

Cllr. Peart appealed for support from next-door residents at council

Go! Residential condo project at Hillside armoury avoids referendum, last major hurdle

BY LAUREEN SWEENEY

It was close. But the register on the project to convert the vacant armoury at 1-3 Hillside into residential condos February 22 failed to win the 14 signatures of support that would have forced the long-standing project into a referendum.

When the register closed at 7 pm, a total of 11 opposing signatures had come from the next-door condominium. The 14 required were the only ones in the unusually small zone eligible to vote. The results mean the city council's second draft resolution of approval "is deemed to be approved by the qualified voters," according to city officials.

The result came after six years and

many development proposals for the vacant and deteriorating armoury. It also followed an impassioned plea to the 14 eligible voters from Councillor Conrad Peart, urban planning commissioner, whom he had addressed at the February 20 council meeting.

"On Wednesday [February 22]," he explained, "a register is tabled, wherein there remains a possibility that as few as 14 of the 35 residents of 11 Hillside could trigger a referendum that challenges and overrides council's and PAC's (the Planning Advisory Commission's) approval."

While this was their right accorded by provincial legislation, he explained how their own building had gone through a similar *continued on p. 10*

A very Canadian morning



A lone city worker adds water to the hockey rink at Stayner Park on a very cold February 21 morning. Several other workers were at the park working on the smaller rink to the east. PHOTO: INDEPENDENT.

Project clears yet another obstacle at corner of Windsor

Council extends expired demo permit for 500 Claremont

BY LAUREEN SWEENEY

The demolition permit for the fifth storey, roof and south wall of the building at 500 Claremont won an extension of 12 months at a council demolition meeting February 20.

The meeting lasted only a few minutes and did not generate any questions or comments.

The work had been started after the demolition permit was issued October 8, 2021 subject to the work being completed within 12 months, and so expiring October 8, 2022.

The city's demolition by-law states that the city's demolition committee may, "for reasonable cause," change the fixed expiry time, provided the request for the change is made *continued on p. 15*

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PSOs help 3 seniors in 3 days

BY LAUREEN SWEENEY

As the community ages, the role of Westmount's Public Security in responding to older residents' need for help was highlighted in departmental reports between February 19 and 21. Officers were called for medical assistance when two octogenarians fell crossing the street and a 99-year-old was reported missing.

The first of the calls for help came February 19 from Public Works at 4:37 pm for an 85-year-old woman who had tripped stepping onto the sidewalk while crossing the street at Sherbrooke and Greene. She sustained bruising and scrapes to the face along with a sore arm, wrist and knee. Urgences Santé was called but no other details were reported.

The next day, a call was received at 11:30

am from a man saying his 99-year-old mother had left the house without telling him. Officers located her seated at a table, presumably at a friend's, and drove her home.

On February 21, a call was received at 11:10 am from Hydro Westmount about an 89-year-old man who had injured his head and face crossing St. Catherine at Wood from the north side to the south. The responding officer stabilized him and treated lacerations above the left eye and nose as well as swelling to the left side of the face.

He was reported to been wearing "proper" shoes and to have fallen when stepping up onto the sidewalk. Urgences Santé and fire department first responders were called to the scene and the man was taken to the Montreal General Hospital.



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Goal: 50-50 girls-boys – city at 49.9% so far in 2023; club at 25% last year

Westmount Soccer Club, city work to increase girls' participation

BY LAUREEN SWEENEY

The city's Sports and Recreation department and the independent Westmount Soccer Club are teaming up to recruit more girls into the sport, with a goal to achieve a parity of 50 percent boys and 50 percent girls, according to a combined announcement last week.

While the city's youth soccer program is an in-house, non-competitive spring one playing in April through May, the club's inter-city competitive play takes place through the summer months and beyond, which allows non-interrupted play for those who enroll in both programs.

"The soccer club and city's soccer program work hand-in-hand," said Andrew Maislin, operations manager for the West-

mount recreation centre (WRC) "When one of us succeeds, we both win. We see the great potential in Westmount for programs that target girls. We know they are out there and we are eager to get them involved."

His experience building up all-girls' hockey teams is another example.

The city's soccer registration numbers at last week's count show 169 girls had signed up, out of a total 339 (49.9 percent). This registration is still under way.

The independent inter-city (IC) soccer club, run by volunteers, does not start registering until May. Last year, it had a total of 317 players of whom 25 percent were girls, with growth coming mostly from boys, according to club president Jean-Sébastien Grisé. The most popular age

groups for girls were U10 to U11 and U13.

Sports, Maislin added, are so important to the development of children that "any way we can increase participation is pivotal to achieving our goal of getting more Westmount residents active. The way I see it is that we offer a recreational-based program and who is interested in a more competitive program joins IC."

Club's plan

The soccer club's plan to increase girls

includes continuing to work with the city, introduce younger age groups and attract girls early (at U6), Grisé said. "Once they get in, they stay."

The club will also work through social media to attract more girls, he said. "Girls invite friends."

It also plans to change terminology from "tryouts" to "open house" to emphasize the fun versus competitive aspect. "We're also looking for woman coaches. It's super tough, but we try."

Simple or complex explanation?



These full dog-feces bags were photographed where the Roslyn steps meet Upper Roslyn Ave. on February 16. Are dog owners missing the bin? Maybe, but one dog owner has shared her theory with the *Independent* that owners are good at getting the refuse bags into the trash can, but then squirrels chuck them out. Briefly impersonating a squirrel, she said, "Get this out of my lunch!"

PHOTO: INDEPENDENT.



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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

CRACK DOWN ON CONTRACTORS DUMPING SNOW

I thank Henry Aubin for his excellent letter (January 31, p. 6) urging the city to take action when contractors dump snow on sidewalks or roads. I have been harping on about this for years but with little support.

The city is sympathetic but insists it cannot take action unless one of its employees witnesses the offence. Hence, unlike other offences that are readily ticketed, contractors and their employers are rarely - if ever - punished for increasing the serious risk to pedestrians that Aubin discusses.

As a 90-year-old, I am not able to climb over a snowbank that contractors have created when I need to cross the road. I also have great difficulty when snow is piled on the road opposite my parking apron and I need to exit onto a road that is half its normal width because, ignoring the rules, the snow removed from a long driveway, instead of being distributed along the curb, is all piled on the road. It is not as if there are no alternatives.

Côte St. Luc urges residents to remind their contractors that pushing snow onto the sidewalk (or street) violates its by-laws. It asks residents to do their part by pushing snow onto their lawns and not onto sidewalks (and streets). Similarly, Montreal West reminds all contractors, and the residents who hire them, that the rules require contractors to have a valid snow removal permit and that city by-laws hold contractors and property owners liable for any by-law infractions. One such is that during snow removal

operations, snow must be blown or lifted and deposited on both sides of a parking entrance, on the front or side yard of the property and that snow from private driveways and walkways must NOT be placed on public sidewalks, lanes or streets. The exception during removal time is that snow may be added to the banks to be removed but must be spread out along the snow bank, not piled in a single large mass and under no circumstances may snow removed from one driveway be placed on the street in front of any neighbouring driveway.

Beaconsfield is even more specific.

Westmount has never seen fit to follow these sensible practices. I might add that when contractors remove snow from long driveways and remnants create dangerous conditions on the sidewalk after it has been cleared by the city, the owner may be held liable for any injury that follows. I predict it is only a matter of time before legal action is brought against the city by a pedestrian who is seriously injured by the prevailing dangerous and selfish practices.

BARRY PLESS, LANSDOWNE AVE.

Comin' Up

Tuesday, March 14

The Westmount Horticultural Society presents "A Cut Above: how to prune trees, shrubs and vines," by David Wees, faculty lecturer at McGill University. Westmount Room, Westmount Library. Free for WHS members (\$25), guests \$7. Tea, coffee & cookies: 6:30 pm. 7 pm.

Batshaw Children Needing Homes

Rhonda likes to be read to

A foster home is being sought for a sweet, playful, easy-going toddler who attends daycare.

Rhonda at times may be temperamental, but does well overall. She continues to benefit from this environment given her developmental delays in reaching her milestones, mainly in the area of speech. Although she seems to understand what is being said to her, she has minimal words and unclear responses; and she does not often point.

Rhonda will need support in developing her speech and communication skills as well as weening off the bottle.

Rhonda is a child who likes to be read to and needs a lot of stimulation at playtime through educational toys and activities to help develop her speech and motor skills.

When it comes to her medical needs,

she has received all of her vaccinations, but requires medical and dental follow-ups. She has been treated for a herpes flare-up and her medical situation is stable. It is unclear if there will be sporadic flares-ups in the future.

Rhonda is in need of a foster family that can make a long-term commitment to her with compassion and sensitivity to help her meet her developmental needs in a stimulating, loving and secure environment.

The ideal family would be a one- or two-parent black family that can make the commitment to her for as long as she is in need of care.

For more information about Rhonda please call and leave a message at Batshaw Youth and Family centres recruitment line, and indicate that you are calling for Rhonda at: 514.932.7161 ext. 1139.

Good news, even it's litter



This negative COVID test was photographed on York St. near Victoria on February 21.

PHOTO: INDEPENDENT.

WESTMOUNT INDEPENDENT

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Governing board to meet at end of March

City needs to invest for local hydro control: Cllr. Shamie

BY LAUREEN SWEENEY

The future of Hydro Westmount's investment needs and its value to the community were the reasons the city set up a governance body two years ago to evaluate the 118-year-old utility, Councillor Jeff Shamie explained in written comments to Jon Breslaw of Grosvenor Ave. recently.

His comments came in a summary he sent February 16 to Breslaw, who had questioned why Hydro Westmount's net contribution to the city's budget had been negative since 2015 (see story February 21, p. 3).

Shamie, whose commissionership includes the city-owned electrical utility, points to the investment needs and associated financial challenges that had built up over time as well as the advantages of local management and control in everyday and emergency times.

These benefits have been shown over the years, in his view, to include repair and

maintenance work carried out more efficiently and quickly according to local needs, he states, and that these will continue to be especially important as the city prepares for climate change.

"As we face an environmental crisis... we have the capacity to put forward innovative and sustainable clean energy initiatives," he said. These include the location of charging stations and a transition to sustainable public lighting.

"Moreover, we can leverage our public utility to boost our ability to deal with outages resulting from the severe weather." He cited the ability of Hydro Westmount to minimize service restoration delays and provide quick access to customer services.

An example of this occurred during the ice storm of 1998 when the city was able to buy electricity in bulk from Hydro Quebec (at its usual wholesale prices) and distribute it when and where the city decided it was most needed to reduce the time that homes were in darkness and winter cold.

The needed investment is the main rea-

son why Hydro Westmount's net contribution to the city's budget has been negative since 2015, "and raises legitimate" questions, Shamie said.

This investment catch-up is being carried out through the pay-as-you-portion of the city's capital works budget at an average of some \$2.3 million a year.

The municipal accounting procedure also complicates the understanding of the utility's position and impact on profitability, Shamie added.

"Unlike what you could often see in the private sector, these types of investments must be reported as expenses in municipal accounting, which in turn reduces Hydro Westmount's net contribution to the city's budget."

Victim of COVID

Beyond these investments, other factors also impacted profitability in recent years. These include recent supply chain disruptions and the closure of many businesses during recent COVID shutdowns. "This resulted in a significant decrease in Hydro Westmount's revenues."

"For this reason, the council and the

administration are studying many options to determine the best energy strategy for the city," Shamie stated in referring to the governance body.

"The goal is to provide the community with a reliable, modern and sustainable electric service within the city's financial capacity."

To look into these important issues, he said, he had called a meeting of this board for the end of March "and I look forward to keep you informed." This committee had been formed in 2021 after many years of discussion dating back at least to the finance commissionerships of David Laidley and Tim Price, who were both named to the committee (see story June 22, 2021, p. 1).

Price is a second cousin of the *Independent's* editor.

Also named was Julie Mandeville, the city's newly appointed director general, who at the time was finance director.

While not mentioned, the utility, historically called Westmount Light and Power, had been a leader in North America in burning garbage to melt snow (see story May 17, 2022, p. 10).

Police Report

Burglars break into house on summit via second floor

BY MARTIN C. BARRY

A robbery last week at a house on Westmount's summit has prompted a police spokesperson to remind home owners to make sure their second-storey doors and windows are properly secured since burglars actively seek this sort of weakness to break in.

The owners of the upscale home were away just after 7 pm on February 17 when a suspect, seen in a video capture taken by a security camera, approached a neighbouring house, where he initially tried without success to force his way in through a ground-level patio door.

Staff at the Montreal police department's Station 12 on Stanton St. were alerted to the incident by the monitoring team at a household alarm company that a break-in was in progress.

When the police arrived, they saw a trail of footprints in the snow. They led towards a heat pump unit on the side of the house that had been used as a platform to climb up to a second-storey balcony.

At the second-floor level, the officers could also see that a window on a door giving out onto the balcony had been shattered.

Inside the house, the tell-tale signs of a household burglary were apparent: open

drawers and closets in the bedrooms, as well as personal property items scattered about on the floor.

As the investigators found the front door to be unlocked, it is presumed this was the route the suspect took to get away.

Although heat pump units outside homes are sometimes used by burglars to stand on in order to reach windows or upper floors, ladders that are negligently left outdoors come up more frequently in incident reports, according to Station 12 community relations officer Cst. Adalbert Pimentel.

And as he has often said before, homeowners with alarm systems tend to concentrate their efforts on the first floor, where windows and doors are obviously most vulnerable, while frequently neglecting the second storey, which most burglars have come to know as a typically weak security point.

Knife used in mugging

The victim of the February 13 mugging on Claremont between Windsor and Chesterfield described in last week's Police Report (p. 14) called the *Independent* February 27 to give us the additional information that one of the perpetrators brandished a knife during the incident.



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Happy (Persian) New Year at Marché Bazaar



Retail Review

VERONICA REDGRAVE

Montreal is renowned as a foodie city. And one of Westmount's destinations is celebrating. Not only a one-year anniversary, but *Nowruz* - the Persian New Year, which occurs on the vernal equinox, which this year is Monday, March 20.

Celebrating his milestone as well as the equinox, Reza Nikzad has inaugurated a mini-bistrot in his *Marché Bazaar*.

In this new seating area, one can try freshly cooked lunches, special breakfasts and mouth-watering desserts. More than a culinary experience, the tables offer away-from-the-concrete-moments to experience the different flavours of a faraway land.

This ancient country has adapted and assimilated recipes from its neighbours, so tasting is a surprise. For

instance, my childhood's admittedly rather bland rice pudding (British upbringing) was transformed by saffron.

Chatting with chef Mengameh Fadaeinez was a mini kindergarten class in learning about dishes created with unexpected combos. She often uses sisymbrium seeds (ask her what they are!) in her daily creations.

Some dishes are meat stuffed with dried fruit and cooked slowly in milk, cardamom and cinnamon. Pistachios are much loved.

I learnt that Persian dates are unique. Called *kimia*, the famed dark-coloured delight is only grown in one part of the country and then shipped around the

world.

Along with discovering new tastes, the other fun part of my visit was discovering new names: *ghormeh* (stews), *haleem* (a slowly-cooked wheat-and-meat breakfast dish/porridge; sounds strange I know, but try it); cookies *padrazi* (ginger), *gerdooyl* (walnut) and *latefah* (pistachio bites complete with an exquisitely tiny rose), to name a few.

I learnt that Persian rice is different than all other. "Soft and fluffy, it is one of the most expensive in the world," Reza tells me as I sit enjoying saffron black tea. My sipping choice was a challenge as I was lured by tea with cardamom as well as borage.

One can try traditional thick Persian coffee or simply re-awake with the usual. Along with wonderful market-like bins of fresh nuts and salted watermelon seeds, packages of Turkish delight caught my eye.

Indeed. What a delight.

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If sold, Villa Sainte-Marcelline would be ‘single-family use’: Mayor Smith

BY JENNIFER BALL

Several meetings of the Villa Sainte-Marcelline school rescue committee and its sub-committees were held over the weeks of February 6 through 20 under the chairmanship of Hubert Lacroix. The committee is trying to obtain a longer transition period – until June 2026, instead of June 2024 – from the Congrégation des Soeurs de la Villa Sainte-Marcelline, the owners of the school’s facility.

Presumably, this longer transition period would mean an extension of the existing lease on largely unchanged terms.

The committee sent an email in French to parents on February 9 that explained that the longer time period “would give the committee the leeway and time needed for viable scenarios to ensure the school’s sustainability, as well as to secure the neces-

ary funds – through fundraising and through a financial institution. Discussions are ongoing.”

Mayor Smith shares zoning situation

Mayor Christina Smith posted a message on the city’s website on February 20. While acknowledging the school is private, and not municipal, she was keen to highlight that if the school were to close, the future conforming use on this site would be for single-family residential.

“...indeed, after announcing in October 2022 that the school’s lease would not be renewed the following year, the Congregation of the Sisters of Villa Sainte [Marcelline], who own the property, finally committed last month to maintain the school’s operations for the next school year (2023-2024).

“Many of the school’s parents, some of

whom are themselves alumni of the school, are raising funds and exploring options to ensure the school’s long-term sustainability. Some of them have contacted me and other city councillors to help them find a long-term solution to keep [Villa Sainte-Marcelline] open. I want to emphasize that this is a private situation, but I thought it would be helpful to share some of the municipal perspective.

“Located near St. Joseph’s Oratory and straddling the border between Westmount and the city of Montreal, Villa Sainte-Marcelline has a vested right to operate a school in this area where only single-family residential buildings are permitted. If the school were to close, the future conforming use on this site would be for single-family residential.

“It is important to remember that a change of use from school or single-family residential would require amendments to the city’s by-laws and its Official Plan. This is a lengthy and complex process that requires a public consultation phase. At this time, the city has not received any requests for such an amendment.

“Westmount is very proud to have had Villa Sainte-Marcelline on its territory since 1959. It is one of the most renowned ele-

mentary and secondary schools in Montreal and Quebec. As the only independent French school for girls in our city, it is a very attractive option for many residents of Westmount and surrounding communities. The city is ready to work with the parents and community of Villa Sainte-Marcelline to find solutions to keep this vibrant school in our community for many years to come.”

But how many such single-family dwellings would fit? Frédéric Neault, director of the city’s Urban Planning department, explained by email on February 22 at least one important constraint to the *Independent*, saying that “the property at 811-815 Upper Belmont Ave. (the Westmount portion) has a lot width of approximately 58 m. The property is located in a zone where only single-family, detached dwellings or municipal buildings are permitted. The minimum lot width to accommodate a single-family, detached dwelling is 23 m.”

The two-lot site is a complex one: it is partially in the Côte des Neiges borough of Montreal and the border goes through the imposing “villa,” which is itself attached to three other major buildings/wings. There is also frontage on Lexington Ave., in both Westmount and Montreal.

Council reacts to Hillside result

Cllr. Peart pleased with register outcome: will allow ‘choices’ for many families

BY LAUREEN SWEENEY

Reaction to the register results for 1-3 Hillside February 22 generated an enthusiastic comment the next day from Councillor Conrad Peart who said he was “very happy” with the approval results.

“To be sure, some neighbours nearby didn’t approve of the project,” he said, “but a far greater number voiced their support either by petition, or by their silence,” he explained, referring in particular to many letters received by the city and a Facebook petition (see story August 30, 2022, p. 5).

“This project will add 32 new units to a neighbourhood boasting a ‘walk score,’ of 87,” he explained. “All units have two or three bedrooms and... are big enough for most families.” This gives more choices for people who want to move to either a bigger

or smaller home.

“I can’t wait to see residents enjoy this new use of this historic Westmount site,” he added.

Mayor Christina Smith voiced a similar reaction and added that the outcome “makes us reflect on our zoning and the small size of this one [zone] containing only two buildings.”

“We’re very happy to have the mayor’s and council’s support,” said Maya Guirlando, development director for developer Groupimmo, “It’s not an easy process to go through.”

The armoury had been home to an engineering regiment for 67 years before it moved out, citing the need for the building to be brought up to fire code standards (see story April 1, 2014, p. 1).

Hillside armoury, cont’d from p. 1

process after the site had been used as a curling club and later the Giant Steps school for autistic and other special-needs children.

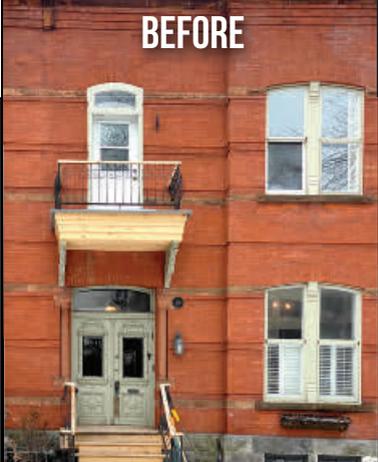
‘Think about this...’

“Think about this,” he continued, “14 individuals from a recent project of 42 units, 101 bedrooms, up to 143 resident occupants of 11 Hillside. Think about this... 14 residents, potentially able to forestall the arrival of 32 new households, 77 bedrooms, up to 101 potentially new residents in the community, none of whom have a voice or vote to be heard here today.

“Who speaks for them? Today, we (on council) speak for them in their absence. Today, we appeal to the better angels of the residents of 11 Hillside to hold their fire and to graciously extend the same welcome to the 32 future households of Westmount as was extended to them, or to their predecessors, just a very short time ago.”

Peart then read off several comments previously submitted by other nearby residents saying the armoury project was needed in the neighbourhood and that the former armoury was in a very deteriorated state.

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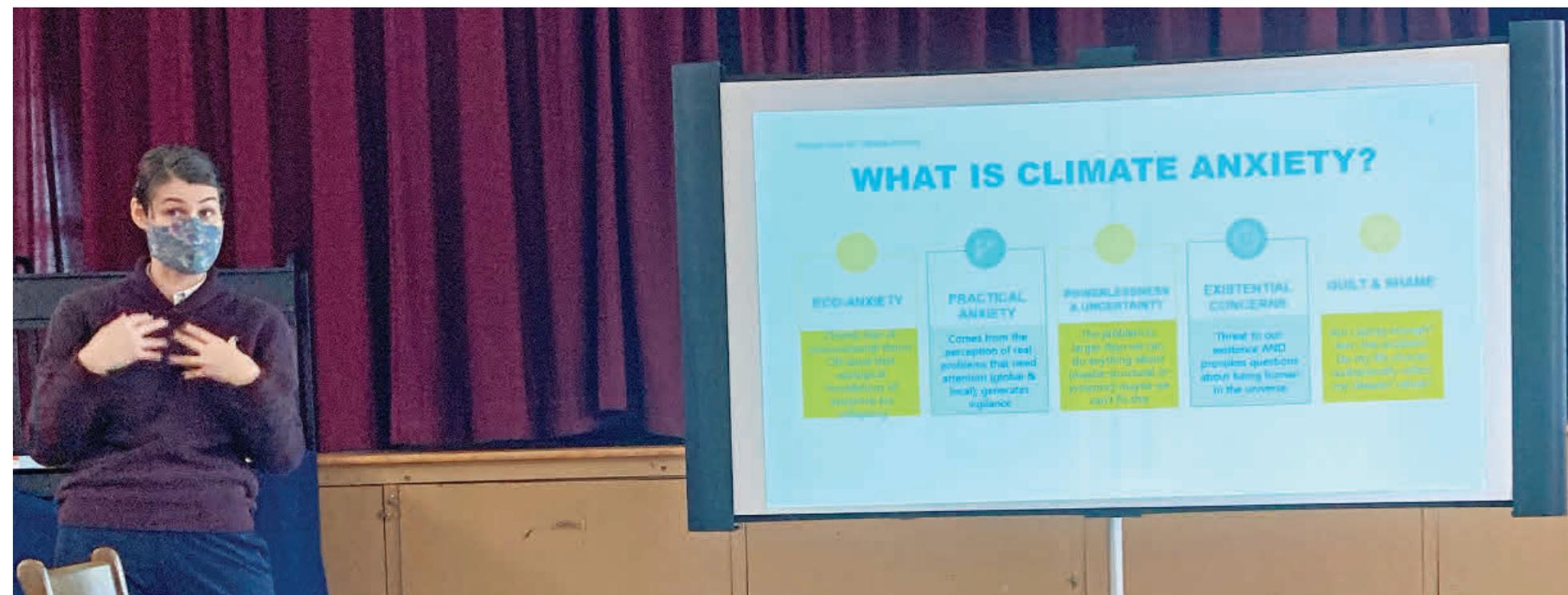
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Mutual care for climate anxiety at Westmount Park United Church



Jessica Stilwell at the mutual care for climate anxiety event at Westmount Park United Church on February 19.

BY JENNIFER BALL

It seems that one cannot escape coverage of the climate crisis when tuning in to news on one's preferred device. Events attributed to climate change are reported with irksome regularity. Viewers often decamp out of indifference or anxiety, and it was the latter that Westmount Park United Church sought out for dialogue with at its first public conversation on mutual care for climate anxiety.

The event was held at the church on February 19. In this, the first of many planned conversations, church staff member Jessica Stilwell created an interactive event where people could express their concerns or outline their own environmental efforts.

A 12-year-old boy drew a tree that he said was infested with caterpillars, in anticipation that our wet and warm 2023 January

and February will result in eco-system variances later this year. A woman sketched a monarch butterfly as a reminder and contention that the environment is now as fragile as the gossamer wings of the insect.

In 2018, the American Psychological Association issued a report about the impact of climate change on mental health. It said that "gradual, long-term changes in climate can also surface a number of different emotions, including fear, anger, feelings of powerlessness, or exhaustion."

Stilwell said that eco-anxiety is still very under-theorised, but "the current research suggests that we should be thinking about a couple of key elements when we try to develop a common language: eco-anxiety is really rooted in observation of what is going on around us.

"Both gradual, as the American Psycho-

logical Association says, and especially the sharper and more sudden effects of climate change and ecological disaster; eco-anxiety is related to existential concerns, both in terms of our survival as a species and in terms of what it means to be a human in the universe; and eco-anxiety is most commonly associated, not just with powerlessness, but with guilt and shame..."

Environmental grief can be divided into three categories: physical ecological losses, the loss of environmental knowledge and anticipated future losses.

Stilwell is most concerned about relational loss, about the loss of connections between members of the family or body of the world.

"Sometimes that connection is lost because of physical ecological loss, for instance the extinction of a species, and sometimes that connection is lost because

the connected beings no longer know each other. The large and complex organism that is our world is composed of these connections, these relationships, and it is this loss that I grieve the most."

While it could be said that mother earth is extorting a reckoning, the event's ethos was promising.

What resonated with Stilwell was the willingness to dream. "I think we tend to get very bogged down in the legitimately very frightening bad news that we hear and that we see with our own eyes. It takes a lot of courage and resilience to be willing to dream something better, to imagine what it would look like if we were all, human and non-human alike, caring for each other and cared for by each other. I was glad that almost everyone who attended was in a space where they were open to that process of imagination!"

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Parking meter evolution



As previously reported (“Tap option, larger screens featured in new interface,” February 7, p. 1), the city is updating its parking meters to allow for “tap” payment (circled in red above) and other changes aimed at improving service. At left, the old style on Victoria on February 3 and, right, the new kind on Greene on February 21.

PHOTOS: INDEPENDENT.

500 Claremont, cont'd from p. 1

prior to the expiry date. The applicant “contacted the city September 27 requesting that additional time be granted for completion of the work,” stated a resolution moved at the recent meeting by Councillor Conrad Peart, commissioner of urban planning.

Revised schedule

As a result, a revised schedule submitted to the city attributed delays to “difficulties in the supply of certain materials, a shortage of manpower, and the withdrawal of certain contractors due to the pandemic.”

A new schedule was submitted and an

extension of the permit was granted, setting completion of the work “no later than October 8, 2023,” the resolution states.

The project to convert a vacant 1908 institutional building into “high end” residential units has been more than six years in development, having been initially presented to the public in December 2016.

It had gone through many versions and changes as well as a referendum in its development as non-conforming to the current residential zoning. A demolition meeting had been required after deterioration of the brick was discovered.

“The 500 Claremont project is indeed a significant project,” Peart had said after the council had cleared the way for the demolition (see story August 24, 2021, p. 8.)

À VENDRE



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*Two Sandras reminisce***Teacher influence: Influencing the career of a next-generation educator**

BY SANDRA HENDLISZ

About two months ago, while walking in Monkland village where my daughter lives, a young man approached me and asked if I was Mrs. Hendlisz.

He said that I had taught him in 1998. At that time, I was teaching moral and religious education at Westmount High School. Little did I expect to meet a gentleman who I taught over 30 years ago.

It was a surprise to me that someone recognized me and remembered me from the time that he was in grade 8. This encounter came out of the blue for me and made me feel very good because he claimed that I had influenced him in a positive way.

The name of the young man that I met is Clayton Grunberg. Clayton graduated from Westmount High, and then lived and worked in Switzerland for a while as he had Swiss citizenship.

Clayton may have left Montreal but never forgot his years at Westmount High.

When he returned to Montreal, Clayton



Sandra Hendlisz in the late 1990s.

worked in construction. One day a worker at the construction site asked Clayton why he was working in construction when his

interests seemed to be in people and academia.

After this incident, Clayton returned to school and pursued a program at McGill that included philosophy, psychology, religion and history. He successfully completed this program and is now teaching moral and religious education as well as other subjects at Kells Academy in NDG.

Meditation works

Clayton begins and ends each class with meditation. As well he tries to incorporate mindfulness into all his classes. He claims that a skill that comes with meditation is the ability to alchemize our negative thoughts into golden ideas. He marvels at how well it operates.

When these meditation sessions are in progress, Clayton uses the same mantra that I used with my students at Westmount High.

Specifically, it was “*Omna ma shivaya*,” which means “I pray to the God in me.”

It gives me great pleasure that Clayton chooses to meditate with his classes

because I believe that although meditation often appears quite passive, it is the route to discover inner freedom and independence as an activity of the soul.

When I speak to Clayton, I have great joy in the notion that I could have possibly contributed to his career path, which in turn offers him great joy.

He claims that in his evaluations from school, his classroom management is solid. This, coupled with his philosophy and cognitive tools, offer him a lot of knowledge with which to imbue his students.

As for myself, it is hard to pigeonhole my years as a high school teacher as my memories are drawn from different schools where the ethnicity of the population varied in many ways. I wanted them to envision humanity as one. I always wished to influence my students in a way that would benefit their lives, and I was always searching for new ways to achieve this. In all, to be approached by someone from so many years ago who has benefited from you is so validating.

Social influence: Defeating a proposal regarding the Cinema Act

BY SANDRA FELDMAN

Last year, the National Assembly of Quebec passed Bill 96. In the name of protecting the French language, the new law further erodes the rights of the province’s English-speaking citizens.

Legal challenges to the new language standards are currently in process. But where are the protests in our streets and our press? Has Quebec become such a single-language culture that anglophones no longer even know how to speak up?

We have been down similar roads before, and took them in a different stride. My own experience in 1986, when the province was governed by the separatist Parti Québécois, gave me some insight into how to amplify our voices.

Proposed amendment to Cinema Act

Under the initiative of Lise Bacon, Quebec’s deputy premier and minister of Cultural Affairs, the National Assembly had passed Bill 157, “An Act to amend the Cinema Act.”

Under its terms, movie distributors would have been forced to provide French-dubbed versions of non-French movies before the original versions could be released. The effect of this act on the availability of English-language films, especially smaller ones, would have been devastating.

My friend, a journalist, and I, a social

worker, were alarmed by this threat to anglophone culture.

But how could our outrage be converted into action? Could two women help persuade the powers-in-place to change their minds?

We got to work.

We wrote a statement that strongly disapproved of Bill 157, drafted a group of volunteers, and drew up a petition to oppose the act. All of us worked ceaselessly, even compulsively, to distribute copies of the petition wherever we thought we might find people who were willing to sign it: stores, schools, movie queues, newspapers.

Anglos, francos worked together

The English press was encouraging, as was *La Presse* columnist Lysiane Gagnon. A small announcement we placed in *La Presse* requesting mail-in signatures for the petition garnered hundreds of responses.

Some anglophone members of the National Assembly were also helpful. We met with an MNA who explained the relevant parliamentary procedure to us: the necessity of tabling our petition at a certain time in the life of the planned bill and its amendments.

Armed with about 6,000 signatures, and followed by cameras from the TV news in both languages, we were interviewed and filmed before entering the National Assembly to do so.



Sandra Feldman c. 1986.

A few days later, Mme. Bacon backed off. The proposed amendment to the Cinema Act was withdrawn. My friend and I, and all those who had worked so diligently on this project, felt heard.

Who, if anyone, is hearing us now?

Building on the tenets of Bill 101, which the Parti Québécois passed in 1977, Bill 96 further circumscribes the use of English in the public sector, and allows government inspectors to conduct searches and seizures, without warrants, of businesses suspected to be in violation of the stricter new language laws. It also limits the

number of students who can attend English-language CEGEPs, and requires that those who do must pass three courses in French in order to graduate.

It is true, of course, that Quebec has changed a great deal since 1986. Many anglophones have left the province since then, and more are likely to do so now. A vast majority of francophones approve of Bill 96. Our success in fighting changes to the Cinema Act – including our ability to attract sympathetic French speakers to our cause – may no longer be possible today.

But that doesn’t mean we must accept these changes in silence. I’m glad that the rights of English-speaking citizens are being fought for in court, but wider action is called for.

We need petitions, we need coverage, we need protests on the street.

The anglo community in Quebec is here by choice. We love to live in a largely French province, as we do more and more each year.

But in doing so we shouldn’t have to mute our own deeply-rooted culture and its expression.

Retired Westmount High English teacher Sandra Hendlisz is a former Westmounter.

Both Sandras attend the Congregation Shaar Hashomayim. See February 16, 2021, p. 22, June 15, 2021, p. 18, October 26, 2021, p. 16 and August 23, 2022, p. 20 for their previous reminiscences.



infoWESTMOUNT

2023.02.28 • Vol. 4/04

Publié par la Ville de Westmount
Published by the City of Westmount**NOUVELLES**PROCHAINE SÉANCE
DU CONSEIL**Lundi 6 mars****NEWS**NEXT COUNCIL
MEETING**Monday, March 6****Séance du conseil : modification**

La séance ordinaire du conseil prévue le mercredi 8 mars 17 h 30 aura lieu le lundi 6 mars à 17 h 30. Vous pouvez y participer en ligne sur Zoom ou en personne à l'hôtel de ville. westmount.org

**Council meeting: modification**

The regular Council sitting scheduled for Wednesday, March 8 at 5:30 p.m. will be held on Monday, March 6 at 5:30 p.m. You can participate online on Zoom or in person at City Hall. westmount.org

Activités du printemps : inscription

Inscrivez-vous au soccer, tennis et une foule d'autres activités. Consultez le guide d'activités du printemps à westmount.org.

Piste de ski de fond : mise à jour

Les pistes de ski de fond sont ouverts au terrain d'athlétisme de Westmount (WAG) et au parc King George.

Registration for spring activities

Sign up now for soccer, tennis and many other activities. Consult the spring activity guide at westmount.org.

Cross-country ski trail update

Cross-country ski trails are now open at the Westmount Athletic Grounds (WAG) and at King George Park.

Ressources pour locataires

La Ville tient à informer les résidents qui sont locataires des ressources qui sont disponibles pour la protection de leurs droits. westmount.org

État des patinoires extérieures

Mises à jour : westmount.org/patinoires.

Resources for tenants

The City of Westmount wishes to inform residents who are tenants about the resources available to protect their rights. westmount.org

Outdoor skating rink conditions

Updates are posted at westmount.org/rinks.

Sign up for E-Westmount

Your municipal newsletter. westmount.org

BIBLIOTHÈQUE ET ÉVÉNEMENTS COMMUNAUTAIRES**Art Westmount de retour en 2023**

Le festival Art Westmount aura lieu les 6 et 7 mai au Victoria Hall. Réservez votre place au plus tard le 24 mars. westmount.org.

Concours littéraire McEntyre

Participez au Concours littéraire McEntyre 2023 en écrivant une histoire, un poème ou un essai sur le thème de l'exploration. westlib.org

Appel aux artistes

Les artistes de Westmount sont invité(e)s à soumettre leur candidature pour la prochaine saison d'exposition à la Galerie du Victoria Hall. westmount.org.

Exposition : Roxanne Dyer et Tracy Steer

Vendredi 17 février, 18 h, Galerie du Victoria Hall. Vous êtes invités au lancement de cette nouvelle exposition. Bienvenue à tous.

Conférence :**Opera During the Reign of the Sun King**

Vendredi 3 mars, 14 h, Bibliothèque. Avec Karina Cahill, bibliothécaire et spécialiste du XVII^e siècle. Inscrivez-vous sur westlib.org.

Semaine de relâche à la Bibliothèque

6-17 mars : Chasse au trésor - trouvez les 10 images de Lyle dans la bibliothèque des enfants.
Jeudi 8 mars, 14 h : Journée cinéma - *Lyle, Lyle, Crocodile* (2022). Inscrivez-vous à westlib.org.

Projection spéciale :**The Banshees of Inisherin (2022)**

Samedi 11 mars, 19 h, Victoria Hall. Inscrivez-vous à westmount.org.

Parlons Opéra !

Dimanche 12 mars, 14 h, Victoria Hall. *Ainadamar* de Golijov/Hwang. Avec Pierre Vachon, musicologue. Inscrivez-vous à westmount.org.

Soirée pub irlandais

Mercredi 15 mars, 19 h, Victoria Hall. Prestation musicale du trio celtique Solstice. Bar payant. Inscrivez-vous à westmount.org.

LIBRARY AND COMMUNITY EVENTS**Art Westmount back in 2023**

The Art Westmount festival will take place at Victoria Hall on May 6 & 7. Reserve your spot at westmount.org by March 24.

McEntyre Writing Competition

Take part in the 2023 McEntyre Writing Competition: write a story, a poem or an essay on the theme of *Exploration*. westlib.org

Call to artists

Westmount artists are invited to submit their proposals for the next exhibition season at the Gallery at Victoria Hall. westmount.org.

Exhibition: Roxanne Dyer and Tracy Steer

Friday, February 17, 6 p.m., Gallery at Victoria Hall. You are invited to attend the opening of this new exhibition. Everyone is welcome.

Lecture:**Opera During the Reign of the Sun King**

Friday, March 3, 2 p.m., Library. With Karina Cahill, Librarian and 17th century specialist. Register at westlib.org.

March Break at the Library

March 6-17: Scavenger hunt - find the 10 pictures of Lyle in the Children's Library.
Thursday, March 8, 2 p.m.: Movie Day - *Lyle, Lyle, Crocodile* (2022). Register at westlib.org.

Special screening:**The Banshees of Inisherin (2022)**

Saturday, March 11, 7 p.m., Victoria Hall. Directed by Martin. McDonagh Register at westmount.org.

Let's Talk Opera!

Sunday, March 12, 2 p.m., Victoria Hall. Golijov/Hwang - *Ainadamar*. In collaboration with l'Opéra de Montréal. Register at westmount.org.

St. Patrick's Pub Night

Sunday, March 12, 2 p.m., Victoria Hall. Live music with Celtic band Solstice. Cash bar. Register at westmount.org.

Resident looked in vain for original building plans

Almost business as usual at Urban Planning after city's Nov. cyberattack

BY JENNIFER BALL

The owner of a condo in a Westmount six-plex wanted to see the original architectural plans of the entire building in order to solicit a contractor's quote for maintenance work.

Her first stop was the Urban Planning department at the city, then the Westmount Historical Association and thirdly Robitaille Curtis' architecture office in Westmount.

The two subsequent expeditions were necessitated because she was told by Urban Planning that the plans for the six-plex had been "lost forever" due to the city's cyberattack late last year.

The city has a more nuanced view. Frédéric Neault is the director of Urban Planning department and he said that

"while I cannot answer for this specific matter, as I am not aware of this particular case, I can say that most of our blueprints, most of our plans, we do have. There is no worry about this.

"If we lost – because we may have lost some information – we are not without any information at all. It could be just part of the information, if it is the case."

Westmount's archives

Anthony Chiasson is division manager, archives and document management. "I am the one in charge of archives, and I am the one in charge of digitizing all of those plans, and if we did not find them, if they are not scanned and the paper is not there, it is because we have never had them."

Chiasson said he was unaware of what the outcome was of the city cyberattack but

said that the information that was given to the condo-owner was missing content: "We do have the plans to a certain extent."

The archives office at the city keeps historical files, but it is always in regards to the city and how the city was run, Chiasson said, including "Council minutes from 1893, property evaluation role, historical finance information, etc.

"Whatever the city has produced since its existence, we keep those archives," he said. "We do have a conservation calendar that's mandated by the National Library and Archives of Quebec that permits us to destroy documents that aren't administratively important anymore. Or, [we] conserve permanently documents that basically concern the history of the city. This is stuff that needs to be kept so we're following those rules."

Even though he asserts he is unaware of the outcome of the cyberattack, he was apprehensive at the time, he said. "There was a concern! A cyberattack... you have to consider that it is like a fire. If there is a fire, you can lose a lot of documents. We have confidence in our teams here that everything is fine."

Neault summarized the situation this way: "because there is a lot of heritage in Westmount, when there is a request for permits for construction or renovation, we always tend to refer to what was the original. So those original blueprints are very important. The oldest plans for most of the oldest buildings in Westmount, we should all have them – with no impact from the cyberattack."

Protecting oneself from house title fraud

BY JENNIFER BALL

Not all of the intentions of the hackers who breached the city's cyber defences in November 2022 are known. One circulating theory is that Westmount's high home valuations were a lure. If so, expert opinions on how citizens can protect themselves from house title fraud is timely.

Here, the word "title" is used to describe someone's right of ownership to land. Title fraud is when the title of someone's home is stolen. This scheme begins casually: with a walk through a neighbourhood. A criminal's favourite target is expensive houses, preferably mortgage free. This makes the fraud easier and, above all, more lucrative.

Identity theft

Then, he goes to work on stealing the personal information of the residents and

commits identity theft. Once the scam is in place, the fraudster sells the house or gets a new mortgage on it and then disappears.

Jeff Horncastle is acting client and communications outreach officer at the Canadian anti-fraud centre. They have little reporting currently on house fraud but he estimates "less than five percent of any type of fraud is actually reported to the Canadian anti fraud center."

As with an invasive cancer, prevention is key. "Educate your children about what the current scams are. Know that the government will never send you payment by text message, so it will never ask you to click on a link," Horncastle said regarding another common scam.

"Contact both Equifax and TransUnion. Some financial institutions use Equifax, whereas others may use TransUnion. You want to make sure that you're fully pro-

ected and you put fraud alerts on both." If there is an application for credit, the victim would get a phone call asking if it was actually them that applied for the credit or not.

When fraudsters strike

Also know that fraudsters often time their outreach opportunistically. Around tax time, there is an uptick in phone calls and text messages to offer phony refunds or extort bogus back-tax. When there is a new federal or provincial government benefit announced, fraudsters ramp up outreach to trick people.

Best practice is to shred all documents with personal information on it before recycling and "keep an eye on your mail. We get reports of redirected mail, so if you notice you're not getting the mail you normally get, then you want to advise Canada Post immediately," Horncastle said.

"Let your financial institutions know that this has occurred. They can monitor your accounts and if any thing suspicious comes in, red flags are there."

Sylvain Paquette is president, financial crime management and prevention, at the credit institute of Canada. He recommends Westmount home owners purchase title insurance for their homes. Title insurance is an insurance policy that protects homeowners against challenges to the ownership of their houses.

"Secondly, have a notary put an address notice that is registered on the land registry. If any changes are requested to the land registry, the owner is going to be advised and they will know that someone has tried to make a transaction on their property."

Province: Targetted organizations should inform

Emmanuelle Giraud is the media relations manager at the provincial access to information commission.

Giraud says "...it is the organization that has suffered a privacy incident (in this case the city of Westmount) that must notify the individuals affected by the personal information and must take reasonable steps to mitigate the risks and prevent further incidents of the same nature."

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In memory of Gerdy, with thanks



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LYSANNE FOWLER

Gerdy Cox-Gouron devoted her life to rescuing animals and choosing loving families for them. We have walked our paths by her example.

In Westmount, we open our hearts and our homes. Over the years, as you have read this column, you will agree that we have lived our values proudly: We are rescue.

Let me share the press release from the Rescue and Foundation with you here:

It is with great sadness that the Board and volunteers of Gerdy's Rescues & Adoptions (Gerdy's Rescue) and Gerdy's Foundation for Animals announce the peaceful passing of our Chief, Gerdy Cox-Gouron, after a lengthy illness.

An animal rescuer since childhood, followed by years of volunteering with various shelters and rescue organizations, Gerdy ultimately parlayed her passion and dedication into Gerdy's Rescue.

Gerdy is well-known in Montreal and environs for her 35-plus years of compassion, dedication and success



Gerdy Cox-Gouron and Pocket.

PHOTO COURTESY OF BEVERLEY AUERBACK.

in providing abandoned and homeless cats and dogs in distress with new beginnings through adoption.

She has helped thousands of animals find new homes and funded surgeries for innumerable pets, often out of her own pocket. It was a job with tremendous demands, all hours of the day, every day of the week.

"You rescue a dog or cat, it's in bad shape, it's been abused. You bring it around, you find it a good home, you see it happy, that's a reward for me," said Cox-Gouron. "I think animals are faithful to you. And this is what I enjoy, and this is what I'll do until the day I leave this world."

Over a year ago, when Gerdy's health

took a downturn, she got to work setting up and putting the wheels in motion to guarantee that her mission continue. She created Gerdy's Foundation for Animals to ensure that her legacy will live on under the guardianship of long-time devoted volunteers and board members.

An obituary will be posted with details of the funeral service and memorial in a few days.

R.I.P. Gerdy.

All donations in her memory may be made to Gerdy's Rescues & Adoptions via Canada Helps or PayPal on our website: gerdysrescue.org/donate/

*

Your neighbour, Lysanne

On behalf of all the rescue cats



9 Lives

LYSANNE FOWLER



PHOTO COURTESY OF MARC FOWLER, METROPOLIS STUDIOS.

This week's column is a tribute to Gerdy Cox-Gouron and all the volunteers of Gerdy's Rescues & Adoptions, who have saved so many cats and dogs throughout the years and given them new lives in the loving arms of families.

In this neighbourhood, our families have reached out to shelter and adopt, and we have so many stories to tell.

We look forward to continuing this mission of kindness and charity, as one of many that Westmount is known for. We keep the flame lit in our hearts.

Your neighbour, Lysanne

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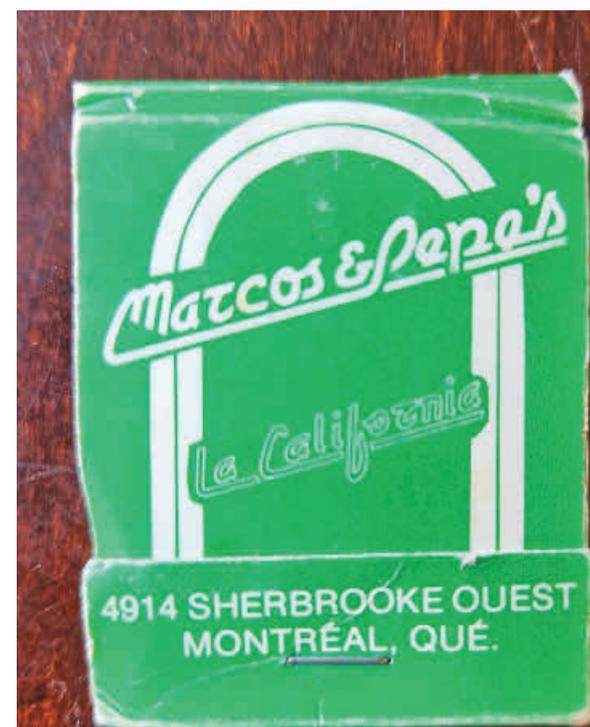
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Remember when giveaway matches were everywhere? (part 2)



Remember Steinberg's? The Metro grocery store on Victoria Ave. was a Steinberg's until June 1992. (See "[Sandro] Patulli remembers the Steinberg's days on Victoria," December 10, 2019, p. 4.) Remember Marco's & Pepe's? It was on the south side of Sherbrooke between Claremont and Prince Albert, where Ono Pokoii and Environnement are now. At its high point (c. 1990), it had a front terrace, back terrace, basement bar, upstairs restaurant and third-floor bar. It was affiliated somehow with, and had the same food as, Carlos & Pepe's downtown, which continues at four suburban locations, but not at its original Peel St. location. "Drinking, smoking, listening to Dylan's "Hurricane" on the jukebox – Marcos was a great place," one former patron told the *Independent*. "They had food too, but who cared about that?" See January 31, p. 16 for part 1 of "Remember giveaway matches."

PHOTOS: INDEPENDENT.



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Social Notes

VERONICA REDGRAVE

An Austrian/Cinderella moment

Chris Ramoutar (débutantes), Patrick Hansen (musical performance), Sandra Castro Mühlbauer (ballet performance), Melanie Syrenne and Anissa Capilnean (silent auction), Erik Gutenkunst (casino), Markus Hold and Susan Byrne (“Heuriger” wine tavern).

Ladies’ gifts were graciously provided by the city of Vienna. Débutantes elegantly clad in white – no hoodies on this special night! – were Alice Arnaud, Alexia Brauswetter-Day, Alexia Cote, Sarah Cron, Nina Coeugnet, Philippine Delaby, Jessica Emond, Julie Gnugesser, Jasmine Le Sieur, Bianca Matei, Eleanora Paduano, Maeva Ramboni, Leana Ramirez, Vanessa Marie Rathwell, Michaela Syrenne, Valeria Tabara and Emily Trudeau.

Their white-tie clad escorts were Jassim Ahmed, Eden Alati-Coventry, Ali Ramzi, Constantijn Bijl, Samuel D. Boaknin, Antoinette Dion-St. Germain, Luka Edward, Matthias Emond, Pierre Emond, Tristan Emond, Dominic Goyette, Daniel Hackl, Yannick Kofmehl, Ian Luque-Poll, Laszlo MacCallum-von Hahn, Teodor Nicolau, Lukas Shannon and Raul A.Viurquis-Perez.

Noted amidst the glamorous guests were local res honorary Austrian consul



Aviva Vetter, Sylvia Meier Kajbic and Russell Brown.

general Marc Bissell with parents Naomi and Eric Bissell, lifetime president of B’nai Brith; designer Astri Prugger with her husband John McGaughey and daughters Anna McGaughey (with husband Glenn Wolfe), Clara McGaughey, and Katrina McGaughey.

Also present were honorary Austrian

vice-consul Monica Schirdewahn, president of the Austrian Society, who acted as a special emcee appearance with Austrian representative to ICAO Christian Schleifer, there with his wife Verena Heingärtner; Elizabeth Wirth, chair of McGill Schulich School faculty advisory board, Hector Rayo, hus-

continued on p. 22



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Social Notes cont'd from p. 21

band of ball president **Aviva Vetter**; **Alfred Wirth**, endowing patron of the Wirth Institute of the University of Alberta, there with spouse former TSC TV **Anne-Marie Sweeney**.



Marc Bissell and his father Eric Bissell.



Omar Al-Rawi, Birgit Erdan and Jeff Erdan.



Debs and escorts.



Christian Schleifer, Elizabeth Wirth, Monica Schirdewahn and Hector Rayo.



Glenn Wolfe, Anna McGaughey, Astri Prugger, John McGaughey, Clara McGaughey and Katrina McGaughey.



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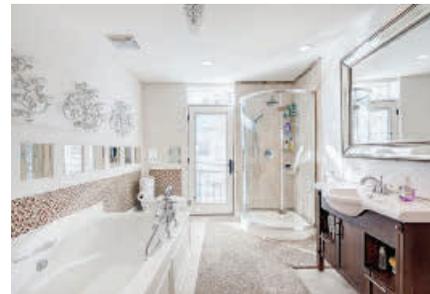
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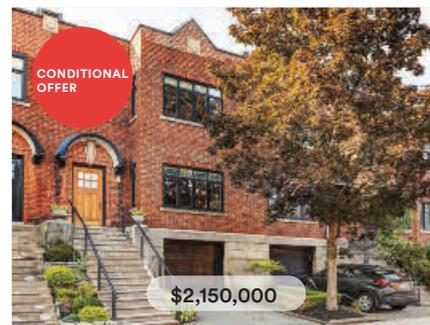
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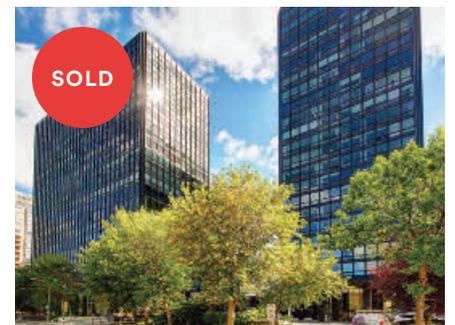
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