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Season's Greetings!



At the start of the most recent general meeting of **Our Harbour** our president, Catherine Gilbert, in her introductory remarks asked residents from our apartments if they would like to introduce themselves to the gathering and say a few words about **Our Harbour**. There were three who spoke, a woman and two men. The men talked about how much they liked living there; the woman said that living there had saved her life. Her remarks brought vitality to all those statistics and hard work that normally measure success at these meetings; they reflect amply and aptly the sense of success all the people of **Our Harbour** had worked so hard for in the last year. She turned us all into heroes.

Of course her remarks were aimed at a much larger audience than those

of us sitting in that church basement hall. Our volunteers who work with the residents of our apartments deserve most of the praise. Many volunteers work together to produce a warm and welcoming environment in both of our apartments. Volunteers work with the residents to teach or otherwise encourage them to shop for groceries, cook meals, clean the apartment and attend to personal cleanliness. The treasurer of the apartment visits on the first day of each month to ensure that the residents pay their rent as a priority. Our professional staff member, Perveen Khokhar, makes sure that the residents and volunteers harmonize with each other, get along.

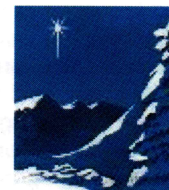
Behind this line, we have other volunteers. We have people who go into the community publicizing our aims, writing letters, and looking for more volunteers and funds.

We need more volunteers for the apartments. We intend to open another apartment for three more people with mental illness in the New Year. We need volunteers to find, clean, paint and repair the apartments. We also need money – any you can spare.

Lastly, but not leastly, there are people like you, the friends we rely on to get the funds and the most precious of all, the time to give to others less privileged. Be their hero: support them and **Our Harbour**.

...and Happy New Year !

*Jim Moran
on behalf of the Board*



Taking care of our Volunteers

On November 9th l'Abri en Ville sponsored a Volunteer Work-shop for groups like us. Eight volunteers from Our Harbour attended. The workshop leader was Dr. Pierre Lalonde, a Psychiatrist at Hôpital Louis-H. Lafontaine and a Professor at Université de Montréal.

This was an empowering experience for all who attended. The main focus of

the workshop was to better understand the dynamics of the person who has schizophrenia.

After a lecture on the physical and medical aspects of the functioning of the brain, Dr. Lalonde led us in a series of role plays that gave us concrete tips and a better appreciation of what some of our residents may be experiencing on a daily basis.

We learned how to be aware of verbal and non-verbal behaviours and were given concrete tips on how to handle certain situations. We also learned how to be sensitive to the other person's feelings and special needs and how best to help.

Our volunteers are dedicated and eager to keep honing our skills in being better able to interact with our

residents. The role playing was a powerful tool in helping us to empathize with a person who has a mental illness.

I am even more impressed with our residents and how they are managing so well now that I have an insight into the daily challenges that they face. Bravo to them all!

*Barbara Duguid
Volunteer*

We are very proud of our residents and of our dedicated volunteers. This is a snapshot of each of the residents in our Apartment #1.

Robert, one of our first residents, has been with us since the beginning. Robert has taken on (under Anne Marie's tutelage) the apartment rent collection and has the money ready for the Treasurer when she arrives. Robert also keeps an eye on what needs fixing in the apartment and conscientiously relays the information to the volunteer team leader who informs the landlord.

Robert has subsequently become more sociable and an interesting conversationalist. He willingly helps in moving, storing, and placing furniture in both the men's and women's apartments. He also does occasional odd jobs at his church and attends services. When Robert expressed an interest in swimming, I obtained the details and went swimming with him at the St. Lambert pool. Now he and

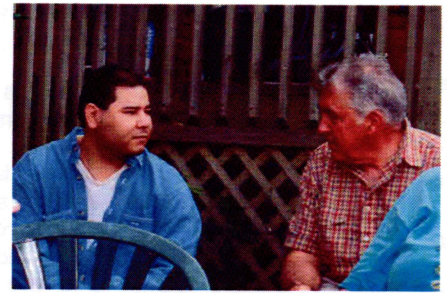
Daniel plan to go on their own whenever they want to.

Daniel's skills have been very useful as well. We learned that Daniel was a house painter in his earlier years. He offered to paint two rooms of the women's apartment. He did a great job. Daniel is seriously involved at "Alternative Centregens" becoming a member of the board of their directors. He is also the resident's representative on the **Our Harbour** board of Directors. This has given Daniel a community focus. He seems very pleased to be part of **Our Harbour**.

René, in spite of his difficulties adjusting to his medication, expressed an interest in exercising. A volunteer initiated a plan of getting René out playing baseball for a couple of hours a week. So René, Daniel, that volunteer and I went to a municipal ball park where we worked up a sweat, pitching, batting, and catching baseball for an hour or so. Since baseball season faded out, we, René, Bob (a new

volunteer), and I now play ball hockey once a week, weather permitting. This helps René feel more energized. René has needed support with housekeeping. A Volunteer, Mary Ann sees him once a week to ease him over this hurdle. This is working well for the apartment and for René.

JIM DENNY
Volunteer



René and Jim having a chat.

About the women...

October has been a month of transition for the women in apartment two. There has been somewhat of a parting of ways as one of the three has moved on to other adventures and changes in relationships. The remaining two women (Gayle and Liane) have bonded and there is a real sense of community developing among all the residents.

The women, who are quite adept in their culinary skills (the men certainly hold their own in that arena, I've been told) enjoy cooking together and for each other. Liane prepared a turkey dinner for their guests and sent down a plate to the men like good neighbours. The men, in turn are always willing to lend their muscle to tasks in the women's apartment when required.

On Tuesday, October 25th, a drizzling, cold, windy and generally miserable evening, we had a wonderful potluck dinner in a warmly lit home with a fire crackling in the fireplace, lots of laughter, great company and absolutely delicious food! Perveen, our professional coordinator, had gone shopping with Liane and bought a turkey with all the fixings, made arrangements for Liane to stuff the turkey with her yummy sausage dressing and cook it. Mary Ann prepared cranberry dressing and her delicious sweet potatoes that everyone raved about. I was personally enamoured with a fabulous apple pie made with thinly sliced apples stacked together with just the right hint of cinnamon and a light, flaky, golden brown crust. The potluck was a

great opportunity for new volunteers: Leslie, Louise, and her husband Roland to meet the Our Harbour gang.

On November 5th, both of our women were helpers at a church bazaar. It was a pleasure having them be part of the community in this way.

Volunteers have been bringing in plants and laminated pictures to decorate the women's apartment. Diane and Gayle both enjoy the edgy humour of Terry Gilliam films so they went to Guzzo's to see "The Brothers Grimm". Shirley (a volunteer) has been showing Liane the finer points of Rummy on Thursday nights. Gayle and Liane go out regularly for coffee with Cathy and Kathy (two other volunteers).

Earlier this summer Jim and Diane took Liane to the Old Brewery Mission to serve supper. Since Liane had been there before, she explained the procedure to them. Liane would like to return and help out on Sunday nights.

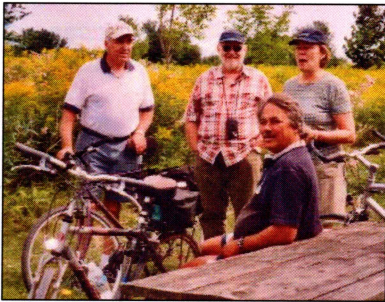
Perveen, Liane, Gayle and Diane spent some time at La Mosaïque checking out the bargains. All of them were quite pleased with their purchases.

We are all looking forward to November and the launching of our first Games Night on the 23rd. We move ahead in faith and hope. It is going very well. Our residents, all of them, are such wonderful people to work with. It is truly a joy and a blessing to know them all.

Zelda Hippolyte - Volunteer

Although Diane and I became *Our Harbour* volunteers primarily to give rather than receive, we have discovered that we receive more than we could ever give! Volunteering for *Our Harbour* has given us feelings of accomplishment and even a little sense of empowerment. The residents to whom we have been assigned have responded very positively to our presence even though we have not consciously attempted to elicit such a response.

I believe that they have been subconsciously aware that our intentions for them were honorable



"The Bikers", Daniel (seated) with three volunteers taking a little break.

and they reacted accordingly. Their responses have been mostly positive. Subsequently their progress has proven very rewarding to us. I shall recount some of the ordinary activities we initiated with the approval of *Our Harbour* residents that have proven beneficial in helping them move towards consistent normal social interactions. None of the activities are earth-shatteringly creative. Actually, they are very ordinary, everyday interludes that cost them nothing financially; all the volunteers need give is their time and willingness to be involved.

We have organized activities for all or most of the residents. We had a very successful day at Îles des Boucherville on August 18, '05. Daniel and four volunteers spent a very satisfying two hours biking and then picnicking. The activity afforded everybody a chance to get to know

one another better and this really helped the bonding within the group.

We discovered that Daniel had a penchant for movie going. He saved his money and John and he went to see a couple of movies of Daniel's choice. A very simple activity but one Daniel and John have enjoyed very much.

Recently four volunteers and all the residents (three men and two women) went for a walk and a picnic in "Parc de Saint-Bruno de Montarville". The trees were in their October glory, the chickadees were at their cheekiest, and although it was a bit nippy, everyone enjoyed the prepared food and subsequent camaraderie.

So it would seem that to effect a successful intervention with persons with mental illness one need not require a complicated set of operations with a psychological construct but simple

personal interactions that enable relationships to develop and a community to form. In this way, they get to practice normal social interactions and develop habits to help them fit into community life and feel good about themselves. The volunteers get a personal lift from participating in such activities as they see the positive results of their involvement. By the same token, volunteers are frequently cautioned not to take setbacks (residents opting out of planned activities at the last minute) personally but to continue to make the effort to help the residents respond with normal social behavior that is affected mostly by implication or subtle suggestion.

*Jim Denny
Volunteer*

Impressed and blessed!

"Before, I was isolated. Now I see Our Harbour as a family."

UPDATE!

As of the end of November, we have a third resident for the women's apartment. The family is still growing!

One of the practices that Perveen, our coordinator, established is to try to have someone (usually a volunteer) accompany her on her regular weekly visits to the residents' apartments. I had the privilege to be with her one day in November. It was an experience that I will not soon forget.

Our first visit was with the men. I asked if anyone would like to say something for the newsletter. Daniel told us about how he feels being part of Our Harbour. He said, "Our Harbour changed my life. Before, I was disorganized. Since I have been here, I have been in more control of my life. Speaking about the volunteers he said, "It's great to have people helping. Before, I was isolated. Now I

see Our Harbour as a family. I feel supported. People care." And about the residents themselves, Daniel said, "It's a good relationship. People are pretty well focused on each other."

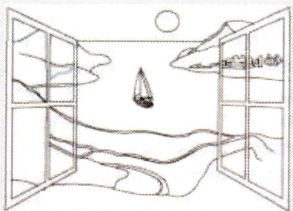
All of the men impressed me as being very self-aware and freely able to express their joys, fears and concerns. One was happy to announce that his doctor reduced his medications. He then immediately voiced his concern that, with Christmas coming, he may find it a little difficult. Another said that he was tired today and was just not feeling too enthusiastic about anything but that tomorrow he would probably be feeling better after a good night's sleep.

It was much the same with

the women. They proudly announced that, "The cupboards are full. The fridge is full and everything was bought on sale!" One of the women expressed that she was not happy in her job. "I'm helping poor people in the community. I should be happy. I've been thinking about what it is that I don't like about it. It's the people I work with. They don't inspire me." I was amazed at her perception and her ability to assess the situation and discern what to do.

It warms my heart to see how the residents interact and encourage one another. I feel blessed to have had this time with them and I am happy to be part of this special group.

Barbara Duguid - Volunteer



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We would like to express our appreciation to the churches, individuals, associations, the EJLB Foundation and the McConnell Family Foundation who have been most generous to Our Harbour. Your donations have allowed us to maintain two apartments, one for men and one for women. Despite some periodic vacancies, the cost for each resident has been stable due to our ability to cover the short fall.

The better part of our funds goes towards a professional salary. Our coordinator, Perveen Khokhar, visits the residents on a

weekly basis encouraging them towards a harmonious living environment. She has set up, guides, and supports two teams of five to seven people for each apartment. The teams organize a monthly calendar of activities for the residents. The results of this work can be seen in the stability being created in the residents' lives that has enabled them to try activities outside their immediate circle.

So where else do we spend money besides salary and the occasional rent coverage? Most of the furniture for the apartments has been donated.

However, our policy is to provide new mattresses and linens for each new apartment and so far window treatments in the form of blinds have been purchased. Add to this the office expenses to cover phone, stamps, Internet, paper and ink cartridges and you have our budget.

We may be operating on a small budget but we are getting huge returns in the life of people living with mental illness.

Judy Cruchet - Treasurer
j.crochet@sympatico.ca

About Our Organization

Persons with mental health problems and their families often find it difficult to cope with the stresses associated with their illness.

Our Harbour offers long-term housing within the new city of Longueuil as well as the support needed to promote independent living.

Help with basic living activities such as finding shelter, organizing meals, sponsoring activities and providing regular social contacts, avoids problems such as street-living and relapses.

The philosophy of Our Harbour is that people rooted in spiritual fellowship have the resources to offer community support to those who are living with mental illness.

By contributing our services to daily life-

management support, we offer residents the opportunity to enhance the quality of their lives and to find their place in the community. The project is funded by generous donations from faith communities, foundations, businesses, government and individuals.

Our objectives are to:

- provide supportive, long-term housing;
- provide life-management support;
- provide a link with resources in the surrounding community;
- assist each resident's integration into society;
- to decrease the risk of re-hospitalisation;
- educate the wider community about mental illness.

Referrals may come from families, hospitals, crisis

centres or community groups. We also accept self-referrals.

A resident in our program is:

- able to live in the community;
- willing to live with others;
- willing to accept help;
- willing to stay on medication;
- not abusing alcohol or drugs and does not have a history of violence;
- willing to be connected to hospital or social worker for professional follow-up.

For more information about referrals, volunteering, or an offer of funds, please see the contact information at the left.

Thank you.

Printing thanks to:

South Shore CEDEC