

The next time that you pass a homeless person

Marie-Eve Dionne

When I began working at the St-James Drop-In Centre, I must admit that I did not know what to expect and I was a bit scared. It is easy, when we think of the problems of homelessness and mental health, to believe the prejudices created by society. I have surprised myself by having a prejudice about the homeless because once or twice I've felt hassled by one of them. However, just because that one person's behavior scared me does not mean that all homeless people are like that. It is not true that homeless people are dangerous, incompetent or any other of the negative umbrella generalizations made by our society.

By working at St-James, I am in contact with people who are homeless and/or suffer from mental health issues. And I've been completely charmed by these people. I discovered people who live alone on the fringes of society, voluntarily or not, and who have much to offer and teach us when we take the time to listen to them. They are rich in life experiences, intelligent, and they are trying to exist alongside a society of which mold they don't always fit. People can be scared of the unknown and those who are different.

The next time that you pass a homeless person, look past initial appearances and think about how much you could change someone's day by simply saying hello or taking five minutes to talk with them. You will be surprised not only to find how much you can offer them but also how much they can offer you.



OBITUARIES:

We want to express our deep regrets over the deaths of two long time members: Ronnie Jacob, 43, who passed away at the end of August; and René Brunelle, 69, who died in early October. They were well-liked by our staff and members, and we will all miss them.



Ronnie



René

Out In The Wet, Wet Wild

(continued from page 1)

the sound of rain. The clammy, sodden sleeping bags are another story - but hey, ya can't have it all...

Under interlocking, dripping-wet branches of trees, we came together to prepare and eat our meals. And then again around the campfire at night, when we could get the damp kindling to burn. We endured cloudburst after cloudburst, and in between, time was spent reclining at the beach, walking trails, picnicking, playing cards, and sharing stories. And the precipitation made doing the dishes a cinch!

The conservation area offers forests of mixed tree and plant species. The mélange is home to many species of birds, mammals, and amphibians, and is a perfect setting to enjoy the tranquilizing effects of nature (however sopping). Our Yamaska trip was a little bit of a monsoon, a lot of squeezing out clothes and bedding, and a total success.

Our second major outing was participation in the **Dianova Urban Breakway Program**, which proved to be a bonanza for six of our members this past October. Our enthusiastic group had the fortune of a 6 day, 5 night stay at the non-profit's country facilities.

The serene setting proved to be an authentic retreat for our St-James group. Dianova offered our members the luxury of a clean, safe, comfortable environment while engaging them in therapeutic programming. Our crew partook in activities such as bowling, swimming, horseback-riding, and a ropes course - a challenging outdoor personal development and team building exercise. They also attended workshops on nutrition, and addictions.

The St-James Drop-In members agree that the experience was a true blessing, and continue to benefit from its calming, rejuvenating effects.



centre de jour St-James drop-in centre

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It ain't gonna be cheap, and it ain't gonna be easy: Looking back on the last 6 months

Alan Spitzer



The last 6 months have been incredibly busy at the St-James Drop-In Centre. Staff changes, renovations, a fundraising campaign, and the implementation of new programs have kept us all very busy. First off, there are a few staff changes that have taken place during the last few months. Departing are Kathryn Suchostawski and Patrick Cavalier. We are sad to see them go, but at the same time are excited with those who have replaced them: Alexis Boyle and Catherine Lacasse. Their addition to the remaining team members has been a blessing, and the months to come look great.

During the same period, we have launched our most ambitious fundraising campaign yet. After a lengthy amount of research, we have established a list of nearly 40 foundations that we perceive as suitable potential benefactors for our upcoming projects. The months that followed were used to write up and prepare the different grant proposals and although it was a daunting task, we are almost finished sending them out. At the time of print, we had sent in excess of 30, and had already received 2 positive responses. The first response from the **Hylcan Foundation** was used to build the emergency infirmary which is fully stocked with various medical supplies that will allow us to better care for our members. The second response from **Hockey for the Homeless**, will allow us to initiate a full scale facelift on the centre. New furniture, offices, and a fresh paint job are just some of the changes that took place during the first week of November. Despite the amount of hard work, we are all very excited by these changes.

Out In The Wet, Wet Wild

Erin Carney

Over the past 6 months I've had the pleasure of accompanying groups from St-James Drop-In on two separate wilderness trips.

The first of these was our **camping trip to Yamaska National Park**. We kicked off this past summer by piling fourteen of us into 2 vehicles overloaded with tents, sleeping bags, and food. But nooooo umbrellas - that's right, we forgot the umbrellas. The adventure began with an early Montreal departure, and space was cramped but spirits were high. The surprise downpour hit before dusk on our first day there, as we were setting up camp. Through torrents of rain, our hardy group remained chipper despite being soggy. Somewhat ill-prepared for the three-day storm, we huddled under makeshift shelters of tarps strung up between trees.

Even through the drizzle, showers, and sheets of rain, our week there was akin to an almost-audible collective sigh of relief. Enveloped by the hush of the forest and its green carpet (oh yeah, and water - gallons and gallons of water), there was a perceptible change in our members' attitudes. Tensions and hardships faded into the background along with the noise, violence, and grime of the city. And there's something soothing about drifting off to sleep to

Page 4

Thank you, Thank you! Thank you? Thank you:

EJLB Foundation, Jackman Foundation, Hylcan Foundation, Hockey for the Homeless, Mazon Canada, Kenneth Shea, Le Garde manger pour tous, Government of Canada: IPLI program, Régie Regionale de la santé et des services sociaux: Programme PSOC, Dianova Canada, St-James United Church, F.O.H.M, Beaver Lodge N6, David Eggert, Danica Straith, Frankie Martinez, Indigo / Chapters bookstores, Nancy Keays et le CLSC des Faubourgs, Direction Chretienne, Paula Klein and the Montreal City Mission, North West Clothing company, Isabelle Leduc et Chambrclerc, Church of St-Andrews and St-Paul, Irwin Brown, Shaika Café, Helen, Stan Kupferschmidt, Li Stock, Francois Hoang, McGill University: School of social work, Concordia University: Art Education,

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www.stjamescentre.ca

The team
at St-James
drop-in center:

Page 2

Top row: Nathalie Sheppard, Erin Carney and Catherine Lacasse
Middle row: Alexis Boyle, Marie-Eve Dionne and Bernard Racicot
Bottom row: Alain Spitzer, Anne-Marie Beaulieu and Ron Melanson



Looking back on the last 6 months

(suite from page 1)

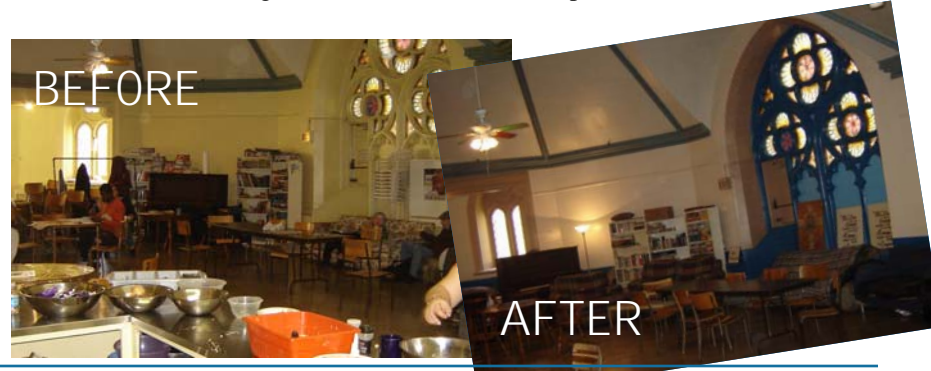
Hopefully the other grant proposals will also be well received and we will be able to build on what is already in place. The financial dimension of our work is definitely the most stressful and uncertain one of all. We increasingly need the support of non-governmental sectors if we are to continue our march forward.

This summer, we headed off to Yamaska Park for our camping trip, and despite the fact that it rained nearly every single minute, all the members had a great time. (A special thanks to David Eggert and former staff member Stan Kupferschmidt for volunteering their time to assist with trip). Additionally, we had the opportunity to take part in an urban breakaway program with DIANOVA in October. As it was last year, this year's *breakaway* in Terrebonne (QC) went very well, and all the people involved really enjoyed about a week in a small cabin in the country. All activities, food, and

workshops were organized and financed by DIANOVA, and for this we thank them from the bottom of our hearts.

Lastly, I'd like to make mention of 'Outreach program' which was officially put into place at the beginning of September. Nathalie Sheppard is spearheading this endeavour specifically focussed on helping members acquire suitable housing and assisting them throughout this difficult transition.

All in all, the last 6 months have been very positive. I hope that we can carry this momentum into the new year, continuing to progress and bring success to the St-James Drop-In Centre.



St-James Outreach Begins...

Nathalie Sheppard

After a month-long break for August, the St-James Drop-In Centre re-opened with some new staff and new programs. One of the programs that began in September is the Outreach Program. When one gets to experience the drop-in on a daily basis, the needs of the individual members become increasingly more evident. Time spent doing the everyday tasks such as showers, distributing medication or escorting people to appointments becomes an opportunity to bond with people outside of the regular work day of 9-5. It becomes a time where the conversations are more personal and less of an intervention worker/client type of relationship. Through these types of interactions it became apparent to the staff of St. James that our goals of enabling individuals to feel fully integrated into the community and feel less frustration would benefit from either more staff or more hours in the day.

The basic premise is to house individuals in a setting that meets their needs, while providing regular check-ins to ensure that they stay housed. Along with follow-up, which will include help with cleaning, organizing, and painting the apartment, the program will expand to include shopping excursions, cooking lessons

and pretty much any assistance required for day-to-day living. Sometimes tasks that people complete everyday with little thought can be much more complicated for others who may be struggling with mental health issues. The Outreach will also be focusing on escorting people to various appointments to give us a more rounded sense of how an individual's overall quality of life is. When the program does expand to include tasks such as cooking, the focus will be on nutrition and preparing and eating balanced meals on a smaller budget. Hygiene and activities such as doing laundry will also play a part in helping people feel pride in themselves and work as a stepping-stone to increased self-esteem. As an individual's self-worth expands, participation in various group or individual outings will be encouraged as well as balancing budgets to allow people to feel in control of their finances. This will allow people to save in order to accomplish larger needs or goals.

The overall point of the Outreach Program is to empower individuals to take control of all aspects of their life where they are currently experiencing difficulty. This control will hopefully alleviate feelings of frustration and low self-esteem. Empowering people will allow them to live happy, healthy lives in the community. The goal is ultimately to give them the chance at a stable life just as every individual has the right to.



From the chairman

"When winter's here, can spring be far behind?" Shakespeare said that. It makes you think.

With Marie-Eve's leadership, our writers have been looking into Shakespeare, Bob Dylan, Nelligan and many more of the greats. And they've been writing back, with flashes of brilliance and truth.

Poetry distils experience in a creative way that helps us share with each other. Sometimes this and other kinds of sharing - Shakespeare, Bob Dylan and Nelligan with us and ours with each other -- help us get through a tough spot. Sometimes it's just fun which is reason enough.

There's a lot of creative sharing going on at the St. James Drop-In Centre



Bob Dylan

Rob Bull.

A word from the treasurer:



How the energy flows! Fiscal 2006 saw a notable increase in the amount of donations to the Centre and more money than ever before spent on creative programming. Testimony to the quality of results can be seen concretely in a four-fold increase in the sale of artwork produced by members of the Centre. Their pride in such recognition of their work and what it means to them and to the Centre financially speaks volumes, as does the gain in self-confidence members experience thanks to outreach and other programs whose continued existence has frequently run principally on faith. Government grants do provide part of the St. James Drop-in Centre's funding, but it is the private donations, large and small, that ensure the long-term survival of our most creative programming and the possibility of bringing new dreams to fruition.

DON'T MISS!

Centre St-Pierre
1212 Panet Street,
Metro Beauty
Exposition and Sale
February 1 - 28

ÉTAT D'URGENCE
24h / 24
From November 21 - 25
Émilie- Gamelin Place,
Metro Berri- UQAM
Live painting
with our artists
on November 22 and 25
1- 4 p.m.

FUTUR EVENTS
Winter 2008
Exposition
-
Fundraiser
2142 Mackay Street

Art therapy?

Bernard Racicot

Art therapy is a million-dollar word. So many people want to use it that, understandably, therapists want to protect it. If we dare to admit, many ridiculous things have been done in the name of art therapy.

But the St-James Drop-in Centre wants to create a space where inspiration and creativity can flourish. Tools, artistic material and a warm reception pave the way for artists to create in this intimate setting adapted to their needs.

Art in itself is therapeutic. St-James is aware that art can have a positive impact on the lives of those who use our art studio. More important than numbers and art exhibitions are people and their stories. Precious time spent with them make their work so relevant.

Peace and serenity seem to flow from Roger's paintings. Curious, I asked him about the state of his life, to relate to me what he was going through. Roger told me, "I don't paint peace because I am peaceful. On the contrary! Painting brings me peace. I actually experience peace as I paint!"

Jean-Guy express happiness at his progress with his drawing. I keep encouraging him not to give up. He also draws at home and he is highly motivated because he is planning to take part in one of our upcoming art exhibitions.

These stories remind me that beyond logistics, operations, statistics and politics, there is a group of people who need to recover their dignity. This can be helped along by their art work. When the setting is right, small miracles do happen, and they are like brush-strokes from the Creator.

When I see this happening, I tell myself that I am in the right place. I feel so useful. Working at St-James has a positive impact on my life as well. I am constantly being challenged. When I try to see beyond what is there - it's not always easy to do - I can truly see that each person who attends St-James is truly a work of art. We can plan great artistic events, but true works of art are created when we least expect them. In those moments, colors take on new meanings and, frankly, when that happens, I wouldn't want to be anywhere else.