't open up. That's why I think that yes, developing the connection is vital, but nurturing and maintaining it is just as important."

Obviously, to be a CCW you have to enjoy working with children; not only your assigned student, but children in general. One of the benefits of being a CCW is the fact that you get the opportunity to help other kids whether they are special needs students or not. For Alexander, this is what attracted her to the job.

"There always ends up being more kids then you signed up for," Ms. Alexander says. "That's just the nature of the job. Personally, I just can't sit there and watch a child struggle and not do anything. When nothing gets done to help the student, those are the very same kids who end up falling through the cracks because they don't have access to the resources and services they need. To me, that's just not right. The position I'm in enables me to really help the kids, and that's what I love to do."

At the end of the day, every special needs child is different. This is why it is important for CCWs to not only have patience, but to be able to adapt on the fly, depending on the mood, emotions, and most importantly, ever-changing needs of the child.

Being a CCW is not an easy job. There are some days that might feel like a walk in the park, while there are others that resemble a roller coaster ride. Regardless, it is one that can definitely be rewarding for the student and worker alike.

**Brent Brodtkin is an EMSB child-care worker.**





# Riverside School Board: Stepping up to new heights

By Nathalie Brault

There's new energy at Riverside School Board's ACCESS Adult Education and Career Training Center in Saint-Lambert and it's due in large part to a diverse group of students enrolled in an adult special needs program called Step-Up. The students in this program have disabilities that include intellectual handicaps, learning disabilities or behavioural problems. Since its inception in November 2011, it has been running at full capacity with 20 students enrolled in the program.

Backtrack to summer 2011 when teacher Ruth Thomas was approached by Dave Dupont, Project Development Manager at ACCESS. He pitched the idea of creating an adult Special Needs program at ACCESS and Ruth jumped at the opportunity. Together they visited other centres in Montreal that offer similar programs to gather ideas and develop a plan.

On paper, the program is designed for students who experience various difficulties and need a "step-up" to be more autonomous and adapt better to community life. In reality, it has come to mean so much more for the students who attend.

Ruth, who is also coordinator of the volunteer-based South Shore Reading Council (SSRC), a non-profit community organization that provides literary support and tutoring to the Anglophone community on the South Shore, has provided a haven for her students where no one is judged, everyone is accepted and the mantra is to always help others. The curriculum, based loosely on the Quebec Literary Working Group (QLWG) guide, has been adapted and individualized to meet



Montreal Alouettes' Anwar Stewart with some of the Step-Up students and Ruth Thomas (back row, second from right). Photo credit: Johnny Rollands

each student's particular needs.

With the help of technician Doug Bailey, the program functions partly like a regular classroom, with daily teaching of traditional subjects like English and Math. But the students also acquire more practical skills, such as learning how to cook and follow a recipe, how to use a dishwasher, washing machine and dryer (the Centre has a kitchen and appliances that are used in the Home Care program). They also learn social skills, friendship skills and problem solving with art, Tai Chi and dance rounding out the other activities the students can participate in.

Because the students function at different levels, some of them work one-on-one with tutors to improve their literary and/or math skills. These tutoring sessions are led by volunteers, many of whom Ruth has already worked with at the Reading Council and who have 'followed' her to ACCESS. The Step-Up team has also made an impact at the school, with a team of regular student volunteers who help out, either tutoring, mentoring or helping in the kitchen, all non-solicited!

Ruth states: "Step-Up is about creating opportunities, about acceptance, about bridging the gap between adults with special needs and the world in which they live."

The program is so popular that Ruth receives almost daily calls regarding space availability. "There is a great need in the anglophone community on the South Shore for programs such as this," Ruth emphasizes. "It is filling a void for people who don't qualify for other alternate

programs (of which there are precious few). Our clientele is very broad; we're not just for the intellectually handicapped, but also for those who have suffered trauma, who have other forms of mental illness like OCD, behavioural problems, etc... We aim at re-connecting people socially, above all else. The emphasis is on taking care of each other."

Ruth's preternatural caring attitude invokes trust, compassion and a sense of security in her students. "We've had emotional breakthroughs in class with students telling us things they've never even told their parents," she says. "Every day I see little miracles. They are sometimes small, other times bigger. This is a therapeutic non-judgemental environment. I would love to see the awareness of Step-Up percolate into other areas such as schools and community groups."

With the inarguable success that the Step-Up program has achieved, Ruth aspires to create a second class of students, with extra study spaces for tutors to work with them. Ruth believes this one-on-one time is essential in helping her students achieve  
(Continued on page 30)

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# Alicia's story: persevering in the face of language challenges

● By Elisabeth Christie

What is success and how do you define it? It can have many definitions. The same accomplishment could be seen as "success" to some, and not to others. For children with special needs, even small accomplishments are often celebrated as huge successes. But sometimes, the bar of success is placed beyond what is reasonably attainable for them. This can be especially true for children with "invisible" difficulties, such as children who have language learning difficulties.

Most children progress naturally through the milestones of language development, from babbling to first words, first phrases to sentences, and then quickly to re-telling stories with great detail, and all this before even starting school. But when these milestones are slow to be acquired, parents often wonder what will happen once their child enters school. Language learning difficulties

are not visible the way physical disabilities are, and so they are often slower to be diagnosed. Sometimes parents are told, "Just wait, you'll see she'll catch up." But for a child who enters school without the necessary language skills, trying to "catch up" with classmates can be an uphill battle.

Alicia's parents noticed problems when she was only 18 months old. Having an older child helped them quickly realize there was something different about her. Her words did not come the way her sister's did; she did not respond to her name if she was in another room. They took immediate action. Alicia was extremely motivated to communicate. Although the family followed all of the recommendations they were given, they saw only moderate success until Alicia had an operation at the age of four to place pressure equalizing tubes in her ears to drain fluid that had accumulated. She then started hearing certain sounds for the first time, re-

discovering the world around her.

There was intensive speech/language therapy for a year, but she still entered kindergarten with a diagnosis of a language development disorder, having definitely not yet "caught-up." Her parents were determined to do everything needed to help Alicia whose own determination helped her, and continues to do so today, to achieve many goals that were thought to be almost unattainable.

Everything kids do in school involves language, including making friends, participating in class, learning new concepts and vocabulary, or learning the rules to a new game. Some children continue to struggle, not only with speaking, or reading and writing, but also with math, and in science classes, where knowledge of vocabulary plays an important role in how easily new concepts are acquired. This has and con-

tinues to be Alicia's struggle. Her determination, however, has always led her to seek out the resources available in school, whether material such as a dictionary, or the help of her teachers, resource teachers, and school professionals.

Today, as a student in Secondary IV, Alicia continues to work very hard every day. She has received some academic awards for her efforts. Some struggles continue, most remain unseen. Knowing this, Alicia's family celebrates her accomplishments, both big and small. With the support of her family, some very dedicated teachers, and her own will to succeed, Alicia's language skills continue to develop. She is a definition of success!

*Elisabeth Christie is a speech language pathologist at the English Montreal School Board.*

# Megan doesn't let Spina Bifida get in the way of her dreams

● By Wendy Singer

Spina bifida is a birth defect that occurs when the spinal column does not close all the way around the spinal cord. According to Dr. Patricia Forbes from the Spina Bifida Clinic at the Montreal Children's Hospital, there are several types of spina bifida. "Each causes varying degrees of complications and disabilities," she explains. "Some of the more serious complications include nerve damage with paralysis, loss of feeling, pain, weakness, and problems with bladder and bowel control. A buildup of excess fluid around the brain (hydrocephalus) can cause learning problems, including difficulty paying attention, problems with language and reading comprehension, and math."

Twenty-six year-old Megan Shapiro has spina bifida. She has a permanent shunt in her brain to drain fluid build up and walks with a noticeable gait. She has had over 20 surgeries, including 'shunt revisions' and spine-based surgeries such as 'untethering' to free up nerves in the spine. Megan has experienced lack of bladder and bowel control, and is monitored for a Chiari malformation (a structural defect in the part of the brain that controls balance<sup>1</sup>). "I have been lucky," Megan states when comparing herself to others patients.

Megan attended Christmas Park, Kells Academy and Centennial Academy. Despite her busy surgical schedule, and with the unwavering encouragement of her family and special teachers, she graduated from high school on time and attended John Abbott College.

This feisty young lady tried not to let negative comments, often about the way she walked, get in her way. She explains: "You can't let the stereotypical norms of society influence you or make you feel inadequate. Nobody should accept other people's negative opinions of them."

Sarah Shapiro is humbled by her sister's strength. "Megan's doctors told her she would never walk," she explains. "It's remarkable how many major surgeries she's had on her brain and spine that sheer willpower got her through. On the outside you can't tell that she struggles to do certain things every day. Her strong will is why she is able to do what she does now."

Now studying Political Science at Carleton University in Ottawa, Megan aspires to work for the Department of National Defence. She works in Montreal in the summer, was a skier until realizing she prefers to be warm, enjoys horseback riding, cheering on the Habs, and dreams of playing hockey. Her ultimate goal is to be some-



*Megan and Sarah Shapiro.*

one that she can be proud of: "I want to be able to say I lived my life to the fullest, be it spina bifida or other issues that arise, I want to know that I lived it. My late cousin Neil, who was a teacher and my favourite person, taught me that."

Our conversation ended with powerful thoughts from Megan: "If you're faced with adversity, you don't back away. You have to fight. If you have a goal in mind, you should go for it. It doesn't matter how hard it is because at the end of the day, the harder it is, the more fulfilling it is when you get there."

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.ninds.nih.gov/disorders/chiari/chiari.htm>





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## Adapted Travel by Mike Cohen



### *There is nothing like New York City*

*New York City remains one of the most exciting destinations in the world. When my family and I travelled there recently, it marked our first trip to the Big Apple in six years.*

*New York appreciates its Canadian tourists. This has been underlined in recent years by the establishment of an NYC & Company office right at 99 Blue Jays Way in Toronto. By logging on to [www.nycgo.com](http://www.nycgo.com) you can begin planning your activities. Unquestionably, New York remains to be one of the most exciting cities in the world. I recommend you start things off at the official NYC information center (<http://www.nycgo.com/venues/official-nyc-information-center>) where you can be pointed in the right direction.*

**ACCESSIBILITY:** New York City is committed to ensuring accessibility for visitors with special needs, and has equipped all buses with lifts for those in wheelchairs and those who have difficulty climbing stairs. In addition, many subway stations contain elevators, ramps, visual display signs, accessible public telephones and tactile and audio features on vending machines. Passengers with disabilities are eligible for reduced fares on most trips by using their Medicare card as proof of eligibility.

**GREETERS:** Big Apple Greeter is a welcome program that connects visitors with volunteers who enjoy sharing a walk through one or more of New York City's unique neighbourhoods. There are more than 300 volunteer greeters with special-interest expertise, including accessibility issues and foreign language skills.

**TRANSPORTATION:** To assist those with special needs, Scootaround, a wheelchair and scooter rental business, makes sure travelers are totally mobile no matter where they go. Whether the destination is a cruise, a convention, a swanky vacation or a trip to the Big Apple, Scootaround features a toll-free line with friendly operators available 24/7 and delivery to and pick up from wherever you are.

Vega Transportation offers luxury wheelchair service that is safe and reliable. For more than 20 years, they have helped redefine wheelchair transportation through their customized vehicles. Along with a multi-lingual and rigorously trained staff, the vehicles are customized with wheelchair lifts, high top roofs and doors, special suspen-

sion, front and rear air conditioning, wheelchair locks and TVs with DVD players.

**BROADWAY:** The Broadway Accessibility Initiative, the result of a partnership between organizations Alliance for Inclusion in the Arts and G-PASS, offers theatergoers with disabilities the opportunity to enjoy more Broadway shows. Currently featured on Broadway in *Catch Me If You Can*, the program's services include I-Caption for hearing impaired patrons, D-Scriptive for blind and low-vision theatre-goers and ShowTrans for non-English-speaking audience members. All are available free of charge at every performance. For more information, visit [inclusioninthearts.org](http://inclusioninthearts.org).



*New York City is committed to ensuring accessibility for visitors with special needs.*

For more information on transportation and cultural venues and their accessibility, download our Official Accessibility Guide. The Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities will send the Official Accessibility Guide free of charge to people who inquire via telephone at 212-788-2830. (The guide is also available to download from [nyc.gov](http://nyc.gov).) The 100-page, large-type book provides resources and specific accessibility reviews for cultural institutions, theatres, nightlife and sports venues and tours.

To find out more about accessible opportunities for athletes around New York City, please see the NYC Sports Commission's Exercise Your Ability guidebook. Inside, you can discover how New York City makes sports and athletic activities available to ev-

eryone, from adaptive sports leagues and competitions to accessible recreational facilities. The guide also provides current information on world-famous—and accessible—sports venues and tips on how to purchase tickets for individuals with disabilities. And for activities outside of the City, be sure to check out the section on national and international adaptive organizations.

Unquestionably “the draw” in New York City remains its extraordinary Broadway productions. Be prepared to pay big dollars, even for a seat that is the second to last spot in the house at the top. Here is a tip though. Go online via Ticketmaster or Telecharge, check out the precise availability and call the toll free number so that you can get a more accurate route of what is available. While they offer to mail the tickets at least 48 hours before the show, we recommend that you either print them out online or ask to pick them up at will call. In some cases you can even buy cancellation insurance. Most of the theatres are wheelchair accessible and have devices for the hearing impaired.

min Bed. The Benjamin brand is operated by Denihan, a nationally recognized, independent owner and operator of boutique hotels with more than 100 years in the hospitality and service. It is named after company founder Benjamin Denihan, better known as “Bud.”

For many, the experience of walking into The Benjamin's suites and guestrooms is like coming home to your private apartment in Midtown. Each of the 209 suites and guest rooms is elegantly appointed with a signature Benjamin bed, luxurious Anichini bedding, an executive work station, 42” HD Flat Screen TV, a galley kitchen, mini bar, and sleep menu. The one-bedroom deluxe and VIP suites afford terraces with grand, inspiring views of Manhattan and often a closer peek at the craftsmanship of the famed Emery Roth's architectural design. The one-bedroom suites include double-paned soundproof windows, the custom-designed Benjamin Bed (king) including 500-thread count Egyptian cotton sheets, a down duvet, luxury Anichini bedding and sleep menu with a 12-Choice Pillow Menu. There is also a separate living room, complete with a sleeper sofa, kitchen area with full-sized refrigerator, iPod alarm clock/radio, 42” HD flat-screen TV, and an executive work desk including a multi-outlet station and high-speed Internet access.

What I really liked about this place was the fact we could walk to Times Square in about a half hour while stopping to enjoy such sites as Rockefeller Center on the way. Here is a tip. If you want to eat early before going to a show, the Oxford Café ([www.oxford-cafetogo.com](http://www.oxford-cafetogo.com)), is two blocks from the hotel at 591 Lexington Avenue. The menu is endless, the food great and service exceptional.

Check out the Benjamin Guest Lounge, located on the second floor. It is an intimate 24-hour spot, providing a quiet living room-inspired space to meet with friends or clients. Two steamer trunks in the rear of the Guest Lounge were reinterpreted into individual workstations with computers and printers, allowing you to check email or simply print a boarding pass at anytime that is convenient.

The Benjamin has easy wheelchair access and elevators right off of the lobby.

**SHOPPING:** If it is shopping you like, the boutiques of Madison Avenue, the iconic department stores on Fifth Avenue and the fashion-forward shops in SoHo and the Village, are the favorites. Sporting 100 upscale retailers, Madison Avenue is a slice of heaven, New York's most luxurious shopping experience. From 57th Street to 72nd, this haute strip where the wealthy shop, boasts 15 blocks of designer boutiques and specialty retailers. The Century 21 Department store at 22 Cortlandt Street has bargains galore. But here is a tip. If you are driving in you will pass through the New Jersey town of Paramus, where a Century 21 is right on

**ACCOMMODATIONS:** We stayed at The Benjamin ([www.thebenjamin.com](http://www.thebenjamin.com)), a boutique luxury hotel centrally located in midtown Manhattan at the corner of Lexington Avenue and 50th Street, with quick, direct access to Fifth Avenue restaurants and shops, Grand Central Station, MoMA, Rockefeller Center, St. Patrick's Cathedral and Bloomingdales, among a myriad of other premiere city attractions. Customers of Travelocity, one of the largest travel companies in the world, have ranked it as the top hotel in New York City. The Benjamin provides an experience of true luxury and supreme comfort in an intimate, boutique-style setting. Known for its comprehensive sleep program, The Benjamin features the industry's first and only Sleep Concierge, a 12-choice pillow menu and custom Benja-





Restaurant owner Ben Benson has never let his visual impairment stand in the way.

the main drag.

**DINING OUT:** New York City is indeed the place to dine, with an endless array of choices to please your palate. Needless to say, there are no shortage of kosher restaurants here either.

This was my fourth trip to New York City over the past 16 years and each time I have made it a point to dine at the Jewish-owned Ben Benson's Steak House ([www.benbensons.com](http://www.benbensons.com)). Opened in 1982, it is one of the top 100 independent restaurants in America. Manhattanites and visitors rub elbows with celebrities, politicians, sports stars and business executives, over huge juicy steaks, three-to-seven pound lobsters and fantastic Benson crispy hashed browns. Conveniently located in the theatre district, at 123 W 52nd St., Ben Benson's is considered to be one of New York's top steak houses. Its eclectic collection of authentic Americana fills the two roomy floors with casual elegance and charm. This handsome, clubby restaurant is home to many regulars (many with brass name plaques mounted on the wainscoted walls such as Schwartz and Grossman). Benson is a hands on owner. He created the menu himself, offering only USDA Prime steaks and chops and premium-quality poultry and seafood. He tastes and approves every food, including the bread. I enjoyed the filet mignon. But there were other tempting choices such as broiled veal chop, scallopine of veal: milanese, francese or piccata, veal parmigiana, triple lamb chops, Maryland crab cakes, broiled filet of sole, shrimp, fried chicken, chicken parmigiana, grilled chicken breast with herbed wild mushrooms and chopped steak. Children will love the appetizers and a piece of tilapia represents a perfect choice for them as the main entrée.

Ben Benson's serves huge portions, including a gigantic baked potato. In terms of salads, there are a variety of choices: baby spring mixed greens, hearts of lettuce, endive and arugula, Rancher's salad, tomato and onion, hearts of romaine, a special tomato salad and cucumber, sweet onion and tomato. The Ben Benson chopped salad went over best with our party. As for side orders, try the lightly battered fried zucchini and onion rings or the creamed spinach and the Brooklyn Blackout cake or key lime pie for dessert. The restaurant is also noted for its exclusively seasoned steak sauce.

This is a street-level restaurant and therefore very accessible to patrons in wheelchairs. Ben Benson himself graduated with a B.A. in biology from Bucknell University, a private liberal arts school located in Central Pennsylvania. He had every intention of following in the footsteps of his father and become a doctor. But when his eyesight waned, he fell back on his stellar palate to forge a highly successful career in the hospitality business. Benson never let the visual impairment stand in his way. Now legally blind, Benson remains a hands-on owner. He needed no assistance to come to our table, which included a few steps. Benson is now forced to use a white cane and can no longer walk from his apartment to the restaurant on his own. He has a voice adapted computer and utilizes a special machine to enlarge print for reading.

### *Lake Placid*

Over the course of many years, my family and I passed the exit for Lake Placid, New York on Highway 87 and wondered when we would actually visit the former Olympic Village. Well, over the recent holidays that day finally arrived – several days in fact.

On our way back from New York City, Lake Placid was added to our itinerary and I can now strongly recommend others do the same. This is a four season destination. We got a taste of the winter experience and now we are tempted to go back in the heat of the summer. I cannot say enough about the personnel at the Lake Placid Convention and Visitor's Bureau/Regional Office of Sustainable Tourism ([www.lakeplacid.com](http://www.lakeplacid.com)), who really helped point me in the right direction.

Some winter holiday tips include the toboggan chute on frozen Mirror Lake, ice skating, an invigorating dog sled ride, snowmobiling, cross-country skiing or ice climbing. There is also the option of exploring the endless Adirondack snowshoeing trails to see the forest from a whole new perspective.

**ACCOMMODATIONS:** We stayed at the 92 room Northwoods Inn ([www.northwood-sinn.com](http://www.northwood-sinn.com)), situated right on Main Street, a short walk to the Olympic Arena and Oval, a public beach, numerous restaurants, a movie theatre and quaint shops of Lake Placid. The hotel offers a sidewalk café, two restaurants and "The Cabin," a warm and cozy fireplace bar overlooking Main Street. Their rooftop bar presents a majestic view of the entire town plus the High Peaks and Whiteface Mountain.

The Northwoods Inn was purchased by the Smith family five years ago. Gary Smith has handed the day-to-day operations to his son Garrett, who as innkeeper spends a lot of time mixing with guests and getting their feedback. He is working hard at building the property. Free WiFi was recently added to all guestrooms and public areas.

The hotel is well suited for guests in wheelchairs. The parking lot leads to the back entrance of the hotel, where there is a ramp bringing you to either the lobby or the elevator to your room. Door entrances are large and the suites themselves have a nice passageway when you first enter. The elevator will also take you to the street level, where both sides of the street offer some lovely shops and restaurants to explore.

**DINING OUT:** For dinner one night we discovered Milano North ([www.milanonorth.com](http://www.milanonorth.com)). Modeled on its Albany cousin, this 110 seat, Northern Italian bistro features a dynamic open kitchen design, wood-fired oven pizzas, freshly-prepared homemade pastas and entrées using only the finest of ingredients. Located one block from the Northwoods Inn, Milano North offers a warm and contemporary Adirondack ambience. We absolutely loved our meals: a piping hot and delicious tomato soup, delicious salads and beautifully prepared entrées of grilled scallops, the best veal parmesan I can remember having (with some linguini on the side) and a grilled shrimp dish with fettuccini.

The restaurant offers a nice second floor

view of the charming downtown. You can also catch your favorite game at the bar in its relaxed and inviting atmosphere. Head Chef Ryan Preston oversees a very impressive menu and general manager David McKenty greets everyone with a smile and some Lake Placid trivia.

Milano North is fully handicapped accessible from the upper tier of the municipal parking lot. There are a number of handicapped parking spaces located just outside the front entrance to the restaurant and everything inside is all on one level.

Visit Lake Placid and invent your own perfect day. Sheltered among the Adirondack Park's six million acres, the alpine village offers endless opportunities for outdoor recreation, unique attractions, shopping, dining and a variety of fun. There are mountains to climb, rivers to fish, serene lakes to kayak and vast evergreen forests to explore. Bring your bike and cruise through the region's dramatic landscape, from quiet country roads to scenic mountain passes. Or pack your clubs and play a round on some of the beautiful Lake Placid golf courses—the region boasts 13 including five signature championship layouts. You can also attend one of the many enriching events at the Lake Placid Center for the Arts or catch a movie at the old-fashioned theater on Main Street.

**ADAPTIVE SNOWSPORTS:** Lake Placid was the proud host of the 1932 and 1980 winter Olympic Games. In all of the four seasons, this celebrated history can be experienced with a full range of activities from ORDA – the Olympic Regional Development Authority (<http://www.orda.org/corporate>). Make sure to purchase the Olympic Sites Passport, which gives you access to every one of the Olympic venues—from Whiteface to the Olympic Sports Complex and everything in between. Sold for \$29 at the ORDA Store and all of their ticket offices, the passport saves you time, money, and gets you into the venues at a good value.

Whiteface's Adaptive Snowsports Program is for adults and children with disabilities who want to learn how to ski and snowboard. First-timers needn't worry; lessons range from "Never-Ever" to the advanced skier/snowboarder. Lift ticket, lesson and rental adaptive equipment are included. The duration of the lesson is usually two hours, depending on the student. Payment is required at the time of reservation.

Fun in the Adirondacks takes on a whole new meaning when shared with the family. With Lake Placid's storybook setting, it's no surprise that this quaint alpine village offers unrivaled thrills, unforgettable adventures and historical exploration for all who visit. From museums and theatre performances to classic family amusements such as bowling and miniature golf, the Adirondacks have an array of activities and attractions for moms,

*(Continued on page 30)*





# Visually impaired brothers honour a special teacher

## Inaugurating the C. Elizabeth Tate Low Vision Clinic of the MAB-Mackay Rehabilitation Centre

● By Wendy Singer

Peter and Paul Ash recently paid tribute to their high school teacher Ms. C. Elizabeth Tate by funding the modernization and expansion of the Montreal Association for the Blind-Mackay Rehabilitation Centre's Low Vision Clinic, and dedicating it in her name.

The C. Elizabeth Tate Low Vision Clinic serves a wide variety of clients, from children to adults and seniors coping with vision impairments for the first time in their lives. The new state-of-the-art clinic is designed to accommodate mobility-limited clients and is more suitable for involvement of the client's family members or caregivers. It offers a thorough and comprehensive assessment, intervention and follow-up between MAB-Mackay professionals and their clients.

Younger brother Peter shares his school day memories: "Back in the '70s in Montreal, services for visually impaired students in public school were almost non-existent. I struggled to learn as teachers and schools were unwilling to accommodate my low vision needs." This changed in Grade 8 when he met Miss Tate.

Paul Ash adds: "What previously seemed like a confusing, intimidating mish-mash of numbers and symbols suddenly began



Peter and Paul Ash take part in the formal inauguration of the Low Vision Clinic. Tate.

to make sense! As Miss Tate laid out math equations in large print with a black felt pen, patiently explaining the problem-solving methodology, my understanding began to flow. I remember feeling very empowered. A seed was planted, which grew into a belief that regardless of my visual impairment, I would be able to succeed in the world!"

The Ash brothers are legally blind due to albinism; a genetic condition inherited from both parents, regardless of gender or ethnicity. People with albinism have little or no pigment in their eyes, skin, or hair, causing vulnerability to sun exposure and bright

light. Almost all persons with albinism are visually impaired, with the majority being classified as 'legally blind.'

Now semi-retired, these two successful businessmen maintain they would not have achieved the level of success they enjoy today in their personal and professional lives without Ms.

Also philanthropists, the Ash brothers created 'Under the Same Sun (UTSS) Fund' in 2008 after discovering that people with albinism in Tanzania were experiencing a severe crisis rooted in misunderstandings and discrimination.

"There was and still are attacks and killings of people with albinism in East Africa because there is a belief that their body parts possess magical powers that can be used in potions to make people rich," explains Peter.

1 <http://www.underthesamesun.com>

UTSS implements educational and advocacy programs that foster equal rights for people with albinism, and sponsors 300 children in private boarding schools to ensure a good quality, safe and fully integrated education. They employ 15 staff, the majority with albinism.

The brothers kept in touch with Ms. Tate long after high school. Peter shares: "She was a huge inspiration to us in terms of her humility and passion for teaching. We wanted to recognize what a difference her contribution made."

Sadly, Ms. Tate passed away five days before the inauguration ceremony of the new low vision centre. This dedication will ensure that her contribution is remembered for years to come.

**The MAB-Mackay Rehabilitation Centre offers services that promote personal autonomy and optimize social participation to the extent of the individual's capacities. Last year, the Centre provided service to more than 5,000 people, including children with motor impairments or communication disorders, as well as people of all ages who are blind or visually impaired and/or deaf or hard of hearing.**

For information, visit: [www.mabmackay.ca](http://www.mabmackay.ca) and [www.underthesamesun.com](http://www.underthesamesun.com).

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dads and kids of any age.

For sports fans, be sure to check out the Olympic facilities including the Lake Placid Olympic Museum and the various sports venues such as the hockey arena, home to the 1980 "Miracle on Ice." If you're seeking an adrenaline rush, take a ride on the bobsled run or ski or ride down the highest vertical drop in the East at Whiteface Mountain.

You will love seeing firsthand the ramp that ski jumpers launch from before flying over the length of a football field. Take the chairlift alongside the jumping hills to the glass enclosed elevator to the observation deck of the 120K jump. At the top you will find a panoramic view of the Adirondack High Peaks as you stroll through the ski jumpers

preparation room.

Saunter down Lake Placid's Main Street and prepare yourself for a singular shopping experience. At first glance, it may seem like Main Street, USA - from the local bakery to the old fashioned movie theatre to the public library. But if you look closer there is a discernible cosmopolitan flair as Lake Placid's Main Street fuses the special character of the region with the goods, sundries and cuisines of the rest of the world. As you wander in and out of this retail menagerie you may notice that many of the shops' owners can be found behind the counters. Strike up a conversation - and be sure to take a piece of the Adirondacks and your perfect day in Lake Placid home with you. Whether you're looking for a fun souvenir, rustic Adirondack furniture, handmade keepsakes, high-tech gear or designer clothes, shopping in Lake Placid offers the full spectrum of unique gifts, necessities and must-have

mementos. There are a number of excellent outlet stores; Gap and Van Heusen to name a couple.

Annually, Lake Placid hosts the The Empire State Games and a parallel event for the Physically Challenged. It is open to athletes between the ages of five and 21 in the following divisions: visually impaired, blind, hearing impaired, deaf, spinal cord injury, amputees, cerebral palsy, and "Les Autres" (which includes conditions such as muscular dystrophy, dwarfism, and arthritis, among others). This event rotated between different regions of New York. It was cancelled a year ago, only to be rescued by Lake Placid, which served as the host this past February and will continue to do so each winter.

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their goals. "The whole team at ACCESS has just been wonderful," she says. "They have supported us in everything from supplying unused spaces (for the one-on-one tutoring), the chance to sell our baked goods with our Steppin' Up Café, to supplying materials and computers. This course of miracles has been a miracle and I am so thankful."

In the words of one of her students Kenza, a young adult with Asperger's Syndrome: "Ruth's students don't like ped days and finishing class at 1 p.m. Ruth is like our mother, our psychologist, our big sister, our teacher and especially our friend."

The Step-Up students recently presented a Variety Show called Giggling Ghosts. To see a video of the show, visit [www.youtube.com/user/HRTVweb](http://www.youtube.com/user/HRTVweb). Step-Up is currently offered at ACCESS Adult Education and Career Training Centre in Saint-Lambert. For information, please call 450-676-1843.

Nathalie Brault is the Communications Officer at Riverside School Board.





# Centennial ACADEMY & COLLEGE

## WE'RE NOT LIKE OTHER HIGH SCHOOLS...

Everything we do at Centennial Academy is designed to help teenagers who are not thriving in school learn to succeed. We recognize that learning is a partnership and that teachers, parents and students can work together to shape a learning environment that changes a young person's life.

We emphasize basic literacy and numeracy, teaching all our students learning strategies that serve them in high school and beyond. We provide more time on task for reading, writing, math and science and enrich the core curriculum with athletics and creative arts. Our Student Success Team tracks the performance of each student and provides continuous feedback on a weekly basis.

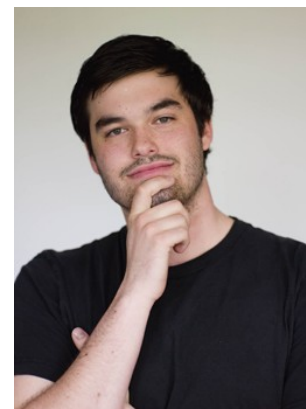
We have a "no tutor" policy at Centennial— we get schooling done in the classroom and with an appropriate amount of homework. Students need a balanced life and school should be a source of satisfaction, not frustration, for a teenager.

With our approach, 98% of students complete the regular Quebec high school curriculum with most going on to CEGEP and university. We have continuous admission throughout the year at all grade levels; we also admit Francophone students who have diagnosed learning disabilities.

We've worked with thousands of young people since our founding more than 40 years ago. One thing we've learned is that when teenagers aren't succeeding at school, most aren't doing it on purpose. Learning is a struggle and teachers and parents have to help a young person persevere and develop the skills to learn effectively.

### CALL

Andrea Burdman at **514-486-5533** for an appointment with the Head of School, Angela Burgos, to discuss what we can do to help your child thrive at school.



## A DIFFERENT WAY TO DO COLLEGE...

The stark reality is that most young people fail their first semester in CEGEP— level academic program. Generally speaking high school doesn't equip our young people with the learning toolkit they require for success at college and university. The academic skills that get you into CEGEP aren't the same skills a young person needs to get a DEC done on time and to secure entrance to university.

At Centennial College, we see ourselves as coaches, creating good student behaviours and building the self management and study skills that are needed for post-secondary success. We emphasize planning, perseverance, and hard work to get successfully through college. For example, we add an additional hour of classroom time to courses that focuses on learning strategies, problem solving, and self-management across all disciplines.

We want young people to strive for their personal best— whether that means achieving the highest "R Score" for university entrance or simply becoming the kind of person who lives to learn and to succeed. We provide students with continuous evaluation and feedback and, unlike every other college in Quebec, we insist on parents' involvement in their child's CEGEP-level education.

Centennial College offers three DEC programs in Social Sciences, Social Sciences for Commerce, and Creative Arts as well as a one year, Bridge to Science Program that lets students "left behind" in math and sciences make up their advanced high school prerequisites while studying core DEC subjects in languages and humanities. We accept applications through the fall and winter.

More than 90% of our students finish their DEC's and almost all go on to university programs of their choice. We meet in small classes in a friendly college environment where a student is always a name and never just a number.

### LEARN MORE

About a different way to do college at Centennial visit:  
[http://college.centennial.qc.ca/how\\_we\\_do\\_things](http://college.centennial.qc.ca/how_we_do_things)

[www.centennial.qc.ca](http://www.centennial.qc.ca)



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