

Seniors' group to keep offices at Westmount Park United Contactivity to move programs from church to Vic Hall, WRC

BY LAUREEN SWEENEY

A new chapter opened for the Contactivity Seniors' Centre in a partnership agreement approved with the city May 6. This will allow the centre to use Victoria Hall and the Westmount recreation centre (WRC) to host seniors' programs. It has been headquartered at the nearby Westmount Park United Church for decades.

"We are moving all of our programs and activities into WRC and Victoria Hall as of September 1," executive director Benita Goldin told the *Independent*. The centre, which marked its 50th anniversary in 2022, has taken over much of the meeting space at the church. Its membership is reported to be 600, with another 200 non-members attending events.

The "facility usage agreement" is to be

reviewed annually. Council also approved a supporting grant for 2024 of \$55,500 to help financing its operating costs.

Contactivity is "such an incredible" organization "that offers an opportunity to break social isolation," explained Councilor Mary Gallery, whose commissionership includes sports and recreation.

While the city has been providing facilities for a teen centre at the WRC in partnership with the Westmount YMCA, this is the first partnership resulting from the city's newly created division of Culture, Sports, Recreation and Social Development, headed by Dave Lapointe, Westmount's longtime director of Sports and Recreation, in which role he continues.

"The city has always been a supporter of Contactivity Centre and
having them use city facil- *continued on p. 8*

Westmount Florist's Pickrell to retire June 1



Christine Pickrell and Georgie at Westmount Florist on Victoria Ave. on May 16. See story on p. 18.

PHOTO: JENNIFER BALL

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Stolen pick-up flips over, traps driver, closes Lansdowne

BY LAUREEN SWEENEY
& MARTIN C. BARRY

A stolen pick-up truck heading down the Lansdowne hill toward Sherbrooke in the early hours of May 19 was described by Public Security as having ricocheted off parked cars and flipped over, trapping the driver, who had apparently lost control of the vehicle. The car had reportedly also hit a tree and rocks, and slid further down

more of the hill.

Firefighters "cut out" the windshield to extricate the driver, described as a 20-year-old man, who was subsequently arrested by police and taken to hospital by Urgences Santé for minor injuries. The site was secured and the hill closed till 7 am.

Dan Lambert, president of the Association of Pedestrians and Cyclists of Westmount, who lives nearby,
told the *Independent* that *continued on p. 17*

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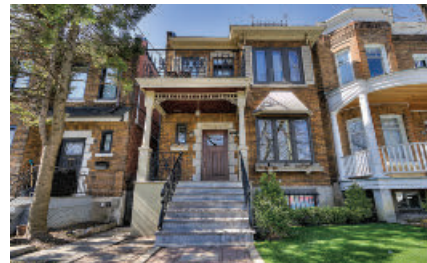


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Unicyclist, 3 others ticketed for riding in Summit Woods

BY LAUREEN SWEENEY

The user of an electric unicycle was issued a ticket for \$81 May 19 when spotted riding it on the gravelled walkway through the far side of Summit Woods, according to Public Security officials. The rider stopped when an officer held up his hand at 2:18 pm and was advised that according to posted signs, he was in violation of park regulations. The 37-year-old was a city of

Montreal resident.

The previous day at 1:10 pm, three other cyclists – also city of Montreal residents – were also ticketed \$81 for cycling in the same area, and informed that, again in accordance with signage, the path was for pedestrians only. This is the portion of what was formerly the paved northern portion of Summit Circle.

Two of the men were aged 30 and another was 39.

Editor's note

Mayor's proposed salary increase

Readers have asked me about the notice of motion regarding the mayor's salary (see public notice, May 7, p. 25). The proposed change would increase her salary from \$76,142 to \$110,578, as well as make very small increases to councillors' salaries and allowances. It would appear it is to be voted on at the Monday, June 3 city council meeting, which starts at 7 pm, although the notice mentions "Monday, June 7."

A May 24 email to the city asking for clarification was not replied to by the *Independent's* May 27 press time.

At the May 6 council meeting, Coun-

cillor Jeff Shamie explained it this way: "Our HR division has asked that we bring equity, consistency, to the remuneration of ... elected officials and this will bring it in line with others," to which Councillor Antonio D'Amico added: "This was based on an objective analysis done by HR, of which I approve."

Mayor Christina Smith said: "This is really addressing the mayor's salary, which is out of step with the other, certainly the demerged, cities... so the Finance and Admin Committee received the report, requested the information... This is something that I have been delaying as they can attest to... This is not something that is about me, at all. This is something that is about the role. This is something I have been talking about recently on different panels that I have been on. [It is about] attracting the right people to do these jobs in today's context... We certainly shouldn't be on the lower end.... You have to live in the city of which you are elected to serve."

For the entirety of the council members' remarks, see time stamp 2:44:00 of the city's video of the meeting, which is on its website.

There were no questions asked on this matter at the meeting. – DP

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Sylvie Lafrenière

I just saw Sylvie Lafrenière. She looks fabulous! Did you know she sold my parents' house and my boss's condo?

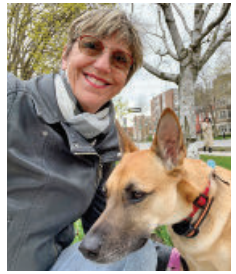
Yes, she also sold mine, and 3 other houses on my street! She's a powerhouse! Energetic, and always on the go.

Wow, she must really know her stuff if she has 40 years in the business!

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400 people swap clothes (no, not that way!)

For the second year in a row, the city hosted “a very successful clothing swap at Victoria Hall April 20 to celebrate Earth Day,” Méli^{ssa} Denis-Daigneault, community events technician, told the *Independent* by email April 25.

“Over the course of the event, nearly 400 people participated. The community brought clothes to exchange with their neighbours to give them a second life. They also perused the items brought by the community and chose some to their liking!”

The remaining clothes were to be donated to the Resilience Shelter, when useful, and the rest to Renaissance.

Storm brings down large tree section

A large section of a tree was brought down on Dorchester at Clandeboye May 22 in a heavy wind, rain and thunder storm, Public Security officials said. Found at 8:51 pm blocking traffic in the westbound lane, officers managed to move the section to the median. - LS.



From left: Méli^{ssa} Denis-Daigneault (organizer), Anthony Jeanpierre, Ève-Catherine Champoux, Mintstar Zhao, Rachel Conover (organizer), Claude Danis (organizer), Camila Kasymova, and Jennifer Miller.

PHOTO COURTESY OF WESTMOUNT'S COMMUNITY EVENTS DIVISION.

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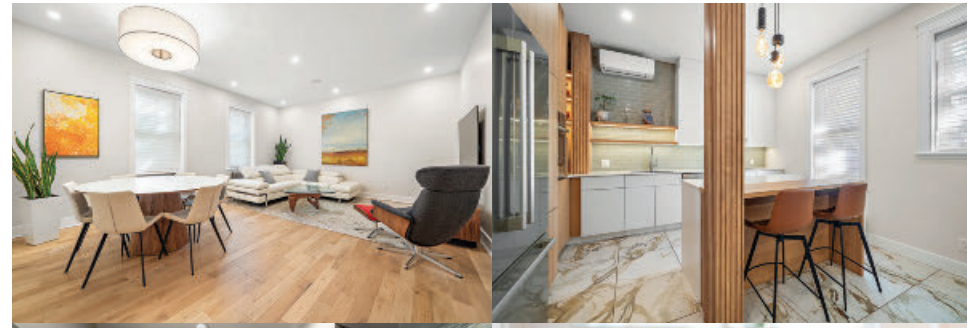
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Boys' club? Stag party? Drakes' club?



This spring, reader Soryl Rosenberg started with hosting “a couple of ducks” in her pool. “The female disappeared and the male was joined by one other male. The female appeared and the two males gave her a hard time and she fled with her life. Now we have five males!!!”

PHOTO COURTESY OF S. ROSENBERG.



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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

BEST WISHES, CHRIS ROGERS

It is with gratitude that I wish Chris Rogers much success as he leaves his position at Urban Planning (April 30, p. 12). I only spoke to him once on the phone in 2014, but what great advice he gave me as I considered landscaping the entrance to our home. His positivity and consideration saved me money, helped me avoid losing a feature that I'd never get back if I'd had my way, and wound up looking much, much nicer in the end... without needing a permit after all.

All the best, Mr. Rogers!

HEIDI LEIN, CHESTERFIELD AVE.

TAKE BETTER CARE OF THE TREES, PLEASE

The sight of freshly-cut tree stumps inside the fenced-off reconstruction area of Westmount Park the week of May 12 shocked and saddened me. These were mature trees, judging from the circumference of the stumps. The next morning, the remains were shovelled away, exposing roots of nearby trees.

These trees were across from the library and close to the play area. Children loved to play among them. Surely trees need not be cut down in the interests of replacing playground equipment and pathways. The park should offer children ample scope to imagine their own spaces.

But more than that, our city's parks have lost too many trees. This ongoing deprivation is due not only to weather but also to

years of neglect. It is confounding that a city council that considers itself environmentally proactive would authorize this destruction.

ANNE DOUGLAS, ACADEMY RD.

YES TO 'ZERO ENVIRONMENTAL' IMPACT ON TURF

Mayor Smith and our councillors are to be commended for insisting that the safety and security of our community and those around us be priority "number one" in any plans for the Marianopolis College synthetic turf field.

To receive funding from the city, as passed by resolution on May 6 and reported in the *Independent* (May 14, p. 1), the project must demonstrate – in a study – to have "zero environmental impact."

In the interest of full transparency, this report should be reviewed by the soon-to-be-formed Advisory Environment and Sustainability Committee and also released to the public. We have a right to see it.

I look forward, with great anticipation, to Westmount being in unequivocal compliance with council's clear directive of "zero environmental impact." This is a pivotal moment.

DENIS BIRO, BURTON AVE.

FRENCH NOT THREATENED

Kudos to the letter writer from St. Marguerite (April 30, p. 16) who explicitly showed with three premises that there is currently no threat to either language in Quebec.

I agree with his reasoning that we need to support and promote French in an increasingly English world, being an historic anglo father of three bi-cultural and bilingual daughters.

TONY LAYTON, ABBOTT AVE.

BRAVO FOR KEEPING TRADITIONAL SUMMIT WOODS COMPROMISE

Update on the dog petition, "Protect off-leash access for pooches in Summit Woods."

On May 6, Westmount city council voted in favour of a by-law amendment that better reflects the longstanding coexistence of dogs, people and nature at the Summit Woods. Bravo to all!

Thank you to those who worked tirelessly in affirming that the traditional schedule represents a healthy compromise, where the nesting period is respected, where people can walk between 10 am and 5 pm (almost three full seasons) without encountering off-leash dogs, and thank you for community support in speaking out and providing nearly 2,500 signatures to this effect.

This wondrous and unique privilege in the heart of our city will continue to be shared by all, despite the efforts of a vocal minority that vehemently wanted (and persists in trying) to make the Summit Woods an exclusive entity and eliminate all off-leash periods.

As many of us know, we seemed to be up against fear-mongering, intimidation and lack of transparency with false claims. Dogs are not the problem. There is no evidence that dogs have reduced bird populations or caused ice storms that damaged and felled trees.

The petition to save the Summit Woods (from dogs) also misrepresented the recent by-law amendment in claiming that the woods would lose its current status as an urban forest and be transformed into a dog park. These woods have long been recognized as an urban forest, part of the Mount Royal heritage site, as well as home to dogs who walk/run under supervision of their owners (on and off-leash). The fact that the city has embraced the multi-use nature of the park, to protect this status, changes nothing. Rather, it clarifies that it is and has always been in keeping with all provincial laws.

The city has also increased signage, fines and patroller presence to ensure compliance with rules at all times. They have hired a forestry engineer who has the proper (not confabulated) expertise to assess data and maintain the health of Summit Woods.

While we are relieved that our tradition will continue, there are those who continue to challenge the city and we must not become complacent. Moreover, a minority of dog owners continue to disregard the rules and we need to remain vigilant about this should we wish to continue to have this right. Please remind people of our collective duty, educate when you can, report when you must.

Most important of all, continue to love your dogs and rejoice in this victory!

DANA EVEN, SHERBROOKE ST.

PROTECT SUMMIT WOODS – KEEP DOGS LEASHED

At the May 6 city council meeting, my expectations of a healthy democratic process were not met. At the previous meeting, Westmount council had presented a motion to designate Summit Woods a "dog exercise area." At the May 6 council meeting, despite many speakers urging council to always have dogs on leash for public safety and ecological reasons, the council passed this motion. Before the council meeting, an on-line petition supporting having dogs on leash at all times had 1,528 signatures.

The Westmount website now groups Summit Woods with the other enclosed dog parks found under "dog runs" where dogs can be off-leash and where Summit Woods' particular off-leash times are stated.

Summit Woods is named a nature reserve and bird sanctuary on the Westmount website. Cornell Lab studies show a decline of 30 percent of the North American bird population since 1970, or three billion birds. Summit Woods' new grouping with "dog runs" comes despite years of concerned citizens requesting city council to restore the Summit Woods' natural ecosystem from the degradation caused by human and unleashed dogs travelling off the paths.

Invasive species are taking over natural habitat, resulting in a loss of nesting sites, food and protective cover for birds.

Is Summit Woods a public space for all to enjoy? Apparently not. During question period, speakers who have been bitten by dogs at Summit Woods, including myself asked for dogs to always be on leash. Parents asked for on-leash rules at all times because they no longer take their children there because of incidents that they have suffered with aggressivity from dogs.

Sadly, the Westmount councillors seemed to have already made up their minds to vote to group Summit Woods with "dog runs" before the meeting. Mayor Smith rushed speakers who supported keeping dogs on leash at all times.* Concerns

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

raised by Westmounters to enhance Summit Woods to protect the natural ecosystem and improve public safety were ignored.

The mayor's claim that nothing changes is false. The new designation of "exercise area" grouped along with enclosed dog parks will encourage new users with unleashed dogs at Summit Woods. We know a "dog exercise area" is a dog run. Dogs don't do yoga. They run. The opportunity to restore a natural ecosystem in a time of loss of biodiversity and for families to enjoy it safely has been lost again with the passing of this motion.

KATHERINE WALSH, GROSVENOR AVE.

***Editor's observation:** I was there and I do not share your impression. I saw the mayor give *everyone* ample time to state their case and questions. – DP.

DOGS NEVER BITE, EXCEPT WHEN THEY DO

Regarding the dog park debate: I have never been attacked on the street by so many dogs as when I moved here – always accompanied by a "but they neeeeever do this!"

Friend, your furry companion shredded the arm of my coat while still leashed. Somehow I don't believe you.

I have avoided the dog-friendly areas of Westmount for years as a consequence. Since my main interactions with Public Security involved being followed around the block for having the temerity to come home after the opera, you can understand my reluctance to put myself at the mercy of entitled fools and Fifi's jaw strength control.

And as for crows not being "real birds" (May 14, p. 18), I am going to presume someone's jealous of the way they play, court and visit their parents for years after leaving the nest.

[Back to dogs:] Leash your dog. It takes half a moment for something terrible to happen. Just make it easier for everyone to get along.

ISADORA JONES, CLAREMONT AVE.

SUMMIT WOODS: A PLACE FOR SOBER SECOND THOUGHT

Envision a host of protesters encamped in Summit Woods – to capture the moral charm of that high ground – all in protest against city council's downright illegal decision to turn the public land of Summit Woods into an unfenced dog run – illegal because a dog run must be fenced in; illegal because the unceded land McGill gave* to Westmount was on condition it remain a park; and immoral because dogs have no place, on or off leash, in the ecol-

ogy of Summit Woods. Neither, perhaps, do human beings, although woods have been our evolutionary refuge for a long time. Surely, we citizens can do better with the western summit of Mount Royal. We already forbid fires to be built and bicycles to ride. Is it such a stretch to limit dog-walkers in the woods to just the walkers? Treasure the human heritage we have with the indigenous life of those woods. Lavish the care on that heritage of tranquility our jerked-up lives must long for.

Do we really want our lawyers to face off in court arguing about the legality of unleashing the dogs of war?

The Canadian senate should not be the only place for sober, second thought. Might Westmount not consider other sites for additional, and legal, fenced in dog runs?

VICTOR (TOR) YELVERTON HAINES II,
DE MAISONNEUVE BLVD.

***Editor's note:** This is disputed by the text of the "dog petition" ("Preserve our heritage! Protect off-leash access for pooches in Summit Woods"). It talks of a sale, as does Wikipedia. – DP.

COUNCIL IGNORES YOUNG, OLD AND EXERCISING WESTMOUNTERS

On May 6, Westmount council amended By-law 1522, declaring Summit Woods to be an un-fenced dog park with dogs allowed off leash over 70 percent of the year.

As there are 20,000 Westmount residents and only 1,000 registered dogs*, the entire Summit park is effectively reserved for the pleasure of the less than five percent of Westmount citizens who free their dogs to roam Summit Woods unleashed.

A petition signed by 1,500 people, incidentally more than the entire dog-owning population of Westmount, calls for council to not take this action.

Mayor Smith and council have chosen to ignore that Summit Woods is an environmental jewel destined for the enjoyment of all Westmount citizens. This indefensible amendment privileges dogs over people and wildlife, and in a dismissive manner ignored residents' impassioned descriptions of frightful dog encounters in Summit Woods. Council's shallow platitudes don't correct the fact that young families, strolling elderly and exercising residents are wary of and avoid using Summit Woods' pathways.

Oblivious to the obvious conflict of interest, the mayor and [most of the] the five [dog owners] of the seven councillors [who supported the by-law amendment] happily introduced their own dogs [by name] to the public audience, and shortly

afterwards, voted to disadvantage the 95 percent of their constituents who do not have a dog. Only Councillor D'Amico voted against the amendment.

It is clear that this issue must be reviewed by an impartial panel, including dog and non-dog owners, veterinarians, environmentalists and lawyers, to validate the legal, moral and public liability aspects of this contentious and unfair amendment.

B. CHAMANDY-COOK, OAKLAND AVE.

***Editor's note:** I don't think that this statement captures the popularity of dogs in Westmount. For starters, on March 20, 2022, there were 1,775 dog licences (see May 3, 2022, p. 16) in Westmount. (An email sent May 14 to the city requesting the two most recent years' statistics was not returned by press time May 27.) Additionally, many dogs reside in households containing more than one person. Without much effort, I can think of two families of five, two families of four, and a family of three with one dog in Westmount. Granted, some dogs reside with other dogs and some licences are held by non-Westmounters, but when all the math is done, I would guess that there is much more than one Westmouter per licensed dog. I would *guess* at least three. And there are unlicensed dogs... – DP.

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- Adoptees, and their first-degree descendants if deceased, will be able to obtain a copy of the original birth certificate and adoption judgments;
- The rules governing reunions between original siblings have been modified, and the concept of concordance has been abolished.

Finally, the rules governing the communication of medical information requested by a doctor will be more flexible.

As of June 8, 2024, official forms for requesting backgrounds, disclosures and reunion services will be available on Quebec.ca.

For more information on the subject, or to contact the entities responsible for providing services, visit Quebec.ca/BIII2.

Québec 



IMAGINE WESTMOUNT SUD-EST

La Ville de Westmount élabore un Plan particulier d'urbanisme (PPU) afin de réfléchir collectivement à une vision d'aménagement pour le secteur Sud-Est. Ce PPU sera un catalyseur pour la revitalisation de ce secteur.

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Your ideas will influence the key orientations of this major project:

- RSVP to the public consultation on June 12
- Participate in the online survey by June 30

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WSE



More climate march coverage



Students from St. George's, The Study, Selwyn House, ECS and Roslyn got down to brass tacks during and after a May 16 march to Murray Park called Rising Voices: A Call to Climate Action (see May 21, p. 16). Above, from left, Chloe Arae, Éva Dufour, Maria Issid and Augusta Kau of The Study championed climate change education as part of the curriculum to provincial legislator Jennifer Maccarone (not pictured). Below, Max Elman-Glick from St. George's School proposed a bike path along The Boulevard to Mayor Christina Smith.

PHOTOS: RALPH THOMPSON.

Contactivity, cont'd from p. 1

ities is a way for us to continue our involvement and support of seniors' programming," he told the *Independent*. It will "allow them to run their organization in a more cost-effective manner."

The city is providing the facilities for most of their programming needs, while their offices will remain at their current location, he added. "The city will continue to work in tandem with Contactivity to provide a wide variety of programming that will be interesting and beneficial to all seniors in our community."

"We are very pleased to have this partnership agreement with the city," Goldin explained. "We believe our members will greatly benefit by enjoying our programs in the well-appointed and hospitable activity rooms of WRC and Victoria Hall. Remaining in our current premises was no longer a viable option."

Contactivity's fall guide is expected to identify which programs are being held where, she added. The centre's staff "will always be on site at both locations to welcome our participants, guide everyone to the right rooms, answer questions, and have a friendly chat. Our programs will remain the same as will our staff and teachers."

Contactivity leaving completely will free



up much space to rent to other organizations as the church does need the income from rentals, Joan Hagerman, a member of the congregation, told the *Independent*.

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McGowan-Ross teaches ECS students about Mi'kmaw traditions



On April 25 as part of the Blue Metropolis literary festival, Mi'kmaw writer, poet and artist Tara McGowan-Ross enlightened students from ECS with Mi'kmaw stories and legends at Westmount Public Library.

By MARTIN C. BARRY

As part of the Blue Metropolis literary festival in Montreal late last month, grade five students from the ECS school got a chance to attend a presentation by Mi'kmaw multidisciplinary writer, poet and artist Tara McGowan-Ross on April 25 at the Westmount Public Library.

To those who follow the local literary scene, McGowan-Ross is perhaps familiar as the host of the Mile End-based bookstore Drawn & Quarterly's Indigenous Literatures Book Club.

She is the author of several books, including two collections of poetry, as well as the memoir *Nothing Will Be Different*. She shared some of her vast knowledge of native culture and storytelling with the ECS students.

"I love writing memoirs," she said. "I really like talking about myself, having

opportunities to talk about myself."

Although both her parents were originally Montrealers, McGowan-Ross's family on her father's side hailed from Mi'kmaw territory in Atlantic Canada. She explained some of the linguistic differences between the Mi'kmaw language and English.

Stories and legends

As well, she told some of the Mi'kmaw people's stories and legends, such as the Mi'kmaw tale about the creation of Kluskap, the first human who came into being when the creator caused a bolt of lightning to hit the surface of the Earth.

Providing the students with some context, McGowan-Ross said, "A lot of these stories are true," but not in the literal sense. "You have to think a little bit, kind of let the story come into your head and live there for a little bit."


She said Mi'kmaw culture is "very

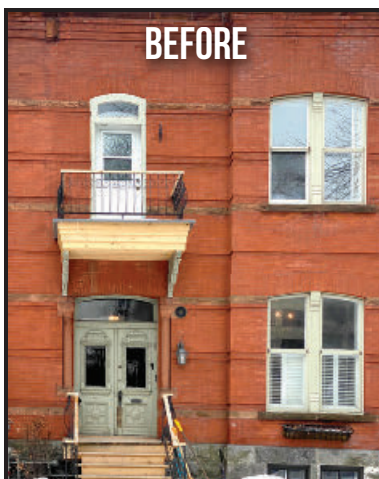
friendly," as she described some of its traditional medicines, including burned sweetgrass, which "is probably the most important medicine to Mi'kmaw. I find it really, really powerful. I think it's magic."



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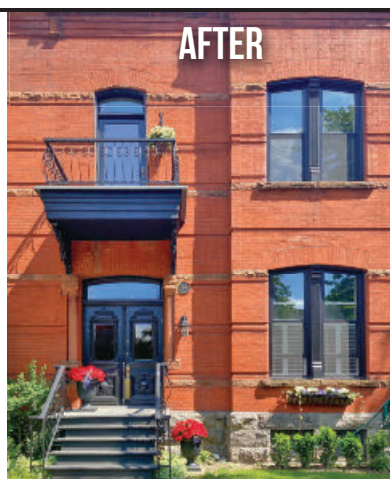
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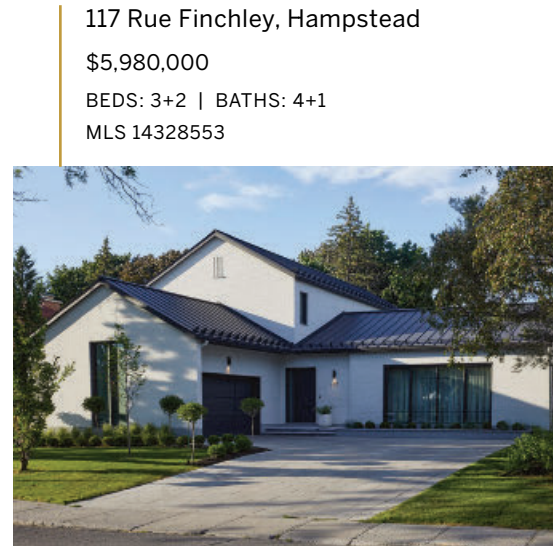
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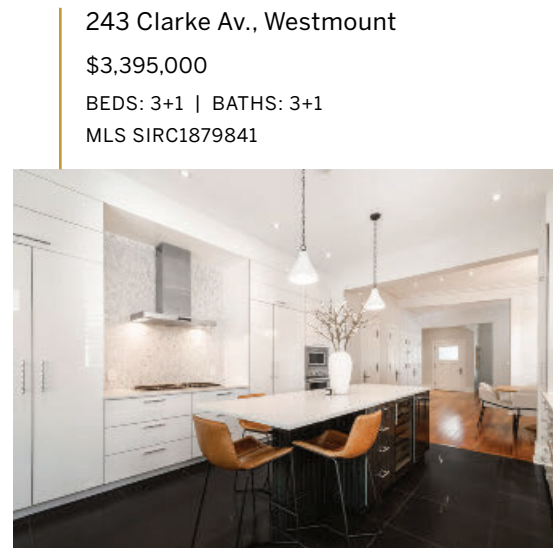
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Dangerous direction on Greene



Left photo, the driver of the car at right seems to have thought, erroneously, that Greene was one way south from St. Catherine to Dorchester (which it is from Sherbrooke to St. Catherine), as seen May 24. The three pedestrians to the right appeared to be attempting to enlighten the motorist, who nevertheless proceeded south to Dorchester eastbound against potential northbound Greene traffic, right photo, which fortunately was not present. Hands to the car in question added by *Independent*.

PHOTOS: INDEPENDENT.

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Greene bridge barrier coming?



Greene below Dorchester was closed for construction for several days last week. A worker on site told the *Independent* May 24 that the protective barrier for the rail bridge would be installed this week. The official EXO train spokesman was on holiday and did not reply to a request for comment by press time. The new eight-foot-high concrete base to the right of the Washingtonian lamppost (hand added by the *Independent*) is one of four and would appear to be for the eastern pole of the northern barrier. See October 17, 2023 for more on the work and May 14, p. 15 for the last known bridge strike by a truck. Nothing was going on when the *Independent* went by the morning of May 27.

PHOTO: INDEPENDENT.

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Retail Review

VERONICA REDGRAVE

There is a pretty new pink place at Alexis Nihon Plaza. Shu Shu recently opened in the midst of teeming commuters. “We offer press-on nails and wigs,” explained owner Angelia Jin. The shop is named after her daughter Shuhan Yu, who coincidentally had a day off school the day I passed by, so was helping out. Add some *faux* finger flair to your day.

SHU SHU.

Metro level. Alexis Nihon Plaza.

Open every day, 11 am to 6 pm.



Shuhan Yu, whose mother named the store after her.

TNT comes back to Westmount

New neighbours on Sherbrooke St. in Victoria village include TNT and Audio Centre Ouest.

TNT already has a following from fashionable fans: the shop was on St. Catherine opposite Westmount Square for many years. Directed by store manager Jordan Grover, the boutique is an “online

brick and mortar store,” she explained. “Along with basics, we carry brands not accessible elsewhere. For example, we have TWP exclusively in Canada.”

Stylist Jade Assaraf, daughter of the owner, is on hand to offer trend tips. A one-stop destination, TNT (“The New Trend”) also carries accessories and shoes, as well as men’s lines. They must be doing something right: TNT is celebrating over 30 years.

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Jade Assaraf of TNT.

Smith stays in Westmount

Sound lovers everywhere knew the Audio Centre. For 20 years, *the* stereo store at Decarie and Sherbrooke drew fans from all over Montreal. It is now closed, but the expertise and excellence are still around.

James Robinson, sales director, explained that the original shop was owned by David Smith and John Banks. The owners of Audio Centre Ouest, a new venture, are Smith and Leam Venafro.

“Audio Centre Ouest is still dedicated to audio-video. We are in the former Environmental Electronique site.” (That business continues to operate and is renovating a

store site on the north side of Sherbrooke west of Victoria, which was still under construction when the *Independent* went by May 22.)

Back at Audio Centre Ouest on the south side of Sherbrooke, the approach is simple but impressive. On entering the shop, one notes a row of screens simultaneously streaming the same program. “This way, clients can see the difference in colour and brightness produced by different technologies.” The team offers in-home consultation and installation, including re-wiring if necessary. Leam noted that their brands are top of the line, including Samsung, Sony, Sonos and Sonos Faber, Bluesound and McIntosh – to name but a few. The store also carries a wide-range of noise-cancelling headphones, perfect for today’s world when everyone seems to find it necessary to speak in a loud voice as they chat on their mobile, totally impervious to anyone around them.

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James Robinson and Leam Venafro.

SACO completes international line-up with Greene site

In the past, Greene Ave. was often referred to as “tony,” meaning “elegant” – not the renowned shoe shop, which we all still miss. Today, instead of idling chauffeur-

driven limos, Ferraris and Lamborghinis abound, as do electric cars and Volvos. Hoodies are *haute*, and most wear sneakers as they errand-run. I often see a phoenix: a renewal. Closed doors re-open.

One such new neighbour is SACO, already existing internationally in London, Paris, Moscow, Copenhagen, Seoul, Taipei and Hong Kong.

Stylist Aldo Furfaro was the renowned owner of a salon in Westmount Square for many years, where Eliza Castela and Olivia Grably worked with him. He approached them to partner in SACO, and the rest, as they say... .

When I met them at SACO, both ladies had glorious manes made more magnificent with blonde highlights. They told me that, indeed, highlights are the main request today.

“Particularly highlights on grey hair,” Eliza Castela pointed out. SACO carries organic products, one of which is AKA, a hair-colour line that SACO offers exclusively in Montreal.

“We are very green,” confirmed Olivia, whose daughter, university student Kylie, was working at the reception. The space is luminous, throwing natural light on 14 chairs, manned by 12 hairdressers.

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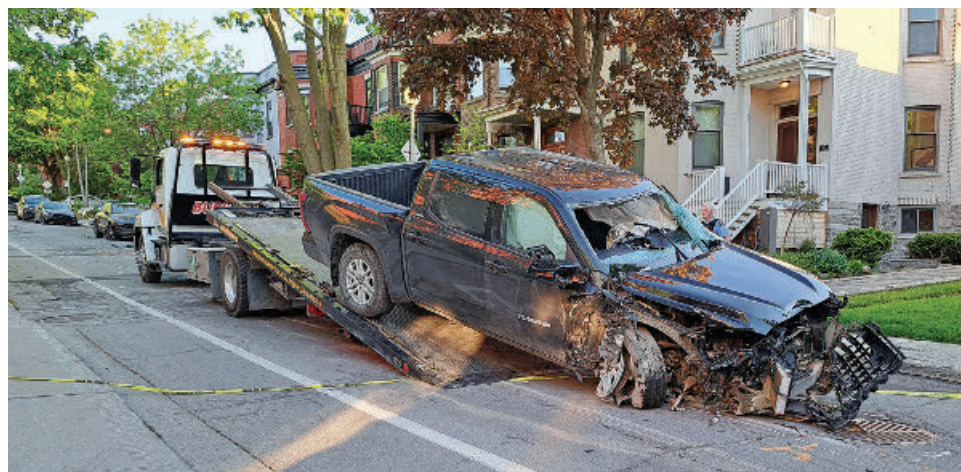
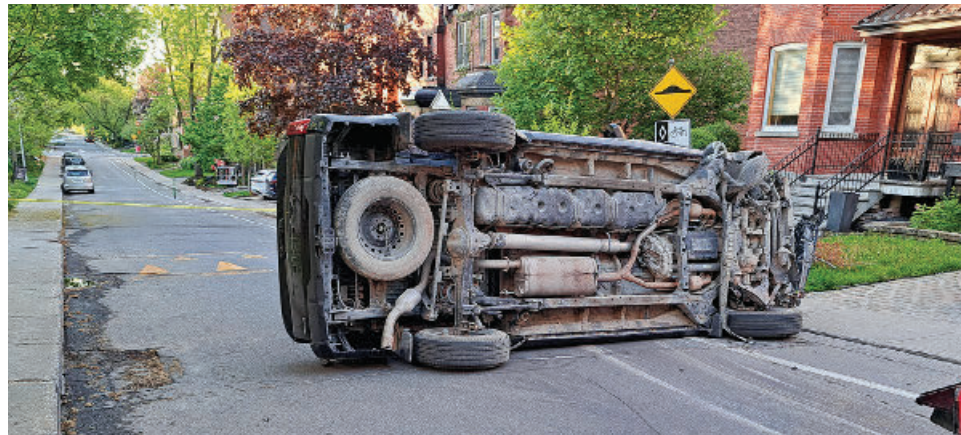
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Stolen pick-up, cont'd from p. 1

“most neighbours think the [street’s] speed bumps should be bigger and more numerous since there are so many non-Westmount drivers going down Lansdowne daily who speed.” He suggested the bumps “are not high enough.”

Police’s view

According to Station 12 community relations police officer Cst. Mike Yigit, the perpetrator was a minor driving a stolen Toyota Tundra full-size pickup truck at around 4:30 am.

“As he was driving away with the car, he

got into an accident and the car was found at Lansdowne and Sherbrooke overturned with the suspect still inside,” said Yigit.

He said the responding officers had no trouble taking custody of the driver as he was trapped inside.

While recent news reports suggest that minors are increasingly being used by organized crime for car thefts, Yigit couldn’t confirm whether this was a case of “joy riding” by an adolescent or something else.

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Christine Pickrell of Westmount Florist retires this week

BY JENNIFER BALL

Christine Pickrell, the head floral designer at Victoria Ave.'s Westmount Florist, will soon set her sights on mastering pickleball and charitable key performance indicators instead of assemblages of garlands, sprays, and arrangements.

Many family members have worked at the stores (there is also one in Pointe Claire), including three of the founder's children until just last year.

Christine's brother Peter worked in the business, but retired six years ago to sell ice cream.

The other three have played different roles until very recently. While Christine's brother David learnt the florist business by going to flower wholesalers with their dad George, she and brother Stephen were sat down in front of a table with blooms and instructed to make a floral arrangement.

George, who started Westmount florist in 1962, appraised the results and instructed: "[Christine] to the design room and [Stephen] up in the office."

When David spoke to the *Independent* in May 2023, he said the siblings, "received no preferential treatment from Pop Pickrell. All my old man was paying us was chicken feed, working for him, but it really was good times" (see June 13, 2023, p. 18 and April 19, 2022, p. 10)

David retired in May of this year, but he trained Marc Harrison to take over and manage all the logistics.

Stephen retired in May 2023. His son Brent has been working in the business for nine years.

Peter's son Matthew – who was a schoolteacher at Selwyn House – has also joined the family business and is customer facing.

With the new staff in place, Christine knew it was time to make a change.

"As long as Dave and I were here, we were going to be calling the shots and making all the decisions, which was totally un-

fair to the next generation, so we felt in order for us to move forward properly, we had to get out."

She also said that Westmount Florist hired a consulting firm to put a transition plan into place and help to succor the business in all matters, from HR to automation.

Ready to retire

"Two years ago, I was not ready to retire but as I started thinking about it more and more, I am now."

Father George, who died in 2006, credited the growth of the business to his children, she said, dating its success from when they joined it.

On collaborating with her siblings day in and day out, Christine said the best advice her father could have given was to "never let the business get in the way of our relationships..."

"We fought and we still fight, but we never let it carry over outside of work. We are very close as a family."

Christine had planned to retire after Mother's Day this year, but clients kept asking for her services for parties and large events.

She has a large party on June 1 at the Windsor, which will be her hard stop. "I have to just say 'no.'"

After more than 40 years at Westmount Florist, she said that her immediate plans are "to learn to play pickleball like everybody else. I have a friend who has a court up near the cottage who is going to teach me..."

"I want to do charity work..."

"I travel a lot already and I will spend a lot of time at the cottage and go see friends that I have not seen in a while."

Both David and Christine did agree to come back to work the large holiday rushes like at Rosh Hashanah.

Christine named her dog Georgie, and he roams Westmount Florist bringing warmth and affection to the customers,



she said. Apropos of the 18 years since the man who inspired the name passed, the *Independent* wondered what he would make of the business today.

"He would have been so proud! He would have been so proud of the business side but probably more so of the personal

side – the fact that we are all so close and that we all stayed in the city."

At the end of the day, and as the third generation steps up, his children did exactly what he had asked: to not let the business get in the way of their relationships.

See another photo on p. 1.

Police Report

Police give similar advice after two thefts

BY MARTIN C. BARRY

A car owner who parked on Sherbrooke St. on the evening of May 17 until noon the following day found out that leaving the doors unlocked is an invitation to theft – although in this case it was a minor one.

In a complaint filed with police at Station 12, the owner reported that a pair

of sunglasses were missing when he returned.

"Most likely the doors were unlocked," said Cst. Yigit, noting that many thefts from vehicles are crimes of opportunity and that "you should always lock your doors."

Bike stolen

And in yet another likely case of a crime of opportunity, an Olivier Ave. resident who left a bicycle locked to his car's bike carrier overnight beginning on the evening of May 17 found out the next morning that it had been stolen.

"The bike was on the Thule bike rack on the back of my car," the victim wrote in a summary of the incident filed at Station 12. He said the thieves "destroyed" the rack in order to steal the bike.

Leaving any kind of valuable item out in the open overnight is tempting fate, said Yigit, while adding that even leaving an item of heavy equipment in a utility trailer can end up with a nasty surprise the morning after.

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Tiny siblings George and Georgette



9 Lives

LYSANNE FOWLER

What to do when a mommy cat has a litter near your home? Caring neighbours from the area try desperately to take in the kittens as soon as possible to ensure their survival.

This is the story of siblings George and Georgette. George is the tabby-and-white sweetheart on the left and Georgette is the



stunning redhead on the right.

These two wee kittens are now ready for a loving family and we are hoping that you will take them into your arms and hearts together so they are forever joyfully bonded.

Being only two months old, they are very healthy and have had their first treatment for their age.

For more information and wonderful photographs, please contact our neighbour Francine at 514.637.5411. They are loved in this foster home, but she looks forward to George and Georgette having a wonderful forever family soon thanks to your kindness.

Your neighbour,
Lysanne.



Westmount
A-dog-tions

LYSANNE FOWLER

So if gorgeous Walter the doodle is known as Mr. Handsome, does it make him Mr. Walter Handsome or Handsome Mr. Walter? Maybe it depends on the day. Regardless, it is always a giggle for his foster family to have such a sweet and

Perfect Walter

year-old, up to date with his inoculations, neutered and microchipped.

Please contact the volunteers at Gerdy's Rescues & Adoptions through their website at www.gerdysrescue.org or directly at their email address info@gerdysrescue.org for more information on Walter, he is a very good buddy to all and would fit in a daily routine so well.

Your neighbour,
Lysanne



affectionate fellow.

Walter is presently in his foster placement for the Gerdy's Rescues & Adoptions group. His initial family was going through a divorce and changes in circumstances, and he would be better in a home environment with more availability.

Walter is very social and active, kind with people and other dogs. He enjoys his walks and is very interested in pleasing everyone around him, making friends easily. He is not used to cats so maybe not 100 percent.

He is quite content with children, but it is best they be over 12 years of age as he is of a taller breed. He is a very healthy five-

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Tees visits The Study, 84 years later



Long-time Westmounter Miriam Tees, 101 and The Study class of '40, is pictured here with several of the school's Westmount alumnae, from left, Samantha Hayes, Arabella Decker, Amanda Eaman and Emily Ritchie. Tees visited her alma mater and spoke to a group of kindergarten, grade 1 and grade 11 students as well as alumnae. "We really enjoyed hearing her stories about our founder, Margaret Gascoigne, who was still teaching at The Study when Miriam attended," communications and marketing director Sarah Binns told the *Independent* by email May 17. PHOTO COURTESY OF THE STUDY.



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Social Notes

VERONICA REDGRAVE

Suarez premieres new work at Han



Nadine Mehanna, Chloe Ng, Luis-Fernando Suarez and Antoine Mehanna.



Fabio Avella Martinez and his wife Miriam.

It couldn't have been a more perfect day for a garden party. Luis-Fernandez Suarez' new work premiered at Han Modern & Contemporary. Floating floral forms starred in his series "Historical Gardens."

Driven by his love of nature, their narrative is enhanced by precisely aligned flowing drips. They were inspired by Cy Twombly, the pioneering artist whose iconic work featured scribbled dribbly forms.

Suarez is on a roll. A solo show of his paintings took place at the acclaimed Seminario de Cultura de Mexico in 2023. And he just returned from an exhibition at the SAQ Gallery in Mexico City.

In his work shown at Han, passionate colours became abstract pastorals with a lively looseness that echo garden memories. Ions of energy loom from the dynamic paintings, but they also emit a meditative calm. There is a quiet aesthetic in his exuberance.

Along with his clouds of blossoms, Suarez created tactile pieces. "I use plaster and con- *continued on p. 22*



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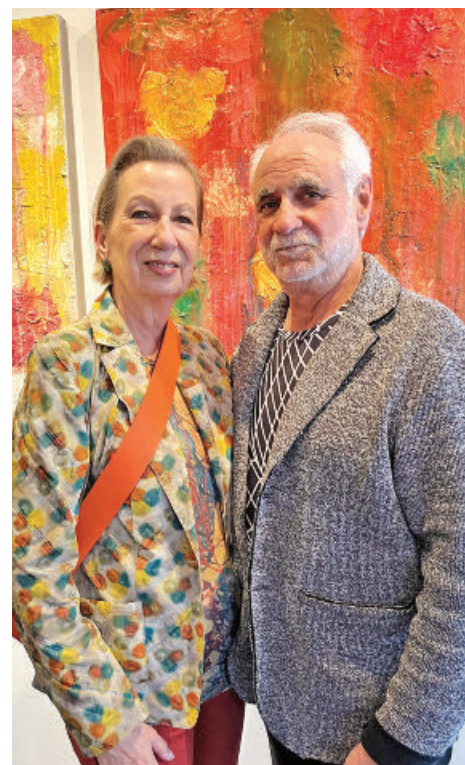
Jaclyn Griner and David Levy.

Social notes, cont'd from p. 21

crete, and work it with my hands." Time is present in the delicate imperfections; the cracks echo natural aging. Odes to past, present and future, his luminous, fluid paintings not only catch the eye, they resonate with the soul.

Noted at the vernissage were gallery director **Chloe Ng**, **Nadine** and **Antoine Mehanna**, manager Greene Ave.'s Scotia bank, **Roberto Menagati**, **Nancy Cleman**, **Kevin Lutes**, **Cheryl** and **Alan Goffman**, **Jocelyn Griner** and **David Levy**, **Sharlene Giuliani**, **Margot MacIllivray**, **Henrietta Muir**, **Eramelinda Boquer**, and **Louise** and **Michel Blouin**, who chatted with former consul general of Colombia in Montreal **Fabio Avella Martinez** and his wife **Miriam**. The couples knew each other from the consular corps, as Michel was the former honorary consul general of Denmark for Quebec.

PS. During Quartier Greene's block event June 1 weekend, Chloe Ng plans to have special dancing at Han gallery. "Maybe some fun salsa!"



Cheryl and Alan Goffman.

City fills lagoon, opens WRC pool

Late last week, the city began filling the lagoon in Westmount Park. It was full when the *Independent* went by the morning of May 27, and ducks were using it.

For human bathers, the city had been filling the Westmount recreation centre pool at about the same time and opened it the morning of May 27.

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