

## Butters has big plans

A diagnostic and behavioral research centre, a therapeutic farm, a family support program. The Butters Foundation, based in the Eastern Townships, is fundraising for three breakthrough projects to assist intellectually disabled persons. Providing services for both language groups, this \$3 million venture is very much an anglophone initiative.

“It’s a tribute to Lily Butters,” says **Ron Creary**, executive director of the foundation. “In 1948 she started taking in intellectually disabled children. Over the years, she continued to add more and more children to her original homestead. Today, The Butters Homes Inc. runs a network of 30 group homes serving over 150 clients.”

Now Butters is going to set up a working farm to provide therapy and employment possibilities for the intellectually disabled. The local rehab centre (CRDI Montérégie-Est) will operate the program. “Urban life can be stressful for these people,” says Creary. “A farm can provide a stimulating, but comfortable, environment for them.”

There will also be a three-year project to give seed money to parents with disabled children to develop their own self-help programs. “These people have been overlooked by the public system,” affirms Creary. “They will decide what they need to develop a self-sustaining program, so they won’t have to rely on the State for everything.”

Crowning the Butters campaign is the state-of-the-art facility the foundation is to build in St. Hyacinthe. There, diagnostic tools and rehab treatments will be developed for people with serious behavioural disorders. “It will bring together mental health and social rehabilitation professionals as well as university researchers,” says Creary. “A collaboration of this size is a first for Canada.”

Butters builds the facility; the local CRDI provides the service. “A fine example of private-public partnership,” says Creary.

## A century of correctional care

The Prévost campus of Batshaw Youth and Family Centres is marking its 100th birthday this year. First called the Boys’ Farm and Training School, then Shawbridge Youth Centres, this correctional facility for juvenile offenders has sheltered over 13,000 youngsters since its founding in 1907. Today, the Prévost site can accommodate up to 80 young people, about half the total number under Batshaw’s residential care.

“These are not only kids who have committed crimes,” explains **Michael Udy**, Batshaw executive director. “More and more are being placed in care because of their severe behavioural problems. They’ve been abused and neglected and get into trouble. The labels and the laws might have changed from 100 years ago, but they’re the same kids and our job is the same – to see that they are helped.”

A treatment concept pioneered by the founders, residents live in cottages to provide an atmosphere as close as possible to a family-living situation. There is a strong rehabilitation program, schooling, sports activities, psychological help, and specialized assistance such as drug counselling. “We’re also very involved with helping to strengthen relationships between these kids and their families for when they leave care,” says Udy.

“If we want to reduce the number of troubled kids in our community,” affirms Udy, “there needs to be earlier intervention. Behavioural problems become apparent at a very young age, so when daycares detect problems, they should be flagged for attention. That’s the way to go.”

## Access programs approved

The Montreal Health and Social Services Agency has approved the new access programs for English-language services submitted by 54 health establishments in the Greater Montreal region. Once reviewed by the Ministry, they will be submitted to Cabinet for its approval, expected in October.

## Seniors the subject

Public hearings on living conditions of Quebec seniors are now under way across the province. The consultation is headed by **Marguerite Blais**, Minister responsible for seniors, and co-chaired by **Réjean Hébert**, Université du Sherbrooke dean of medicine and **Sheila Goldbloom**, community volunteer and retired McGill social work professor.

“I accepted because I was very excited about what this consultation could accomplish,” affirms Goldbloom. “It’s a real effort by the government to go to the people who own the problem, to listen to them, and to develop policy on what they consider needs to be done. And it’s meant to bring about action on this very important issue.”

The consultation deals with the themes of family, society and different living environments in a wide array of situations. Each region has its own particular characteristics. There are significant differences between rural and urban communities, between men and women, between fragile and active seniors. Some communities, experiencing their first elderly generation, face building up resources and institutions for seniors for the first time.

“One of the things that I hope will happen,” says Goldbloom, “is that there will be more sharing of information, so that those communities don’t have to start from scratch. They can learn from the mistakes made elsewhere. And we’ll all be learning from the many Quebecers who are coming to the hearings with their experiences and suggestions.”

A common, and overriding, issue seen to be affecting many seniors is financial insecurity. Some help on that score was introduced in the government’s February budget, which provided \$238 million to implement a variety of tax relief measures and social initiatives to alleviate some of the problems that seniors face. This consultation is one of them. Its findings are to be tabled early in the New Year. For documentation and hearings schedule, see: [www.consultationpublique-aines.gouv.qc.ca](http://www.consultationpublique-aines.gouv.qc.ca) .

## AMI-Québec, 30, takes new name

Celebrating its 30th anniversary this year, AMI-Québec has decided to change its name to better reflect the proactive role it has assumed over the years. Previously the Alliance for the Mentally Ill, AMI now stands for Action on Mental Illness. “This is a much more dynamic description of what we do,” says Ella **Amir**, executive director.

AMI was founded in 1977 when four families who were dealing with mentally-ill loved ones came together for mutual support. That small group has steadily evolved into an association of almost 700 families. While the precept of mutual support remains the core of its operations, AMI has developed a diverse program of professional assistance for its members as well as outreach activities aimed at eliminating the stigma of mental illness among the public at large.

“We have a pretty broad menu,” says Amir. “There are support groups, educational events, counselling sessions, discussion round tables, telephone workshops. The challenge is to stay versatile enough to meet changing needs, and to do it on a very tight budget.”

Another challenge, according to Amir, is the sensitizing of mental health professionals. “In general, they don’t do enough to help families,” she affirms. “Many still don’t recognize how crucial it is to support families, and, unfortunately, they often forget to send them to us.” For further information: [www.amiquebec.org](http://www.amiquebec.org) .

## Mental health commission set up

The federal government has set up a national Mental Health Commission to develop a new mental health strategy for the country. The \$55 million five-year commission is also to lead a national campaign to erase the stigma attached to mental illness. Quebec is “opting out” of these national discussions, claiming health as a provincial prerogative; there are Quebecers serving on the Commission, however. See: [www.mentalhealthcommission.ca](http://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca) .

## Centraide draws diverse donors

When Centraide of Greater Montreal launches its 2007 fund-raising campaign – on October 1 – it will be counting on a wide and mixed base of generous donors to meet its goal. Last year, campaign returns reached an all-time high of \$51.5 million. Some 175,000 Montrealers contributed to that success.

“People are very generous when they know and trust you,” says **Michèle Thibodeau-DeGuire**, Centraide president. “We now have a Leaders’ Circle of 6,000 donors who give \$1,000 or more. Their combined donations last year totaled nearly \$16 million, close to one third of the total return.”

Among that group are some very big givers. As well as generous donations from foundations, last year 15 families contributed \$100,000 or more, and five among them gave \$500,000 or more. “What is most noteworthy about those gifts,” says Thibodeau-DeGuire, “is that they came with no strings attached. We were trusted to invest in the best place possible.”

Just over half of Centraide’s funding comes from payroll deductions. “They are the source of our strength,” says Thibodeau-DeGuire. “The large gifts are very important, but it is the accumulation of all those small, individual gifts that enable us to continue serving the community as we do. And it’s thanks to the 22,000 volunteers who direct mini-campaigns in the workplace that we have been so successful on that front.”

## Montreal Initiative looks at health

Following a citywide series of public consultations, the Greater Montreal Development Initiative (GMDI) has presented its final report on Montreal’s English-speaking communities. Among its many recommendations, the GMDI calls for creation of a task force on health and social services to assess the impact of current healthcare reforms on Montreal’s English-speakers. It also calls for their participation in Quebec’s public health planning. The complete report is available at: [www.qcgn.ca](http://www.qcgn.ca) .

## St. Margaret’s making changes

Major renovations are to start soon at St. Margaret’s Home, to accommodate the changing needs of its aged residents. With increasing loss of mobility, many are no longer able to access the Home’s communal areas where therapeutic treatment and religious services take place. Under the new setup, those services will be “by delivery”.

“We’re adjusting the physical space in a significant way,” says **Carole McDonough**, executive director. “Therapeutic equipment will be made mobile, so that it can be taken onto the different floors. There will be specially adapted shower rooms. We’ll even have a ‘Mass on wheels’ for residents who can’t get to the chapel.”

The renovations were made possible through a grant of \$2.5 million from the Montreal Health and Social Services Agency. “This funding is indeed timely,” says McDonough. “There’ll be even greater demand for these kinds of adaptations in the future.”

## Almage goes on the road

The Almage Senior Community Centre has just launched a string of five satellite centres around the city’s East End. The goal is to reach pockets of isolated anglophones who have difficulty getting to the Centre itself.

“It’s a very large region,” says **Diane Doonan**, CCS community organizer, “and transportation can be a problem. So each day of the week, we’ll be holding activities at a different site. They will be open to both francophone and anglophone seniors, but English-speakers are our first target.”

The activities, chosen by the seniors, cover a wide range of interests, including music, bingo, computer courses, storytelling and nutrition workshops. This new program evolved from the networking project spearheaded by CCS to improve English health and social services in eastern Montreal. For further information: 514 770 8416.

## Canadian children still poor

Campaign 2000, a 120-member movement of organizations working on family/child issues has just issued another negative annual report on child poverty in Canada. The campaign was spurred by the Canadian government's failure to honour a unanimous all-party parliamentary resolution, taken in 1989, to eliminate child poverty by the year 2000. The poverty rate among Canadian children is still near 12 percent.

Campaign 2000 is calling on the federal government to reduce Canada's child poverty rate by a minimum of 25 percent by 2012, and a minimum of 50 percent by 2017. It is also appealing to provincial governments to meet their commitments. The report is available at: [www.campaign2000.ca](http://www.campaign2000.ca).

## Legislation for elderly protection?

La Coalition québécoise pour la protection des aînés, launched this month, will lobby for a government ruling similar to the Youth Protection Act to shelter Quebec's seniors from abuse. The organization estimates that there are now some 150,000 cases of elderly abuse in the province every year, and as the population continues to age, that number can only grow. It wants a legislated body to provide rapid intervention whenever abuse of elderly people is reported.

## Foundation funding nutritional food

La Fondation André et Lucie Chagnon is offering \$50 million over 10 years to help government improve nutritional information on food packaging. The Foundation is calling for a single, clearly understood system of labeling so that consumers can make an informed choice for healthful eating.

## Affordable housing up for Montreal

Montreal passed its objective of increasing low-cost rental units by at least 30 percent last year. In fact, 40 percent of new units were "affordable".

## In brief

Members of the new provincial advisory committee on accessibility to English healthcare services are: **James Carter, John Cruikshank, Cynthia Dow, Dr. Abraham Fuks, Marjorie Goodfellow** (president), **Jennifer Johnson-Blouin, Edward McCann, Aline Rahal Visser, Lionel Roberts, Lorraine Torpy, Michael Udy** (vice-president).

**Ella Amir** was named chair of the Family Caregivers Committee of the new Mental Health Commission of Canada.

**Paul Bissonnette** has been named acting director of Volunteer West Island.

Dr. **Harvey Guyda** was named acting associate director of the Montreal Children's Hospital.

Rev. Dr. **Patricia Kirkpatrick** was elected president of the board of Auberge Madeleine.

**Daphne Nahmiash** was appointed to the new National Seniors Council.

**Denise Tessier** is the new president of the YWCA Foundation board.

The 2007 Low-Ber Memorial Lecture, on Why we stigmatize mental illness, is at 7:00 p.m., October 10, at Oscar Peterson Concert Hall. Free admission.

The Volunteer Bureau of Montreal has published a guidebook to volunteering in Montreal. For information: 514 842 3551.

...Refusing and Dismissing Volunteers is the subject of a daylong workshop being offered by the Volunteer Bureau of Montreal on November 20. Registration fee is \$70.

The editor welcomes story ideas: 514 937 4309

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