

## **EXHIBITS (2006)**

### **Portraits / Exposition de portraits**

Maison de la culture Côte-des-Neiges, Montréal, January/janvier 2006

### **Fundraising concert**

The Green Room, 5386 boul. St-Laurent, Montréal, March 2006

### **Art Exhibition**

Galerie ARTS NDG, 5839 Sherbrooke Ouest/West, Montréal, April 2006

### **Exhibition "no title"**

COOP La maison verte, 5785, rue Sherbrooke Ouest, Montréal, Mars et Avril 2006

### **Liberté Visuelle / Freedom to See**

Chez Laoun, 4012 rue St-Denis coin Duluth, Montréal, Mai et Juin 2006

### **Global Blue**

5674 Avenue Monkland, Montréal, Avril et Juin 2006

### **Nuit Blanche sur tableau noir**

Marché d'arts sur Mont-Royal, Montréal, Juin 2006

### **Hudson art fair**

Église St-James, Montréal, Juin 2006

### **Art Exhibition**

Centre-Ville (YMCA) sur la rue Stanley, Montréal, July 2006

### **C'est ça qui est ça**

Au bistro du terroir "Vice Et Versa", 6631 Boul. St-Laurent, Montréal, Septembre 2006

### **Art Exhibition/Book Launch**

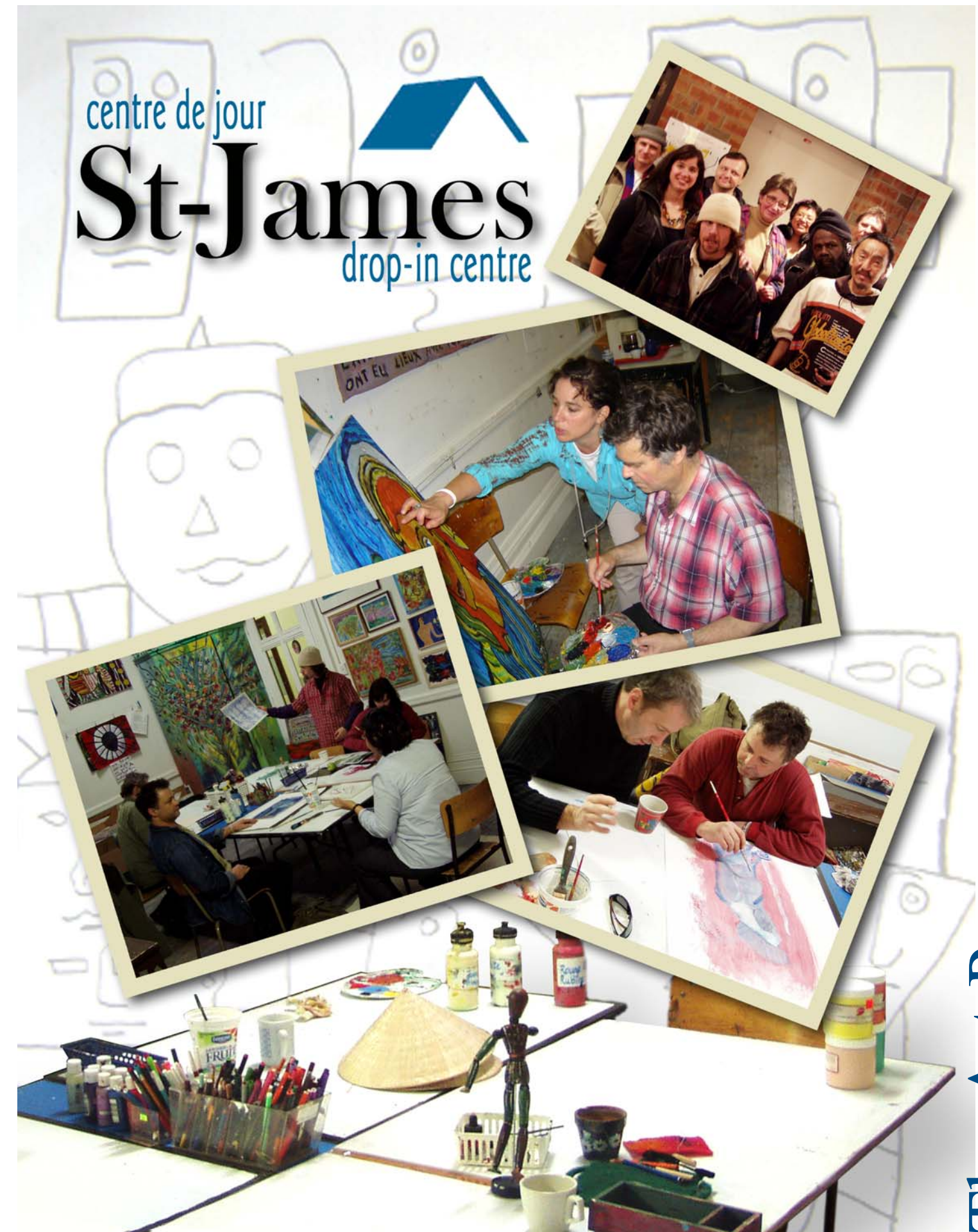
Shaika Cafe, 5526 rue Sherbrooke Ouest, Montréal, Octobre 2006

### **Art Exhibition**

Place Emilie-Gamelin, Montréal, Novembre 2006

### **Chapters Bookstore Art Exhibit**

1171 St Catherine St., Novembre - Décembre 2006



# The St-James Drop-In Centre

Alain Spitzer, Director

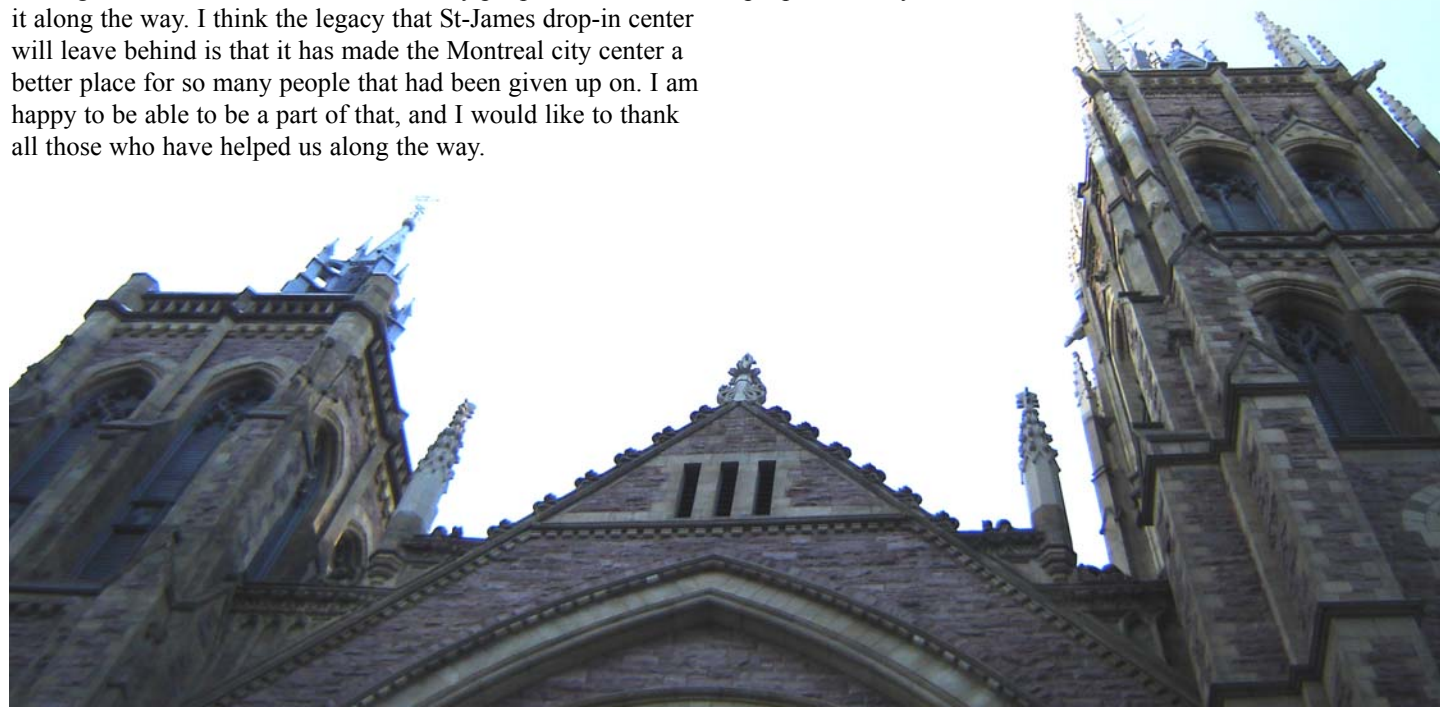
In October of 1985, the St-James drop-in centre opened its doors for the first time. From those early days, the center has evolved and consequently increased its services. In its humble beginnings, the center catered to 30 or so members, and served primarily as a place where one could get a hot meal, and a bit of shelter from the cold. Today it serves as a day shelter for more than 200 members, serving food throughout the day, running a clothing exchange, showers, an art studio, and more importantly serving as a place where men and women marginalized by society can obtain help from our social workers in a safe and peaceful place. Along the way the center went through numerous changes, all of which allowed it to achieve a greater influence on the lives of its members. As for me, the St-James drop-in center will always remain the story of exceptional people. Whether it is the user-members of the center, or the incredible team that works here, what I have noticed is how much is achieved everyday with so little. I think that this is what makes St-James drop-in such a special place. Everyday I see the dedication of all involved with St-James drop-in center (employees, volunteers, stage students), and how they help to better the lives of so many different people that have been cast aside by mainstream society. You can only be inspired by what this center has achieved over the last 21 years. What has made St-James drop-in so special is the spirit that has been infused in it by the different people who have passed through its doors over the years. In a society where most people look out for themselves, in a society that rips away the self belief of those most vulnerable, the St-James drop-in centre is the foundation upon which new aspirations are created; it has given so much self-belief to so many people who had lost it along the way. I think the legacy that St-James drop-in center will leave behind is that it has made the Montreal city center a better place for so many people that had been given up on. I am happy to be able to be a part of that, and I would like to thank all those who have helped us along the way.

The **St-James Drop-In Centre** in Montreal has been operating as a day centre for men and women who are experiencing difficulty in their daily living situations due to one or a combination of the following factors: homelessness, mental illness, substance abuse, personality disorder, or intellectual handicap.

The Centre (which is independent from the St-James United Church) attempts to meet the basic needs of its members by offering a safe and flexible home-like atmosphere, food, one hot nutritious meal a day, and access to a shower room and clean clothes. These basic services are integrated with professional services offered by three social workers, which include counseling, crises intervention, monitoring of medication, referrals, assistance with welfare, help finding housing and networking with other resources such as legal services, hospitals, CLSCs rehabilitation and detox centres.

The Centre provides jobs to capable users through welfare projects (I.N.S.O.) and serves as a teaching facility for McGill University Social Work students and for Dawson Social Service students.

Individuals using the Centre —open Monday to Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.— have a large amount of freedom in deciding how they wish to spend their day; they can sit down and chat with other members or staff, receive help with an immediate problem, lie down and sleep, watch television, use the telephone to make and receive calls, help with meal preparation, play a table game or participate in one of the recreational activities which are periodically offered (poetry workshops, bowling, etc). The Drop-In is visited once a week by a volunteer nurse. This kind of community outreach allows the members of the Centre the opportunity to have their physical and mental health needs assessed and cared for, in an environment where they feel safe and comfortable. One of the most remarkable and special things we observe at the Centre is the strong bonds, warmth, and affection that grows between members. There is a real sense of family that comes from spending so much time with the same group of people, and it is the kindness, support and help that members extend to each other that allows to make the **St-James Drop-In Centre** a place where people can truly feel “at home”.



## THE ART PROGRAM

The **St-James Drop-In** has offered an art program since 1996. It is funded by the federal IPAC program for the homeless.

The Art Program helps members in their daily struggles with mental illness, substance abuse and other issues related to poverty and social exclusion. Through it, they can find ways to overcome internal brakes, recover their personal dignity and better cope with the problems that they face on a daily basis.

Professional artists volunteer to help members in their creative expression of the inexpressible. The result is art that is both a form of personal affirmation and universal in its values.

The art room is open to the public and serves as a selling point. The money from all art sales is split 50-50 between the artists and the Drop-In.

In addition to this, since the autumn of 2006, the art studio has become a teaching facility for fine arts students of Concordia University. Once a week, students from the fine arts department come to St-James to conduct workshops for the its members, while learning about the dynamic of the St-James Drop-In Centre. This exchange is beneficial to both the members and the students, as they both get to learn about each other, and the issues that matter to them.

The art studio is a central part of the St-James Drop-In Centre, as it serves as a means of therapy for so many people, who are unable to express the pain that they go through on a daily basis. Through the creation of beautiful pieces of art, these marginalized segments of the population are able to express the deepest meanings of their lives. It is in that way that I believe the art program to be so successful. It breaks down the boundaries of expression that have imprisoned so many people for so long, giving them hope when all seems lost.



*It is a great space, where I can work on my art. It's good to spend time here.*

-Jimmy Daskalopoulos

*People who are suffering with problems like homelessness and mental illness are not interested in being retrospective. So it is easier for them to express themselves through art then talking about their problems*

-Chris Reid

*It's a space that gives freedom (...)*

-Karen Spencer