WESTMOUNT INDEPENDENT

Weekly Vol. 19 No. 3b

We are Westmount

Developers seek minor zoning exemption

Hillside Lane condos re-designed to add more, smaller units

By LAUREEN SWEENEY

A long, drawn-out process to convert the vacant former armoury at Hillside Lane and Hillside Ave. into residential condos is headed back to city council at its meeting March 17. While already approved by council, its developers are now seeking a minor exemption to current zoning in order to allow for two one-bedroom units.

The zoning involved stipulates that "in every zone where a multi-family building is permitted, (...) every dwelling unit must contain at least one bathroom, two bedrooms, and a room containing a kitchen area, a dining area and a living area."

In this case, however, development director Maya Girlando of Groupimmo told the *Independent* last week, that "We are

finding today's market involving people downsizing is looking for a mix in size to include smaller units and related pricing, This is the reality of the market."

In the spring "everything was going well," she explained, "but then there was a slowdown in the market so basically we decided to go back to the drawing table and re-design the units."

The re-designing means the average unit size has been readjusted from 1,800 sq. ft. to 1,200 sq. ft., and, with the addition of units, including two one-bedroom ones, the total unit count increases from 31 to 41, she said.

Request for exemption

The new building before its re-design was *continued on p. 4*

Warmer than February-colder than Brazil!



Alice (left, front) and Julia with mother Monique (left, rear) and her sister and Westmounter Jacqueline were enjoying the sun and the playground in Westmount Park March 7. Monique, her husband and children are visiting from Brazil for a couple of weeks. "It's very hot there right now," said Monique.



Red pine, yellow birch, sugar maple City offers three native species for free tree-planting program

By Laureen Sweeney

The city is offering three Quebec native species of trees this spring for its free tree distribution to residents for planting on their property. These are red pine, yellow birch and sugar maple.

Although these species can generally be more sensitive to urban conditions, "it is important to prioritize native species that are well adapted to the region as they contribute enormously to our urban ecosystem," city horticulture and arboriculture inspector Alberto Medeiros told the *Independent*. This is in part because they attract a wide array of local insects that bird species benefit from.



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Man wearing running shoes falls when jumping over snow bank

By Laureen Sweeney

Public safety officers were called to the Westmount Library February 28 at 5:01 pm where they found a man seated on a chair with blood on one knee and pain in the other, department officials said.

Accompanied by a family member, he was reported to have been trying to jump over a snow bank outside the YMCA on Sherbrooke St. while wearing running shoes and lost his footing. He was taken to hospital by Urgences Santé.

Officers were also called to the library March 3 at 5:13 pm for a man suffering what was described as "a small seizure." On arrival, officers found him seated upright, accompanied by another person. Urgences Santé checked him out but the man refused to be taken to a hospital.

Ticket issued for fallen security fence at Metcalfe worksite

A ticket for \$1,336 was issued regarding what was described as an unsecured worksite on Metcalfe at Melbourne March 5 following a complaint from neighbours, Public Security officials said. On arrival at 1:21 pm, officers found the fencing had been knocked down and two men were in the process of trying to make a delivery.

Letters to the Editor, p. 6

Pet page, p. 10

Social Notes: Atwater Library, p. 12

No Police Report this week

Car towed when parked over water main breaks on Victoria

City Public Works, Energir gas crews and a tow truck were called March 5 to 368 Victoria just south of Sherbrooke at 6:36 am when water was found coming through small cracks in the pavement under the a car, Public Security officials said. Nearby shop clerks were advised to evacuate, the car was towed and the water shut off. The area was back in operation at 8:30 am.

Woman's stolen handbag found in lane

Public safety officers were called March 3 when a woman's handbag was found in a laneway near 4200 Sherbrooke, department officials said. Containing prescriptions, other medical papers and car keys, the bag turned out to have been reported stolen from a car parked on Greene, leaving the owner unable to move it.

The woman, who lived on Northcliffe in NDG, had reported the bag stolen from an Audi, but when Public Security was unable to contact her, the bag was taken to the police station on Stanton St.

Free trees, cont'd from p. 1

order forms on the city's website under "special tree distribution," he said.

"We suggest residents consult them to decide whether they have the adequate space to grow their selected tree on their private property before signing up."

When the trees are delivered in late April, "the saplings will be in 2- to 5-gallon pots and can be easily planted by hand," he added. "We like to remind residents that in order to qualify for the trees they must be planted within the city of Westmount."

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Group turns 35 this year Westmounters invited to join McGill Community for Lifelong Learning

BY MARTIN C. BARRY

How do you stay mentally active and with a sense of purpose following retirement?

It's a question Grosvenor Ave. resident Chris Neal, president of the McGill Community for Lifelong Learning, asked himself four years ago shortly after retiring from a career in print journalism, corporate communications and international development.

The way he sees things, seniors are living much longer than they used to, and in many cases the years of retirement are now almost as long many people's working lives.

"So, what are you going to do with all that time?" says Neal, suggesting that the extra time is "a gift but also a challenge" for which a growing number of new retirees have no immediate plan.

He sees lifelong learning as it is presented at McGill as an excellent way for retirees to maintain their cognitive abilities.

More than 1,000 people (including a good number of Westmounters) are currently registered to take part in the group's extensive list of study groups led by volun-



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teer moderators.

continue learning for the joy of it, but who The group is for people who want to also wish to share their knowledge, ideas,



McGill Community for Lifelong Learning president Chris Neal and board member Christine Mutter are seen here on February 26 in the group's lounge near the McGill University campus, where paintings by Sylvia Kissin can be seen on the wall behind them.



O REFERRED FOR A REASON

experience and interests with others. Learning takes place relatively stress-free, as there are no exams or grades to worry about.

Based on a peer-learning concept, small study groups are led by volunteer moderators. The informal small-group approach makes the programs accessible.

There are four terms to a year. Fall, winter and spring are 10-week terms with a complete program of study groups, lectures, workshops, outings and social activities.

Members are currently celebrating their 35th anniversary and will be holding an open house on Wednesday, March 25 from 10 am to noon at 680 Sherbrooke St. West, suite 1240.

All are invited to drop by and learn more about the program of study and courses.

Hillside Lane, cont'd from p. 1

approved a year ago after both Mayor Christina Smith and Councillor Conrad Peart, commissioner of urban planning, had appealed to nearby residents to allow the project to go through without a referendum. This was based mainly on the proposed residential plan being considered to be for the good of the neighbourhood (see story February 6, 2024, p. 14)

Originally built as a riding academy in 1910, the building had been used as an armoury by the 3 Field Engineer Regiment (latterly re-named to the 34 Combat Engineer Regiment) for some 67 years. The army moved out in 2014 citing the building's need to be brought up to fire code standards (see story April 1, 2014, p. 1).

It was subsequently sold by Canada Lands in 2017 and re-sold again after the city rejected a proposal to convert it into a sports facility. It was then acquired by Groupimmo and partners in December 2018 (see February 4, 2020, p. 1).



Seriously?



These contradictory signs at Wood and Sherbrooke were photographed March 7. To add to the confusion, there isn't even a pedestrian detour at this precise spot, although the city of Montreal's workers or contractors have set one up to the east through the Queen Elizabeth Gardens so people can avoid their work on a water valve chamber (see February 18, p. 4). PHOTO: INDEPENDENT.

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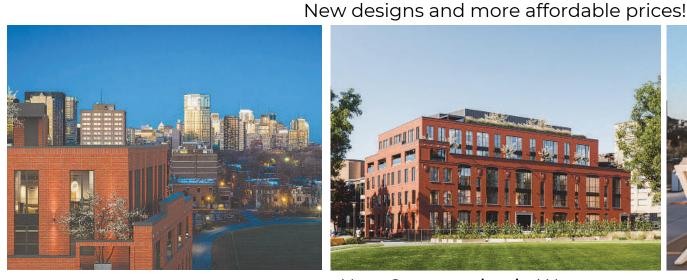
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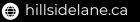
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Homelessness among WOMEN - THE INVISIBLE FACES **BEHIND THE NUMBERS**

Every day, the team at Chez Doris connects with women who are often overlooked. We welcome those who struggle in the shadows, their faces strained by fear, fatigue and distress. Whether they are homeless, vulnerable or living precariously, we are there to support them. As we approach the census of the unhoused, we already know that many of these women will once again be overlooked.

Contrary to popular belief, homelessness is not just about tents in parks or lineups in front of shelters. For women, it takes on more discreet forms: sleeping in a car with children, couch-surfing with friends or enduring abusive relationships in exchange for a roof over their heads. They do not show up in the official statistics, yet their number is growing.

Every day, we welcome elderly women evicted from their homes after decades of stability, unable to find new housing with their meagre pensions. Students with inadequate incomes end up homeless. Others, out of shame or fear, choose to wander, unseen.

Every night, our waiting list includes more than 10 women looking for a place to sleep. When we cannot accommodate them despite our best efforts, we do everything possible to find them a solution and prevent them from spending the night on

the street.

Homeless women face specific dangers: sexual violence and exploitation, and lack of safe spaces. Given the traumas they face, they feel less comfortable going to mixed shelters and develop strategies that make them invisible. This vicious cycle of invisibility perpetuates their exclusion and prevents any response tailored to their needs. We demand:

- A new census methodology that considers hidden homelessness,
- The urgent creation of more womenonly shelter resources,
- Sustainable funding for organizations that support them,
- Official recognition of women's homelessness as a distinct problem requiring tailored solutions.

On this International Women's Day [March 8], we remind everyone of one essential truth: these women are not invisible. Behind each missing number, there is a woman, a journey, a struggle. They hide because they have no choice. It's time to open our eyes and to act. Together, let's marshal the resources to bring these women out of the shadows and into the light.

DIANE PILOTE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, NANCY GIRARD, DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS

- SERVICE CENTRES: TANIA FILIPPONE. DIRECTOR OF PROGRAMS AND SERVICES; BÉATRICE ROCK, MANAGER, SHELTER; Tamarah François, manager, health AND SERVICE CENTRE; AND THE ENTIRE Chez Doris team

PLAN TO ADDRESS LACK OF EXPERTISE IN CITY COUNCIL

The city of Westmount has long been celebrated for its rich history, vibrant community and commitment to maintaining a high standard of living for its residents.

However, recent decisions and actions by the Westmount city council have raised concerns about the level of expertise and preparedness among its members to address the complex challenges facing our city.

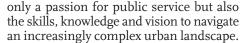
While the dedication of our council members is commendable, it is evident that certain issues - ranging from urban planning and infrastructure management to environmental sustainability and fiscal responsibility - require specialized knowledge and experience. The lack of expertise in these critical areas has led to decisions that appear short sighted, poorly planned or out of touch with the needs of the community.

For example, the handling of the extremely poor repair of our roads has been marred by delays, cost overruns and a lack of transparency. Such outcomes suggest a gap in the technical and strategic expertise necessary to manage large-scale projects effectively.

Similarly, the council's approach to the environmental issues of Summit Woods has been criticized for lacking innovation and failing to align with best practices observed in other forward-thinking municipalities.

It is not enough to rely solely on good intentions or community spirit when governing a city as dynamic and diverse as Westmount. The challenges of the 21st century demand leaders who possess not

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To address this issue, we urge the Westmount city council to take the following steps:

- 1. Seek external expertise: Engage with urban planners, economists, environmental scientists and other professionals to inform decision-making and ensure that policies are grounded in evidence-based practices.
- 2. Invest in training: Provide council members with access to workshops, seminars and resources to enhance their understanding of key issues and improve their governance skills.
- 3. Foster transparency and accountability: Establish clear mechanisms for community input and oversight to ensure that decisions reflect the best interests of all residents.
- 4. Encourage diverse leadership: Actively recruit candidates with diverse backgrounds and expertise to run for council, ensuring that the city benefits from a wide range of perspectives and experiences.

Westmount deserves a city council that is not only well meaning but also well equipped to tackle the challenges of today and tomorrow. With the election coming soon, we must address all these issues in order to choose councillors who will do so and who are *able*.

By addressing the current lack of expertise, we can ensure that our city remains a model of excellence and a place we are proud to call home with the lifestyle we all deserve.

JOSEPH YERMUS, OAKLAND AVE.

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WESTMOUNT INDEPENDENT

We are Westmount

LETTERS: We welcome your letters but reserve the right to choose and edit them. Please limit them to 300 words and submit before Friday 10 am to be considered for publication the following week. Please check your letter carefully as we may be unable to make subsequently submitted changes. Letter writers should not expect to be published in every issue, or in back-to-back issues, or repeatedly in the same season or on the same topic. Please include your name and street for publication (or borough or municipality if you do not live in Westmount), but not your address (unless you want it published).

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CLAIRE PANET-RAYMOND, BLENHEIM PLACE

New Vic village café-resto coming...



As seen March 7 on Sherbrooke west of Victoria. The site previously housed, in chronological order, the following restaurants: Mess Hall, Well House, Brasserie Centrale and Brasserie Melrose. It has been empty for years.

McEntyre Writing Competition nears March 30 deadline Those already submitted found 'inspiring' in style, ideas by chief judge

By LAUREEN SWEENEY

With the March 30 deadline approaching for this year's McEntyre Writing Competition, entries are already coming in from local schools and residents in keeping with more than 1,000 received last year, when most arrived after March break.

"I have taken a peek at some of the entries, and am truly inspired by the writing styles and ideas," said Liz McCallum, the co-chief judge with Westmount children's librarian Wendy Wayling. "We currently have 80 judges committed to read the McEntyre entries this year, up from 2024." More details can be found on the Westmount Public Library website: westlib.org.

This year's theme is "The View from my Window" (see story February 11, p. 7).

Entries can be in the form of a poem, story, play or an essay at a maximum of 1,000 words, in English or French. As a reminder, students that are either residents of Westmount, attend school in Westmount or have a Westmount library card are eligible.





City requires Albert Square builder to clean up debris-filled snowbank

By Jennifer Ball

The city has been praised and criticized for its snow removal after back-to-back snowstorms February 13 and February 16, but at least one snowbank in the city was not picked up by the city or its subcontractors.

After the snow fell and had been ploughed from the street to form a snowbank, the city took exception to what it took to be construction debris in a snowbank on the west side of Prince Albert between de Maisonneuve Blvd. and York St. As a result, it contacted the project manager working for Prince Albert Development L.P. to request that it be cleaned up, which was accomplished by February 27.

Prince Albert Development is the owner of the three-storey building 4898 de Maisonneuve – part of Albert Square – located at the southeast corner of Prince Albert. It is currently under renovation as an office building is turned into townhouses.

An *Independent* team member may

have played an unwitting role in the delayed pick-up. On his way home February 21, editor David Price, who lives nearby, noticed a piece of lumber protruding from the snowbank.

"I called Public Works to alert them to what I saw as a danger. I was worried about a person getting hurt or a snowblowing machine being damaged, and about possible items under the snow that were not visible. I was not aware of any resident complaints at that time, nor was I personally impacted by the snowbank."

In the subsequent days, at least two nearby residents complained to the city while

 By February 26, the sidewalk had been ploughed.



The snowbank on February 25 covered both the street and sidewalk, nine days after the last snow. The inset is a blow-up of the same photo showing a two-by-four piece of lumber.

also alerting the newspaper. They noted that even the sidewalk was unploughed many days after the most recent snowfall, by which time much of the snow else-

where had actually been picked up.

City's view

On February 27, the *Independent* visited

the area and saw intact two-byfours on the east side of the street, as well as broken and splintered wood fragments jutting out of the snowbank.

It reached out to Robert Talarico, director of Public Works at the city, with questions. Talarico did not respond and, upon follow-up four days later, his status was "out of office."

On March 3, the *Independent* reached out to Titouan Perriollat, the assistant director of Public Works, and Mugisha Rutishisha, director of Communications at the city.

Rutishisha provided a statement on March 4 that explained the situation. "Snow and construction debris, believed to be from the 4898 de Maisonneuve



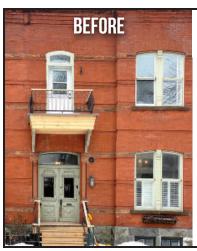
On March 3, there was still some lumber debris in the area. PHOTOS: INDEPENDENT.

construction site, were indeed found along Prince Albert Ave. between York St. and to de Maisonneuve Blvd. ...

"This hampered the city's snow-clearing operations and endangered the snow-clearing employees and their equipment. On February 24, the city contacted the project manager mandated by Prince Albert L.P. developments to ensure that they removed the snowbank and the debris. The company completed the clean-up on February 27 using contracted snow removal services...

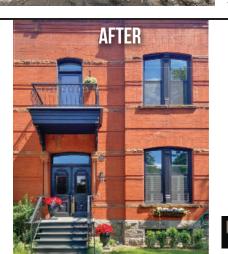
"City personnel conducted site inspections that day to ensure the work was properly executed."

On March 5, efforts were made to reach Prince Albert Development and specifically its administrator Denis Tremblay to hear their perspective, but there was no response in time for the *Independent's* print deadline.



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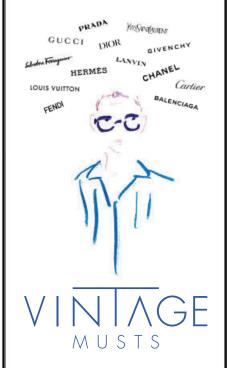


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Lysanne Fowler

9 Lives

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Since our days are brighter now, he can be found snoozing after a good breakfast. There is always more activity before breakfast, to get attention and a full tummy.

Robbie is about six years old, up to date with his inoculations and neutered.

He enjoys cuddles and other cats, as he is very social with everyone in his foster home.

If you would like more information on Robbie, please write to me at Lysfow@



Westmount A-dog-tions Lysanne Fowler

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You can find out more about Mushu by referring to the Montreal SPCA website at www.spca.com, and scrolling for his information page by his identification number, 2000214991.







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Buy locally to sell locally

Westmount food retailers identifying products' origin, bracing for impact of tariffs

BY MARTIN C. BARRY

Grocers and a restaurateur doing business in Westmount reacted with uncertainty but also apprehension last week when asked by the *Independent* to evaluate the impact Canada's response to US president Donald Trump's 25-percent tariffs will have on local food and meal prices, as well as on their business practices.

At the Metro Plus Westmount supermarket on Victoria Ave., franchise owner Gajan Rajasingam said he's received quite



National Food Shop owner John Cho says the independent grocery retailer has been labelling items as Canadian-sourced in response to the U.S. tariffs.

a bit of feedback from customers who want to be able to clearly identify products originating in Canada.

"They're asking a lot of questions about whether things are from Canada or the USA," he said, noting that many customers are specifically rejecting anything that comes from south of the Canadian border.

According to Rajasingam, corporate management at Metro has made extensive efforts since March 4 (when the US tariffs first kicked in) to identify products originating in Quebec and Canada. While the labels feature images of blue fleur-de-lys and red Canadian flags, he acknowledged that many items on the shelves still had to be identified.

No impact felt yet

As for the impact on food prices, he said it was far too early to tell, but that there had been no related price adjustments at that point. In any case, any changes would be ordered by Metro's head office, he pointed out.

At the independent grocery retailer National Food Shop on Sherbrooke St., owner John Cho said staff had just begun the process of identifying merchandise as manufactured in Canada. "We've put little flags," he said. But he noted that the upheaval is taking place at a time when the food retail business tends to be in a slump anyway. "Generally, in food in Montreal, this is a slow time because people go away for spring break, so sales are quite depressed in early March," Cho said, while adding that immediate price hikes are less likely as a result.

As well, he noted that a good deal of the fresh produce the store sells during the winter months originates in Central or South American countries, rather than the US. He expected the price of oranges coming from California to shoot up significantly at some point, although the store also has the option to purchase citrus from Morocco and Spain.

Alternatives to US

Currently, most of National Food's betterquality lettuce – including spring mix, arugula and romaine – is imported from California. "But, because the distributors are aware of the backlash, they will carry more from Mexico if they can," Cho said.

At Chez Nick's restaurant on Greene Ave., Rob Callard agreed it was still too soon for the looming tariffs' impact on prices to be felt.

"Maybe in the next couple of weeks," he said. Saying that some of the food products the restaurant uses come from the States, he added that if he can find alternatives in Canada, he will.

"But that's the thing with these tariffs – our two nations are so intertwined. I haven't really sat down to see what's available in Canada. Some products from here we'd buy for sure." Among the obvious exceptions would be lettuce and other seasonal produce. "I think meat and dairy would be okay – they should be stable," Callard said.



Seen at Metro Plus Westmount on March 5, franchise owner Gajan Rajasingam points to a shelf label that identifies products as having originated in Canada.

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Social Notes

Veronica Redgrave

Atwater Library's annual benefit cocktail was super successful.

The evening's guest of honour was Andrew Molson, chair Avenir Global. He pointed out that 196 years ago John Molson was a founding vp of the Montreal Mechanics' Institution, from which the library evolved. Although he humbly stated that he didn't really speak that much in public, he easily charmed the sold-out crowd.

"I love this place. It's a great Montreal institution. It's cool, and it's an important place for our city."

Molson was introduced by library president **Bruce Bolton**. Clad in his family Royal Stewart tartan, he played the bagpipes to



Andrew Molson.



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Aislin (Terry Mosher), Lorne Steinberg and Geoffrey Smith.

signal the start of the speeches.

Emcee was **Terry Mosher** (aka Aislin), whose sardonic cartoons – renowned for their spot-on-skewer – were featured in an online fundraising auction with proceeds going to the library's Third Century Campaign, chaired by **Richard Pound** and **David Angus**.

Lynn Verge, library executive director, welcomed guests. Enjoying the silent auc-



Bruce Bolton.

tion table were Atwater Library board members Helgi Soutar, Carol Christie-Olsen, Helen Malkin, Geoff Dowd, Caroline Nalbantoglu, Daniel Boyer and Chris Lyons, as well as past pres John Aylen.

Amidst the crowd, I noted former mayor Peter Trent, Julie Keith and Richard Pound, Marie Senécal Tremblay and Bruce McNiven, Susan Doherty and Hal Hannaford, Montreal *Gazette* editor-in-chief Marilena Lucci, Nancy Brown, Janice Winslow, *continued on p.* 13



Helgi Soutar and Peter Trent.

Atwater Library hosts successful cocktail, silent auction

Andrew's daughter Celia Molson, Lori Baird, Dora Koop and Stephen Phizicky, John Blachford, Audley Coley, Bob Johnson, Martha Harrison and Marc Boivin, and Beth Marchant and Chris Pickwoad.

Also noted were the Quebec Writers' Federation executive director Lori Schubert and president Tawhida Tanya Evanson; Leah Trineer, president University Women's Club of Montreal; Scott Pritchard, Anna and Phil Belec, Christopher Neal, president McGill Community for Lifelong Learning; **Thomas Leslie**, executive director Macdonald Stewart Foundation, and **Peter McNally**, McGill University professor emeritus.

Evening sponsors included Dorchester Wealth Management, represented by **Bruce Gill**, Construction Ville-Marie, by **Pierre Besner** and **Langis Fortin**, and Lorne Steinberg Wealth Management Inc, by **Lorne Steinberg** and **Geoffrey Smith**.

One of the night's many highlights was

the marvellous Scotch selection at the silent auction. I bid (but not high enough!) for the BenRiach 21-year-old Authenticus Speyside Single Malt and the Tullibardine 25-year-old Highland Single Malt.

Much-loved Dunn's buffet was a mustvisit on the second floor. Many may munch on salads but, boy, Dunn's smoked meat sandwiches, complete with pickle, were drippingly delicious. Line-ups proved the point.

Soaring amaryllis surrounded by puffy

white hydrangeas were donated by Westmount Florist. The Dave Turner Jazz Trio drew much applause.

Indeed, the energy-laced eve was praised by all. In an era of tech, this building of books makes a statement.

Mia colpa: I forgot grammar rule "I before E" and misspelt artist Joyce Wieland's name last week.

For your spring event, please send information to: veronica@redgravepr.com.



Richard Pound.



Celia Molson.



Lori Schubert and Susan Doherty.



Conrad Richard.



John Aylen.



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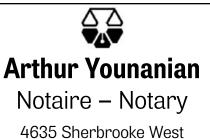
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Veronica Redgrave

This article is the corrected version of last week's p. 22 Art column. The Independent apologizes for the errors in the original. – DP.

Art

Nori Bortoluzzi founded her Crafted for Courage project to raise awareness of abuse against women.

Inspired by a project she saw in Italy, Nori launched a similar knitting venture in Montreal. However, it is not just the clacking needles and quiet crocheting that caught my eye. It seems to me that the project also offers a retro response, a counterpoint to a world of artificial intelligence and streaming "news."

It is a shape shifter. The gentle – and comforting – craft brings touch to a techdriven life. It enhances – indeed encourages – conversations as groups form to knit together.

Talk also drives awareness of the cause. "We are weaving hope." Knitted or crocheted squares have been dropped off all over Montreal.

Next steps? Nori "curated" the cuddly donations, putting together chromatic collections of the squares (50 cm x 50 cm) from which "blankets" were made. Recently they were assembled by helpful volunteers, including her daughter Emily Churchill-Smith.

A carpet of colours covered the gym floor at the Westmount recreation centre, graciously proffered for the cause by Westmount's division director of Culture, Sports, Recreation and Social Development Dave Lapointe.

All kinds of kindness have been impressed by Nori's drive. The community art installation – individual pieces transformed into beautiful harlequin blankets – will premiere on **May 10** at the Esplanade Place Ville Marie.

Correction: Bortoluzzi knits against abuse of women



Nori Bortoluzzi.

Visitors can donate and in exchange select one. Proceeds go to Auberge Shalom, Chez Doris, Fondation de la Chaînon and the Native Women's Shelter of Montreal. Information notabenecourage.ca and notebenefoundation@gmail.com.

Ruth Stalker Antiques

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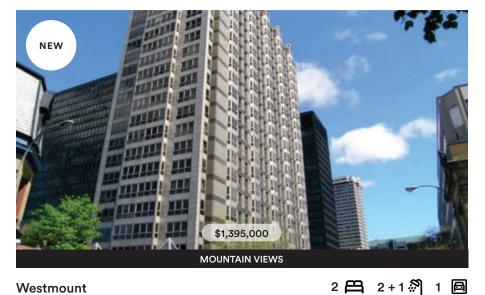
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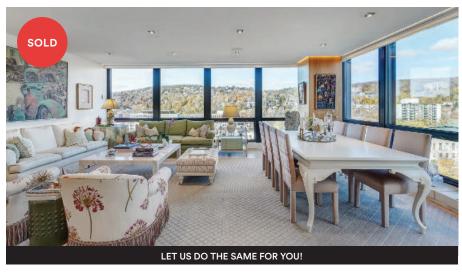


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