

THE NDG FREE PRESS

Bi-Weekly. Vol. 1 No. 8. (12D)

We are NDG

December 16, 2009

LCC students collect food for Share the Warmth ... see p. 7



Calgarian Travis Benoche with the Olympic torch, lit at the corner of St. Jacques St. and Connaught Ave., was carried from the western-most edge of NDG into Montreal West, up Westminster and back east along Côte St. Luc Rd. on December 10 as it made its way around the Montreal region. Torchbearers have been relaying the flame every 300 metres as it traverses its 106-day, 45,000-kilometre journey across Canada — the longest domestic torch relay in Olympic history. The torch will pass through more than 1,030 communities in every province and territory. On February 12, 2010, the Olympic flame will light the Olympic cauldron in downtown Vancouver to officially kick off the 2010 Olympic Winter Games.

Photo: Isaac Olson



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Councillors, resident want more council meetings held in NDG

BY ISAAC OLSON

Before the last CDN-NDG borough council of 2009 voted in favour of next year's meeting schedule, two councillors and one resident expressed concern over the lack of council meetings held in NDG.

"It would be fairer to have more meetings take place in NDG, whether it be in Loyola district or in NDG district," said Loyola councillor Susan Clarke during the December 7 council meeting.

"I would like to encourage our borough to try and figure out a way of doing that and making it at locations

that are accessible."

For many years now, the Cummings House on Côte St. Catherine Rd. has customarily served as the venue for most borough council meetings.

The Monkland Community Centre and the NDG Manoir each host one out of the 12 once-a-month meetings. In past discussions, the borough's administration has cited proximity to public transit, the centralized location and its handicap accessibility as the main reasons to continue using the Cummings House.

continued on p.2



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Station 11

POLICE WATCH



One joint, and the joint's rent money gets stolen

A 32-year-old Grand Blvd. resident who spilled the beans on his rent money ended up getting robbed by three suspects, after an evening of smoking pot.

The victim told police he knew the suspects and let them into his apartment at 10 pm on Dec. 6. As the four men were passing around a marijuana joint, the victim told the suspects he had \$800 he had to pay to his landlord for rent.

"After they finished smoking, the suspects took the man into his bedroom, and the first suspect began searching his pockets for the money," said Constable Peter Mandelos. "He refused to give up the money, and they started to struggle. Meanwhile, the other two suspects were acting as lookouts, and making sure the victim could not leave his apartment."

The first suspect finally managed to extricate the \$800 from the victim's pocket, then he punched him twice – once to the side of the head and one right in the mouth.

"Before leaving, both the first and third suspects threatened the victim," said Mandelos. "The first suspect simulated having a gun in his belt and told the victim he would kill him if he came after the suspects. The third suspect put his hand in his coat pocket, as if he also had a gun."

All three suspects are described as Middle Eastern males, aged around 25. The first is 5'8" and 170 lbs., with a moustache. He wore a dark brown shirt, blue jeans and had a belt with a silver buckle.

The second suspect is 6'1" and 170 lbs.,

with long blond hair who wore a red baseball cap.

The third suspect is 5'7" and 160 lbs. with dark brown hair. He was dressed all in black, including a black baseball cap.

The victim had minor injuries to his face and was suffering from shock. He was not taken to hospital.

Tanning salon stuck up

A lone suspect got away with a small amount of money after holding up the Bronzage Soleil NDG tanning salon.

The gunman entered the store, located at 4170 Decarie Blvd., at 11:25 a.m. on Dec. 5. He went up to the store's cashier and had his hand under his sweater, as if he was holding a gun.

"Give me the money," he ordered her, and the cashier complied. "Is that all you have?" asked the suspect.

"The employee told him that was all that was in the register, and he told her to lift up the cash drawer to see if there was more money," said Mandelos. "When he realized there wasn't any more bills, he told her to give him all the change in the register."

The suspect then fled the store on foot, heading north on Decarie. He is described as a white male, 35-40, 5'8" and 210 lbs. He had blondish-brown hair and a three-day beard, and wore light blue jeans and a dark grey plaid hooded sweatshirt.

"The store's security camera captured both video and audio of the suspect, so we expect we will be able to make an arrest in this case," said Mandelos.

From the publisher

Thank you, NDG

The *Free Press* has had a great start. We close off our first calendar year with this issue, our eighth. We continue to receive (and appreciate) positive feedback from residents. And we look forward to growing in the new year. Please remember: every page of ads allows us to add a page of content. If you can help us do that, please call us. If you know our advertisers, please encourage them. Best wishes for 2010. We'll be seeing you.

- David Price, Publisher

Also in this, our last edition of 2009, we start a new tradition by offering up our *Free Press* Christmas Wish List. See what presents we'd like to give out to those in the NDG community.

continued from *Councillors*, p. 1

The motion to set the 2010 schedule passed unanimously. The council will meet on April 12 at the Manoir and on December 6 at the Monkland Centre. As usual, the rest of the meetings will be at the Cummings House.

Local councillors, resident speak up for NDG

During the question period, NDG resident Claude Casgrain pointed out that some other boroughs vary council meeting locations between each voting district throughout the year.

Casgrain submitted potential NDG meeting locations that fit the criteria laid out by the borough's administration.

"We already know your preference for Cummings House," said Casgrain in French. "But, it's common public knowledge that the citizens of NDG have asked, for a long time, that the meetings are more frequent in their neighbourhood."

Later in the evening, before councillors voted on the issue, Clarke said she hopes, in the future, the council can look for a suitable venue for meetings. With Benny Library and Cultural Centre in the making on Monkland Ave., she said it "will be a really good facility for having meetings."

NDG's Peter McQueen seconded Clarke's comments while suggesting the borough install an elevator in the Manoir, which sits at the corner of Decarie Blvd. and NDG Ave., because, with the exception of handicap accessibility, it meets the rest of the criteria.

In post-meeting interviews, Clarke and McQueen both reiterated their concerns. Clarke said NDG has long been a very community-oriented district with a strong sense of identity that deserves to be recognized by more than two meetings per year. McQueen said he would like to see at least four meetings held in NDG.

Two councillors, borough mayor support schedule

Councillors from Snowdon and Darlington, along with CDN-NDG borough mayor Michael Applebaum, all defended the Cummings House location.

Applebaum said Cummings House is a central location that allows people from all reaches of the borough easy access. Two other council members agreed with him.

While Snowdon's Marvin Rotrand admitted NDG residents are very active in council meetings compared to the rest of the borough, he too said the Cummings House is a central location that is, unlike the Monkland Centre, close to public transit.

In the future, he said, the council should aim for one regular meeting location.

"I think it's almost a no-win situation," said Darlington's Lionel Perez, citing the borough's large size. "I think, personally, the way it is now, we have a stable place. We have a place that is accessible to the borough. It's in the middle. It doesn't inconvenience the Darlington residents any more than it inconveniences the Loyola residents. We have a happy medium."



NDG resident Claude Casgrain asks for council meetings to be held in all voting districts at the December 7 borough council meeting.

Photo: Isaac Olson

Seniors are safer than they think

Police, community organizations doing their best to keep seniors feeling secure

BY DAVID GOLDBERG

While there are legitimate safety concerns for seniors in NDG, both local police and community organizations say the elderly can stay safe by taking some simple precautions.

"I think most seniors in NDG are very safe, but they have to be aware of their environment and be careful," said Station 11 constable Peter Mandelos. "A lot of it comes down to common sense."

Many seniors worry about leaving their homes to do everyday tasks, such as shopping and banking. But both Mandelos and Prevention NDG crime prevention counsellor Eero Piilokivi say there are steps that can be taken to prevent seniors from becoming victims.

"Seniors should be aware of their environment and their surroundings when they go out," said Piilokivi. "They should try to take the same route so it becomes familiar to them. And they should stay on the side of the street where there are more people, and go out during daylight hours."

Mandelos said seniors have to make sure they don't become easy targets for thieves.

"These guys are looking for seniors walking around carrying big purses," he said. "But we have a new program sponsored by Jean Coutu pharmacies, where we give out a small blue plastic pouch, where seniors can put their money and credit cards. They then put the pouch inside their clothing where thieves can't see it."

Mandelos said he has already given out

around several hundred pouches, and he expects to hand out at many more.

Piilokivi said seniors should never carry credit or bank cards if they don't need to, and should only bring as much cash as is needed. He said there are also things they can do in their homes to increase their security.

"For those who live in apartments or residences, you should never buzz anyone into the building if you don't know who they are. If someone knocks on your door, never open it if you don't know who it is. Keep the door shut and look through your peephole. If they tell you they are there to do some work or check on something in the apartment, call the super and make sure the work has been authorized."

Piilokivi added seniors should only give copies of their keys to one or two trusted family members, and they should also get to know their neighbours.

Both the police and Prevention NDG offer free senior safety sessions throughout the year.

"We talk about all aspects of safety and whatever concerns the seniors have, including personal security and fraud," said Mandelos. "We, along with community organizations like Prevention NDG, want to do everything we can to make seniors in NDG feel as safe as possible."

For more information or to organize a senior safety session, call Constable Peter Mandelos at 514.280.9411 or Prevention NDG at 514.736.2732. You can also visit the Prevention NDG website at www.prevention-ndg.org.



Station 11 constable Peter Mandelos shows how seniors can wear the pouch sponsored by the Jean Coutu pharmacies to keep their valuables away from thieves.

Photo: David Goldberg

NDGer's play wins writing contest

BY ISAAC OLSON

NDG resident Alexandria Haber won Infinithéâtre's second annual, Quebec-wide Pam Dunn Write-On-Q playwrighting competition — taking home a \$1,000 purse for her play titled, *Life Here After*.

"It's, of course, great to win — it's always better than losing," said Haber. "There are not a lot of well-known Canadian playwrights. Just being a playwright here is not easy, so it's really nice to have any recognition at all."

Life Here After explores addiction and redemption throughout the tale of a 16-year-old girl's quest to uncover the truth about her family's dark past. The play, which she started writing about two years ago, is very loosely based on the story of infamous Canadian ex-convict, Karla Homolka, explained Haber.

Homolka reportedly moved to the West Indies with her young son and new partner in tow two years after her 2005 release from prison. The playwright wondered what it be like to be Homolka's child, discovering the truth about your mother — creating inspiration for her piece.

Haber, a longtime playwright and actress who grew up in NDG, said plays are meant to be performed in front of audiences and it feels only half-done until it gets produced on stage.

Haber said the production of *Life Here After* is already looking promising but, for now, her play was one of three featured at Infinithéâtre's reading series from December 11 through 13 called, "The Pipeline."

Most recently acting in the St. James Church hit titled *Haunted*, Haber has written several plays and she once won a short-story contest. Mother of four children, she is married to actor and director Alain Goulem. The couple lives on Clifton Ave.



NDG playwright Alexandria Haber, whose play *Life Here After* on Infinithéâtre's Pam Dunn Write-On-Q competition.

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Our first annual *Free Press* Christmas Wish List

It's our first holiday season here at the *Free Press*, and what better time to start a new tradition? So here is our first annual Christmas Wish List for all our friends in the community, and our own staff. If you can't be thoughtful and generous during the holidays, then when can you? Besides, it doesn't cost us anything. Away we go:

MPs Marlene Jennings (NDG-Lachine) and Marc Garneau (Westmount-Ville Marie): We wish that some of their wisdom and leadership skills might rub off on their own party leader, which would make 2010 a lot happier for all Liberals across Canada.

MNA Kathleen Weil: A resolution to the city of Montreal's construction scandals, so the provincial government can get back to the business of governing the province. And the ability to spend even more time in the riding. Her presence is always appreciated.

Mayor Michael Applebaum: What do you get the guy who has almost everything he wants? Perhaps, a record low snowfall this year, followed by as few potholes as possible. And no more hospital stays.

NDG councillor Peter McQueen: The ability to constructively criticize but the sagacity to know when to agree with the majority. So far, McQueen seems to have a leg up on his gift.

Loyola councillor Susan Clarke: Perhaps longer battery-life for her Blackberry. It's getting a lot of use, because Clarke is proving early on to be a councillor who likes to learn as much as she can on every issue affecting her constituents.

Fiona Keats and her crew at the NDG Food Depot: The type of generosity we saw during their recent food drive to continue year-long. NDGers have shown their spirit of giving, but with our difficult economic times, it's required more now than ever.

Gillian Keefe and the NDG Community Council, and Marlo Turner-Ritchie and the folks at Head & Hands: More volunteers stepping up so both organizations can continue to provide even more valuable services to our community.

Terri Ste. Marie and Prevention NDG: Now that Tandem has received a new three-year contract, maybe Prevention NDG can receive the rest of the funding they need without too many headaches for their other projects, including graffiti-removal. And a Super Bowl win for Terri's beloved New Orleans Saints is also long overdue.

Nikki Schiebel and Eco-quartier NDG: Continued environmental awareness by an already quite green NDG. A little more local composting would be nice, too.

Constables Peter Mandelos and Patricia

Bourgeois, and the rest of the officers at Station 11: A safe and secure 2010, with much less crime and more help from rehired temporary officers.

The merchants on Monkland, Sherbrooke, Somerled and everywhere else in NDG: An economic boom in 2010, followed by increased consumer confidence and a lot of spending.

Free Press publisher David Price and sales rep Peter Shea: A lot more ads and a lot more pages, so we can bring even more stories and information to our readers.

The Westmount Independent's deputy

editor Kristen McNeill and sales rep Arleen Candiotti: A few more hours in the work day for the very busy Kristin, and a Stanley Cup parade for the Habs this spring for Arleen.

Our office manager Beth Hudson and layout wizard Ted Sancton: Fewer boxes to carry for Beth, and plenty of good eats in 2010. And for Ted, more deadlines met earlier and more great tunes to listen to in his office.

And finally, to all our readers, a wonderful holiday season, and health, happiness and prosperity in 2010.



Susan Clarke

FROM THE LOYOLA DISTRICT

Come take a walk with me

My father liked to take long walks and he used to ask me: "Do you want to go for a walk around the block?"

It was just an expression – we also walked many other routes – but "a walk around the block" became our family's way of saying, "Let's go for a walk."

Many years later I find myself reviving that expression as, today, I am announcing a program to invite Loyola district citizens to join me for a walk around the block – their block.

But, before we set off, I want to thank many people for their support and encouragement: the volunteers, who worked tirelessly for me on advance polls and election day; the voters who made it possible for me to be here now, working for you; Warren Allmand, whose mentoring and advice have made the transition to political life infinitely easier than it otherwise would have been; and Michael Applebaum, who got me into this in the first place and has been beside me every step of the way.

You will recall that my campaign promise was to concentrate on local services: garbage collection, recycling, compost collecting, potholes, snow removal, tree trimming and graffiti.

Beginning early in the new year, and on every other Saturday morning, I will invite the residents of one block to join

me for a walk around their block – rain, snow or shine – to tell me, and to show me, what concerns them.

Each household where the walk will take place will receive an invitation about a week in advance, giving the date and time and where we'll meet.

Together, we'll take a close look at your neighbourhood: What works well and what doesn't; what's broken and needs fixing; and, of course, I'd like you to tell me, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." Bring notes, photos and comments but, most of all, please bring yourselves.

There are a lot of wonderful changes ahead for NDG, not least of which is the new Benny Area comprising the sports and recreation centre, library and CLSC.

I am particularly interested in, and looking forward to, working in very close partnership with the community groups that will be using these new facilities and with the borough officials who, also, will have their various roles to play.

Just the other day an acquaintance, who lives in a very chic part of the city told me: "I hear NDG is a fabulous place to live. I'd love to live there someday."

Aren't you glad we do?

Susan Clarke is the city councillor for the Loyola district.

THE NDG FREE PRESS

Published twice per month – Presstime: Monday at 10:30 am

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Sherbrooke-Valois Inc., 310 Victoria Ave., #105, Westmount, QC H3Z 2M9

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Eco-quartier NDG says rinse your recyclable plastics and glass items for hygiene matters

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

DON'T BLAME THE ADULTS

I take exception to David Goldberg's article "What's the matter with adults today?" (Nov. 25).

As a resident of this neighbourhood for more than 15 years, I have seen the havoc created by students from St. Luc High School. Shopkeepers on Somerled have spoken to me about the mess left, the clusters of boisterous students blocking sidewalks and detailed incidents of shoplifting to me. They act with a complete disregard to the rights of others, and I've seen them bumping people aside as they take over the area, as if it's their turf alone.

Recently I left my dog outside a shop, and a neighbour came in to tell me some kids were teasing him. When I went out and asked her to identify the culprits, she demurred. One youngster started howling, and I asked him if he thought that was a great way to interact with an animal. He got louder, and I told them they had not only acted stupidly and carelessly, but that they were lucky my dog is particularly good-natured. I explained that some dogs would attack when provoked, and that animals have feelings and rights, as do they.

The response was dismaying: smart alecky, disrespectful and callous. On the way home, my neighbour told me not to shop at lunchtime, and I bridled at the idea that there are those, particularly seniors and those of fragile health, intimidated in this supposedly quiet residential area. Subsequently I called the school and was told by the secretary that, "There's not much we can do," and this incited me to make a personal visit to the school. I spoke with a teacher, Katherine Forget, who was sympathetic, telling me that the students were in assembly with the principal addressing behavioural choices.

I said I'd wait to see if I could find the miscreants when the bell rang, and I must say, had I not been with my dog I would have felt scared. Kids whizzed by me, almost pushing me aside, fighting, littering the yard with plastic lunch bags, bottles and other paraphernalia. The girls were as bad as the boys: they fought and yelled alarmingly.

At one point, as one boy was about to stomp on a bottle, I couldn't contain myself. I asked him if he'd not rather have the five-cent deposit, and asked what they had just heard in assembly. It took some doing, but finally one boy picked up the bottle and took it to the trash, not a recycling bin. I saw teachers exiting during this melee, hurrying to get to their cars and home, away from this circus.

At no time did I see any modicum of respect towards an adult, until I recognized a young man who had been a neighbour, and I told him I know him and his family.

I have been amazed, at times, walking along Kensington Ave. at lunch time or when the kids get out of school, to see the way some children fight, barrel along the sidewalk without displaying any courtesy, and have seen other dogs being walked bark or scuttle away in fear. It sounds exaggerated, but I assure you it is not. Having worked with children almost 30 years, I've seen a steep decline in manners, mores and just plain good sense. I have been told again and again, "Well, that's the way it is," by others in other schools, and heard teachers just cave in to what they feel is another burden they must bear, rather than joining forces to create a climate of trust, respect and inculcation of good citizenship.

It is a sad day when my neighbours are afraid to carry on normal business during daytime hours, and even sadder that children are not being taught to respect all life, but particularly those older, at risk, and, in this case, a gentle, loving creature who took this abuse.

I have offered my services, by the way, to go into this school to teach children the proper way to interact with animals they meet on the street, in their neighbourhood, etc., but have yet to connect with someone who can take advantage of my offer. It is particularly important in light of the fact that a dog park borders the school.

ALANA RONALD, GRAND BLVD.

KUDOS FOR FALAISE CLEANUP

It is gratifying to see that CDN-NDG's borough manager Stéphane Plante says that the St. Jacques escarpment must be treated with respect and not be perceived as a dumping ground ("Borough busts illegal falaise dumping," Nov. 25). It is nice to see dumpers being fined, the area secured and the site finally being cleaned up.

Countless "Meet the Candidates Nights," Agglomeration Natural Spaces hearings and council meetings have paid off. Much kudos to Mayor Michael Applebaum and newly elected councillor Peter McQueen for pulling it off.

The boarded-up Raphael Motel presents a grand opportunity for Montreal to begin to assemble the pieces needed to create a more expansive Falaise St. Jacques linear park adjacent to the future Turcot redesign. A greater Trame verte du Grand Sud-Ouest would link the

escarpment with other green spaces, like Meadowbrook and Lachine Rapids Park in LaSalle. This plan was proposed by the Green Coalition, Heritage Laurentien, Les Amis de Meadowbrook, CRE-Montreal and other groups and individuals to the Montreal Agglomeration Commission responsible for natural spaces and was presented as part of its recommendations last June.

One hopes that the boroughs of CDN-NDG and Sud-Ouest impress upon the executive committee to adopt this plan as the policy of the city and island of Montreal.

AVROM DAVID SHTERN, GREEN COALITION

SOME SNOWY IDEAS

Here is my wish list for this winter's snow removal:

1. All main streets passable, especially those with hospitals, schools and bus routes within 24 hours of a major snowfall.
2. All sidewalks walkable within the same time frame.
3. Snow removed within 48 hours.
4. Someone to explain why the plows have to pass several times, moving the snow from side to side of the street before blowing it into the trucks.
5. If snow has not been cleared within

48 hours, refrain from doing so at 3 am and waking the neighbourhood. It's no longer urgent. Save on the overtime.

6. Refrain from telling us repeatedly how many kilometres of roads and sidewalks there are. It serves no purpose to repeat this. Just get on with the job.

I hope someone hears me.

RHODA MADOFF, KING EDWARD AVE.

MISSING HIS LIBRARY

With approval for funding of the Benny Library and Cultural Centre, I see no mention of some collaborative efforts with the once highly significant Fraser-Hickson Library.

There is no reason for not taking advantage of the existence of an enormous collection of books and related material (minus, admittedly, more recent items). I would think that it would be appropriate too to give the library a name of great significance to the NDG reading public for generations: The Fraser-Hickson Library.

Thousands of people (including me) were members of the F-H and regard its closure an act of monumental stupidity and short-sightedness.

JOE KING, CÔTE ST. LUC



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Libéral

*Season's Greetings and Best Wishes
for the New Year!*

*Joyeuses Fêtes et meilleurs vœux
pour la nouvelle année!*

Weil and the Rotarians



Speaking during Westward Rotary's weekly Thursday lunch on December 10 at the Montreal West Town Hall, NDG's MNA Kathleen Weil discussed her background as a community organizer and lawyer as well her current roles as a member of the National Assembly and Quebec's minister of justice. While stressing the importance of community organizations, she said the National Assembly is "here to serve you." As the minister of justice, she said white-collar crime and access to justice are some of the big current issues. "When you do need the justice system, you want it to be there for you," she said.

Photo: Isaac Olson

Bookstore's a diamond in the rough

BY MARLENE EISNER

Emma Sindell grew up reading the likes of Robert Munsch, Beatrix Potter and Roald Dahl, so it's no surprise the first thing she wants to do as the new owner of Diamond Books is to expand the children's section.

"It's very important to me to promote kids reading," says Sindell.

The 27-year-old native of Westmount launched her ownership December 8 with a public reading of the Foundation for Public Poetry's new book, *Leonard Cohen, You're our Man*, a tribute to Leonard Cohen. Michael Mirolla, Jeffrey Mackie and Meredith Darling read their Cohen-inspired poems to an audience of about a dozen people gathered in the cozy space.

Diamond Books has been a fixture on Sherbrooke St. for generations. It sits on the cusp of NDG and Westmount, just west of Claremont, and is famous as the go-to place to find reasonably priced – and unique – books. Sindell says she remembers coming to the store as a child with her dad, who deals in rare books, and her love of books became ingrained. When she decided to return to Montreal after an eight-year absence, owning the bookstore seemed a natural fit. She does admit, how-



Diamond Books owner Emma Sindell sits in the armchair, surrounded by the store's children's books and toys. Photo: Marlene Eisner

ever, that it's "a lot harder to take over a business that I haven't worked in."

She says her retail management experience in other sectors will help her through the initial learning curve, but more importantly, she says she has found work that is meaningful.

"I was looking to find a change, to find myself, and I love this store," she says.

"My work makes me feel good."

The bookstore itself is a delightful throwback to another era, with wonderfully creaky wood-slat floors. The back walls are painted a funky lime green, and gold-coloured chandeliers hang from the high ceilings. In one corner is the expanded children's section, overflowing with books and toys, while the rest of the store is taken up with rows and rows of books that range from new and used bestsellers, coffee-table books, non-fiction, cooking, nutrition, gardening and more. The place also has an interesting collection of unusual items such as posters and DVDs. Unique items were a specialty of the store's previous owners and it's something Sindell wants to keep and expand upon.

"I want to keep with the eclectic stuff and carry the cool older, interesting things. The previous owner also dealt in remainders and I am going to keep it the same and not upset the balance. I want to grow it and slowly learn what's working."

Sindell says she takes advantage of the quiet moments to sit in the store's armchair to reflect upon the changes she would like to make in the direction and growth of the bookstore.

"You really have to talk to people and find out what they want," says Sindell.

"I want somebody to walk by the store and see the armchair in the corner and come in and have a chat. I really want to understand what they want so they walk out with something that they love."

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Diabetics can enjoy holidays if cautious, informed: NDG Diabetes Association

BY ISAAC OLSON

As the holiday season approaches, some local diabetics may be feeling the bitter-sweet pressures of high-carb meals and rich desserts that, if gobbled down without concern, could have serious health consequences.

However, members of the NDG Diabetes Association say it is possible for people with diabetes to enjoy the season as long as they understand their condition and pay attention to what they eat. They can enjoy a slice of chocolate cake, for example, by planning the rest of a day's diet around that single slice. The trick, said association founder Elinor Alleyne, is knowing and respecting what you can and can't eat.

"We have to know our limits," said Alleyne. "If we are careful, we can still enjoy the holidays."

Careful diet and exercise are both extremely important, explained Alleyne, but it is also necessary to educate family about diabetes so they can understand the diabetic's needs and the hereditary risks involved.

Association member Ruth Dickstein said it's hard for people to understand that rejecting food offers is not intended

to insult a meal nor the one serving it.

"The hardest part is convincing people we have a problem because you can't see it," said Dickstein. "When you have a broken leg, you see it but if you have diabetes, you don't. People say one little bite won't hurt you, but it does."

Alleyne founded the association 10 years ago because, she said, there wasn't enough information about diabetes readily available. Backed by the Centre de santé et de services sociaux Cavendish (CSSS Cavendish), the incorporated association hosts a diabetes support group that meets once a month at the CLSC NDG.

The organization also offers colourful informational packets that outline the condition, risks and management of diabetes.

During the December 10 meeting, members expressed concern over the amount of people that don't take Type 2 diabetes seriously. Unlike Type 1 diabetes which people are born with, Type 2 is caused by poor diet. If left untreated, diabetes can lead to serious health problems or even death.

Members like Otto Cerbs are worried about the amount of people who are unknowingly pre-diabetic and

could, through life-style changes, reverse the damage.

"A lot of people are pre-diabetic and they don't even know it," said Alleyne.

"It's important to get tested."

For more information about the association, which is affiliated with Diabetes Quebec, people are encouraged to call: 514-484-7878, ext. 3102.



Members of the NDG Diabetes Association meet for a potluck on Dec. 10. Around the table from the left: Ruth Dickstein, Ian (no last name given), Ardee Patterson, Carol Garnett, Elinor Alleyne (founder), Judith Shapiro (CSSS Cavendish community organizer), Otto Cerbs, Marry Ann Lipscombe and Robert Ticker. Photo: Isaac Olson

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LCC sharing the warmth



Lower Canada College students, from left, Francesco Capretti (NDG), Alysha Fedele, Kira Perlman and Nicholas Howe-Bukowski (NDG), with some of the food collected by the school's students in support of Share the Warmth in an effort to feed the hungry. Judy Stevens, Director of Share the Warmth says "We have eight-hundred boxes out in the community being filled with food. LCC has filled over seventy of them."

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Pre-employability project for women going strong

BY ISAAC OLSON

A local pre-employability project for women has been building steam the past few years and, heading toward its seventh 11-week session this coming January, organizers say it has proven to be a valuable community resource.

"It's been going really well," said Brent Laughren, a workshop coordinator at the NDG Food Depot. "A lot of people have found work."

The project

Targeting mostly low-income women over the age of 35 who are either immigrants or of a visible minority, the project is a component of the NDG Food Depot's continued effort to underline the relationship between poverty, hunger, isolation and chronic unemployment.

The program offers workshops on personal development, Laughren explained, that teach participants about budgeting, time management and local customs. The workshops also involve self-esteem and assertiveness training. The project even helps develop basic computer and language skills.

In operation since 2006 and serving

up to 12 women per bi-annual session, the project brings in community resource people to help participants learn about the wide variety of services available in Montreal.

Each session is tailored to the individual as much as possible, said Laughren. Before the program begins, women fill out a questionnaire so coordinators can know what each participant's needs are.

"The idea is to basically bring people to the next level," said Laughren. "Which, in some cases, helps them find work. Sometimes it is to break the isolation because they have been by themselves for a long time. It all depends on where the person is in life."

Beyond the training, the project helps participants find volunteer work within a local non-profit organization in order to help build references, work experience and job skills.

Project leaders remain in contact with participants long after they complete the program — continuing to offer them support, Laughren said.

Rising up

Elizabeth Aguero immigrated to Canada from Argentina in 2007 and,

despite her multifaceted professional background, she quickly discovered finding employment in Montreal is not so easy. Discouraged by her inability to land a job, she found herself at a frustrating impasse.

Now she is a coordinator and instructional assistant for the very program that helped her find direction in her new Canadian home — the depot's pre-employability project.

"It was really a good experience," said Aguero, who participated in the program last year. "I was really happy because I recovered my self confidence. That's the best part. I was really frustrated before."

After losing her job, Dolly Hicks, a divorced mother who emigrated from Italy as a child, was first driven to the depot by



Elizabeth Aguero, instructional assistant, sits with Brent Laughren, workshop coordinator, at the NDG Food Depot.

Photo: Isaac Olson

hunger. Out of work and depressed, she found out about the pre-employability project and decided to give it a shot.

"I just wanted to find a way for me to get prepared again to go out looking for a new job," said Hicks. "This program gave me direction. It gave me focus — it gave me something to do other than feel depressed."

Immigration integration program on board with council's Christmas dinner

BY ISAAC OLSON

The NDG Community Council's decades-old, annual Christmas dinner is a beloved tradition for hundreds of NDGers and now, as organizers plan the free event, a local initiative will be aiming to attract immigrants to the holiday celebration.

"The mission of the Welcome to NDG project is to help families integrate into the community," said Halah Al-Ubaidi, a community organizer with the council. "We want them to learn about Quebec culture. One of the things people celebrate here is Christmas and how do we celebrate it? We have turkey, Santa Claus and gifts. We want people to have this experience."

The Welcome to NDG project, commonly called Bienvenue à NDG, focuses on integrating new immigrants into the community through educational workshops at local schools. Organizers also host festivals and other community activities that introduce new and long-time Canadians to traditions from here and afar.

The dinner, held on Christmas Day at the St. Ignatius of Loyola Church Hall, is a perfect opportunity for immigrants to not only learn about local culture, but also meet new people in the community and avoid what can be a lonely day for those without family in the area, said Al-Ubaidi.

With Christmas inching ever closer, a search has begun for volunteers and donations.

Volunteers are needed to work in the kitchen, serve food and transport less mobile people to the event. For donations, the free dinner is fuelled by contributed prepared food, like turkey and sides, as well as toys that Santa will be giving to kids. Monetary support is always welcome as well, said Al-Ubaidi.

Financially backed by Quebec's ministers of education and immigration, the Welcome to NDG project is a Comité d'Action 6-12 NDG initiative run by the NDG Community Council. Prevention NDG, Commission scolaire de Montréal (CSDM) and Centre de santé et de services sociaux (CSSS) Cavendish are also project partners.

The dinner is a longstanding local tradition that dates back further than people can remember, said Al-Ubaidi, describing the event as a chance for people to come together and celebrate the holidays with fellow community members.

"People can just come to celebrate together by eating a nice, hot meal," said Al-Ubaidi. "It will be a very nice event. Every year it is."

Volunteers, donors or those with questions should call the NDG Community Council at: 514.484.1471.

To all the residents of Notre-Dame-de-Grâce



Warmest wishes for a very
Happy Holiday Season!



Kathleen Weil

MNA for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce
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Québec

All the world's a stage when your house is on sale

BY NANCY SNIPPER

Home staging. Some say it's an art, others a craft; some claim it's necessary, and others call it daft.

One thing for sure: when it comes to hanging a "For Sale" sign outside the house, an increasing number of home sellers are relying on the artistic eye of a home stager; he or she's the one who cleverly sets the scene. The stager carefully readies the home for potential buyers and that big public show – the open house. Who knows, maybe the optimum offer could be a doorstep away. And the stager may have a lot to do with that. Truth is: seeing is believing; your house is on show, and as every home stager knows, all that meets the eye is far more important than most of us wish to admit. It's all about that first impression.

Therefore, a professional stager has to possess the talent to address the aesthetics of furniture in relation to space, and at the same time, create visual appeal by placing each item of furniture in harmony with the other.

"As a home stager, my goal is to seduce, through presentation, the future buyer. The house has to be neutral, but updated. It has to have zip and zing. It's the wow effect that I am seeking," said Madeleine LeBlanc, who has created a name for herself as a stager and a niche in NDG where she has lived since the summer. She followed an intense immersion course in home staging at College Immobilier du Québec. She now has the proof that home staging can make a significant difference.

"In April, a condo went on sale on Marcil, it was listed at \$339,000. The highest offer had been \$275,000. I was called in to stage the house in October, and during the open house mid-month, there was bidding war. The highest offer was \$345,000."

Noting that home staging does not try to rock the apple cart in terms of realistic market value, LeBlanc revealed that her job is to help people sell their house as quickly as possible within reach of the asking price.

"Sometimes a home owner is not capable of imagining an alternative function for a room. For example, an office might benefit the buyer by having that office being presented as a third or fourth bedroom." LeBlanc can supply the missing furniture, including the bed at a small monthly rental cost. Conversely that small basement room could be converted into an office or entertainment room.

Pointing out basics, LeBlanc said, "Clutter is the seller's enemy. Personal



A living room before home stager Madeleine LeBlanc ...

pictures are a no-no. I suggest repainting if the colours are too bold, and it is my duty to play with what people already have in terms of furniture."

Often, she'll move a piece of furniture into another room and if it is a particularly attractive piece, she'll put it in a feature entrance room. She undertakes five rooms, applying technique and common sense. Accessories including vases, candles and curtains are also in her grab bag of tools. Of course, you need talent to revamp a home's interior in a single day after any necessary repainting or floor sanding.

"Every house is a challenge and each dwelling has its unique space and décor." She knows all about objects in space because of her Masters degree in Museology from UQAM. She also writes in the Mon Toit section of *La Presse*, so she knows all about everything under the roof.

"Pictures can pose a challenge when it comes to room and height placement.



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... and here's how that same room looks after LeBlanc does her magic.

People tend to hang their pictures too high or do not see them as harmonizing pieces in the room. They can be used to create a special ambience. I recall there were two little pictures hanging over two bedroom night tables in one home. I took them out and replaced them. I put a big picture over the bed and the affect was totally positive."

She does her work when the owners are not present because it is not about pleasing the present owners; it's about sealing a sale. So if that comfy old rocking chair

has been in the same place for 15 odd years, LeBlanc makes no bones about moving it out.

Home staging is not just for the rich. LeBlanc makes sure that her professional skills bring maximum results quickly. "It's a very small investment given the payback."

No doubt about it, LeBlanc is your gal for getting your house off the market.

Madeleine LeBlanc's email is: style@madeleineleblanc.ca. Her phone number is 514.842.2535.



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Roger Haughey

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Nancy offers a very sweet holiday

As we slide into the holiday season (Hanukkah began last Friday) thoughts, mine at least, turn to all of the great treats of the season: egg nog, fruit cakes, cookies, roasts, buche de Noël and sweets of all sorts.

Pâtisserie de Nancy (5655 Monkland Ave.) really goes all out for the holidays. Their marzipan figures have brightened many celebrations over the years, but they also have a full – and by full I mean outrageous – selection of holiday chocolates, cakes and pastries.

Co-owners Claude Chateigner and Marie-Josée Bedard have kept the store

open extra hours for holiday shoppers, so if you haven't tried their amazing holiday confections yet, this may be the year!

Bienvenue to Christmas

The NDG Community Council, with the participation of Bienvenue à NDG, is offering an NDG Christmas Community dinner, Friday, December 25, from 1 to 8 pm at St. Ignatius of Loyola Church, 4455 West Broadway. To volunteer or for more information, call 514.484.1471.

A behavioural workshop

For parents and caregivers of children with autism and developmental delays who sometimes feel frustrated, helpless or out of control, the Donald Berman Yaldei Development Centre is offering an Applied Behaviour Analysis workshop over two days, January 12 and 19, 2010, from 7:30 to 9:30 pm at 2100 Marlowe, fifth floor.

The workshop will help parents and caregivers learn to set limits, create a positive and happy home environment, and have fun with your child. The two-day workshop costs \$40. For details, contact 514.279.3666, ext. 250, or visit yaldei.org.

YPP's edible feast

The Young Parents Program at Head & Hands presents a workshop on making edible gifts, on Wednesday December 16 and on Friday December 18 the YPP will celebrate the end of the year with its annual Holiday Party. All members are invited, and they would love to welcome new young parents as well.



If this doesn't make you hungry for the holidays, nothing will. Take a gander at all those goodies behind the glass at Pâtisserie de Nancy on Monkland Ave.

Photo: Roger Haughey

Call 514.481.0277 for more information.

A great concert

Folk music lovers of all sorts will want to hear "Songs from Connemara, Belfast & Montreal" on Thursday, December 17 at 9 pm, featuring Feargal Ó Béarra, Belfast Andi MacGabhann & Swift Years. The show will take place at Shaika Café, 5526 Sherbrooke St.

A kids' musical Christmas

On Saturday, December 19, at 7 pm in the sanctuary of the Unitarian Church of Montreal (5035 de Maisonneuve Blvd.) there will be a Student Christmas Concert

with Violin, Voice, Guitar and Piano, featuring students of all ages and levels from the studios of local music teachers Marie-France Boisvert, Emilia Cordoba, Alexandre Braultand Melissa Archambault. Come and see what the kids are up to!

Tickets are \$10 at the door. For more information, contact Marie-France Boisvert at 514.769.6912.

Have a happy, safe and healthy holiday, and remember, if you have an announcement you would like to see in an upcoming issue, please send me an email: rogerhaughey@gmail.com.

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Noah Sidel

OFF-SIDEL

NDG's annual hockey tournament explodes to 76 teams

One of the highlights of anyone's youth hockey career is surely participating in tournaments. It's been more than 10 years since I last suited up in an NDG Hockey jersey, but I still vividly remember and often talk about winning the West Island Bantam tournament in 1995 and I will always look back on that as one of the best hockey experiences of my life.

With those kinds of emotions in mind, it's no wonder NDG Hockey launched its own tourney 15 years ago, turning out a generation of great memories since.

This year's event will run from December 19 to 30 at both NDG's Doug Harvey and Côte des Neiges' Bill Durnan arenas.

"It's during Christmas and I like playing hockey more than going to school," said atom A defenceman David Wzykowski. "Also my grandmothers, uncles, aunts and cousins are able to watch me play."

What better endorsement than that?

"This started as a Novice-only tournament and has now grown to Novice, Atom and this year, we have added Junior A and B," explained NDG Hockey's Ray Mason.

"Last year we had 36 teams and this year we will be hosting 76 with approximately 1,100 kids!"

Atom A winger Benjamin Serafin said you can't beat the thrill of playing at home.

"My favourite part is that we play on our home ice and my friends can come watch me play," Serafin said.

Mason, who has been involved in this tournament for as long as anyone can remember, has been blown away by its recent growth.

"We have an increase of 24 teams in Novice and Atom with an additional 16 teams for Junior – which filled up very quickly. We even had to turn away many teams," he said. "Year over year, we have seen fluctuations in numbers – but never like this!"

Why the addition of the new age group? "Junior tournaments seem very hard to find and this is one of the reasons why we decided to add it to our NDG tournament this year," Mason explained.

Teams from all over

"We have teams from many areas such as Sherbrooke, Beauharnois, Mirabel and Varennes to name a few," Mason said, adding that Novice and Atom games will be held during the earlier hours and Junior will be played later in the evenings.

"The NDG Tournament has become a tradition and it is an important fundraiser for our organization. At the same time, it's an opportunity for us to show our hospitality to so many families

who, in many cases, are coming here to experience their first hockey tournament.

"An event of this size requires months of planning and preparation and our tournament committee has done a tremendous job putting this together."

Read our full coverage of the 2009 NDG Tournament in the *Free Press*' first edition back in the New Year.

Happy holidays!

While we're wrapping up 2009, I'd like to wish all of NDG's athletes, coaches and volunteers a healthy and happy holiday season and a fantastic New Year. But most of all, all the best to our readers – many of whom are those same kids, coaches and parents mentioned above!

It is because of you that local sports in this community thrive and it's been a

pleasure covering your activities all these years.

I look forward to seeing and hearing from all of you in 2010!

You can always reach me at noahsidel@gmail.com.



Another winning team from last year, the Novice A Panthers.



NDG teams had plenty of success at last year's tournament. Here are the Atom B champions, the NDG Panthers.

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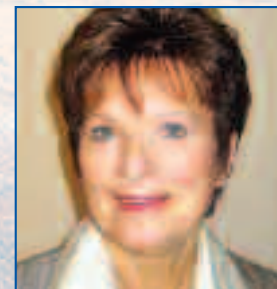
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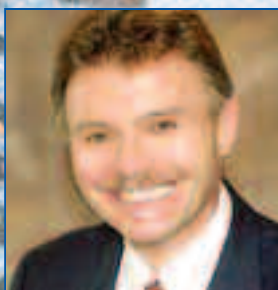
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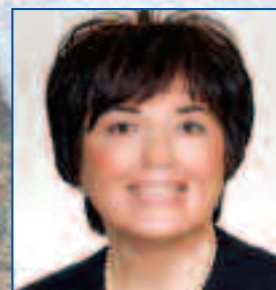


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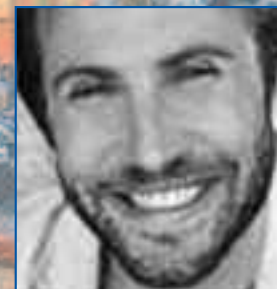
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