

Our Harbourviews

Summer Newsletter 2020 Bulletin d'été

Your support makes a real difference Votre appui fait une différence

Thinking of You

My ABCs for Promoting Mental Health and Resilience during COVID Times

None of us, in our wildest dreams, could have predicted the transformations we are living through during this global pandemic. Here's my take on three strategies that are working for me - right here and right now.

A: Attitude is Everything - and make that Positive!

I know it sounds clichéd but it's true. What you think does influence how you feel and, also, how you behave. The key is to consciously choose to notice the positive in your life. A more positive state of mind and overall perspective will result, and you'll start to notice more positive things. So, positivity begets positivity and the same holds true for negative thoughts. Although we cannot eliminate negative emotions, psychologist Barbara Fredrickson suggests that to lift us up, we need a ratio of three positive emotions for every negative emotion. We can create a mindset of positivity by being more open to the present moment, appreciative, curious, kind and sincere. Visit Fredrickson's website (www.positivityratio.com) to track your positivity ratio and remember: what you feed will flourish.

B: Build New Behaviors

With many daily distractions removed, what an opportunity these times are to strengthen existing behaviour and start new projects we may have been putting off for years. Daily routines are important for mental health and allow us to exert control. I begin my day with an hour-long walk and my cup of coffee at the end tastes so good. BTW, this is known as the Premack Principle - eat your carrots before your ice cream - and it's a great tool to build in new behaviour. So get creative and begin projects that nourish your soul. Tackling longer-term tasks is especially important as they help us to plan for tomorrow. Build in some fun because we all need something to look forward to!

We know how difficult these times can be for us emotionally, especially when we think of loved ones we cannot see or hug. This separation has been particularly challenging for those who live alone. More so than ever before we need to reach out to our loved ones and just listen. Technology is the next best thing to being physically present. Both the Canadian and Quebec governments have set up websites with advice for taking care of our mental health during the pandemic.

C. Self-care

Self-care is also critical. Set aside time daily to nourish your spirit. This can take many forms: an online retreat, prayer, meditation, mindfulness training, among others. One website that offers free resources to boost resilience and mental health is <https://www.soundstrue.com>.

Stay well, keep safe!

Susan Kerwin-Boudreau

Our Harbour Board member and professor of psychology at Champlain College



Chris and Anna showing resilience

Our Residents Face Covid-19 Together

Most of our residents are coping well with the Covid-19 situation but, like everyone else, they are finding the changes to their routines disruptive. Our Harbour staff and volunteers frequently contact them while emphasizing Covid-19 precautions. Over the summer, the Street Café, Gardening Club, Bicycling Group and our Art Studio *al fresco* all provided safe settings for interaction.

Diana is passing time doing cooking, baking and catching up with some reading.

Renaud goes out for walks every day. Such a great thing for all of us to do!

Lamiae is proudly preparing for her exam for certification as an auxiliary nurse this fall. In her spare time, she listens to music and YouTube.

François still runs regularly. What a champ!

Allan wears a mask while spending time with a friend.

Mario is carrying on with daily life, going for groceries like before.

Michael and **Jordan** have thrown themselves wholeheartedly into the Our Harbour garden, watering regularly and helping bring in a bumper crop!

Scott was one of the cooks at the Canada Day BBQ!

Rosalind Rembacz, Board Member

Contributors

Thanks to Rosalind Rembacz, Linda Magher, Susan Kerwin-Boudreau, Lesley Régnier, Dolly Shinhat, Peter Woodruff and others for their contributions to this edition of Our Harbourviews.

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Le havre
Our Harbour

A haven for people living with mental illness
Registered Charity

Refuge pour personnes ayant des problèmes de santé mentale
N° d'enregistrement 87723 1803 RR0001

Resilience in Action

Linda Magher, founding member of Our Harbour, former Board member and active volunteer, shares her new Covid routine with us below:

Hello dear Our Harbour community!

Prior to Covid, I always tried to balance the physical, intellectual, spiritual and emotional parts of my life. I still try to do this but in different ways.

Now, every morning at 10 a.m., I join my Zoom group from St. Mary's church and do 40 minutes of moderate aerobics. I always feel better after exercise. I've also become a better cook and am trying new recipes. As a result, I'm eating better and enjoying the sense of satisfaction I get from this. And, of course, getting out for a walk is really important. As for the intellectual part I continue to join my book club via Zoom. We've been reading short stories by wonderful authors who really do nourish the intellect. Sundays I "attend" Mass on Zoom and feel connected to people praying all over the world. I also go on to a website run by the Irish Jesuits called Sacred Space. It's a great way to start my day and it gives me a feeling of serenity.

I've learned over the years that my emotional toolbox has been filled with different tools that are very useful to me now. Being isolated can be challenging so I pull out my favorite tool - journaling. I write about how I'm feeling, challenge negative thoughts and focus on all the things I'm grateful for. Today I'm especially grateful to a very dear friend who sent me a beautiful poem urging us to "... call on your heart that it may grow clear and free to welcome home your emptiness that it may cleanse you like the clearest air you could ever breathe."

I hold you all in my heart!



Linda Magher at the Space Centre beneath a poster of Chris Hadfield, himself no stranger to isolation



Creating a pollinator flowerbed beneath the church sign



The Spirit of Gardening

"Mighty oaks from tiny acorns grow." Or, in our case, lush beds of watermelon, peppers, tomatoes, zucchini, cucumbers, flowers and lots of herbs sprang from a bright idea in the dead of winter. When the Saint-Lambert United Church's Green Team spearheaded by **Natacha Sanson** partnered with Our Harbour, they launched an environmentally friendly learning experience. The thorough planning and commitment involved have been recognized through an Erskine & American Mountinside Fund award of \$14,000. Participating residents and coordinators work three people at a time while respecting physical distancing rules. We are seeing the fruits of all that effort in the five beds on the Notre Dame side of the church.

Michael in the Jungle

My jungle garden needed drastic action. I had heard that **Michael**, an Our Harbour resident, liked gardening, so I called him. Well actually I first called him a few weeks earlier after he lost his mum and offered him a few words of condolence. Then later, knowing how therapeutic gardening can be, I asked him if he could give me a hand. Little did I know that he already does gardening - with the OH team looking after the garden at the United Church - and he enjoys it. So one fine Sunday, Michael came over to give me a hand.



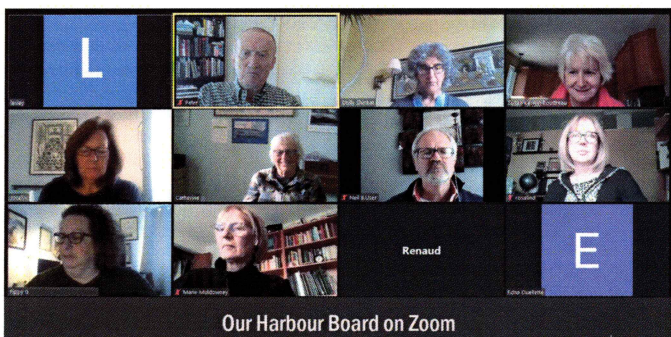
He was so efficient. Within an hour one could hardly call it a jungle any more. All the saplings were down and bundled up ready for composting by the city. It normally takes me hours. But not with Michael. Hey presto, and the job was done! Michael told me a bit about himself. He has been with OH for over a year now and is very happy to have found a healthier environment here. He has made good friends, participates in the activities, takes care of himself and is always ready to lend a hand. So if you need any painting, gardening, repairing, etc. done... you know who to call: Michael!

Lesley Régnier, Board Member

Noteworthy

The Our Harbour Annual General Meeting will be held in September or October at a time and place to be determined. Please look for updated information on our website or in your email inbox.

Renowned Montreal artist **Nancy Cousins-Viau** has generously donated several of her early period landscapes to Our Harbour. We are planning an online auction later this fall. Visit her website at www.cousins-viau.com to view her work under archives-landscapes. Stay tuned for the opportunity to bid on some exceptional art!



Our Harbour Board on Zoom



Jody's Meal Magic



And now, some words from our D-G, Dolly Shinhat

Dynamic Crew faces down COVID!

Last winter, **Phil Otto** joined **Regine Bouzi** and **Chloë Lévesque** on the Our Harbour team. They have been outstanding in the face of COVID-19, responding quickly and creatively to the shifting restrictions and challenges of the pandemic.

Chloë first joined Our Harbour as a volunteer a couple of years ago. Her volunteer work led her to redirect her educational path towards a more hands-on, applied career in Psychology rather than the research-oriented track she had imagined for herself. Happily, Chloë was a good fit. Last summer, she worked with us full-time through the Canada Summers Jobs program and has rejoined the team as this summer's candidate Coordinator.

Phil's **Street Café** brainchild was launched in March to help residents handle the pandemic shutdown. Providing frequent distanced opportunities for coffee, cookies and conversation, it has been quite a hit. Chloë and Phil, being *aficionados* of the outdoors and exercise, have also worked together to provide a range of open-air activities. The walking, cycling, and gardening clubs as well as yoga are keeping everyone outside, moving and managing stress; the *al fresco* art studio, special lunches, not to mention the Street Café, ensure that Our Harbour residents can exercise their creativity, socialize safely or just hang out together.

Our Harbour's mission to support residents has stayed front and centre.

Des policiers de Longueuil assistent à notre rencontre matinale !

Trois fois par semaine, les résidents sortent de leur appartement pour prendre un café, du gâteau ou des biscuits dans la rue. Là, en plein air, ils parlent entre eux et avec les membres du personnel. Le personnel est fier d'avoir pensé à ce moyen sécuritaire d'interagir, de socialiser et de s'amuser pour minimiser l'impact de l'isolement imposé par la pandémie sur la santé mentale.

Un jour en avril j'ai rencontré un couple de policiers que j'ai invité à nous rejoindre et à nous faire savoir si nous respectons correctement les règles. Ils ont refusé le café et les petits gâteaux mais ils ont accepté de se faire photographier et ont promis de repasser nous voir. Cool !

Le havre remercie le Lions Club de Greenfield Park de leur soutien de notre Street Café.



Longueuil Police Officers at the Our Harbour Street Café!

The Our Harbour Street Café is a three-times-a-week get-together with coffee and cake or cookies. Residents come outside in the fresh air to hang out and chat with staff and one another. It's a great way for staff to help minimize the impact of even greater isolation on our residents' mental health by providing a safe way to interact, socialize and have fun. One day in April, I met a couple of police officers and invited them to join us so they could tell us if we were correctly following the rules. They declined coffee, but accompanied residents and staff for a walk in the neighbourhood, and agreed to drop by again! Cool!

Our Harbour is most grateful to the Greenfield Park Lions Club for their support of the Our Harbour Street Café.



Outgoing Coordinator **Regine Bouzi** being presented a card, flowers and well-wishes by DG **Dolly Shinhat** and Coordinators **Phillip Otto** and **Chloë Lévesque**.

Thank you, Regine!

Regine Bouzi first came to Our Harbour in November 2016, bringing with her a desire to support Our Harbour's residents in their journey toward better lives. In addition, Regine helped Our Harbour build upon its mission by coordinating the opening of three new apartments and welcoming nine additional residents. She suggested improvements to the admissions process that have led to greater stability for residents and a better match between Our Harbour's services and the people who need us. This June, Regine decided the time was right for her to move on, spend more time with her family, travel, and so she bid *au revoir* to Our Harbour in June this year.

We celebrated, as we have all summer, with a party outdoors, brimming with residents, volunteers and staff enjoying Chinese food and red velvet cupcakes! The residents she supported over the years and staff who learned from observing her warm rapport, her empathy and respect for residents' life stories and her willingness to share her experiences and her knowledge will remember her.

Thank you Regine. Wishing you fair winds and following seas! *Bon voyage!*

WE OUR VOLUNTEERS and PARTNERS

Whether **making meals** to distribute, **baking**, helping with **shopping** and **banking**, **listening**, contributing delicious food to Street Café picnics, **painting** and **decorating**, taking **photographs**, helping to sort and organize, calling for a chat, **driving**, setting up meetings, **hosting** picnics, providing opportunities for work and volunteering, leading **yoga** lessons, **writing** and designing communications, providing strategic advice and guidance, **being kind**, making apartment **repairs**, raising money, accompanying residents on **walks and bike-rides**, troubleshooting IT, **giving** time and energy unselfishly, taking minutes, providing prepared meals, **caring**, encouraging **gardening**, tracking and reporting on apartment revenues and expenses, **teaching** ... in fact you name it, our **volunteers and partners** do it and have continued to do it, safely and sensibly, all summer! **You are all extraordinary people. Thank you.**

Thank you! Merci!

To all the people, organizations, foundations, social and cultural groups, companies and employee groups that supported Our Harbour financially during 2019-2020, a thousand thanks! We are extremely grateful to our government partners: Employment and Social Development Canada's Reaching Home program, Quebec's *Programme de soutien organisme communautaire* and the Canada Summer Jobs Program. Hats off to the members of the Individual Fundraising Committee chaired by **Susan Kerwin-Boudreau: Gretchen Cheung, Susan Leclair, Linda Magher, Lyn Scott, Peter Woodruff and Dolly Shinhat.**

Individuals accounted for close to \$23,250 of the gifts received, 13% over our goal of \$20,500.

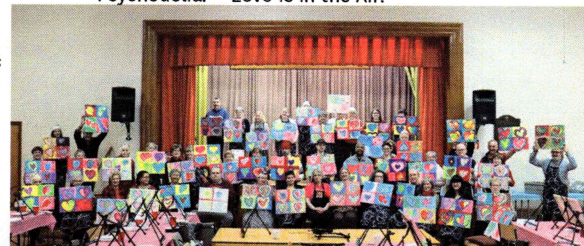
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Donations listed were received between April 1, 2019 and March 30, 2020. We strive to publish a complete and accurate list. For any errors or omissions, please accept our sincere apologies. Please contact **Dolly Shinhat**, Director General, with any questions, comments or concerns at 450-671-9160.