

Providing Support & Housing for persons
with mental health problems

Our Harbour/Havre à Nous News

Newsletter Fall/Winter 2009

95 Lorne Avenue, Saint-Lambert, Québec, J4P 2G7, Tel. (450) 671-9160

Montreal Walk for Mental Health...

The Our
Harbour family
extends to you
all
our warmest
wishes for a
Happy Holiday
Season &
Healthy New
Year

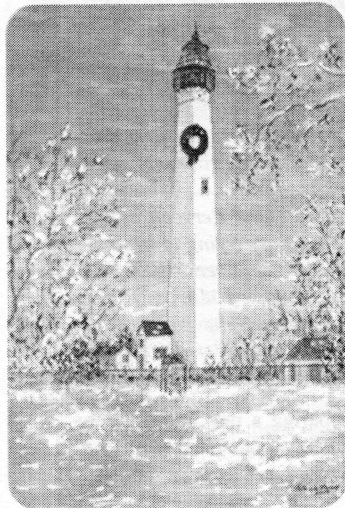


Margaret Trudeau with Our Harbour residents and volunteer

It was a crisp fall morning when the crowds turned up at the arena in *Pierre-Elliott Trudeau Park* in Côte St. Luc on the Sunday morning. Although they had run out of coffee, the excitement and enthusiasm were enough to keep the 500 or more participants warm as we waited for the walk's Honorary Chairperson, Margaret Trudeau, to address us. She shone her disarming smile on us all and open-heartedly shared her own fight with mental illness with us before we set off on our three- or five-kilometer walk through the leafy streets. There were babies in their prams, seniors with their walkers and lots of eager individuals waving banners, singing or simply talking to other participants about their personal involvement with mental illness.

Our Harbour residents Alan and Bob enjoyed the event, especially the hotdogs and pizza awaiting their return! Alan was impressed by the organization of this walk. "We were told to stay on the sidewalks, not to wander in the road," he said. "They really kept their eye on us." The volunteers accompanying them had a good time and were fortunate enough to have a brief exchange with Ms. Trudeau back at the arena.

Congratulations are due to *Ami-Québec*, *Agence Ometz*, *CSSS Cavendish*, *Cummings Jewish Center for Seniors*, *Abri en ville* and *Forward House*. It was a great day.
Lesley Régnier



Our Harbour: some of our success stories come with a good bye...

A harbour, or haven, is a place where ships may shelter from the weather, take on repairs and set sail once calmer waters prevail. It is the reason we chose the name *Our Harbour* because people living with a mental illness, like all of us, need a safe haven to wait out the storms in our lives. And, as at the end of a battering storm, we feel again the desire to venture outside this haven. So it is with a mix of sadness and pride that we recently said a happy goodbye to three of our residents.

Gayle, who was with *Our Harbour* for over three years, has decided to take her own apartment in the city. Gayle was one of our most active residents, volunteering at community events and attending our many volunteer activities. Along with rediscovering her gifts as an artist, she served on the *Our Harbour* Board as resident representative. Gayle credits her stay at *Our Harbour* as a real confidence builder. In our 2008 Newsletter she wrote, "My confidence is increasing each day I am at *Our Harbour*." It was only to be expected that in time Gayle would be ready to venture out once again beyond *Our Harbour*."

While Bruce's stay at *Our Harbour* was not as long as Gayle's, he also praises us for the great improvements in the quality of his life. So much so that, after a visit with family this summer, Bruce was able to feel secure enough to fulfill a long-standing desire to move to British Columbia and live with his family again. Our third resident was so encouraged by his progress, that he decided this summer to try it on his own.

While it is never easy to say good-bye, we wish each of our dear friends a fond farewell as they set sail in the now calmer waters outside *Our Harbour*.

OUR HARBOUR VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Our Harbour is looking for volunteers to provide one-on-one friendship for individuals with mental health problems. This would involve meeting with the individual once a week, engaging in social activities and helping him or her reintegrate into the community. The goal of *Our Harbour* is to expand by providing new apartments for residents to fulfill the needs of the English-speaking community of the South Shore. For more information contact **Mary Ann Bresba at 450-656-1157.**

Come meet Jocelyn Saulnier

Due to a few changes since our last newsletter, Jocelyn Saulnier has been hired as the second coordinator at *Our Harbour*. Jocelyn took an interesting route in finding us and we thought you would enjoy reading about it as a way of getting to know her a little better.

"I first found out about Our Harbour while perusing the arts and crafts at St. Augustine's Christmas Bazaar in the fall of 2007. Seated quietly amid all the hustle and bustle of the gift buying was Jim Moran, spreading the word of a great volunteer opportunity within our community. Curious, I stopped for a chat and left my name with Jim. Shortly thereafter, I received a call from Linda Magher about volunteering and agreed to make myself available later in the spring. I was studying full time, working towards a degree in Human Relations at Concordia University, and also holding down a part-time job, so my time was very limited.

But, as fortune had it, I was given the opportunity to work with Our Harbour and Perveen Khokhar for the field work portion of my degree. My partner and I, in collaboration with Perveen, created and facilitated an eight-week Life Skills program for the residents of Our Harbour. It was an experience I cherish. Having worked with the residents, I was eager to begin volunteering and I joined the Board of Directors in the fall of 2008 and started visiting Apartment 4 as a volunteer.

Then, in the spring of this year, I was hired to assist Perveen as the second coordinator. Since that time I have been busy trying to become acquainted with the needs of the residents and volunteers, the office and administration functions, our sister organization L'Abri en Ville, and other community groups offering resources for the mentally ill within our community. There is so much to do and learn but I feel privileged to work in such a caring and compassionate environment.

Jocelyn has already been hard at work preparing a new information pamphlet about *Our Harbour* and has quickly connected with the residents. We warmly welcome Jocelyn into the *Our Harbour* family.



Jocelyn (on far right) with her new friends

Our Harbour goes Camping

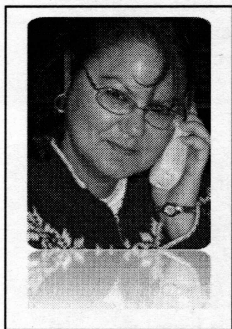
It was for a weekend of adventure that I and four *Our Harbour* residents (Bob, Abdul, Allan and Sabina) headed up to *Camp Kinkora in St. Adolfe de Howard*. As we arrived at camp we were allowed to choose our own cabin. We had plenty of time to get settled into our cabin. Lunch was made available for all campers and their drivers. A nice 'help yourself, prepare your own sandwich' buffet ensued.

That afternoon the residents signed the duty roster as during the weekend everybody was called up to do at least two tasks; such as, scraping dishes or cleaning vegetables for the meal. Later that afternoon Jerome, a resident from *L'Abri en Ville* guided us through a forest trek up the mountain side towards another upper lake. Sleeping in the cabins was a little chilly, but we woke up to a bright warm Saturday. The camp was beside a beautiful lake, and we were looking forward to testing the waters. A buddy system was enforced all weekend long for swimming and the use of the pedal boats or the canoes. Activities were optional during the weekend. It was a team effort as Allan and Sabina enjoyed an afternoon pedal boat ride with Bob helping them with the launching of their craft.

During both evenings at camp, Brenda and Andy from *L'Abri en Ville* maintained the welcoming glow of the bonfire down by the lake. After a hearty Sunday morning breakfast, Jerome and Rick produced a small chapel ceremony for roughly twenty participants. The themes of the service were the first commandment and love. After lunch it was time to pack up and say our good-byes. Many thanks to Jocelyne Saulnier, *Our Harbour's* new coordinator, for driving us to and from the camp. Special thanks to Marianne, coordinator at *L'Abri*, and Sharon our cook for their tireless participation and hospitality. Together you provided us with fond memories of a beautiful weekend

Michael Whelan (Our Harbour Volunteer)

Hello! My Name is Sabina and I'm calling from Our Harbour

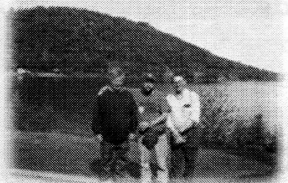
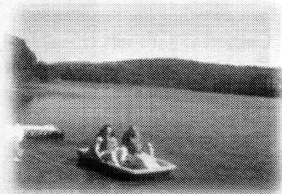


We have all gotten those calls: a very friendly voice asking us how we are doing before they start pushing some product they are trying to sell. So you can image how pleasant it has been to pick up the telephone and hear "Hello! This is Sabrina from *Our Harbour* and I want to invite you to....."

A guiding philosophy of *Our Harbour* has always been to encourage our residents to take greater charge of their lives. So we were more than pleased to now have *Our Harbour* residents such as Sabina and Robert take on the task of inviting volunteers to our various outings. Once events are planned, Sabina quickly and in a very businesslike fashion gets to work calling to invite people and provide them with all the details while planning out the number of vehicles needed for transportation. Robert is the point man who overseas everything: he makes sure people are matched up with drivers, collects any required fees and makes sure everyone is ready to get going.

"I enjoy making the telephone calls," says Sabina "It really has impressed me how caring people are when it comes to helping out...people really care about us. It gives me hope." And volunteers enjoy hearing from her: "Even If I cannot attend," says apartment visitor Mary Ann, "the calls make me feel connected to the residents". One of the most challenging parts in making telephone calls and lining up transport is getting people at home to confirm they are coming. So when Sabina calls, be sure to get to back her as soon as possible. And thank you all those who act as volunteer drivers, your help is always needed.

Fond memories of a beautiful weekend



Outreach Committee members are available to visit your church, community group, or social event to provide you with more information about Our Harbour

Our Harbour Annual General Meeting...

Our Harbour has now crossed the five-year mark and, with much to be proud about, we held our sixth Annual General Meeting (June 8, 2009) with over forty people in attendance. Along with the often dry business of by-law changes, reports and motions, during the meeting we learned that our finances are doing well and the number of apartments has increased to four, hopefully going on five. We are continuing to advocate for people while debunking myths about mental illness on the South Shore. Much well-earned praise was handed out to our volunteers and we can applaud the residents for improvements in their relationships with each other. Both residents and family members spoke of their experiences during the year at *Our Harbour* apartments. We welcomed **Jocelyn Saulnier**, who has joined our staff as a newest coordinator, and once again offered our thanks to **Perveen Khokhar** for all her great work over the past year. We also extend a thank you to **Linda Magher**, who has stepped down from the fundraising committee. Linda has been the driving force behind our successful fundraising committee. Because of her efforts, we are stronger and peoples' lives are just a little better.

Our Harbour Board of Directors for 2009-2010

Catherine Gillbert (President)
Kevin Erskine Henry
Edna Ouellette
Peter Woodruff

Jim Moran (Secretary)
Priyamvada Sankar
Lesley Régnier
Allan (Resident Representative)

Judy Cruchet (Treasure)
Debbie Arsenault

EDITH JACOBSON LOW-BEER, a great lady and friend to Our Harbour, has passed away in her 93rd year ...



Edith, through the EJLB Foundation, has been our principle non-Government financial patron over the last five years. While highly honored with an Order of Canada and Order of Québec, it will be for Edith's deep concern and personal support of people living with a mental illness that she will be most remembered. We extend our condolences to the Low-Beer family and Edith's many friends. **The Board of Our Harbour**

Along with the annual generous donation of **\$15,000** from the **EJLB Foundation**, we would like to thank our Government, individual and community financial supporters: **St-Lambert Lion's Club (\$500), St. Barnabas (\$300), St. Augustine St-Bruno (\$250), and Together 2000 (\$250).**

TOP 10 MYTHS ABOUT MENTAL ILLNESS

- Mental illness is a single, rare disorder.
- People with a mental illness never get better.
- If you are diagnosed with a mental illness, kiss your chances of a brilliant career goodbye.
- Mental illnesses are not true medical illnesses like heart disease and diabetes.
- If you have a gene (or genes) that been associated with a mental illness, you will experience a mental illness
- If mental illnesses are biological, then psychotherapy is useless.
- The mentally ill are weak or lazy.
- The mentally ill are insane.
- The mentally ill are more violent.
- We who are working with the mentally ill always know what we're doing. Not true, often we are just good people trying to make a difference. So please do join us ...

New Ami Quebec offers a Free Tele-support group for caregivers of people with a mental illness. For information about the variety of topics and support groups offered call 514-486-1448

Coming in the New Year, *Our Harbour* is planning to host a visioning workshop with our individual and community partners. The Outreach Committee will keep you informed. Due to budget restraints, the newsletter will now be published in black-white. As always, we welcome any input you may have about our outreach efforts. Please forward them to our office. **Kevin Erskine-Henry,**