

INSPIRATIONS

A Snapshot of Our Special Needs Community

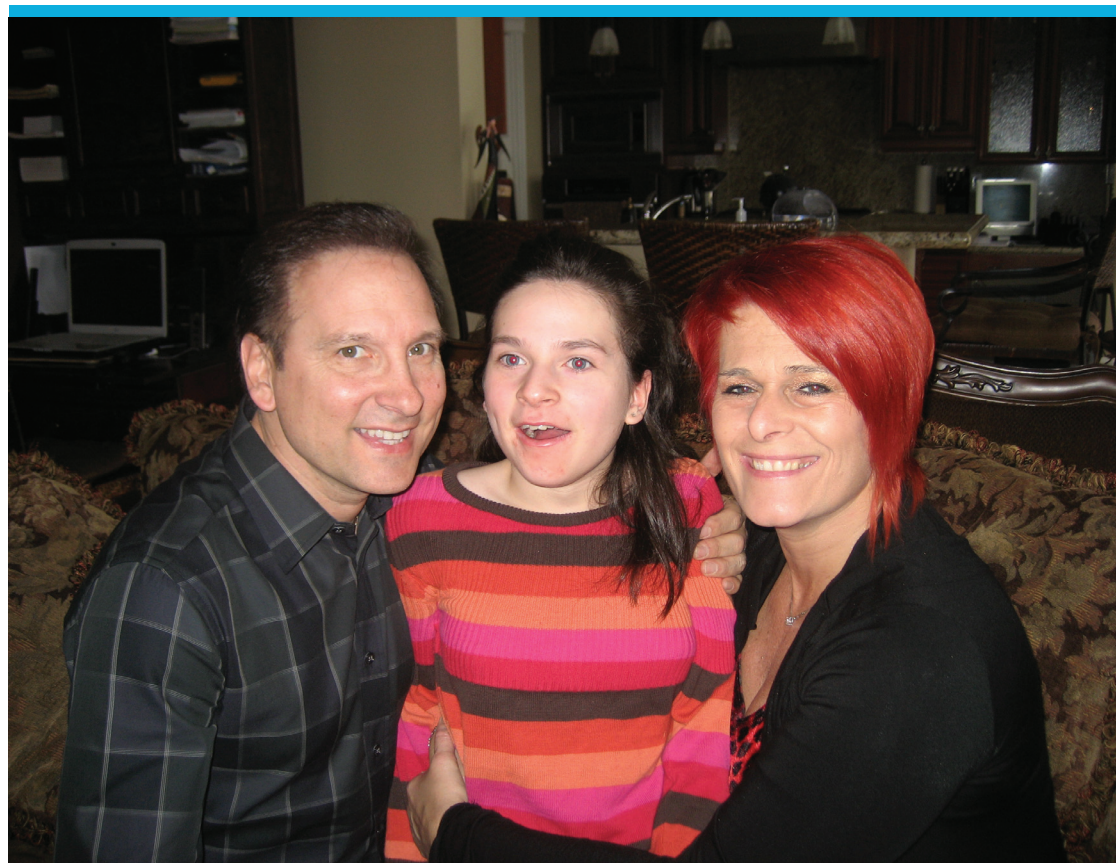


Vol. 3 No. 2

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SO YOU THINK YOU CAN DANCE CANADA JUDGE

Jean-Marc Généreux's story of love *By: Tania Piperni, M.Ed*



Jean-Marc Généreux and wife France Mousseau with their daughter Francesca. Photo by Tania Piperni

Jean-Marc Généreux is a ballroom dance champion, a world renowned choreographer, a judge on CTV's So You Think You Can Dance Canada, and a father of a child with special needs. This is the Généreux family's story of inspiration and love.

Upon meeting Francesca Généreux, her clear blue eyes pierce right through you; curiosity, strength, and innocence pour out of them. She is tiny for a 12 year old, but that is the nature of her condition. Francesca has Rett Syndrome a rare neurological condition that almost exclusively affects girls. Physical features include small hands and feet and a deceleration of the rate of head growth. Repetitive hand movements, such as wringing and putting hands into the mouth are

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Advice you can bank on™



By Mike Cohen

SPECIAL NEEDS FAIR: Inspirations participated in the first Information Fair on Intellectual Disabilities and Autism at the Marriott Fairfield Hotel in Dorval recently. Organized by the West Island Association for the Intellectually Handicapped (WIAIH), a community organization that provides services, support and leadership to people with intellectual handicaps and autism and their families, the Fair was the brainchild of Natalie Miyake (parent-volunteer) and Franca Kesic (WIAIH staff). Over 300 people spent the afternoon and evening browsing and meeting the 40 exhibitors who were present. All were enthusiastic about the event and about the need for providing such information to families. Franca Kesic was thrilled with the success of this event: "It shows that parents are looking for services and having them in one place made the information so much more accessible to them," she stated.



This young man took part in the Toronto walk.

The WIAIH is a volunteer-driven, non-profit organization that works to increase opportunities for individuals with intellectual handicaps or autism, strengthen their families and sensitize the community. Created in 1958 by concerned parents, WIAIH takes a leadership role in advocacy and provides programs designed to increase independence and empower over 800 people that depend on WIAIH annually. For more information on WIAIH and its services please visit wiaih.qc.ca.

AUTISM SPEAKS MONTREAL

WALK: On Sunday, June 19 at Stade Uniprix, join thousands of walkers from across Montreal in the first annual Walk Now for Autism Speaks and be a part of the largest ever gathering of the autism community in the Montreal area. Families, friends, autism service providers, educators, and corporate leaders will be walking together to raise money to support autism research, programs and awareness in Canada.

Activities and entertainment will include bounce houses, mascots, face painters, music, games and lots of fun for all ages. There is no cost to attend or participate in the walk that offers a festival of fun and activities for all ages including the Toys"R"Us Kids Play Zone. An autism resource fair showcasing local autism service providers and supports is another popular feature of the event. The walk is short in length to encourage everyone to participate. The event opens at 8:30 a.m. with opening ceremonies at 9:45 and the walk starts at 10.

There is no registration fee and no minimum amount that needs to be raised to participate. Everyone is welcome to join the fun – and you do not need to be personally touched by autism to be a part of the Walk. Anyone that raises \$150 or more receives an official 2011 Walk t-shirt. You can register and get more information at www.walknowforautismspeaks.ca/montreal or call 1-888-362-6227.

BUS DRIVER WORKSHOP: South Shore Montreal's Riverside School Board (RSB) hosted a workshop for bus drivers recently about students with special needs. Drivers from Transport Sco-Bec benefitted from the expertise of Director of Complimentary Services Gail Somerville and psycho-educator Guiliana Gattola. They animated the session by highlighting profiles of special needs students, programs available in the community to assist the students and their families, best practices and strategies the drivers could use in their daily interactions with the kids. Certainly the drivers were sensitized to the special needs of some of the kids they see every day on their bus, and the initiative may be



Jay Jones-Doyle

Self-perception and the disabled individual

Being a productive member of society with a disability, especially a physical one, has never been easier. I know that sounds cliché, but from a historical point of view it's fairly accurate. The societal perception of an individual with a disability has changed dramatically in the past 500, 100, 50, and even 20 years. Where the assumption used to be that a disability meant an inability to succeed, people with disabilities are now perceived as simply requiring additional support to reach their potential. That said, the responsibility still lies with the individual to make use of the resources available to succeed.

How does all this relate to self-perception? Well, self-perception within a society like ours tends to be heavily dependent on comparisons to family, friends, and peers. When we're young there are certain things which help us to define our sense of selves, such as play, socialization, and competition. When we become teenagers we generally either want to fit in - or stand out - for calculated reasons. As adults we generally strive to select an area in which we excel and turn it into a career that can sustain an independent lifestyle, eventually leading to partnership and parenthood. For a properly socialized individual without a severe mental incapacitation, the stages of growth and maturity are typically similar to someone without any impairment. This can be daunting if they try to compare themselves to their peers on the standard dimensions as they may come up short some of the time, negatively affecting their self-perception.

In my opinion there are two ways to deal with this situation (from the affected individual's point of view). Before I start, however, I must say the following to the parents reading this: Excluding extremely dangerous situations **do not prevent your child**

repeated in the future to better serve RSB's special needs community.

SPORT AND MOTOR SKILLS: Special Olympics Quebec has started a FUNdamentals program in LaSalle for children aged seven to 12. FUNdamentals and Active Start programs are new initiatives that develop the basic sport and motor skills of children living with an intellectual disability

from participating in age appropriate activities. If you ever want your child to believe that they have what it takes to succeed, it has to start at home. Let them go out and scrape their knees, play sports, and learn how to stand up for themselves; everyone else's kid does – yours shouldn't be left out if the goal is for them to become a 'normal, contributing member of society' (whatever that will mean when they grow up). Okay, back on point. The key to having a positive self-perception is to believe that you're doing something worthwhile and valued. If you see a situation where you don't feel you can perform as well as others, try to find another equally valuable activity that you can perform well in. I know it sounds cliché, but one place to start really is getting good grades. The logic is simple, and it builds into the second point. The second point is to have a genuine interest in being personable. Being nice to people – while maintaining high standards and defending them when need be – is the quickest way to make friends and be liked. The truth is that no matter how good you are in sports, you very rarely make any money from it as an adult. It's the people that have the most to offer intellectually and inter-personally that end up popular and successful.

While I have much more to say, I am sadly out of space. If you want proof that my general philosophy works, I recently won Concordia's Outstanding Student of the Year Award – not bad when you consider that the university has over 45,000 students.

Keep believing in yourself – apparently others may follow suit!

Jay Jones-Doyle has cerebral palsy. He is pursuing his MBA at Concordia's John Molson School of Business

ity through fun and positive activities. To be successful, programs require the involvement of parents, guardians and caregivers. The program runs on Sundays from 3 p.m. to 4 p.m. at LaSalle Comprehensive High School. An Active Start program (ages two to 6) will start in May at the Westmount YMCA. For information, contact Mélissa Hunn at 514 843-8778, ext 231 or mhunn@olympiqueesspeciaux.qc.ca.



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

An inspiring South Shore teen: meet Meagan Hawes

By Nathalie Brault

“Never let other people judge or laugh at you for who you are.”

These words of wisdom were written by Meagan Hawes, an energetic and bubbly 17-year-old with an infectious smile. Meagan has Down's Syndrome but has never let that get in the way of achieving success.

This Secondary V student from St-Hubert attends Riverside School Board's Centennial Regional High School. An active teen and student, she was involved with Girl Guides for many years, took dance and swimming lessons, participated in school talent shows and received many school certificates of merit. This included Student of the Term, Perseverance and Dedication for Dance, Commitment and Hard Work for History, Academic Achievement for Family and Life Skills, Perseverance and Determination for Physical Education and recognition for her participation in a recent Staff Appreciation Breakfast. She's also a public speaker, having spoken to her peers about Down's Syndrome, which helped give mainstream students a better understanding of what DS is and what it means for Meagan to be a teenager living with it. She also gave a speech to the entire school about Terry Fox. A favourite pastime of hers is writing, which she does every day. She has amassed an impressive collection of spiritual and affirmative stories, poems and essays which she'll eagerly read to you.

One of Meagan's proudest achievements, however, is working at Langmobile, an English immersion learning centre which offers, among other services, mainstream and special needs summer day camp programs on



Meagan Hawes

the South Shore. Co-founder Nicole Bianco agreed to hire Meagan as a junior leader in the mainstream camp in 2008, and Meagan has worked there every summer since then. Though tentative at first, Nicole now says that Meagan's integration as a staff member was really no different from working with other members of the team. It required a little more understanding of how Meagan learns, but following that it was simply a matter of helping her discover, develop and shape her strengths. Now Meagan's energy, outgoingness and ability to communicate with others is positively put to work meeting and greeting parents, helping with crafts, organizing games and assisting with

camp outings. Response to Meagan by the other campers has been very positive. Once some initial questions about DS were answered, Meagan was simply viewed as just another member of the team. "Meagan has taught me more than I could ever teach her," says Nicole.

Meagan Hawes has a gift; she inspires people to think big, to be accepting of others and to remind us to never give up on our dreams. Her integration into a mainstream school and her employment with Langmobile are proof that people with special needs can, and do, achieve success. We can't wait to see what this go-getter will do in the future!

Meagan will be graduating in June and hopes to attend Champlain Cegep's Adam PACE program in the fall. Langmobile will be offering a new music program at its Special Needs Summer Camp to be held at REACH school in St-Lambert, August 8-12 and 15-19, 2011. Meagan is looking forward to working there once again this year. For more information visit www.langmobile.com.

Nathalie Brault is the Communications Officer at Riverside School Board.



Inspirations is produced by the Communications and Marketing Division and the Student Services Department of the **English Montreal School Board** in collaboration, and distributed across the Greater Montreal, Laval-Laurentians and South Shore areas.

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“Génèreux praises his wife as a caregiver”

(Continued from page 1)

common. These girls typically have limited verbal skills and are often not ambulatory. The DSM-5 (the Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders, 5th revision) classifies Rett Syndrome under the category of Pervasive Developmental Disorders*. Francesca also suffers from seizures related to the condition.

Francesca was diagnosed at age two with autism, which later was revealed to be Rett Syndrome through DNA testing. Jean-Marc shares that after the diagnosis, his wife, France Mousseau “was depressed for about five minutes; then she was ready to turn the page and do whatever needed to be done.” France elaborates that it is due to the fact that she knew something was wrong with Francesca’s development from the age of nine months. “She was not imitating people. I knew it,” she says.

Jean-Marc could not argue with a mother’s intuition, so they pursued further testing until receiving the final diagnosis. For five weeks, Jean-Marc struggled with trying to understand the reality of what was happening to his family: “It was really difficult,” he told Inspirations in a wide ranging interview at his home, with his wife and daughter by his side. “The only word that made sense to me was ‘freedom’ because it was no longer freedom for Francesca. I said to myself wherever I am restricted, I will not be restricted anymore. I didn’t know where to go, what to do. Then I realized this commitment of making babies is a beautiful thing. When you do it for a purpose, you pray to God and ask him to help you. You make a family and will always be there for them, to nourish them, and to protect them.”

Jean-Marc explained how he was a happy father with his son, Jean-Francis, now 15 years old. He needed to return to that place of joy and happiness. “Francesca deserved that guy, not the guy I had become or could have stayed, bitter and asking why,” he says. “I took the why away and moved forward. Since then I try to do as many things as possible to help Francesca, and the family.”

Francesca now attends a public school for children with special needs. The family believes that she enjoys attending school. However they cannot know for certain since it is difficult for Francesca to be expressive. Jean-Marc elaborates, “I don’t know how much she can express her emotions, how

much is voluntary,” he says. “You can tell when she is really, really sad and when she is happy, you can see the difference. I do know that when Francesca hears music and singing, she loves that and becomes animated.”

Jean-Marc turns towards his daughter and when he speaks to her, one can feel love exude from his words. He looks at her and holds her face gently as he speaks in a calm but expressive tone. At one point during the interview, Jean-Marc soothes Francesca by varying his voice intonation in order to stop her from

hyperventilating and restores her breathing to a regular rhythm. She instantly puts her fists in her mouth, a clear message to her father that she feels better.

It is this love for their daughter that inspired Jean-Marc and France to choreograph a number for the fourth season of So You Think You Can Dance U.S. and dedicated it to Francesca. The senior producer of the show presented the couple with the Celine Dion song A New Day. Jean-Marc knew exactly how to choreograph it. Together, Jean-Marc and France created a beautiful Viennese waltz that transcended the competition and celebrated Francesca’s life as a message of hope, creating a memorable television performance. Recently, Jean-Marc used this experience to choreograph a piece for the Multiple Sclerosis Society. This time he combined Celine Dion’s Fly with A New Day. Jean-Marc poetically illustrates the choreography. “It involves a cage, people walking in suits, and angels,” he remarked. “Then the cage breaks and beds are floating around, because I think when people with MS and probably Francesca too, when they are asleep, I am sure they go to a good place.”

For a moment both parents are too emotional to continue, as they are lost in the vivid imagery and must each compose themselves. Jean-Marc then discusses the challenges parents face when caring for a child with special needs. He and his wife



Jean-Marc Génèreux strikes the pose.

deal with many sleepless nights, waking up to change Francesca’s diaper. Then she usually wakes up around 5:30 am. When Jean-Marc is home, he and France share the tasks. When he is traveling, France does it on her own without complaint, preferring this night time routine herself, “I like to go to bed early and wake up early,” she says. “That is why Francesca is the perfect child.”

Jean-Marc calls France a night guard, a supermom, and Mother Teresa for working so hard with Francesca and always keeping a positive outlook. He poignantly describes their life, “I always said I wanted to keep my kids forever with me,” he said. “You have to be careful what you wish for. Francesca will be with us forever and it’s not a problem.”

Jean-Marc and France accept the challenges that Francesca’s diagnosis has brought with it. This includes building a home that is wheelchair accessible, physical strain from lifting Francesca, lack of sleep, and, a big challenge for Jean Marc, driving a minivan! “I had a nice car,” he explains. “Now I try to act like my caravan is cool and sexy. I pimped it, I have a ramp!”

Finally the discussion moves towards how Francesca inspires each of them. “Through her I see the real values: to be patient, not to complain because you have a little pain. She makes me a better person,” is France’s immediate response.

Jean-Marc agrees and adds: “If I had a doubt in my head that angels exist, I have the proof. Francesca is pure. Everything she does is pure. There is not a mean bone in her body. That inspires me to try to be like her. If there were more children like her, there would be a better world. When she laughs, it comes from inside. There is pure innocence in her eyes, the way she looks into people. That would be the inspiration for me, to try to be more like her everyday and forget the desire to be greater than you are. She is happy to just be. Spending a minute with her takes you back to reality, to where we should all be.”

With that, the ballroom champions cast a look of love and admiration towards their daughter, Francesca, who is a true inspiration!

*Rett Syndrome-Dorland Medical Dictionary

Tania Piperni is the Autism Spectrum Disorders Consultant at the English Montreal School Board.



New Mobile Communication Technologies

- Providing a voice (and more!) for students with special needs

By Andrea Prupas

inov8 Educational Consulting

What could be better than having a full communication system available on a small, “cool” mobile device? Many children with autism spectrum disorders, communication disorders and developmental delays can now use mobile devices to help communicate in ways that they were never able to in the past.

Assistive technology (AT) is a broad term for any device that helps an individual bypass the challenges associated with their disability. AT tools that provide individuals with an alternative method of understanding or communicating language are called augmentative and alternative communication aids (AAC). Besides providing a voice, AAC also provides:

- functional spontaneous communication,
- access to social information,
- greater inclusion opportunities in the home, school, and community,
- greater independence,

- greater access to literacy experiences,
- a reduction of frustration associated with lack of expressive language skills,
- an improved sense of self concept.¹

Most families, teachers and professionals are now familiar with the iPad and iPod Touch. However, what is less known is the development of applications (apps) for augmentative communication, specifically designed for children with communication delays and disorders. Many apps also provide social communication options, such as the creation of social stories or visual schedules.

The iPad and iPod Touch are affordable, highly mobile and can be customized to a child's needs. Mobile devices are also more inclusive; they are less cumbersome, serve multiple uses and are “cooler.”

Here are some recommended apps for communication on the iPad or iPod Touch:

-Proloquo2Go is the most well known communications app available and provides a full communication solution for a child who is non-verbal or with limited expressive language skills. This app allows communication with symbols, similar to picture symbols that are frequently used in schools and at home. Once a picture is selected, the app speaks the word out loud. This app provides a full-range of communication options, from very basic communication skills such as making choices, to advanced communication options such as full sentences, commentary, and spontaneous communication. The main advantage to using Proloquo2Go is the ability to customize the app for a specific child.

-iCommunicate is an app for creating visual schedules, routines, visual task completion boards and checklists. If a child has difficulty completing a task, such as getting on the bus, it can be broken down into manageable parts by showing a picture of each step, with verbal instructions or comments. After each step, the child can place a checkmark on the picture to show that he/she has completed that step. The app also allows you to record your own (or your child's) voice.

-Stories2Learn and Pictello are apps for social stories (short, straightforward descriptions of social situations). With these apps



parents and teachers can create a social story with their own voice and photos that are meaningful to the child.

Current innovations in the area of augmentative communication have brought incred-

ible applications into the hands of children, adolescents, and their families and teachers, opening up a whole new world of possibilities. With these tools, parents and teachers are seeing and hearing their child or adolescent communicate in a functional and effective way, sometimes for the first time.

inov8 Educational Consulting works with children with special needs, their families and educators to integrate highly effective assistive technology tools into the curriculum, as well as the home. We are a Canadian Resource Center for Proloquo2Go. Our services include parent and teacher seminars, as well as individualized consultations for mobile applications as well as specialized computer software. Please visit our website at: www.inov8-ed.com or call 514-600-0303.

¹ Cafiero, J.M. (2005). *Meaningful Exchanges for People with Autism: An Introduction to Augmentative & Alternative Communication*. Bethesda, MD: Woodbine House.

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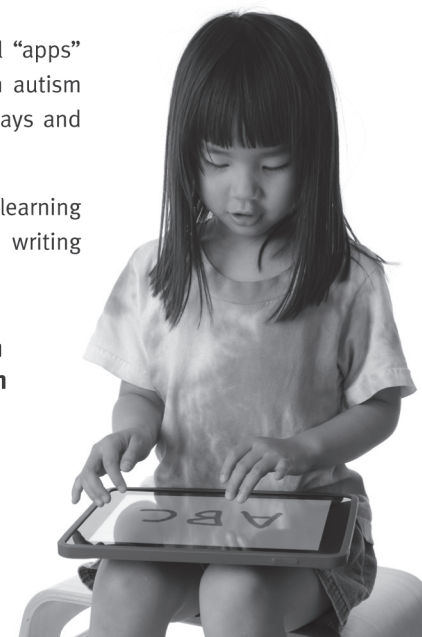
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Inspirations en français



Julie René de Cotret

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XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Mes deux rôles

Lorsque j'ai débuté mon poste au département des services aux élèves, en novembre dernier, j'ai eu le mandat d'écrire un article en français dans le journal « Inspirations ». Pour mon premier article, on m'a conseillé de vous écrire au sujet de mon cheminement et la raison de mon choix de carrière.

Il est certain que mon passage à la commission scolaire English Montréal fut un grand changement dans ma vie, puisque j'ai travaillé les vingt dernières années à la commission scolaire Riverside, où je fus enseignante, orthopédagogue, conseillère pédagogique en adaptation scolaire et dernièrement, coordonnatrice des services complémentaires.

Depuis aussi longtemps que je puisse me souvenir, j'ai toujours eu le désir de travailler dans le monde de l'éducation, tout particulièrement, auprès des élèves ayant des besoins particuliers. J'ai débuté ma carrière à l'éducation des adultes dans un atelier protégé pour adultes ayant une déficience intellectuelle. Par la suite, lors de ma deuxième année dans le domaine, j'ai enseigné en alphabétisation. Ma formation ne m'avait pas vraiment préparée pour un tel poste; toutefois, je réalise aujourd'hui, que ce que j'y ai vécu était vraiment unique comme expérience de vie.

L'année suivante, je débute en tant qu'enseignante en classe ordinaire pour la commission scolaire South Shore devenue maintenant Riverside. Après quelques années comme enseignante, j'ai eu l'opportunité d'occuper un poste d'orthopédagogue. J'ai eu tant de plaisir à travailler auprès des jeunes ayant des difficultés d'apprentissage; ma plus grande satisfaction était de les voir sourire lorsqu'ils réussissaient.

J'ai eu mon premier garçon et, quelques années plus tard, mon deuxième garçon venait au monde. Bien que j'avais fait mes études en adaptation scolaire et que j'avais acquis quelques années d'expérience, je

n'avais pas les outils pour faire face à ce qui m'attendait. En effet, cinq jours après la naissance de mon cadet, nous apprenions la nouvelle qu'il était atteint d'une maladie génétique très rare. Dès son jeune âge, nous avons consulté plusieurs spécialistes afin de lui offrir toutes les chances possibles de se développer de manière optimale.

Nous avons consulté médecins, physiothérapeutes, ergothérapeutes, orthophonistes, nutritionnistes... Durant les premières années de sa vie, nous étions à l'hôpital toutes les semaines afin de rencontrer des spécialistes. Comme il s'agissait d'une maladie méconnue et que la recherche dans ce domaine était peu avancée, il nous a fallu user d'initiative et de créativité afin de composer avec la diète prescrite qui était très restrictive. À force de lire sur le sujet, nous avons été en mesure d'apporter certaines modifications à la diète proposée afin que la vie de notre fils soit un peu plus normale. Avec l'aide des spécialistes et notre implication comme parents, nous pouvons affirmer que nous avons réussi puisque mon fils se porte très bien en dépit de la sévérité de sa maladie.

Malgré la situation, je réalise aujourd'hui que mon fils fut mon meilleur professeur. J'ai appris certes sur le développement de la motricité, le développement du langage et j'en passe, mais ce que mon fils m'a permis d'apprendre c'est que la réussite est propre à chacun. Les enfants malades ont un sixième sens, une grande sensibilité et une empathie envers les autres qu'ils sont en mesure de partager si nous sommes ouverts et attentifs. Les côtoyer quotidiennement nous apprend à remettre nos petits problèmes de la vie en perspective. Il est certain que l'on rêve tous comme parents que nos enfants réussissent comme le veut la norme mais qu'est ce que la réussite autre que l'accomplissement de soi? Mon garçon m'a permis de mieux comprendre les parents qui nous disent combien l'heure des devoirs peut être difficile et exigeante.

Depuis plusieurs années, je vis les deux rôles; tantôt celui de l'intervenante scolaire

(Continued on page 11)

AQEIPS : 20 ans au service de l'égalisation- Chargée de projets de l'AQEIPS

Par Lucette Koffi

Il y a 20 ans, naissait l'Association québécoise des étudiants ayant des incapacités au postsecondaire (AQEIPS). Elle a vu le jour grâce à l'initiative de Lucie Lemieux qui a voulu créer un organisme d'aide aux étudiants et étudiantes dans la poursuite de leurs études universitaires.

En effet, en 1991, elle a eu un accident qui bouleversa sa vie. Utilisant désormais un fauteuil roulant, elle a dû abandonner son travail parce qu'il n'y avait pas d'ascenseur pour s'y rendre. De retour sur les bancs, elle constate que les accommodements offerts aux personnes en situation de handicap ne sont pas suffisants ou encore ne sont pas adéquats. L'information sur les ressources disponibles ne circule pas comme elle le devrait. Elle n'est pas accessible à tous. Par ailleurs, elle remarque le manque d'implication des étudiants et étudiantes en situation de handicap dans les mouvements associatifs étudiants et collégiaux. De plus, les personnes-ressources au sein des établissements d'enseignements sont à cours de moyens et ne savent pas comment aider les personnes en situation de handicap dans la réussite de leur cursus scolaire.

Tous ces besoins émis, non seulement par les étudiants et étudiantes handicapés mais aussi par les intervenant(e)s des institutions scolaires; lors d'une tournée provinciale (Rimouski, Chicoutimi, Québec, Montréal), ont poussé le gouvernement à allouer un budget à la Confédération des organismes provinciaux de personnes handicapées du Québec (COPHAN) pour créer un organisme qui serait le lien entre les étudiant(e)s et les institutions scolaires et gouvernementales. Le 20 Avril de cette même année, était créée l'AQEIPS (Association québécoise des étudiantes et étudiants handicapés au postsecondaire).

Vingt ans après, devenue l'AQEIPS,

l'association continue sa mission qui est de promouvoir l'égalité des chances en éducation postsecondaire des étudiantes et étudiants en situation de handicap. L'AQEIPS s'appuie sur les principes selon lesquels les personnes en situation de handicap ont droit à un milieu libre de discrimination et qui favorise le développement de tout leur potentiel; et aussi sur le fait que l'accès à l'enseignement supérieur est un droit pour tout individu y compris pour les personnes handicapées. Dans la réalisation de cette mission, l'AQEIPS s'est fixée comme objectif, de promouvoir la défense des droits des personnes handicapées (toute tendance confondue), de défendre les mesures d'intégration des personnes ayant des incapacités, des troubles d'apprentissage ou des problèmes de santé mentale, de diffuser l'information nécessaire à ses membres pour les encourager à poursuivre leurs études, d'encourager la création d'association d'étudiants ayant des incapacités dans chaque institution d'enseignement postsecondaire publique et privée et enfin d'assurer la représentation de ces associations.

L'AQEIPS fait aujourd'hui face aux demandes d'une nouvelle génération, qui n'a pas connu les mêmes défis que ses prédécesseurs. L'AQEIPS veut désormais conscientiser la nouvelle génération sur le fait que les acquis d'aujourd'hui sont le fruit des batailles d'hier. Elle se doit de continuer à porter, haut et loin, le flambeau de la défense des droits des personnes en situation de handicap. La relève doit être assurée pour garantir l'accès à l'éducation postsecondaire pour les générations futures.

L'AQEIPS est une association provinciale bilingue de défense de droits. Joignez vous à nous! Votre voix compte! Pour avoir plus d'informations sur nos activités et pour nous contacter, visitez le site www.aqeips.qc.ca ou bien, appelez-nous au 514-499-9451 (Montréal) ou sans frais au 1-866-959-9451



"Caregiver of Inspiration"

Sherri MacCallum is "The Behaviour Whisperer" at Lakeside Academy

By Wendy Singer

Inspirations has introduced two special recognition awards: the Teacher of Inspiration and the Caregiver of Inspiration. The editorial board is pleased to announce the first Caregiver of Inspiration recipient.

Sherri MacCallum began sculpting her career at the ripe age of three when her deaf cousin began learning sign language. Naturally wanting to communicate with her, Sherri learned how to sign as well. Before becoming a special education technician at Lakeside Academy of the Lester B. Pearson School Board 12 years ago, Sherri directed Camp Massawippi (The M.A.B. Mackay Centre summer camp), worked in the Resource Department at John Grant High School and was an oral interpreter for the English Montreal School Board.

The busy Lakeside Academy Resource Team individually caters to some 200 students with intellectual disabilities, 40 of which are high needs. Their goal is to have students reading at a Grade 4 level, and provide training and opportunity for students to become productive members of society. The holder of a Bachelor of Arts Degree, with a major in psychology, Sherri believes this team's success is due to their dedication and explains, "When there's a problem, everyone sits down and fixes it. Everyone puts out so much love, the kids want to come back."



Sherri MacCallum

An average day for Sherri includes breakfast for needy students (sponsored by the Generations Foundation), integrated gym, Science and French classes, and a homework club for any of Lakeside Academy's 600 students. Interspersed throughout the daily bustle is the continuous juggling of issues that arise. Sherri passionately insists on integration and exploration, involving students in countless projects from compost-

ing, building maintenance, life skills program, camping trips and the school-wide Science Fair. She also mentors special care counseling stagiaires from various colleges.

In nominating Sherri for Caregiver of Inspiration, Sandra Mill-Phillips, Resource Teacher at Lakeside Academy, and Bobbie Variantzas, Child Care Worker at Hampstead School, describe the many hats she

wears as leader, organizer, programmer, grant writer, mentor, trusted colleague and friend. They write: "Sherri is very special. Staff and students depend on her tireless dedication. Her intuitive teaching ability is evident in her planning for groups of Special Needs students with diverse learning styles, interests and abilities."

According to Principal Michelle Harper, students trust and love this bubbly, energetic and intuitive woman. She says, "Sherri has unlimited patience and goes above and beyond, handling difficult situations, calming kids down, and leaving them with their respect and dignity. What she gives to kids makes a true difference in their lives. They're better, fuller, happier human beings because of her influence."

While painting a papier maché volcano as part of a combined literacy and geology project, students Nana, Kyle, Alex and Raven were quick to corroborate these statements, agreeing that Sherri is fun, and never boring. Seventeen-year-old Kyle adds: "She's a good listener and understands us, and if she promises something, she does it. She never lets us down." In turn, Sherri strives to bring out the best in her students, stressing that there is so much good in all of them.

A mother of three, Sherri believes that patience, listening skills, a positive outlook, a sense of humour, and not taking things too seriously are all key to a job well done. She dreams of starting an "at risk" school designed to help kids get jobs. She explains, "CEGEP is not the reality for a lot of kids, and it doesn't have to be. Not everyone is suited for school. That's bad if they're wandering the streets. It's not bad if we can get them jobs."

Resource Teacher Luba Kolomychky refers to Sherri as the "behaviour whisperer," and concludes, "This award couldn't fall on a better person. Inspiration is the right word for Sherri."

Sherri will be recognized at an awards ceremony in May and presented with gifts created by the Rosemount Technology Centre students, and The Big Blue Hug.

Nominations are now being accepted for the Teacher of Inspiration award at mcohen@inspirationsnews.com.

Francine Gravel awarded "Teacher of Inspiration" Award

By Wendy Singer

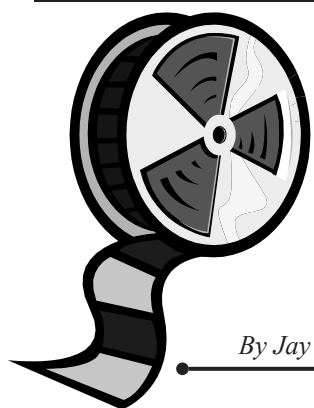


Inspirations was pleased to honour the first "Teacher of Inspiration," Francine Gravel, at a recent English Montreal School Board Council of Commissioners meeting. An inspiring evening began when Francine, who teaches Cycles I, II and III math at Philip E. Layton School for the Blind (at the MAB-Mackay Rehabilitation Centre) arrived, surrounded by family and colleagues. Mike Cohen, the editor of Inspirations, set the tone, describing Francine as an amazing teacher who inspires her students and makes the most of life every day.

Rosemont Technology Centre Vice-Principal Danica Lewington and Big Blue Hug founder Jason Goldsmith (both pictured with Francine) presented Francine with a hand-made wine cabinet and a glass art plaque of a drawing titled "We."

You can see all of the details at http://www.inspirationsnews.com/pages/Inspirations_Teacher.html.

Nominations are now being accepted for the next Teacher of Inspiration Award. Please email us at mcohen@inspirationsnews.com and describe how this individual has played an important role in the life of students.



By Jay Jones-Doyle

Inspirational Movie Review: The King's Speech

As many of you know, *The King's Speech* recently won four Oscars, including Best Motion Picture of the Year, and was nominated for a total of 12 awards.

For the few who haven't seen the movie, it chronicled the battle fought by King George VI of Britain against self-doubt. This self-doubt was routed in the fact that he stuttered, and as a result, questioned his ability to deliver public speeches – something a King must do to larger assemblies than most. Without ruining the movie for those who've yet to watch, it focuses on the interaction between the King (Colin Firth) and his somewhat unorthodox speech therapist

(Geoffrey Rush) as they progress through therapy and later conquer gargantuan feats of public speaking.

The Oscar victories speak for themselves – this movie was a triumph on all counts: from the acting to the cinematography, from the directing to the emotionally gripping nature of the story. Perhaps most important was the masterful acting required of Colin Firth in his depiction of a man with a stutter, a man who felt that his speech would prevent him from achieving his enormous potential. Had Firth's acting not accurately portrayed both the physical dimensions of the disorder, and its prevalent negative emotional and psychological ramifications, the global stuttering community might have spoken out and the film consequently might not have achieved the accolades it has so deserved.

Firth's challenge was a formidable one. Stuttering, or any non-visually identifiable disability, can cause the affected individual to avoid interpersonal interaction for fear

of being negatively judged. Speech impediments are particularly tricky, as fluent speech is expected when individuals meet for the first time. Knowing that individuals expect fluent speech can be a daunting prospect when deciding to open the lines of communication, as sometimes negative judgments will ensue. Almost equally as anxiety provoking is the knowledge that when, and on what words or sounds, one may stutter is similarly unpredictable. The combined unpredictability of possibly stuttering and possibly being negatively judged usually results in heightened levels of pre-speech tension and anxiety. Ironically, this can compound the probability of stuttering even further. Firth's performance encapsulated this complex and oftentimes potentially limiting interplay of physical and cognitive variables, providing the audience with a clear representation of a predicament that afflicts more than 68 million people worldwide.

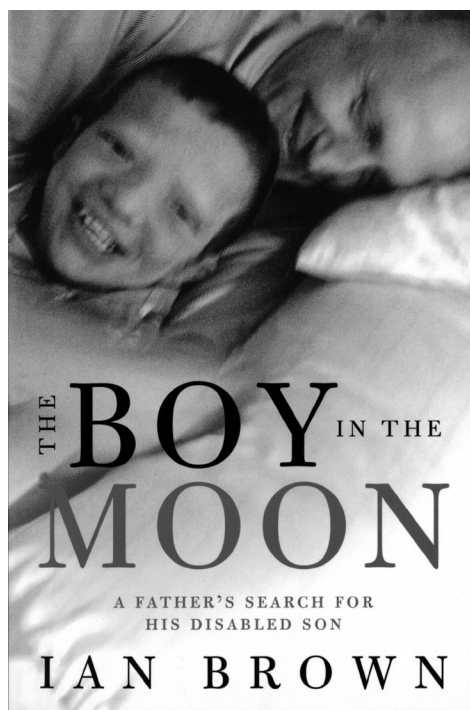
What I enjoyed most about the movie was not so much how Firth's character became

more fluent through learning techniques for more clearer speech, but rather how his fluency improved when he began to believe in his ability to lead. Being a great communicator does not necessitate being fluent, but it is my opinion that being a great leader does require being a great communicator. The power to inspire a people will always rest in the hands of those who recognise the importance of, and nurture the ability to, connect with their target audience on a level beyond words. This capacity can be honed by virtually anybody, but always starts with the same first step. Can you guess what that is?

Jay Jones-Doyle has attended and presented workshops at six National Stuttering Association (NSA) annual conferences. The NSA's annual conference, which has grown to an attendance of over 600 people, is a four-day event that brings together people who stutter from all across the United States, Canada, and beyond.

TRAVELWAY

RIGHT BESIDE YOU



By Stuart Nulman

Having a child with a severe disability – and learning about and accepting that disability in everyday life – takes a lot of courage and sacrifice for every member of the family involved. It also takes a lot of courage and sacrifice for a parent to embark upon a personal journey to find out more about the disability that affects their child and why it happens, as well as alternative means to make sure their child is properly looked after, in order to have a life filled with dignity and respect.

That was the case with Globe and Mail journalist Ian Brown, whose son Walker was born with a rare genetic mutation called Cardiofaciocutaneous (CFC) Syndrome. He

Inspirational Book Review

The Boy in the Moon : A Father's Search for His Disabled Son by Ian Brown (Vintage Canada, \$21)

chronicles life with Walker and his quest to discover what causes CFC Syndrome in his critically-acclaimed memoir *The Boy in the Moon*.

One of Brown's first dilemmas with CFC after Walker was diagnosed was its rarity and mysteriousness. In North America, CFC occurs in one in every 300,000 to one million births. When the syndrome was first described publicly in 1979, there were only three known cases in the world (which has now increased to approximately 300). The symptoms and characteristics – both physically and mentally – range from wide set eyes, no eyebrows, sparse curly hair, a large head, as well as learning difficulties, hearing loss, intellectual and language impairment.

The book is divided into two parts. The first part deals with Brown and his family's super human efforts to raise and take care of Walker at home during his first eight years of life (which also required the help of an extraordinary nanny named Olga). It involved feeding and bathing him, changing his diapers and moving him from his crib. As well, they had to deal with Walker's compulsion to constantly punch himself in the face until he yelled out in pain. It got to the point where Brown had to manufacture from scratch a special device he called "arm cans" (which are made from empty Pringles potato chip canisters), so that it would prevent Walker from bending his elbows and deliver more self-inflicted blows to his face.

The second part of the book deals with Brown's journey of self-discovery about CFC and different ways the severely disabled are looked after, especially outside the boundaries of the public health and social welfare systems. The turning point that sparked Brown's journey was the difficult decision he and his wife Johanna made in June of 2005 to place Walker in a special group home with a full-time, round-the-clock nursing staff (and where, in short time, Walker flourishes).

Brown begins his journey by travelling across North America to meet with families who have children with CFC (some with more mild cases and more severe cases than Walker), and find out how they manage to look after them, and always ask themselves the burning question of who will take care of their children after they die. He then travels to Europe, where he discovers L'Arche, a series of innovative, faith-based group homes where their disabled residents are humanely taken care of and most of all, treated with respect and dignity. He then meets with Jean Vanier, the internationally-renowned humanitarian (and son of the late Governor-General Georges Vanier), who gives Brown a lot of revelations when it comes to the world of the disabled.

Brown writes : "Every time we meet someone who is severely handicapped, Jean Vanier believes, they ask two questions - Do you consider me human? Do you love me? The more we meet the handicapped on their

own ground, Vanier believes, the more our answers evolve ... and 'discover that, by becoming close to disabled people and entering an authentic relationship with them, they transform us.'"

Brown also does a great deal of research through the Internet and interviews several medical experts to unearth the causes of CFC and why it's such a mystery to the medical and scientific communities (and it's during that period when the gene that causes CFC is isolated).

As a result of this factual – and somewhat spiritual – quest, Brown discovers something simple, yet quite important. Throughout the ordeal he and his family went through looking after Walker and how CFC, like any other disability or disease, can affect everyone involved, Brown learns Walker is still his son, and although there are still a lot of unanswered questions about CFC, he should accept Walker for who he is and love him the way a father should.

The Boy in the Moon is more than just a "how-we-cope" type of memoir. Written with a great deal of warmth and clarity, it gives a painful, yet eye-opening look at the severely disabled and their families, and with faith and humanity (not to mention more research), there are many ways to give them the proper care they need ... and deserve, in order to have quality of life.

Action Ortho Santé : working from head to toe

By Daniel Smajovits

Ian Finlay's career in Orthotics began not by a fluke or a lucky break, but by sheer necessity. He needed a job. Fast forward nearly 33 years, and it's safe to say that Finlay has found what he was looking for: a passion.

As the part owner of Action Ortho Santé in LaSalle, Finlay has turned his humble beginnings into a career of quite literally moulding young minds and helping children overcome physical problems to ensure they too have a successful future.

"I developed a passion for this very quickly," said Finlay. "It's a lot of interesting work and I especially enjoy working with children."

"Most of my practice is paediatrics, with specialities in plagiocephaly, which is a slight deformity of the skull bones when a child is growing very young. If a child's head is not reshaping on its own, we can use helmets to help it along and reshape the bones of the head. We also treat children and young adults who suffer from scoliosis, otherwise known as the curvature of the spine. A lot of patients, especially adolescents come here with that. When it occurs in ado-

lescence, it can progress very quickly and that's when we try to maintain it to prevent it from getting any worse."

Between Finlay and his partner, Yvon Leduc, the two work from head to toe, helping patients of all ages. In addition to the paediatric work by Finlay, Leduc deals mostly with adults who have suffered from a stroke, polio or post-polio syndrome, as well as Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS or Lou Gehrig's Disease) and Multiple Sclerosis (MS).

(Continued on page 10)



Ian Finlay (left) and his partner Yvon Leduc



(Continued from page 9)

However, Finlay's half of the business does require some extra tough skin as he has to be able to work with children. "The younger they are, the less they are going to understand what you're doing," he said. "Some, with taking measurements for their helmets when we have to cast their head, have no idea what we're doing. The vast majority get upset, they cry a little bit. It's not because it hurts, but because it's strange to them, it's something they never experienced before."

Fortunately, while the children do need the extra help from Action Ortho Santé to get better, Finlay's positive attitude is highly contagious. His hope resonates onto the parents and then onto the children. The promise he provides through his help and the utmost in care ensures that the children will discover a new normal in which a bright future is undoubtedly in the cards.

"[To a certain extent] most of the children are happy-go-lucky kids," said Finlay. "For the kids with very involved difficulties, to them, their difficulties are normal. Most of them are very happy, but when we help them out even more, hopefully make them even happier."

While some of the children might not understand the treatments they are receiving, their parents definitely do. It is for that reason that the relationship which develops between Finlay and the parents is of the utmost importance.

While more than three decades of experience gives him a sense of confidence, Finlay still understands that each case and relationship is different. As such, the time spent with both parents and children is invaluable, as he strives to go beyond the Orthotist-patient relationship, and convey the very real sense that both parties are working together throughout the healing process.

"My relationship with the parents has to be very good because if the parents do not trust you, they're not going to be here," said Finlay. "I talk to them, and definitely have the patience to discuss everything with them and answer their questions. That's the most important aspect of our relationship because it fosters a sense of trust. [Trust cannot be taught or learned] and if the parents trust you and become comfortable with you, everything else will go a lot smoother."

Ian Finlay can be reached at 514-595-7203.



Inspirations launches new website

Inspirations has launched a new website. Please log on to Inspirationsnews.com, which contains all of our online editions, a special needs database, and much more. You will find photos, information on how to advertise, summer activity listings, news clippings and updates on our Teacher and Caregiver of Inspiration recognition awards. We will post your events and accomplishments in our Community News section and publish special stories between editions. The website was designed by Victoria Dobbin and Yibing Shen, with editorial assistance from Wendy Singer. Victoria is a graduate of Illustration and Design at Dawson College. She just completed the Web Technology Program at John Abbott College and part of her internship responsibilities was working on this project with Yibing, the webmaster for the English Montreal School Board.

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POWER OF ONE

Sunday 6:00

MONTREAL'S WATCHING

Paul Karwatsky & Tarah Schwartz

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Grants for projects completed by special needs students promote creativity and autonomy

By Daniela Scoppa

Being able to give students with special needs a skill set that will serve them well once they have finished school, is a goal all educational institutions strive for and achieve. A unique provincial contest allows special needs students to be part of a team and work towards strengthening their life skills.

The Quebec Entrepreneurship Contest (QEC) is an annual competition which is open to any educational institution recognized by the Ministry of Education, Leisure and Sports (MELS). According to the criteria outlined in the rules for the QEC, projects must meet a need of a target group or respond to a community issue and must be original and innovative. Students who partake in the contest have to create a product, service or event and then market it. The contest has many different categories, one being Secondary School – Special Education. The competition is judged both regionally and provincially with grants being given to winners.

Every edition of the contest has seen many special needs high school students within the Lester B. Pearson School Board (LBPSB) develop creative projects that have won many awards. Students have created cookbooks and sold them in a fundraiser, have put together a bake sale at Christmas with all money raised being used to purchase Christmas baskets for the less fortunate, have taken care of the gardens around their school, the list of projects is endless.

The benefits of these projects for special needs students are also endless. “The students learn independence and they gain



Proud students and teachers at Pierrefonds Comprehensive High School receive an award for their ‘Recycle a Bicycle’ project

many work and life skills from doing these projects,” said Julie Royal, Administrative Assistant for the Pearson Interactive Community Partnership Program and regional contest coordinator for the LBPSB.

Two years ago, special needs students at Pierrefonds Comprehensive High School created a program where they would collect old bikes, fix and restore them and donate them to less privileged children. The “Recycle a Bicycle” project won an award at the regional level of the contest, which garnered the students a \$500 grant but also validated all the work done by the students. “When I presented the students with their

award, they were so proud of themselves,” said Royal. “These projects really boost the students’ self-esteem.”

Last year, students at Lakeside Academy in Lachine put together a unique initiative, called “Soup in Jar.” Students had to find healthy soup recipes, buy the ingredients, put them in mason jars, decorate the jars and sell them for a profit. The students’ goal was to educate teenagers about eating nutritious foods on a budget. The project won a prize and was so successful that students have put together a second edition this year, called “More Soup in a Jar,” which features healthy brownies in a jar as well as different

(Continued from page 6)

qui doit s’immiscer dans une situation litigieuse pour un élève, et dans d’autres moments, je suis le parent qui doit faire face aux limites de son enfant. Sachez que même si je suis dans le domaine, je ne trouve jamais facile de me retrouver dans cette situation. J’en sors parfois un peu meurtrie mais je reste si fière de mon garçon, de ses efforts quotidiens et du bel être qu’il est devenu et de l’adulte qu’il deviendra.

Pendant des années, j’ai trouvé difficile d’accepter que mon fils ne réussirait jamais comme les autres enfants à cause de son handicap. Maintenant, j’apprends à vivre ses petits succès quotidiens. Nous savons qu’il aura sa propre réussite et nous serons auprès de lui pour l’accompagner.

Aux parents qui vivent au quotidien une situation similaire, je vous dis : « bravo! » et sachez que vous aurez toujours quelqu’un sur votre passage qui saura vous soutenir et vous comprendre.

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

flavours of soup. “This project allowed our students with special needs to work on their leadership skills, creativity, reading and researching skills and their ability to work in a group on a meaningful project,” said Sandra Mill Phillips, a resource teacher at Lakeside Academy. “This was a great and novel experience for them.”

For more information about the Quebec Entrepreneurship Contest, visit: <http://www.concours-entrepreneur.org/>.

Daniela Scoppa is the Communications Officer for the Lester B. Pearson School Board

Workshop: Social Thinking: Exploring the Spectrum of Perspective Taking and Teaching with Social Thinking Vocabulary

On Thursday November 3, 2011, Michelle Garcia Winner, MA, CCC, will be presenting a workshop entitled, “Social Thinking: Exploring the Spectrum of Perspective Taking and Teaching with Social Thinking Vocabulary.” This workshop will discuss the different levels of social functioning challenges, treatment approaches, as well as how reading comprehension and written expression are impacted

ed by weak perspective taking skills. The lessons that will be described can be used for people with autism spectrum disorders, developmental disabilities, social learning challenges, and for all children. The target audience includes: educators, professionals, teachers, school staff, community workers, and parents. The workshop will take place at College Montmorency in Laval. Further information and online registration can be

found at www.goldlearningcentre.com. This workshop is proudly presented by: EMSB, Centre Gold, ATEDM, Giant Steps Resource and Training Centre, LBPSB, FQATED, Comité Interordres, and Services régionaux de soutien et d’expertise région de Montréal.

“Disability is a matter of perception. If you can do just one thing well, you’re needed by someone.”

Martina Navratilova



INSPIRATIONS

A Snapshot of Our Special Needs Community



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MESSAGE DE LA MINISTRE DE L'ÉDUCATION, DU LOISIR ET DU SPORT

MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION, RECREATION AND SPORTS

Le ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport est heureux de soutenir la publication de cette revue des plus inspirantes. Les succès qu'on y présente illustrent bien les principes qui doivent nous guider tous pour favoriser l'épanouissement et la réussite des élèves handicapés ou en difficulté d'adaptation ou d'apprentissage.

La réussite éducative peut se traduire de diverses manières, selon les capacités et les besoins de chaque élève, c'est pourquoi des services adaptés sont offerts, et ce, dans le meilleur intérêt de l'enfant. À cet effet, le Ministère réalise déjà plusieurs actions pour accroître la réussite de ces élèves. Il continuera à le faire, conformément aux engagements qui ont été pris lors de la rencontre des partenaires du 25 octobre 2010, en partenariat avec le personnel scolaire et les parents.

Les jeunes doivent savoir que nous sommes derrière eux, que nous croyons en leur potentiel, que nous sommes solidaires de leurs efforts et fiers de leur réussite. Je salue l'engagement des milieux éducatifs et des parents qui contribuent à leur persévérance et à leur réussite scolaires.

The Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport (MELS) is pleased to support the publication of this most inspiring journal. The success stories presented in it are excellent illustrations of the principles that must guide us in fostering personal growth and success for students with handicaps, social maladjustments or learning difficulties.

Because educational success can take different forms, depending on the young person's capacities and needs, we offer adapted services that serve the best interests of these students. In fact, MELS has already implemented a number of measures designed to foster their success, and, in cooperation with teachers and parents, will continue to do so, in keeping with the commitments made during the October 25, 2010, meeting of partners in education.

Our young people need to know that we are behind them and that we believe in their potential; we need to show our solidarity with their efforts and our pride in their success. I congratulate our educational institutions and parents on their commitment to helping students stay in school and achieve educational success.

Line Beauchamp

LINE BEAUCHAMP

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which is fulfilling an important role in our community”*



Summer in the city camp options

By Wendy Singer

Are you looking for something new and fun for your child to do this summer? Here are a few ideas!

Super Sonics Soccer



Head Coaches Martin and Barbara Cheetham have developed an inclusive program understanding that there are no limits when it comes to learning basic soccer skills, getting fit, having fun while discovering a healthy appetite for competition whether it be during a soccer game or a fun-filled mini skill challenge to help strengthen children's cognitive and gross motor skills. Much of the unique guidelines come from the Cheetham's life

experience with their son, who was assessed with dyslexia. Super Sonics has been recognized by Quebec Special Olympics as a forerunner in practical application in their new publication of "FUNdamentals & Active Start."

Summer sessions run from May 2011 to July 2011. Children aged five to 15 years of age, with varying spectrums of intellectual challenges from autism, Down Syndrome, visually impaired, epilepsy, physically impaired but mobile cerebral palsy, severe dyslexia, dyspraxia, and behavioural or learning problems not yet diagnosed are

welcome. Super Sonics also offers winter indoor training sessions.

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Email: info@lakeshoresoccer.ca / www.lakeshoresoccer.ca

Special Olympics Quebec (SOC)

Special Olympics Quebec offers quality recreational sports programs and competition opportunities at nominal or no cost to the athlete so that children and adults living with an intellectual disability throughout Quebec can have access to them and a better quality of life. Goals include: improving fitness level, developing motor skills, moving beyond personal goals, improving self-esteem, improving autonomy, developing interpersonal skills and friendships, joining a regular sports club, having the opportunity to travel.

Athletes form part of small groups, which are created according to skill levels to ensure fair competition. A sports consultant will put you in touch with the coordinator of a local chapter according to your place of residence, age and interests.

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Email: info@olympiquesspeciaux.qc.ca / www.josq.qc.ca

Lucky Harvest Therapeutic Riding Centre

Horseback riding is a growing, and widely accepted, treatment for a broad range of physical, mental, and emotional disabilities, such as Cerebral Palsy, Down Syndrome, Rett Syndrome, neuromuscular disorders, post-traumatic brain injury, autism, ADHD, and cognitive disorders. For someone with reduced or limited mobility or even confined to a wheelchair, riding has tremendous emotional, social and therapeutic benefits.



Horseback riding is a growing, and widely accepted, treatment for a broad range of physical, mental, and emotional disabilities.

Riding is done in a quiet, nurturing, and safe environment that allows students to increase their self-esteem and physical fitness, improve task completion, enhance communication skills, and reach his or her highest potential. Program coordinator and therapeutic riding instructor Debbie Wilson has a wealth of experience in early childhood education and worked at the Quebec Society for Disabled Children. Students are evaluated and paired with a horse prior to having their one on one lessons. Siblings and families are welcomed.

1900, Route 202, Hinchinbrooke, Quebec J0S 1A0

Tel: Debbie Wilson, 450-264-0282


Email: info@luckyharvest.org / www.luckyharvest.org

Visit page 22 of our special needs database for other riding centres.

The Quebec Adapted Sailing Association (AQVA)

AQVA offers children with physical disabilities the opportunity to leave their wheelchair or walking aids on the dock and discover the waters of Lac St. Louis on a specially designed sailboat. The boat can be adapted to meet the needs of sailors with all levels of disability, even children with

(Continued on page 15)



Du soccer pour des athlètes vivant avec une déficience intellectuelle

Soccer for children with special needs

SUPER SONICS

Saison estivale 2011 Summer league

Date de Naissance/D.O.B: (M) _____ (J/D) _____ (A/Y) _____

Sexe/Gender: _____ Date: _____

Nom de Famille/ Family Name: _____

Nom/ First Name: _____

Adresse/Address: _____

De téléphone/ Phone #: 1) _____ 2) _____

Courriel/Email: _____

Chandail/Shirt : YS__ YM__ YL__ AS__ AM__ AL__ AXL__

Frais d'inscription/ Registration fees:

\$50.00 par joueur/per Player

* Session d'une heure chaque fin de semaine/ weekly one hour sessions *

Paiement/payment: \$ _____ Chq. # _____ Cash _____

Terrain Ecclestone 2 Field

2011 - Dates:

mai/May 21, 28

juin/June 4, 11, 18 & 25

juillet/July 9, 16, 23 & 30

août/Aug. 6 & 13

Heures/hours:

4 - 9 ans/years - 9h00-10h00

10 - 16 ans/years - 10h00-11h00



(Continued from page 14)

vere impairments. It can be controlled with a simple stick or, for those with weakness in their arms, a power-assist unit can be used to sail the boat with a joystick similar to that on a power wheelchair.

It is even possible for those with no use of their arms to sail by sipping and puffing on a straw. The boat is designed with safety in mind: a weighted keel prevents the boat from tipping and extra flotation insures that it cannot sink, even when full of water. The boat has an adjustable seat for the sailor and another for the instructor.

Sailing season starts in June. All AQVA instructors are fully certified. Children are evaluated by a volunteer occupational therapist in order to determine their seating needs and precautions. Choose a Learn-to-Sail program leading to official Canadian Yachting Association certification or simply enjoy being out on the water and let the instructor sail. Coordinator Paula Stone is an occupational therapist with many years of experi-



ence with children with special needs.

Tel: Paula Stone, 514-694-8021 (voice mail until the season begins.)

Email: info@aqvaqc.com / www.aqvaqc.com

Explorations Summer Day Camp

Sponsored by McGill University and the English Montreal School Board, Explorations brings kids (aged four to 18) and professionals together in a setting designed to be fun, exciting, motivating and challenging to young minds. Provisions can be made for special needs students who enrol. A wide variety of programming, from music, science, computers, theatre, arts, media, etc., is available to accommodate the interests of children. Staff are professional teachers, not counselors, and are well equipped to respond to the needs of children with special needs. Popular courses include "Rock band" and "Build your own computer." The average number of students per class is 12, making the experience hands on.

Camp is run in two-week periods during the month of July. Registration is now underway. All classes take place at Royal Vale School in N.D.G., except senior science, which takes place in the science labs at McGill University.

Tel: 514-398-4252 (please leave a message)

Email: bertha.dawang@mcgill.ca / www.education.mcgill.ca/explorations/home.html

EMSB Summer Language Camp

Language camp aims to find fun ways (it is summer after all!) to help children develop better language skills (understanding and speaking), as well as early literacy skills (phonological awareness, and phonemic awareness). Staffed by speech-language pathologists, activities are carried out in smaller and larger groups and consist of arts and crafts, board games, singing, hands-on programs like baking cookies, and more. Camp runs the first two weeks in August, Monday to Friday from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at an East End school. Applications must be



EMSB Language CAMP team 2010

submitted. Fifteen children are selected. To be eligible, children must be entering Grade 1 or 2 in September of the same year, and be attending an EMSB school. Info: Elisabeth Christe, 514-483-7200 #7408 or echriste@emsb.qc.ca.

For more information on recreational activities, consult Section 4 of the EMSB Special Needs Database. For a listing of camps and respite care, consult Section 10.

Have a great summer!

Parents' Committee at Summit School awakens the potential

By Wendy Singer

Summit School, located in St. Laurent, helps over 480 special needs students aged four to 21 who have developmental disabilities, including behavioural and emotional disturbances, autism, Down Syndrome and severe learning disabilities. The goal is to make each student as independent as possible.

The Summit School Parents' Committee provides support for their kids and the school and raises funds to fulfill the school's wish list, from obtaining smart boards for classrooms to giving a Christmas gift to each student, educational materials, subsidizing field trips and weekly lunch days.

Cathy Vlahos-Perez has been the chairperson of the Parents' Committee for over 15 years. She continues in this role even though her 21-year-old son, also a medal-winning swimmer, recently graduated from Summit and now works as an office clerk at an accounting firm. "Summit has been great," she said. "They helped Andrew be more social because he is autistic, and now he is a good worker."

Vlahos-Perez loves what she does as chair

of the Parents' Committee, and gets as much from her work as she gives. "They're great ladies," she says. "It's my therapy. It helps me deal with whom Andrew is. He's always going to have autism, and I'm always going to deal with my feelings about that."

Parent Helen Dicso can't say enough about Perez and the Parents' Committee. "The most amazing part is that they are so involved in the every day aspects of the school," she says. "Cathy Perez is there every Wednesday, the designated Parents' Committee day. That is guaranteed. It's a special project for her and all the parents. She pulls us all together for the kids. She's amazing."

The 2010 Summit School Dinner and Dance, dubbed "Awaken the Potential," was attended by nearly 500 guests and raised \$35,000 for the school. Guests were swept up by the emotion and pride that permeated the room. A DVD presentation produced by Vlahos-Perez and media teacher Jesse Heffring and the TECC students (Transitional Education Career Centre - a division of Summit School Services) touched viewers with testimonials from parents, students and family members. Guests received a hand-made wooden duck crafted by woodworking teacher Petra Hoss

and her class. Students Steven Atme and Jamal Thomas re-enacted a scene from the Summit production "The Godfather," and hundreds of prizes were won.

These thoughtful gestures demonstrated how Summit fulfills the goal to develop the potential of each student, be it through acting, drawing, art, film, academic achievement, vocational training or learning how to be independent. Vlahos-Perez explained that the purpose of the event was to inform people what Summit is all about. "Whatever the potential is, they try their best to awaken it," she said. "We wanted to show the school how grateful we are."

Summit School Principal Gloria Cherney commended the parents and staff who are so dedicated. "A school is made up of the peo-



Cathy Vlahos-Perez and her son Andrew at his graduation from Summit School.

ple who are involved," she explained. "It is wonderful to see a mixture of staff, parents and friends having a good time. You got the sense that we're a family. Cathy Perez is a dynamic lady and a wonderful part of our school."

For more information about Summit School call 514-744-2867 or log on to <http://summit-school.com>.



Lego Club gives students on the autism spectrum a boost

By Vicki Fraser

When any child comes home with a smile saying "I can't wait to go to school tomorrow!" their parents are most likely to be pleased.

For the parent of a child with special needs like Sandra Fraser, this kind of enthusiasm from someone who usually has to be coaxed out of bed on weekdays, routinely motivated, encouraged and forced to go to school, this type of experience is particularly pleasing.

Sandra's son Hunter came home with a letter inviting him to join the new Lego Club that was to be offered during lunch time once a week at his school, McCaig Elementary at the Sir Wilfrid Laurier School Board (SWLSB). Hunter, 8, was diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder five years ago. Though Hunter sometimes struggles with verbal communication, can have difficulty remaining focused, and needs support for social skills, when it comes to creating, working and playing with Lego, Hunter is gifted.

This young boy, who battled tantrums brought on by the many stressors triggered by trying to fit into a community with unwritten social cues and rules that he simply didn't understand, was finally elated to be invited to take part in a group in which he could now excel. Not only was he given the opportunity to create with Lego and play Lego board games with his peers, but he also developed friendships, had other children appreciating him, was regularly asked "Do you want to play with me?" and thanks to Lego Club creator, coordinator, and volunteer, Murielle Beaulieu (Miss M.), he also learned a lot about making short Lego movies using stop motion animation.

A social skills group can be a wonderful opportunity for students with special needs to learn valuable life skills that can help them better understand and follow unwritten social rules and cues. The only concern is that these students often have difficulty transferring their new found social skills to unstructured playtime. The McCaig Elementary Lego Club was meant to give a group of students a fair playing field when it came to trying to fit in, communicating and getting along with others, and being chosen to play. Instead of creating a social skills group, a Lego Club that gave countless opportunities to learn and develop social skills was created. Some of the students invited were



Hunter and his Lego buddy.

those who experienced great difficulties socializing and/or staying out of trouble during lunch hour, some of the students were on the autism spectrum, and some of the students were typical learners who simply wanted to play too.

The Lego Club provided the coaches (teachers and attendants who volunteered their time) with valuable opportunities to help these children learn how to accept and adapt smoothly to transitions from one activity to another, how to share, use communication to help them express their concerns and needs in an acceptable manner, to appreciate others, feel part of a community, to think before acting and the list goes on and on.

Carmela Sacco, Principal of Souvenir Elementary School of the SWLSB, has seen the same kind of success as a Lego Club was started up at her school this year. Last year she had some concerns about students who walked around the playground alone and others who were constantly getting into trouble or being picked on because they just didn't know how to handle unstructured time. Since the Lego Club was started this year, Ms. Sacco has noticed that she is no longer receiving phone calls from parents of students on the autism spectrum, complaining that their children have no friends, are feeling excluded and are being picked on by other students. The number of reflections given out to the students who are part of the Lego Club have also diminished. The

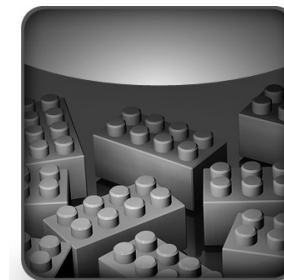
children have found a place where they can learn how to, and want to play. This group that was started with donations of old Legos that were no longer being played with has become so popular that the only problem they face is that there is too much enthusiasm, everyone wants to join!

When asked what he thought about the Lego

Club, Hunter answered with great enthusiasm "I love it!" On many days, the enthusiasm also extended to how he felt about school. This child who often lived in a world of his own was now reaching out to his peers and demonstrating great pride in his accomplishments. He no longer focused merely on his own interests but was excited to celebrate the accomplishments of others.

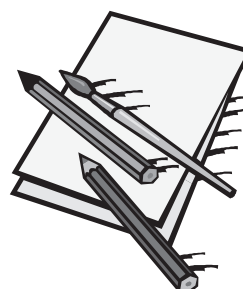
Sandra Fraser was happy that her son finally had an outlet to demonstrate his creativity, a place that provided recognition for his strengths. Most of all, she was so pleased that when she asked her son "What did you do at school today?" her excited little boy had tons of wonderful stories to share with her. She feels that such initiatives are truly life changing for some of these students and should be fostered and supported as much as sports teams and other extra-curricular activities.

Vicki Fraser is a teacher at the Sir Wilfrid Laurier School Board.



WORKSHOP: Drawing as an innovative communication tool

Picture TALKING is a unique and exciting new visual communication tool. Jason Goldsmith, autism consultant and teacher at TAV College, shares techniques gathered from speech therapists, parents and his own intervention with his son on how drawing can be used as a tool for communication and learning. This workshop addresses the needs of children with autism, aspergers, developmental delays and language difficulties. It will be held on May 16, 2011 at TAV College, 6333 Decarie Boulevard, Montreal. Parents and professionals are welcome to register. For more information contact Jason at (514) 342-3331, info@thebigbluehug.com or www.thebigbluehug.com.



"I was slightly brain damaged at birth, and I want people like me to see that they shouldn't let a disability get in the way. I want to raise awareness - I want to turn my disability into ability."

Susan Boyle



Vanier program transitions students from school to work

By Wendy Singer

Hidden in the expanse of the Vanier College campus, one particularly bright classroom is bustling with activity. The Co-Operative Education Program, run by the Lester B. Pearson School Board, under the direction of Director of Student Services Cindy Finn, is providing 20 students at Vanier and John Abbott Colleges with unique opportunities.

Co-Operative Education supports the transition of students with special needs from the worlds of school to work. Participants range in age from 18 to 21 and have a disability that allows them to remain in the youth sector for an extra three years. The goal: to assist each student to reach their potential through gainful employment, independent living and involvement with outside organizations.

Teacher Mary Ellen Montague works diligently to prepare her students at Vanier for life's challenges. "This program is wonderful because it takes the students out of their high school and into an age appropriate milieu," she says. "They get to experience life on a CEGEP campus and be with kids their own age."

Students benefit from a buddy program, which pairs them with a CEGEP student who aids in their socialization. Montague's teaching focuses on life and work skills, and travel around the city – all with the goal of responsible independence. Lessons integrate English, French, Math and current

events, based on each student's Individualized Education Plan. Any opportunity to explore math is grabbed by Montague, from playing monopoly adapted with Canadian currency to grocery store shopping, or regular group excursions with the intent of exercising independence.

Each spring, Montague's class delves into a gardening project. Seedlings are planted, monitored with appropriate lighting and re-potted at home. Hockey fan and student Ali Assy likes growing tomatoes and cucumbers. "We eat them in our salad, and they are really good," he says.

Work-studies begin in first year under the direction of Work Study Animator Peter Bellisario. Students are matched with employers who are open and giving, and believe that everyone has a place in this world; they just need a chance. Time and again Bellisario sees great results. "It's fantastic to see the student's social world explode," he says. "The program affords them the practical experience they need in a safe environment."

First year students spend one day per week at Light a Dream (www.lightadream.com), a non-profit foundation where students develop work and life skills. Sports fanatic Jessie Falcao boils and melts wax to make candles. "I feel good after a day at work because I've worked hard," he says.

A second work-study at companies like Tim Hortons or Old Navy is introduced in first or second year. All around nice guy Evan Lord stocks shoes at Zellers. "I like working at



The Co-Operative Education Program is run by the Lester B. Pearson School Board. Jessie Falcao, Ali Assy, Evan Lord selling Kapow pops for their class fundraising project.

Zellers," he says. "There are more people there than at Light a Dream."

Above independence and work skills, the Co-Operative Education Program provides students the opportunity to socialize with the public – an opportunity they would have missed if still in high school. Montague most enjoys hearing the students chatter about their work, exchange stories and learn from each other. "As their teacher, seeing the self-confidence the students develop while at work or getting from place to place is most rewarding," she declares.

Students must be 18 as of June 30, sufficiently autonomous to travel and participate in outings and referred by their home high school's resource department.

For information contact Patrick O'Connor at 514-422-3000 #4470, poconnor@lbpsb.qc.ca. If you are interested in being a host employer, contact Peter Bellisario at peterbellisario@LBPSB.qc.ca or 514-923-7383.

Focus on hearing technology puts every child right next to the teacher

By Irene Hoshko

Educational researchers estimate that students spend 75 percent of their academic day engaged in listening activities. For the beginning reader, audition is the primary medium for transmitting the curriculum. Classrooms are challenging listening environments. Noise, distance from the teacher and sound bouncing off classroom surfaces, are factors which degrade the strength and clarity of the auditory signal needed for effective learning.

Some children are more at risk academi-

cally in poor listening environments. These include children still developing language, or whose first language is not the instructional language; those with attention deficit, learning or speech and language disabilities, auditory processing problems or behavioural challenges. Mild hearing loss from ear infections or permanent loss in one ear disadvantages students for learning. Permanent hearing loss in both ears necessitates assistive listening technology to extend auditory access beyond the distance enabled by personal hearing aids.

Hearing technology puts every child right

next to the teacher, acoustically speaking. Sound Field FM systems transmit the teacher's voice at a constant level throughout the classroom via microphone-to-speaker. If installed correctly, the FM enhanced signal improves students' concentration, attention, speech and language acquisition and overall academic performance. Teachers enjoy calmer classrooms, less vocal fatigue and more energy left at the end of the day. Administrators appreciate fewer teacher sick days.

Sound Field FM is not sufficient to optimize reception of the teacher's voice where

hearing losses exceed a moderate level. The combination of a Personal FM system electronically matched to the student's hearing aids and compatible Sound Field FM is required. Technical expertise is required to ensure integration of both FM devices. Phonak's new Dynamic Sound Field system achieves this objective and continuously adjusts the signal level as the classroom noise level changes. These new FM features are important innovations in extra-amplification system design for all students.

Irene Hoshko is an audiologist with the Montreal Oral School for the Deaf



A very special teacher : Visually impaired Frances Huot is adored at EBS

By Lori Rubin

Frances Huot has been a teacher for 37 years, including 13 at Elizabeth Ballantyne Elementary School in Montreal West, where she currently teaches Grade 4. At first, Ms. Huot appears to be like any other dedicated teacher by building strong relationships with her students, supervising them during lunch and recess, patiently helping them with their projects and assignments and establishing limits and boundaries when things get a bit chaotic – as they occasionally do in any classroom in every school. But it soon becomes apparent that there is something “extra special” about her.

Ms. Huot has been visually impaired since the age 18, when she was diagnosed with early-onset Macular Degeneration, a condition that slowly, but surely, robs its victims of their sight. The disorder creates blind spots in the centre of the eye, or as Ms. Huot describes them, “little black holes.” The degenerative nature of Macular Degeneration (M.D.) will likely result in the eventual, complete loss of vision. In the meantime, due to very good peripheral vision, which has remained unaffected, Ms. Huot can function with the support of a device she refers to as a closed-circuit T.V. This is a device (about the size of an overhead projector), which significantly magnifies printed



Younsters gather around teacher Frances Huot

material that is placed on its screen, or as Ms. Huot explains, “it lets you know when you need a manicure.”

Ms. Huot describes M.D. as a condition which is commonly known as an “older person’s disease,” and so it was quite shocking to be diagnosed with this impairment at such a young age. Due to this remarkable teacher’s drive and passion, she refused to let this “blip on the screen” get in the way of following her dream of teaching children. In the 1970’s, she spent two years teaching children in Nigeria, and in the 80’s she taught at the Anglo/American School in Moscow. She also volunteers at Camp

Weredale, a summer camp for children and adolescents who are affiliated with Batshaw Youth and Family Services, where she “peels potatoes and helps with the laundry.” When asked about the prospect of retirement, she states that for now, she is happy where she is. She would like to have the opportunity to teach overseas again and to contribute to the betterment of less fortunate students in developing nations, but there is a practical concern that she would not be able to bring her “machine” with her (which is provided by the Montreal Association for the Blind). “Without my machine, I realize that I would be limited in my ability to teach,” she notes, describing her Grade 4 classroom at Elizabeth Ballantyne School as a “joyful place to be,” and plans to remain there until she can no longer effectively fulfill her role as a classroom teacher. For now, that appears to be a long way off.

When asked about if/how her visual impairment affects her ability to teach, Ms. Huot replies that during supervision duties at recess and lunch, she can miss kids misbehaving if they are in the far corners of the school yard. To compensate, she has

become familiar with the “blobs of colour making loud noises,” and that tells her that she needs to approach them. She also added that she can miss details in people’s faces, but that hasn’t been a significant obstacle for her. Ms. Huot explains that she has a “modified teaching style,” such as correcting assignments and checking homework in students’ agendas with her machine, and allowing herself more time to prepare her lessons and go over projects. She feels that the teaching methods she uses works to “keep the kids honest” and she finds that the students are very sensitive to her and to each other and, of course, “they are all fascinated by the machine.”

Ms. Huot uses her challenge as an example. “Here are the strategies I need to use to help me teach,” she tells her students. “Let’s figure out some strategies that you can use to help you learn.”

Indeed she finds this to be a very effective technique to encourage her students with special needs. “If they see that I can do it, they may feel that they can do it,” she says. “We all learn from each other, we all support each other.”

Lori Rubin is a behavior management specialist with the English Montreal School Board

Children with special needs in the Mohawk community

By Lori Rubin

“It’s the children who teach the children.” These wise words were spoken by the esteemed Kakaionstha Deer (pronounced “gah-gah-you-stah”), a retired principal of the Kateri School in Kanawake, with many years of experience working with children with a variety of special needs, both as a teacher and then as a school principal. Kakaionstha was asked to comment on how these children were viewed by their peers and teachers, and if best practices regarding inclusion in the First Nations community were similar to other school boards in the greater Montreal area.

Kakaionstha’s first experience with inclusion began “way back” when she learned she would have a student in her pre-k class with autism. It was then that she saw how children learn far more from others their age than from adults. That experience illustrated to her what has become a mantra in the Mohawk community, something that was brought forth by Edward Cross, a pioneer

in aboriginal education: children are not only part of their immediate, nuclear family, but of the larger community family as well. This value has led to the now well-known native phrase - It takes a whole community to raise a child.

In the Mohawk community, no one is excluded, even though some children, because of their individual strengths or their physical and/or intellectual challenges, may hold a special place in their community. In their schools, they are shown the same respect and considerations as all students. Their voices are heard, and their needs and desires are taken seriously. The respect for these children is inherent. In the Kateri School, there is a place called the skennenko..wa room. This translates to “great place.” All of the students in the school are welcome to use this space. It is a place where students can go to when they are having trouble settling down, concentrating on their work, or behaving in an acceptable manner. The stu-

dent can ask to go to there, or a staff member can suggest to him/her that he may benefit from spending some time there. There are two teachers who supervise the room at all times and who work with the students who pass through. They also help the student to try and understand why they were having difficulty in their classroom and what they need to do in order to return. The room is kept relatively quiet, with students and teachers speaking in hushed tones. This helps to de-escalate an agitated child and support them in making their way back to their regular classroom.

Kakaionstha added that there is always a giving in our community. She explained that this giving involves two-way communication, which can take many different forms, such as talking, gestures and body language, signing, and the unspoken language of emotions. Every year, the school creates “clusters” of activities as part of the regular curriculum which, in the past, has

included dancing, quilting, sewing, poetry and sports. Children with special needs are encouraged to participate in whatever cluster they are interested in, alongside their peers.

In attending the Kateri School, the “regular” students in the school get an informal lesson on how the world works when they share their space with students with special needs. They tend to become more gentle and empathetic, and they are taught to look at the accomplishments of their special needs peers as their accomplishment; everyone owns it and everyone feels the pride. These are portable life-lessons of unimaginable value that can go a long way in paving an easier road in the years to come.

Lori Rubin is a behaviour management specialist at the English Montreal School Board



'This place is like a beacon in the darkness'

Pat Roberts Centre offers early support to young kids, families

By Morgan Lowrie

Less than a year ago, Tanya Hemming's young son Justin could not get through a day of school without an anxiety attack. He was scared of being left alone, and his teachers thought he was unruly and disruptive.

Today, Justin is a happy six-year old who happily runs up the ramp and waves goodbye to his mother at the beginning of every weekday. He plays with other children, does arts and crafts, and loves music class. Most importantly, he now says good things about himself, and knows he's special.

Hemming gives a big part of the credit to the Pat Roberts Development Centre, an adapted preschool for special needs children, in association with the West Island Association for the Intellectually Handicapped (WIAIH).

The centre offers a pre-school and pre-kindergarten program for children aged two to six, as well as an infant stimulation program done through home visits. The ratio of caregivers to children is one to four, which allows the centre to cater to kids "who often need more care and attention than the mainstream system can give them," co-ordinator Lyne Charlebois explained.

Charlebois estimates that the centre directly helps about 50 families a year, but their overall effect reaches far into the community. At the heart of the centre's mission is the belief that parents are a child's first and most important educators. Recently, the centre began a four-part program called "Parents: it starts with you," aimed at helping parents find resources and services, giving them tips on helping their children while they wait,

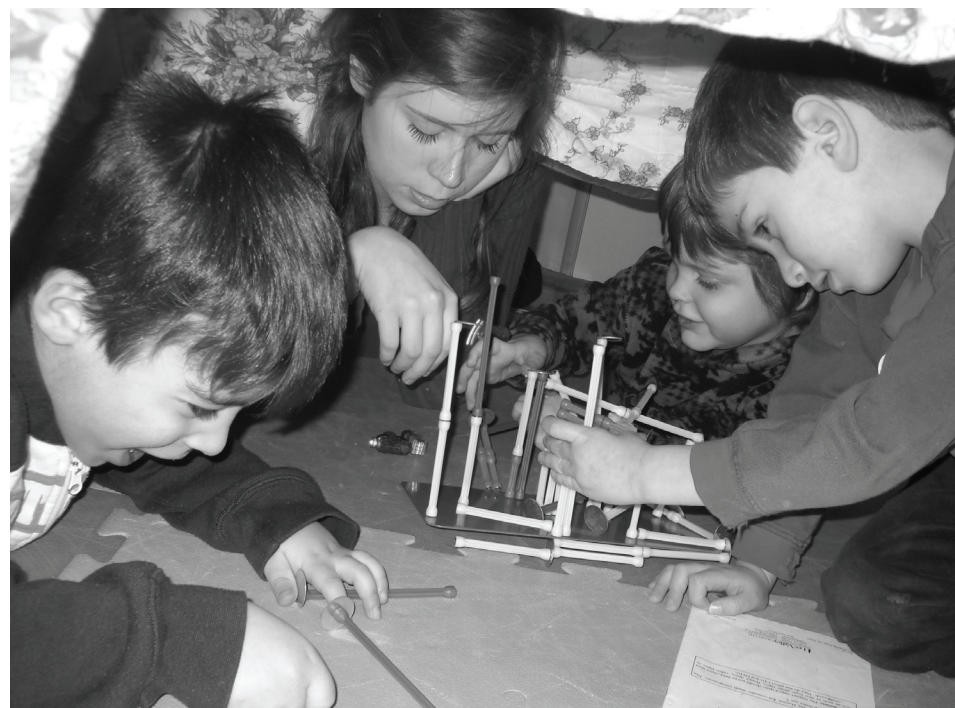
and, sometimes most importantly, giving them the chance to meet other families.

"They come here, and they can relax, knowing that they're not being judged," Charlebois said.

The centre also holds regular outings, parent coffee meetings and information sessions, all designed to offer support to parents of children with special needs. It is always looking to add more services to its repertoire. In October, the centre received a \$10,000 donation from a group of Bombardier employees, which allowed them to bring in occupational therapist Josee Charlebois twice a month to work with the pre-school children.

According to Charlebois, the general goal of an occupational therapist is "to help people become more independent" in their daily lives. More specifically, she comes in to assess each of the children and to work with the parents and educators to develop exercises and strategies tailored to each child's needs. Charlebois helps the children to develop their sensory integration, or the way they process the information given to them by their senses, so that the child can relax enough to truly learn.

"You cannot look at a child and look at only one piece," Charlebois explained. "You have to work all the things together: emotional, sensory, motor functions, and learning."



Some youngsters enjoy themselves at the Pat Roberts Centre.

Too often, she says, kids are asked to learn while sitting still, which is too much for children who have trouble filtering. "Neurologically, they're not ready," she says, noting that she tries to use movement, including a wide variety of tools such as swings, balls, and massage. "I don't believe in bad behaviour -- only need. Once a child is comfortable, once we give them what they need -- then they can learn," she explained.

According to Hemming, it is the attitude of people like Josee Charlebois, Lyne Charlebois and the rest of the staff at the Pat Roberts Centre that truly sets them apart. "Here, they don't see my child as a problem, as a disruption," she said. "Kids like ours need a Superman. And that's what they are to us -- they're Superman."

For more information log on to <http://wiah.qc.ca> or call (514) 694-7090.

Inspirations teams up with CTV

Inspirations is pleased to announce a partnership with CTV Montreal. During the month of May, we will be the official sponsor of the popular Sunday evening feature, Power of One. These segments often focus on individuals with special needs who "inspire" us all.

One report, for instance, deals with art offering confidence to young people with autism. Creating art began as a hobby for Ari and his mother Cheryl Colton, but it's become not only a means of self-expression for the autistic boy, but now also has the makings of a non-profit organization. By offering workshops for teenagers and

young adults diagnosed with autism, Ari Art has become a place where artists with autism work on directed and independent projects in a variety of disciplines from jewellery making, to photography, to creating decorative bowls and spoons.

Some of the other stories include a disabled man who inspires others through his community work and an ambassador for the Shriner's Hospital who has truly beaten the odds.

We also hope to see some of the stories which appear in the pages of Inspirations make their way on to CTV as well. Such

was the case recently in the case of recreational specialist Erika Tencer and her daughter Atara, who has Down Syndrome. They have been visiting different schools.

Go to the website at www.ctvmontreal.ca and click on the Power of One section, where you will be able to see past stories.



“It was ability that mattered, not disability, which is a word I'm not crazy about using.”

Marlee Matlin

Read more: <http://www.disabled-world.com/disability/disability-quotes.php#ixzz1JWmKv49U>



Student revels in hockey commentary

By Daniel Smajovits

If there's one piece of advice you need before sitting down with Alex Ferla-Coirazza at Paul VI High School in Ahuntsic, it's that you better have a good grasp of your hockey.

Ferla-Coirazza, a student at the special needs school, is like millions who have grown up idolizing the Montreal Canadiens. While his staunch passion freezes over while talking about Michael Cammalleri's stealth moves or Carey Price's stellar save percentage, he's aiming not to be the second coming of Saku Koivu, but the next Pierre Houde.

"Just listening to commentators like Pierre Houde on RDS or Don Cherry on CBC makes me happy," said Ferla-Coirazza. "I love sports, I grew up watching the Canadiens and I've always wanted to do a broadcast and be a broadcaster. Everything about it excites me. The comments, the way they interact with the fans, how everybody laughs, talks and the ideas that they come up with."

Having a dream is one thing, but recently, Ferla-Coirazza put his money where his mouth is. With the help of teacher Matthew Goulet, together, the two worked on an audition tape highlighting his skills.

"I always do the commentary at home with my microphone!" he says. "My parents and cousins listen to me and always tell me that it's super. Since they liked it, I came here



Alex Ferla-Coirazza and his teacher Matthew Goulet

and Mr. Goulet and I worked on it and we thought it was good. It took time, adjusting my voice level and speed was hard. It was not an easy process, but I really enjoyed it."

"With anything, there has to be a natural instinct and intuition and real passion for what

you're doing. Alex has had that from the beginning and it's really easy to make something good when you start with that," said Goulet. "We worked on forming a script based on a video game, slowing things down a lot and making things exciting, ensuring that he doesn't make everything exciting. It all made sense to Alex and everybody who listened to it, it all fell into place."

Throughout the process, Ferla-Coirazza kept thinking of his idol Houde, whose passion and excitement during his play-by-play is something which he tried to echo in his audition.

"The way he says 'C'est la but!' is amazing, his passion is perfect," said Ferla-Coirazza. "My cousins think our voices

are similar. My dream is to be on the air one day; that would just be amazing."

Although the jury is still out on whose voice is better, for Goulet, a musician and music teacher, he thinks that Ferla-Coirazza does have the ideal voice for television or radio,

but needs to just hone his technique.

"There is a lot of base in his voice and it's perfect for a commentator," Goulet says. "I still take music lessons myself and I used that to illustrate points to Alex about playing an instrument is much the same as what he was doing. When something is just not working, if it's not spontaneous or relaxed, you have to slow things down and think about it, and then it naturally falls into place. We used an unorthodox approach, like you would have seen in the King's Speech. He tried anything I asked, while we did not have him roll around on the floor or scream out the alphabet, we did things to emphasise the differences in dynamics such as whispering a few lines than say something very loud. When you know you have those tools, and when you know that you can really change your voice that much, you can play with it and then it sort of sounds natural after it."

With enough practice, Ferla-Coirazza is confident that one day he will find himself offering up his play-by-play and analysis from the press box at the Bell Centre. Yet, much to the chagrin of his inner fan, he's not too sure that it will happen this season. While his voice might be ready, according to his analysis, if the Canadiens do not make a roster move soon, they might not have too many games left.

"I think they'll smarten off and have a chance to go as far as last year because Carey Price can bring us to a Stanley Cup," Ferla-Coirazza says. "The season he's had so far has been amazing; however, we need an enforcer to push us over the top, a good fighter to step up on the ice. Without that, I don't know."

Professional development at EMSB keys in on important issues

By Tania Piperni M.Ed

In the Student Services Department of the English Montreal School Board (EMSB), professional development for employees is a priority. Thus, the department held training sessions recently for all of their child care workers (CCWs). Sessions were held over the course of three regional professional days. Three workshops were presented on each day by professionals within the Student Services Department: myself, Lori Rubin, Claudia De Luca, Amanda Vivona and Ann Zilberbrant.

Lori Rubin, a behavior management specialist and coordinator of Project Harbour at the EMSB, presented: "Once a Bully,

not Always a Bully." It dealt with concerns pertaining to the prevalence of bullying in schools. The presentation included topics such as What makes someone a bully? What are certain students more victimized than others? How can the role of bystanders shift the bullying dynamic? What strategies can school personnel use to reduce the negative effects of bullying in the classroom? Poignant video excerpts emphasized the prevalence of bullying and the escalation towards the targeting of students with special needs.

In my capacity as the autism spectrum disorders (ASD) consultant and coordinator of the ASD Support Team at the EMSB, my presentation dealt with creating Social Stories™ as developed by Carol Gray. Guide-

lines to writing such stories were explained, as well as how to tailor them to address each student's need. It was illustrated how this strategy not only benefits students with ASD, but how it can be adapted to address a range of issues with a varying population of students from elementary to high school levels. Guiding principles for writing social stories were explored, followed by practical experience in creating sample stories.

The EMSB occupational therapists, Claudia De Luca, Amanda Vivona, and Ann Zilberbrant, presented their workshop entitled, "The Childcare Worker's Toolbox: Sensory-motor strategies for students with special needs." They addressed topics with respect to students' performances in school-related

activities and offered practical strategies. An understanding of the difference between remedial and compensatory approaches, when assisting students who display difficulties with fine motor and daily living skills at school, was also discussed.

More than 200 CCWs attended these professional development sessions presented by the Student Services Department at the EMSB. Participants laughed, cried, and acquired many skills, strategies, and lessons regarding how to better assist the student population with whom they work.

Tania Piperni is the Autism Spectrum Disorders Consultant at the English Montreal School Board.



Westmount High School Welcomes Lazylegz

By Daniel Smajovits

Luca “Lazylegz” Patuelli, the 26-year-old Montreal native who has been featured on America’s Got Talent, So You Think You Can Dance Canada and in the 2010 Vancouver Paralympics opening ceremonies, was at Westmount High School recently to perform and spread his inspirational message.

Since birth Luca has suffered from scoliosis, the curvature of the spine and arthrogryposis, a condition that affects bone structure and limits joint movement. Despite his condition, he has grown into a worldwide sensation by overcoming life’s challenges and living by his credo of “No excuses, no limits.” His appearance was due to the hard work of Michel and Matthew Nadeau, twin brothers and Leadership students at Westmount High School.

Michel, who is wheelchair bound, felt that Lazylegz was the perfect individual to motivate his peers. Nadeau, who has become a break-dancer himself, is personally inspired not just by Lazylegz, but by the words of leadership teacher Jeff Kosow that the only disability is a bad attitude. He used

the primetime opportunity to prove how he earned the nickname “The Twizzler” by dazzling his peers with his break-dancing moves on stage as well.

A riveting performer, as well as an outstanding motivational speaker, Lazylegz had the 850 students on their feet throughout of the show. His message also truly resonated amongst the students when he spoke about some of the operations and setbacks he has had to battle. Early on, Patuelli realized he was only disabled if he let himself think so. Fortunately, his condition only affects him from the waist down and despite the very little muscle in his legs, he can use crutches to walk and dance.

ILL-Abilities presents: No Limits Fundraising Event

ILL-Abilities is an international break-dance crew made up of dancers who may be perceived as having physical limitations in some way. Founded by Luca “Lazylegz” Patuelli, they aim to inspire, entertain, shatter misconceptions of people with disabilities that society may have, and show the world that anything is possible; getting out the message, No Excuses, No Limits. Their month-long tour ends in Montreal with a



Lazylegz visit Westmount High School.

NO LIMITS fundraising event on Sunday, May 15th, 2011 at Club Soda (1225 St. Laurent Blvd.). This all-ages, all-abilities, family-friendly evening will include 2on2 Breakdance Battles, musical performances

and a new ILL-Abilities performance. Proceeds fund ILL-Abilities performances at schools and centres around the world. For information: info@illabilitiescrew.com or www.illabilitiescrew.com.

EMSB Golf Scholarship Recipient Francesco Bologna

Autism has not limited his achievements



Francesco Bologna (second from the left), a graduate of Laurier Macdonald High School in St. Léonard, receives his scholarship from (left to right) English Montreal School Board Chairman Angela Mancini, Regional Director Marzia Michielli, Laurier Macdonald Vice-Principal Joe Schembri and Commissioner Frank Verrillo.

The English Montreal School Board recently distributed 40 cash scholarships of \$500 each to students from the graduating class of 2010. These scholarships were funded from the proceeds of the EMSB Scholarship Golf Tournament. Scholarships were awarded to high school students who are continuing their studies in a post-secondary educational program and are divided into two categories: students who have demonstrated a high academic achievement as well as involvement in school life activities such as leadership, volunteerism, student council, school sports, representing the school in different events; and students who have persevered in the face of overwhelming odds and personal difficulties.

Francesco Bologna refused to let autism limit his achievements, and taking a glance at his transcript would prove that. Always a supportive classmate and kind person,

Francesco persevered through his time at Laurier Macdonald High School in St. Léonard. Despite having the option of taking a lesser workload, he refused to be treated differently and took on the same classes and deadlines as his peers, excelling in all areas, highlighted by final marks of 91 in Ethics and Religious Culture and 90 in Entrepreneurship & the Community. Francesco, along with his 39 other peers are truly worthy of the honour bestowed upon them.

This Advertisement was submitted by an anonymous admirer of Inspirations.



Adapted Travel by Mike Cohen



Checking out both sides of Niagara Falls

Headed to the Niagara Falls area this summer? Here is my first very important piece of advice. Take advantage of the strong Canadian dollar and spend some time on the US side of the border. Grand Island, located smack in between Buffalo and Niagara Falls, New York (www.niagara-usa.com), represents a good base. The Holiday Inn Grand Island Resort and Conference Centre (www.holiday-inn.com/grandislandny) has been our base on two occasions, most recently during the winter, and we simply loved this gorgeous 263 room property, located at 100 Whitehaven Road. We were lucky to get a reservation, selecting a comfortable Jacuzzi suite. This is a great year-round choice. In the winter, the fitness centre, large indoor pool and whirlpool are real bonuses. The property is



The entrance and deck to Holiday Inn Grand Island Resort and Conference Centre indoor pool is wheelchair accessible.

ideal for business and leisure travel alike. Soon enough, the attractive outdoor pool will be in operation. There is also an on-site health and fitness center, a gift shop and yes, for the business executive, secretarial services.

Standard guest rooms have private balconies, flat screen televisions with on command movies and free wireless high speed internet. The hotel has two room executive suites, two room jacuzzi suites or two room hospitality suites, each of which has pull out sleeper sofas and large private balconies facing the majestic Niagara River. They also are equipped with microwave ovens and mini refrigerators. Right next door is the River Oaks Golf Course. On

site you can enjoy a delicious meal in Currents "A Bistro on the Niagara" or unwind over a cocktail in the hotel's comfortable lounge. On Fridays, there is live entertainment. If you are a member of the Holiday Inn Priority Club, then you have access to an exclusive lounge featuring free refreshments. The hotel recently installed new carpeting, new vinyl wall coverings and received new bedding.

In the summer you can look forward to a number of fireworks displays at the annual Canal Festival. The hotel is conveniently located just a few minutes off of Highway 190, yet secluded from the hustle and bustle of the busy Falls tourism trade. "Sedate" is the best way to describe it. Parking is free in the large outdoor lot and you are only a short drive from a large Tops grocery store and two pharmacies. There are two beaches nearby – Beaver State Park and Sandy Beach. For more information you can call 716-773-1111.

The hotel has 10 accessible rooms, all with king beds and wider doorways. Four rooms have roll in showers. The main hotel entrance is completely wheelchair accessible and the elevators will bring you to every level, including the outdoor pool.

There are two fabulous shopping options to consider. The Fashion Outlets (www.fashionoutletsniaagara.com), with 150 stores, can keep you busy for hours, with bargains

galore. There is also a Target store nearby. In Buffalo, the Walden Galleria (www.waldengalleria.com) is a fabulously large shopping centre, with major anchors such as Macy's, JC Penney, Lord and Taylor and Sears. It is a 25 minute drive from Grand Island. We spent six hours there.

Niagara USA (www.niagara-usa.com) offers visitors "A Great American Getaway" filled with exciting events, one-of-a-kind attractions, fascinating history and adventure that the entire family will enjoy. This place exerts its powerful pull on young and old alike. But anyone who has ever seen the look in a child's eyes as they experience the Falls region – with its unforgettable natural beauty; year-round activities

and enriching diversions for families – will have their own sense of childlike wonder re-kindled, and not soon forget the experience they shared.

Centered by the awesome majesty of the Falls, Niagara USA is a destination unto itself, capturing the hearts of families and drawing them back throughout their lives. And the attractions in the surrounding area are fun, active and exciting for parents and kids alike. The main attraction, Niagara Falls State Park, is the perfect spot for experiencing this magical landmark. There are a number of viewing platforms here, as well as some unusual opportunities to get even closer. For those who don't mind becoming one with the water, the Park's Cave of the Winds is a thrilling guided walking tour along wooden platforms at the base of Bridal Veil Falls. Participants will inevitably get wet as they walk through the spray. Another wet adventure is the famous Maid of the Mist (www.maidofthemist.com), a boat cruise which takes guests right up to the roaring water at the base of Horseshoe and American Falls (don't forget to don your free plastic poncho). The Maid of the Mist can be accessed from both sides of the Falls. It is one of North America's oldest tourist attractions, and its history is resplendent with stories of daredevil rescues and visits from royalty. For the disabled, there are ramps to get to the viewing platform and an elevator takes you down where more ramps allow wheelchairs to go right on to the boat and a special section.



The Fallsview Indoor Waterpark is a popular spot for tourists.

Nearby is the Lockport Cave and Underground Boat Ride. Blasted out of solid rock over 140 years ago, the cave system initially served as a tunnel to provide river water for mills and electrical power. History-themed attractions will educate younger minds and capture the attention of their mature companions. Old Fort Niagara is a wonderful chance for families to travel back in time, together. Preserved as they stood in the 1700's, the Fort's structures (the oldest buildings in the Great Lakes) include several barracks, powder rooms, a bakehouse, an officers club and more.

But for the kids, there is no better place to go than Martin's Fantasy Island (www.martinsfantasyisland.com), located at Exit N-19 (Whitehaven Road) in Grand Island. It is recognized as Western New York's most affordable and fun theme park, with more than 100 rides and attractions. The park walkways and restrooms are equipped to accommodate the needs of the disabled.

NIAGARA FALLS, ONTARIO

After spending five days in the Niagara Falls, New York area we crossed the Rainbow Bridge and within seconds were back in Canada. We settled in at the Sheraton By The Falls (www.niagarafallshotelsheraton.com). This place has a lot of things going for it, notably a passageway to North America's largest indoor waterpark and, if you are lucky, a breathtaking view of the actual Falls.

The Fallsview Indoor Waterpark (www.fallsviewwaterpark.com) is over 125,000 square feet of water park fun across from the Falls. Located on the Falls Avenue Entertainment Complex, this is North America's largest indoor waterpark and hotel complex. It offers 16 waterslides (some up to six stories high), a 1,000 gallon tipping bucket, a full size wave pool, oversized adult only whirlpools, the Planet Hollywood Beach Club, a beach house, a tiny tots play area, a year-round outdoor pool and sundeck, the Canadian Plunge Bowl and the Fallsview indoor beach. The waterpark features direct connections to the Sheraton, the Crowne Plaza Hotel and the Skyline Inn. Admission is \$34 per person. There is also a \$10 fee (\$5 refundable) for a small locker.

With attractions like Marineland, the Maid of the Mist Boat Tour, Casino Niagara, Niagara Parks Conservatory, Skylon Tower, the Butterfly Conservatory, the Imax Theatre and the

Clifton Hills "fun" district, it is no wonder why the area attracts more than 20 million visitors annually.

Tourism Niagara (www.tourismniagara.com) is responsible for promoting all 12 municipalities that make up the region of Niagara and they do a fabulous job. Check out their website, which will lead you in the right direction.

Accessible Niagara: Accessible Niagara (www.accessibleniagara.com) is a guide for people with disabilities to accessible venues in Niagara. With more than 20 cat-



egories and close to 200 items including hotels and lodgings, attractions, shopping and services specifically aimed at people with disabilities, this website and guide help those who wish to come to Niagara as tourists plan their trip. The site and guide



A look at the Oakville Harbour.

are also of use to the more than 70,000 people with disabilities in Niagara looking for ways to become more involved in local activities.

If you are mobility impaired, this site will help you choose your accessible destinations. This site is put together by Eileen Zarafonitis and Linda Crabtree. They have been working together for 12 years. Between the two they have more than 80 years in journalism, proofing and fact finding. The requests they receive the most frequently are for wheelchair rentals and transportation for those in wheelchairs and scooters to and from airports and various attractions.

Back in 2002 they surveyed all of the hotels and motels in Niagara, Ontario by telephone to find out which ones thought they were accessible. Then they set out to personally audit all of them. To date they have been through more than 40 accessible hotels, bed and breakfast accommodations, a cottage, a retreat and a respite care unit from top to bottom. All write ups have been updated. Each place they've audited has the word (details) beside it and will have pages of details about accessibility and photos of the bedrooms, bathrooms and close ups of things that are important when you have a disability.

Linda is a severely disabled with Charcot-Marie-Tooth disease, a fairly rare neuromuscular disorder (see www.lindacrabtree.com) and she has gone the gamut in her 60 plus years from braces on orthopedic boots to a cane, then two canes, a walker and then a wheelchair and electric scooter. She uses a scooter exclusively now, indoors and out. Her shoulders are shot from lifting her body, so she even takes her scooter into most restaurants which she finds easy to sit on while eating. "My disability hasn't stopped me from living, and, yes, I still like

to get out, do things and be as active as possible," she says. "I also know firsthand how hard it can be when you don't have the information and detail you need to truly plan ahead when you want to go somewhere, be it to a local restaurant or thousands of miles away from home. And, I've visited and know well almost all of the places on (the) website as Niagara has been my home all of my life. My husband and I live in St. Catharines, less than 20 minutes from Niagara Falls and we drive all over the Niagara Peninsula instead of taking vacations away from home. I guess you'd say we truly love and appreciate the beautiful part of the world we live in and we'd like to share it with you, particularly if you are mobility impaired."

"AccessibleNiagara.com not only introduces you to our lovely peninsula but you'll find details here you can't find elsewhere. We who are disabled know that the word 'accessible' means little if it isn't accompanied by detail. Canada doesn't yet have legislation similar to the Americans with Disabilities Act in the U.S.A., but it's coming. There is no set criteria in Canada for access to hotels, restaurants, anywhere, except government buildings. Accessibility in Canada is up to the people who develop the hotel, the chain that builds the restaurant, the entrepreneur who develops the attraction. That's why detail is so important. Anyone can say their place of business is accessible and when you get there you find a six inch step at the entrance. We've all heard the line, 'Yes, our business is accessible, there are only a few small steps at the front.' We know those few steps might as well be a mountain. To people who walk, they are nothing. Years ago, when doing the phone survey to find out about accessible hotel rooms before we went out to audit in person, my colleague, Eileen, asked one front desk employee how many rooms in their hotel were accessible. Her answer was something like, 'All of them, the elevator starts at the first floor.' We have a lot of work to do but things are beginning to change for the better."

OAKVILLE, ONTARIO

If you are travelling from Montreal with special needs children, Niagara Falls is at least eight hours away. My advice is to stop on the way there for the evening in the Town of Oakville, a vibrant and impressive community within the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), Oakville (www.oakvilletourism.ca) is a beautiful lakeside town with a strong heritage, preserved and celebrated by residents and visitors alike. Founded in 1857, this thriving municipality of about

165,000 residents provides all the advantages of a well-serviced urban centre, while also maintaining its small-town ambiance.

A 30-minute drive from downtown Toronto, and an hour's drive from the U.S. border, Oakville boasts an \$88 million tourism industry, with over 1.4 million visitors annually. On our recent trip to the Niagara Falls area, we decided to stop over in Oakville for a day. We checked into the beautiful Staybridge Suites Extended Stay Hotel Oakville Burlington (www.staybridge.com/oakvilleon), located at the QEW and Bronte Road at 2511 Wyecroft. This three year old property still looks spanking new. It is managed by the Westmont Hospitality Group (WHG), which I hold in high regard, having stayed at their locales in Ottawa, Toronto and Windsor.

The Staybridge Suites Oakville Burlington offers one and two bedroom suites, with all the conveniences of home to suit your extended stay or short term needs. The hotel offers apartment like suites featuring fully-equipped kitchens, cable TV, free wired and wireless internet and direct dial phone number with personalized voicemail. There is a 24-hour business center with free internet, print/fax/copy capabilities, free laundry facilities, a fitness center, an indoor pool, a home theatre room with a 50 inch plasma TV, gas BBQ grills, a putting green, the Bridgemart "Suite" Shop, a free deluxe breakfast buffet, evening sundowner receptions (Monday through Thursdays). You can help yourself to free soft drinks and



The Radisson Toronto East.

juices in the lobby 24/7. This hotel is pet friendly so that of course includes service animals. It is fully wheelchair accessible, has one room with accessibility standards and handicapped parking at the front entrance. For reservations call 1 877 660 8550, 905-847-2600 or email staybridgeoakville@whg.com. The hotel lobby is fully wheelchair accessible.

When in Oakville I would recommend you make it a point to dine at the Marquis Bistro (www.marquisbistro.com), a 60 second walk from the Staybridge Suites lobby. It is open for breakfast, lunch and supper. We chose to have dinner there and were very pleased with the quality of selections. The

menus are all online. We shared the lemon calamari and the pan seared scallops to start and give high marks for the spaghetti bolognese, the chicken parmesan and the delicious chocolate bundt cake for dessert. There are also a number soups and salads to choose from, other pasta dishes, steaks, rack of lamb and seafood. For reservations call 905-465-4480. The restaurant is completely wheelchair accessible.

TORONTO

Rather than head directly back to Montreal, we stopped over in Toronto for a few nights. Canada's largest city has so much to offer. For accommodations look no further than directly off Highway 401 and the Radisson Toronto East (www.radisson.com/torontoca_east). We stayed at this property three years ago and enjoyed it. It is one exit away from the Don Valley Parkway – a quick 20 minute route to the downtown theatre district and Eaton Centre.

Nestled in a corporate hub, surrounded by malls and major attractions, the hotel is precisely located at the 401 and Victoria Park. All rooms have Sleep Number Beds, where the firmness of the mattress can be adjusted for your best sleeping comfort. Complimentary high-speed internet is available in each room as well. You can unwind in the bar lounge, take a splash in the indoor swimming pool or tone yourself in the fitness center. Other convenient amenities include a complimentary shuttle service to local businesses within the vicinity. There is a full service restaurant, Le Café, and room service to take care of your taste buds.

While I usually seek out a suite for my family when travelling, the Radisson Toronto East is excellent for seeking out the adjoining rooms option. We had two rooms, one with two double beds and another with a king. Upon request, we got a fridge and microwave. With a large grocery store only two blocks away


we were able to stock up on our own foods to make breakfast and lunch. The rooms have comfortable desks, perfect for working on a laptop, chairs, ample cupboard and drawer space and two telephones. At the front desk, staff are very attentive to all of your needs.

There are handicapped parking spots in the lot and the entrance is fully wheelchair accessible, leading to three good sized elevators. Handicapped accessible rooms with roll in showers are available.

Mike Cohen is the editor of *Inspirations*. His e-mail address is mcohen@inspirationsnews.com.

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