

Temporary play equipment made available longer New Westmount Park play structures delayed again

BY LAUREEN SWEENEY

Temporary play activities were set up for young children in Westmount Park over the last few weeks to help fill delays caused by the installation of new play structures for young children, according to Maureen Lafrenière of the city's Communication division.

The temporary attractions included paddler boats and a trackless train near the comfort station August 3 to 5 as well as an inflatable "farm" and inflatable slide last week August 8 to 12 and more to be announced for this week. All were installed and supervised by the supplier and available for use between 9 am and 3 pm but not on weekends or during rain.

"The train was very popular," Lafrenière said. A similar train attracted long line-ups

over the past few Family Days.

The delay in the new play structures that had been ordered for Westmount Park was due to the shortage of specialized installers from the contractor, Lafrenière explained. "That's why the city asked for the temporary play structures from several firms that had supplied them for Family Day."

The purchase of the new permanent play equipment for kids aged 18 months to 5 years had been authorized by city council April 19 to replace the yellow and red plastic slide and ramp structure that had been boarded off and removed as unsafe. The temporary activities were announced at the city council meeting August 1 by Councillor Mary Gallery, whose commission includes parks.

See p. 6 for photos.

Pickles retires from YMCA



The Westmount YMCA honoured 35-year veteran Gail Pickles, centre, on her last day on the job, August 12. From left, top row: Anthony D'Alesio, Stuart Graham, Pickles, Chantelle Ellis, Zeinad Igbo; bottom left: Maxime du Pont. See story, p. 7.

PHOTO: JENNIFER BALL

Second refrigerated rink on the way?

Fall programs filling up or full, 2 weeks left for winter hockey

BY LAUREEN SWEENEY

As summer winds down with the start of school, many Westmount residents have already filled up many city-run fall programs by Sports and Recreation with only two weeks left for registration in inter-city hockey throughout the winter.

This is the first year a second all-girls intercity hockey team is available, namely

for those at the under-9 and under-11 levels.

It's interesting to see that this year so many programs for the 7-9 age group are already closed, department director Dave Lapointe said last week. "The numbers are extraordinary." Those already filled include discovery art, basketball, karate, STEM and a new one on musical theatre for ages 8-12.

Almost full last week were indoor soccer for *continued on p. 8*

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Burying of wires could delay work until 2025 or 2026

New SLDC committee recommends against west Mt. Pleasant sidewalk

BY LAUREN SWEENEY

Safety issues concerning initial proposals to install a full sidewalk on the west side of Mount Pleasant were reported following the first official meeting of the city's newly formalized Sustainable Land Development Commission (SLDC).

While none of the safety reasons was listed, this led to the committee's recommendation to city council that a public consultation meeting with residents of the area take place by the end of August, ac-

ording the minutes of its June 23 meeting, tabled August 1.

Such a meeting, if required, however, would now not take place until mid- to late September, city officials told the *Independent* last week.

Delayed once already

The reported scarcity of granite had postponed the reconstruction of Mt. Pleasant this year (see story May 3, p. 7). Now the granite is still recommended, but only as a curb without adding a full sidewalk

edged by granite.

The installation of a full sidewalk followed a survey to citizens of the area in December 2021 (see story February 1, p. 7).

Further considerations expressed by the new committee was that Mount Pleasant already has a sidewalk on the east side and that a pedestrian crossing between west and east is to be recommended.

It was also noted that the feasibility of burying the Hydro Westmount utility network on the west side behind houses on Rosemount Ave. be studied but that the

process be analyzed in terms of the impact on property and taxation. In this case, the entire reconstruction project might be delayed until 2025 or 2026.

The committee members were also informed that the safety issues involved with installing a sidewalk on the west side and that a report had been commissioned by some citizens from Julia Gersovitz, former chair of the city's Planning Advisory Committee (PAC), titled "Report on Proposed Modifications to Mount Pleasant Avenue, Westmount, June 9, 2022 – EVOQ."

New committee's first meeting documented in tabled minutes

The first official meeting of the city's Sustainable Land Development Commission (SLDC) took place June 23, according to its minutes tabled at the city council meeting August 1.

The minutes were posted on the city's website under "Council/Council Meetings/August 1/Minutes – Commission for the management of sustainable development of the territory."

Chaired by Councillor Conrad Peart, the meeting discussed updates on the progress of the Lexington reconstruction project, recommendations on the proposed recon-

struction of Mt. Pleasant (see story above) and a schedule for a proposed memorial garden project for next year, the location of which was not mentioned.

Also mentioned were proposed traffic calming measures for The Boulevard, removal of swing sets in Hollowell Park, an update on the summit lookout repairs and that two possible proposed options for a sound barrier between Hollowell and Greene were pre-cast concrete or limestone, and clay-brick masonry. These are now on hold pending discussion and analysis.

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Overheard

Clarke Ave and de Maisonneuve Blvd., August 12, 8:20 am, man to woman, whose very large hockey bag he appeared to be carrying:

"There's always something new in this bag!"

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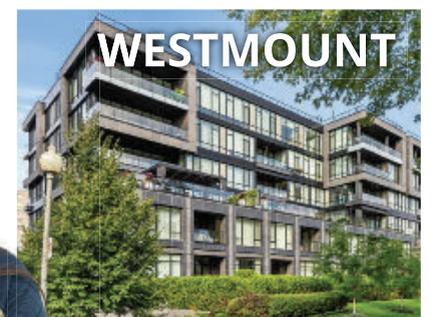
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Achoo!



“Perhaps *Westmount Independent* readers will enjoy this photo I took of a squirrel in Westmount Park around 7:30 am on August 8. I’ve entitled the photo ‘Squirrel has allergies’ because it looks as though the squirrel is blowing its nose,” said Carolyn Samuel.

PHOTO COURTESY OF C. SAMUEL.

Summer reading club registration still open, planning for closing party



Children’s desk clerks Faith Holness, left, and Dawna Hobbs read *The Paper Bag Princess* by Robert Munsch in Westmount Park August 3.

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE WESTMOUNT PUBLIC LIBRARY.

BY LAUREEN SWEENEY

All participants in the annual TD Summer Reading Club program at the children’s department of the Westmount Public Library are invited to its closing party on Saturday, September 17 at 2 pm in Victoria Hall.

Although there are currently 165 children registered in the club, more kids still have time to sign up to be included in the closing party and to take part in the club’s incentive games, according to children’s librarian Wendy Wayling, the club organizer.

“It will be a fun afternoon of celebration with treats, prizes and a special magic show with *The Amazing Todsky*,” who had confirmed his acceptance last week, she said.

Westmount won the national first prize and \$8,000 for English libraries in the annual summer reading club in 2020 but was not eligible to enter again until this year as winner the year before (see story July 6, 2021, p. 10).

The 2020 award is being used to have a Quebec artist design a bench for the children’s department. It is expected to ready next month.

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Police Report**Witness says protestors brought stones to Israeli consulate protest**

BY MARTIN C. BARRY

A Greene Ave. resident who witnessed a protest gathering outside the Israeli consulate at Westmount Square last week says some of the participants may be using a new tactic involving decorative stones bought at garden supplies stores.

Supporters of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine have gathered outside the consulate at Wood Ave. and St. Catherine St. on several occasions in the past few years to stage noisy demonstrations – often while being monitored closely by the police.

Leading up to a gathering outside the consulate around 8:30 pm on August 10, the witness (who asked not to be identified) told the *Independent* he saw several participants remove bags of garden stones from their cars and carry them over to the base of the Westmount Square stairs on the east side of Wood.

“I was out walking my dog as I usually do, and upon getting to Wood and de Maisonneuve, there were three cars doing things u-turns and screeching their tires,” he said.

“After they parked, I saw them taking

out bags of stones which appeared to be heavy. And then they started bringing them to the stairs of Westmount Square where they left them.”

After calling Westmount Public Security and being told to contact the police, he called 9-1-1 and five police vehicles turned up a short time later.

“They arrested at least one of the people,” he said, adding that another ran off. A police investigator questioned him on what he’d seen and requested copies of videos he’d recorded on his cell phone.

He said his initial reaction upon seeing the bags of stones was that they were going to become part of the demonstration and would be hurled at some point.

“This seems to be something new that they’re doing with all these bags of stones,” he said, noting that stone-throwing is a common tactic during confrontations between Palestinians and Israeli security in Israel. “I mean, why else would you haul that there?”

The *Independent* tried to obtain additional information from the Montreal police dept.’s Station 12 on Stanton St, however, the station’s interim community

relations officer is only returning from vacation this week, and we had not received

a response from any other Station 12 official in the meantime.

Another Greene bridge strike

Unofficial strike #12 of the Greene Ave. rail bridge below Dorchester Blvd., as seen August 9.

PHOTO COURTESY OF MO RAHIMI.



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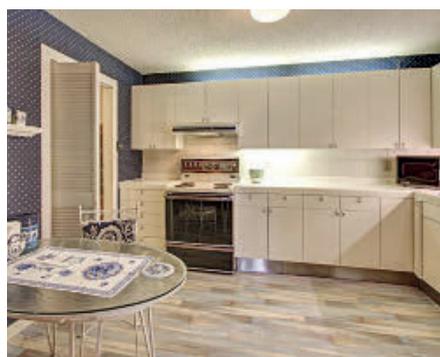
Lots of fun at Westmount Park's temporary equipment



The city's temporary play structure in Westmount Park "at work." Left, the trackless train on August 5 and the inflatable "farm" for children under four years old on August 10. See p. 1 for story.

PHOTOS: RALPH THOMPSON.

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Québec



Graham, Team Quebec place 5th in lacrosse at Canada Games

Westmounter Toby Graham was at the Canada Summer Games last week with Quebec's box lacrosse team. It ranked second in its qualification pool, but lost a quarter final against "a powerhouse Team British Columbia," mother Joanne Kay told the *Independent* by email August 12. In its consolation semi-final, Team Quebec beat New Brunswick 7-6 after three overtimes and 2 hours 20 minutes of play, recording the longest ever female box lacrosse game at the games.

Box lacrosse originated as indoor lacrosse and is rougher than field lacrosse. "Box lacrosse is quite brutal – extremely rough and physical," explained Kay. "The difference is especially true for girls as girls' field lacrosse (unlike the boys' version) is non-contact and played without protective equipment. This is why female hockey players who are used to rough play and contact adapt so well to box lacrosse."

"While many provinces develop female box lacrosse players from youth, Quebec has no female development league for the sport," continued Kay. "Team Quebec is made up almost entirely of elite hockey players."

In the battle for fifth place, the team faced Manitoba for the second time in the tournament August 12. It won 4-2.



Toby Graham, centre, in white jersey, playing in the preliminaries against Team Manitoba at the Canada Summer Games on August 7. Manitoba won 3-2, but lost a "re-match" 2-4 August 12 to give Team Quebec a fifth place overall at the event.

PHOTO COURTESY OF JOANNE KAY.

It was fun to stay at the Y-M-C-A

But after 35 years at the Y, and 17 on Sherbrooke, Pickles is retiring

BY JENNIFER BALL

Gail Pickles was surrounded by well-wishers, balloons and large-format poster-board cards with hundreds of messages from YMCA patrons when she spoke to the *Independent*. It was August 12, her last day on the front desk of the Sherbrooke St. gym after 17 years (plus 18 years spent in other offices). Athletes who were used to her friendly demeanour upon arrival for their work-outs were coming up for hugs and offering congratulations.

"It has been an adventure. Always an adventure!" Pickles said.

Pickles spent her working years in Westmount, she said. Before the YMCA, she worked at Miss Edgar's and Miss Cramp's School for girls (ECS).

"I was an assistant secretary to the head mistresses, the second-in-charge so to speak. I also assisted the nurse with standard first aid and there I learnt CPR."

Sombre moments too

When asked if she ever needed to put that training into practice at the YMCA, Pickles' tone shifted to sombre. "It was a



tough one. We had renovations being done ... and there was a guy that was electrocuted. I had to do CPR on him with another co-worker of mine. He was alive when the ambulance got here but, unfortunately, he was too severely burnt to survive.

"That is the name of the game when you work at a gym. Things do happen, but they could happen anywhere. We have first aid and we perform CPR."

During COVID, the gym was closed for many weeks, which gave Pickles a bitter-sweet opportunity that she might not have otherwise had.

"COVID was a blessing for me in some regards," she said after acknowledging that a lot of people really suffered, which saddened her.

"My mother-in-law got sick and she had to be moved out of Manoir Westmount because she was no longer autonomous. We had a week to move her in to our place and she died with me holding her hand. She kept saying 'I am taking you away from your work' and I said "No, you are not be-

cause we are not working.' She felt so much better about that, being such an independent woman."

Anthony D'Alesio, who works at the YMCA currently, said here are "two are the pillars of the YMCA in Westmount," as he pointed to recently retired YMCA employee Stuart Graham, who returned for the event, and Pickles. "For myself it is because of these two, who trained me, that I am still here seven years later."

"After 30+ years, how many people in any industry can say that? This YMCA opened up in 1912 and you have two people who have been here for over 30 years and that says a lot. That should be recognized, that should be respected. They contributed so much and they have seen so many changes in 30+ years," D'Alesio said.

Pickles' immediate plans are to play music again, take up her sewing needle and luxuriate in reading undisturbed.

"That is what I am looking forward to: being able to sit down and read for three hours. As I said to my husband [on August 6] 'This is my last weekend. After this it is all weekends!'"

◀ Gail Pickles on August 12.

See also photo on p. 1.

Senior cuddlers Mickey and Alfie



9 Lives

LYSANNE FOWLER

Mickey loves showing his tummy for a cuddle, while Alfie waits for his head to be scratched in that spot right behind his ears. The sweetness and warmth of the good life together, that is all they need now.

They are presently in a temporary foster

home for the Montreal SPCA and their foster family report lots of affection, companionship and snack interest. As seniors, Mickey at 11 years of age and Alfie at 9, they are available for adoption together as a pair under the humanitarian-fee category.

They have both been thoroughly vetted at the shelter and staff noted that Alfie has a heart murmur that should be monitored in the future. They have also been updated on their inoculations. They are neutered and microchipped. For more information on these sweet marmalade tabbies, please refer to the Montreal SPCA website at



www.sPCA.com, go through the pages until you find them separately under their identification numbers, which are A46171787 for Mickey and A46171790 for Alfie.

Then click on each page at the "Fill out the Form" button, with the information that is needed for the adoption counsellors to get back to you to answer your questions and organize a visit at the shelter for adoption.

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Your neighbour,
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SPCA kennel, waiting for adoption and a family life. He would fit in so well with all the other young dogs of summer in our neighbourhood.

He is very healthy, up to date with his inoculations, neutered and microchipped. If you would like more information on him, please refer to the Montreal SPCA website at www.sPCA.com, scrolling to Whiskey's information page under his identification number A50787081. The next step is to click on the "Book a Visit" button and fill out the form, which links you to the adoption counsellors to plan a visit at the shelter and a meeting. Please do not hesitate, it is a great time to bring a loving dog into the family.

Your neighbour,
Lysanne



Fall programs, cont'd from p. 1

boys 8-9 as well as the 160 spaces for beginners' hockey. For seniors, low-intensity fitness was already full.

Organizers are in the planning process with Public Works for another year of the refrigerated rink at Westmount Park to be open in November for pleasure skating, Lapointe said. "And we're looking at the possibility of adding a second refrigerated rink for hockey," given a suitable location and costs.

4 registration periods

The department's new system of breaking the year into four registration periods

is also resulting in the quick filling of spaces, he said. This is owing to the ease of on-line registration (August for fall and fall-winter hockey, late November for winter, February for spring and April for summer).

In all, he explained, "We're coming back to normal pre-COVID levels."

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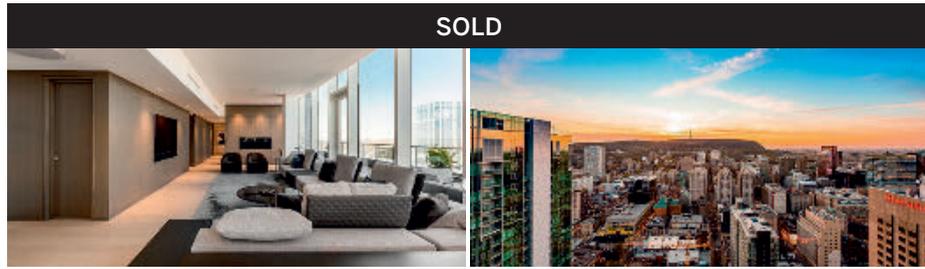


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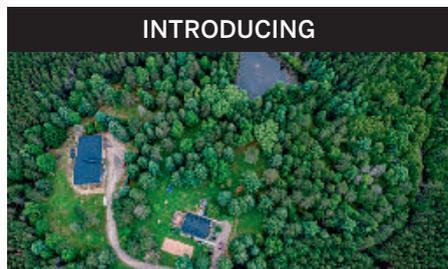
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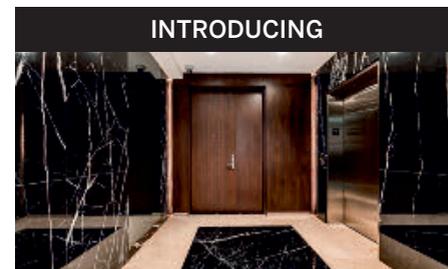
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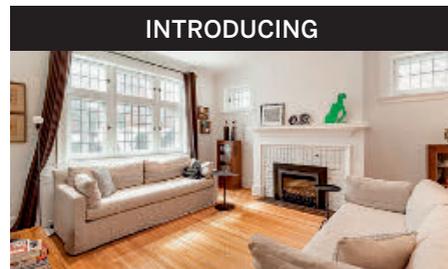
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From farm to picnic tables

Complètement Légume brings organic food to Prince Albert square

BY JENNIFER BALL

The city of Westmount hosts a weekly farm stand at Prince Albert square on Thursdays between 2 pm and 6 pm.

There, you will find a wide variety of fresh organic vegetables and honey that have been locally grown by the Complètement Légume Farm. The farm is owned and managed by Stephanie Ethier and Amelie Rodiez, who are members of the Family Farmers Network (FFN).

“[The FFN] is a network that has a mission to unite small farms that produce organically,” farmer Julien Crevier said. He had just travelled in from Mirabel and was on hand to set up the market stand and to bag up an array of fresh fennel, basil, chard, onions and heirloom tomatoes for those lining up.

“There is no one between the producer and the [seller],” Crevier said to describe

their business model. “We are the producer and the wholesaler, and this means that we can sell less expensively.”

They produce more than 100 varieties of organic vegetables. But which crops are particularly in season right now, meaning they are the most delicious right now?

“Everything!” Crevier quipped, not wanting to show favouritism. He would disclose, however, that the hottest selling produce currently are “tomatoes and Shi-shito peppers.”

In addition to the Prince Albert Ave. stall, they are selling vegetable baskets every week or every two weeks based on the preference of their membership. “We sell also to restaurants: Tavern on the Square in Westmount, Vin Mon Lapin in Little Italy and several others on the North Shore.”

Crevier credits much of Complètement Légume Farm’s success to discerning



Julien Crevier at the Prince Albert square farmers' market.



The farmers' market on August 4.

shoppers who have modified their shopping habits and also cooked more meals at home: “More people are sensitive to buying local.”

Pandemic challenges

During the pandemic, the farm did have hurdles it needed to overcome, though. Finding alternative sources for agriculture and cultivation products that became scarce or completely unavailable due to breaks in the supply chain was the biggest issue, Crevier said.

Organic farming involves much more than choosing not to use pesticides, fertilizers, genetically modified organisms, antibiotics and growth hormones. A holistic system, it is a methodology that aims to optimize the agro-ecosystem, including

soil organisms and plants.

“Now everything is bigger and more beautiful but the biggest issue we have is to control the insects,” Crevier said. “Every farmer going the traditional way uses pesticides but we cannot.”

A guiding principle of organic production is to develop enterprises that are sustainable and harmonious with the environment and to that end-goal Complètement Légume Farm is on track. They also serve as a training school for future farmers so that local, organically grown produce can continue to expand.

“Everyone that is working for the farm has a project in mind to start their own farm,” Crevier said. “We are not there for the money. We are there to learn how to produce vegetables.”

Shortest public consultation meeting?**No attendees, comments on rezoning for incinerator**

BY LAUREEN SWEENEY

It must have been the shortest public consultation meeting on record: Mayor Christina Smith adjourned the session after a recorded four minutes. “There were no attendees or questions,” she later explained.

As a result, anyone who tuned in to the webinar after four minutes was repeatedly given the standard message: “Please wait for the host to start this meeting.”

In this case, those in the habit of following city council meetings on Zoom know from experience that they rarely start for

at least five or more minutes after scheduled due time – except this time called for 7 pm.

It was a meeting on draft By-law 1589 to amend zoning By-law 1303 (5.1) on the maximum number of principal buildings allowed per lot or parcel of land. The change would now not limit the number of principal buildings if each is “designed, used or intended as a ‘municipal building.’”

Though no details or explanation had been posted before the meeting, it turns out the need arises from the city’s plan to build a much-desired storage facility on the

property now occupied by four or five main Hydro Westmount and Public Works buildings, including the former incinerator to be demolished (see story May 17, p. 1).

The by-law change, subject to the referendum process though no opposition has been reported, already received first approval with the notice of motion of the draft by-law July 4. It is expected to receive second approval at a subsequent council meeting.

The meeting’s brief presentation has been posted on the city’s You Tube channel at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S0AZ7MftGow>.

RMR partner in mobile Dieppe exhibition

Westmount’s Royal Montreal Regiment (RMR) Foundation and the Royal 22nd Regiment are among the collaborators that have created a new mobile exhibition called “Courage in Chaos: The Dieppe Story.”

Both units were a part of the August 19, 1942 Allied raid on the French port of

Dieppe, which was then held by Germany.

The exhibition is open to the public, including a free launch event at the Musée des Fusiliers Mont-Royal on August 24 from 5 to 7 pm. The museum is located at 3721 Avenue Henri Julien, near Pine Ave and St. Denis.

The exhibition marks the 80th anniversary of what a press release from the creators calls “a controversial chapter in Canadian history.”

Human tragedy

It continues, the World War II raid “was a strategic failure and human tragedy. Of the 6,000 Allied troops deployed, approximately 5,000 were Canadian. With inadequate air and naval support, 916 Canadians were killed in action and 1,946 were taken prisoner.

“Although credited for strategic lessons that directly contributed to the success of the D-Day landings two years later, many have questioned the merit of the Dieppe raid because of its alarming 70-percent casualty rate.”

The exhibition is intended primarily as

a resource for high school teachers and their students. Educators can reserve the exhibition for temporary installation at their schools. An interactive version of “Courage in Chaos: The Dieppe Story” and a range of turnkey activities will be launched online on August 19, according to the press release.

In his book *One Day in August*, Mariapolis College professor David O’Keefe has contended that the raid had an objective long hidden from historians: to grab a coding machine in order to use it to break Germany’s highly advanced Enigma code (see December 17, 2013, p. 6). Others have contested the importance of this mission in the raid’s planning.

The RMR Foundation is a partner with the Royal 22nd Regiment in the creator of “The Dieppe story” – an entity called Je Me Souviens, which is itself a Canada Company program. Canada Company is a veteran-support group that, among other things, provides scholarships to the children of fallen soldiers, employment resources to veterans and support for military families.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

JOIN UPSTANDERS AGAINST ANTI-SEMITISM

Jewish Canadians are 10 times more likely than members of any other religious community to be the target of a hate crime.

This startling number came from a Statistics Canada report on police-reported hate crimes (<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2022001/article/00013-eng.htm>), issued this month.

As we have seen in the past, many Canadians will scan this report and dismiss it. We tell ourselves that other groups suffer too. We comfort ourselves that, if only an endless Middle East conflict were resolved, harmony would return at home. Most disturbingly, perhaps we harbour our own prejudices about Jewish people as a collective and believe, consciously or not, that they are not a group with which we need to concern ourselves.

It is often said that anti-Semitism is a symptom of a more insidious social disorder. This may be true. But it conversely serves as yet another reason to dismiss it as a problem in itself.

Canada is fortunately far more welcoming and safe than many or most other places on earth. But this is a product of concerted action against discrimination and the celebration of differences. It does not happen by accident.

The latest in a litany of evidence about anti-Jewish attitudes and behaviours in Canada calls out for us to act.

A new, grassroots movement of Canadians is standing with our Jewish neighbours against discrimination. In our unions, on our campuses, in our social circles and our places of worship, at our dinner tables and anywhere that presents an opportunity to advance Canadian values of acceptance, we are making our voices heard against anti-Semitism.

We invite you to learn more and, if you like, to join us at UpstandersCanada.com.

PATRICK JOHNSON, DIRECTOR –
UPSTANDERS CANADA

CAN WE PLEASE STOP MAKING MOUNTAINS OUT OF MOLEHILLS?

In my last letter (August 9, p. 8) “How about St Leon” [whose main point was] seconded by Izak Rubin on Redfern Ave., I used the phrase “and therefore to cut the narrative short and not make a mountain out of a molehill.”

In reply to your “Reply to Izak Rubin and Stephen Chin” in the same issue, I find it more than necessary to use the same phrase a second time.

STEPHEN CHIN, SHERBROOKE ST.

We welcome your letters

We welcome your letters but reserve the right to choose and edit them. Please limit to 300 words and submit before Friday 10 am to be considered for publication the following week. email us at: editor@westmountindependent.com

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Improperly parked car slips into another on Victoria Ave.

BY LAUREEN SWEENEY

The owner of a car parked outside 494 Victoria called Public Security August 5 at 9:52 am to report that another car seemed to have been improperly parked allowing it to slip into his vehicle on the hill, department officials said.

Blocks of wood had already been placed against the tires of the slipped car to prevent additional movement and it had also been ticketed by police. The blocks were replaced by Public Security using special wheel blocks carried by the patrol vehicles. A note was also left for the owner of the car to “call us” to retrieve the blocks, said Public Security director Greg McBain.

The slipped car was found to have stopped against the bumper of the complainant’s but it was not immediately known whether any damage may have resulted.

Special “wheel to curb” signs are posted on many of Westmount’s hilly streets to remind drivers of this parking requirement.

Gas leak sprung by contractor closes Grosvenor

A gas leak outside 669 Grosvenor August 8 generated response from many emergency vehicles around 11:15 am, Public Security officials said. The incident required the block to be closed off to other traffic between Westmount Ave. and The Boulevard until 12:22 pm. It was reported to have resulted from a contractor accidentally piercing a gas line.

2 ticketed for breaking parks curfew 12:50 am

Tickets were issued August 6 to two people for breaking the city’s midnight parks curfew when found on a bench in Queen Elizabeth Gardens at 12:50 am, Public Security officials said. A patroller discovered them with 12 cans of alcoholic beverage. One aged 18 was issued a ticket for \$79 while the other, aged 17, received one for \$71 as a minor.

2 spotted on camera in summit lookout’s restricted area

While repairs to the summit lookout continued, a man and woman were ticketed August 7 for being inside the fenced-off work zone, Public Security officials said. A motor scooter they had been riding was found outside the restricted area. Both were city of Montreal residents aged 22.

Woman treated by library staff, Public Security

A woman twisted an ankle in a fall while walking on the sidewalk outside Westmount Public Library July 29 around 11 am, according to Public Security officials. She was initially treated by a library worker giving her ice to reduce swelling. She was given more by Public Security patrollers while awaiting the arrival of her daughter to pick her up. The sidewalk was described as being in good condition.

FOLLOW-UP

No more info provided by city on December legal work

BY DAVID PRICE, EDITOR

As forecast (editor’s note, July 12, p. 6), I again asked Mayor Christina Smith on August 2 whether the city had paid for legal work in connection with the letter of demand sent by Bélanger Sauvé on behalf of city director general Hadi Hakim (and, purportedly, the city) to the *Independent* on December 12.

This request for information followed up on a first one sent by email to the mayor July 8.

As of press time August 15, I had not received any information. The mayor wrote on August 2, among other things, “I

would like to provide you with those answers but I don’t have them.”

I don’t understand why this information about taxpayers’ money has not been found – easily and quickly – and provided. It is now over a month since my first email. Lawyers keep meticulous account of their time, even if it is being billed via a bank of hours, as is the case here (see September 14, 2021, p. 14).

Even if the client (in this case, the city of Westmount) does not keep records or receive statements regularly, the lawyers should be able to provide them to its client upon request.


ECOWatch

HEATHER BLACK

With the recent posting of the re-design of Devon Park on the city's website, a review of the restorative value of our green spaces is needed. And with the recent pond clean-up at Westmount Park (see August 9, p. 6) underlining the urgent need of pond naturalization, how can this process be facilitated?

Native plants for Devon Park?

The sketch for Devon Park indicates new playground equipment as well as new trees including conifers, shrubs and a perennial flower bed – all good. However, as the plants are unspecified, does the re-design respect the 2009 Fauteux report's recommendations for native plants and reflect current findings on the benefits of natural landscapes?

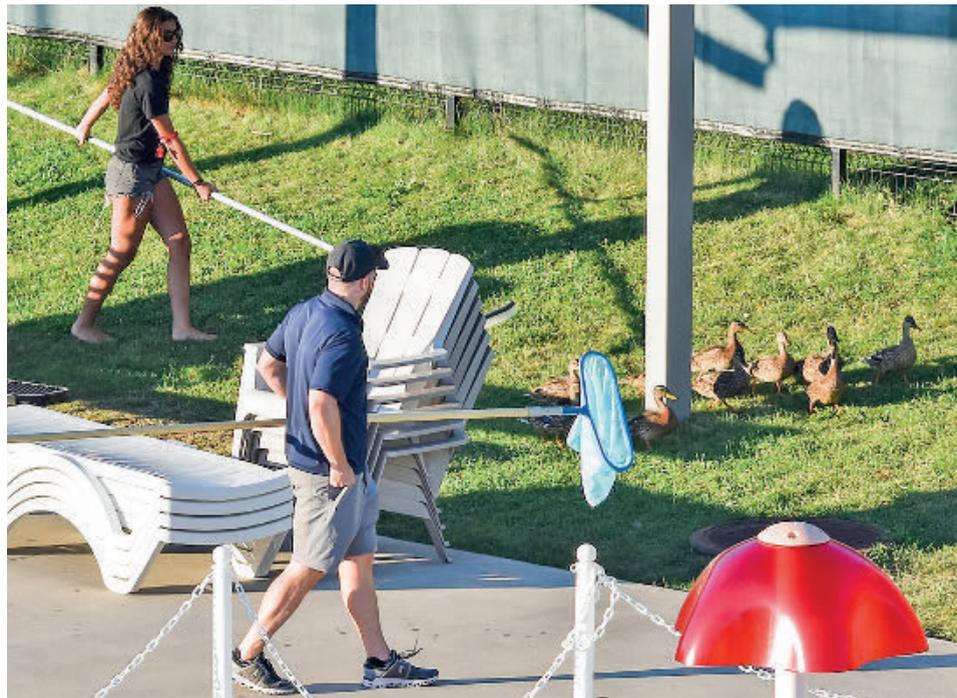
And as trees and shrubs appear uniform in size and shape, is there biodiversity? This is a key feature in restorative environments – settings that help reduce emotional or psychophysiological stress.

One eye-tracking study, "Components of small urban parks that predict the possibility for restoration," found citizen preference for park greenery – the number of trees and shrubs visible from key viewing points and the percentage of grass coverage (Nordh 2009).

Other research by Hoyle, Jorgensen and Hitchmough (2019) described perceived "naturalness" as biodiverse – plants and insects – restorative and attractive rather than tidy. The sound of birdsong also improves the perceived restorative benefits of green spaces (Zhu 2022).

According to a study published in *Nature*, unlike urban settings, a forested environment increases amygdala (the integrative centre for emotions, emotional behaviour, and motivation) integrity import-

As we restore parks, let's make them restorative



Ducks herded from swimming pool July 26, at the same time as the draining/re-filling of the lagoon in Westmount Park.

ant for well-being (Kuhn 2017). And with research on nature doses – 10 to 21 minutes in restorative settings improves both physiology and mood in college students (Meredith 2020) – policy makers are taking note. Last winter, federal Environment minister Steven Guilbeault announced passes to federal parks to healthcare practitioners issuing "nature prescriptions."

Conservation landscaping for Westmount Park?

Support for the naturalized pond – 69 percent in the 2021 survey – reflects citizen preference for restorative landscapes. The recent pond clean-up of algae build-up – exacerbated by a malfunctioning pump – illustrates the necessity to act on this issue. Thanks to our friendly foreman, the project was completed efficiently – an upper pond was re-filled within 24 hours – mi-

nimizing disruption to both citizens seeking to escape the summer heat and to our grounded ducklings or molting ducks.

The pond clean-up – and removal of accumulated mud – also revealed the ongoing problem of bank erosion from runoff. Also noted in the 2009 Fauteux report, this problem is attributed to the lack of vegetation along the banks and park overuse. Planting natural grasses along the pond rim as well as moving city events to less fragile environments such as the Westmount Athletic Grounds (WAG) behind Westmount High are two ignored, but cost-efficient, solutions.

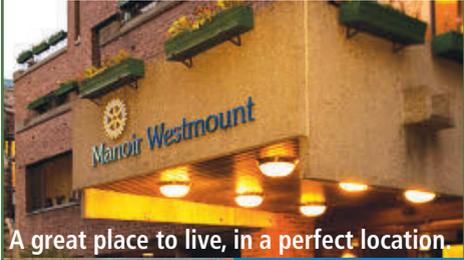
What else can the city do? First, hire a sustainability director/environmental engineer with park oversight to monitor and offset potential problems as well as oversee pond naturalization. Second, support a conservation landscaping committee of

knowledgeable citizens and landscape professionals who care about wildlife and Westmount's green spaces.

The science on park design is clear – citizen well-being is improved in more biodiverse, natural settings. With many councillors expressing support for sustainability – and citizen engagement – during the 2021 elections, city council must prioritize tranquil, biodiverse restorative landscapes. For questions or comments on Devon Park re-design, see engage.westmount.org.



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Opioid crisis impacting young and old alike, says researcher Nairn

BY MARTIN C. BARRY

While there may be a common perception that the opioid crisis affects a small segment of the population, new research suggests the impact is wider and might also include teenagers and young adults first exposed to opioids after surgery or illness, says Stephanie Nairn, a Westmounter who coordinated recent research studies published as a supplement to the *Canadian Journal of Addiction*.

Nairn, a researcher in the psychiatry department at St. Justine's children's hospital and a PhD candidate in sociology at McGill University, helped write the lead editorial and several articles for the *CJA's* June supplement dealing with the Canadian youth opioid health threat.

The emerging research presented in the supplement highlighted the need for youth-specific approaches to address substance use and overdoses in Canada. Over recent periods, youth have experienced the fastest growing rates of hospitalizations due to opioid poisonings.

According to the *CJA's* research, the pandemic exacerbated these trends, while

a recent study from Ontario revealed that young people under age 35 experienced a 320-percent increase in opioid overdoses during the initial periods of the pandemic.

"Just a few years ago, people thought that the opioid crisis was only impacting adults," Nairn said in an interview with the *Independent*. "But data now shows that it's actually disproportionately impacting people between ages 15 and 24 – sort of the younger adult age range."

In addition to that finding, Nairn said the researchers found that most treatments for opioid addictions currently focus on adult males.

"Ultimately, we found that availability of services to youth is limited," she said. "So, access is therefore limited because there aren't any opioid-specific services for youth and they're just not youth-relevant."

On top of her research work, Nairn teaches a health and fitness-focused dance program for the city of Westmount to adults, youths and children at Victoria Hall. She's been offering the weekly Wednesday night program for the past few years. A new season of Groove Dance begins in the fall.



New data shows the opioid crisis is impacting people between ages 15 and 24, and not just adults, says Stephanie Nairn, seen here outside Westmount Public Library on July 28.



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First post-lockdown ICRF gala honours Billick



Social Notes

VERONICA REDGRAVE

This summer the 45th annual Israel Cancer Research Fund (ICRF) gala was held in person for the first time since the beginning of the pandemic.

The flagship event was held in honour of **Dr. Robin Billick**, head of dermatology at the Jewish General Hospital (JGH). He attended with his wife **Vivian Billick**, radiant in a colourful slip dress and floral jacket.

Co-chaired by **Peter Rosenthal** and **Samantha Singer-Guindi**, the evening took place at the Jardin Royalmount. Hosted by CJAD's Natasha Hall, the soirée featured a delicious cocktail-dînatore as well as a sit-down three-course dinner.

Guests rocked to the X Ambassadors, who performed get-up-and-dance songs.

Seen amidst the sold-out crowd were **Dr. Walter Gotlieb**, chair of scientific advisory board for ICRF; **Bram Freedman**, CEO of the JGH Foundation, and his wife **Sarah** *continued on p. 18*



Dr. Robin Billick and Vivian Billick.

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Bram and Sarah Freedman.



Dr. Walter Gotlieb.

Social notes, cont'd from p. 17

Freedman; Jeffrey Bernstein, immediate past president of ICRF; **Alexandra Schwartz**, former CEO of ICRF; **Jillian Zrihen**, Tracy Brooke PR; photographer **Jennifer Fellegi**; Israeli Research Fellows doctors **David Knigin**, **Merav Rokah**, **James Tankel**, **Emad Matanes**, and **Oded Raban**; and local res **Julia** and **Stephen Reitman** with Julia's ever-elegant mother **Ilse Hattam**.

"After two years of virtual events, we're truly humbled to finally be together in person," noted **Stu Guttman**, ICRF's CEO.

"As an organization, we were honoured to be able to recognize the incredible life-saving work that Dr. Billick and his team perform daily, while raising critical funds in our quest to end cancer. Together we can find a cure."



X Ambassadors.

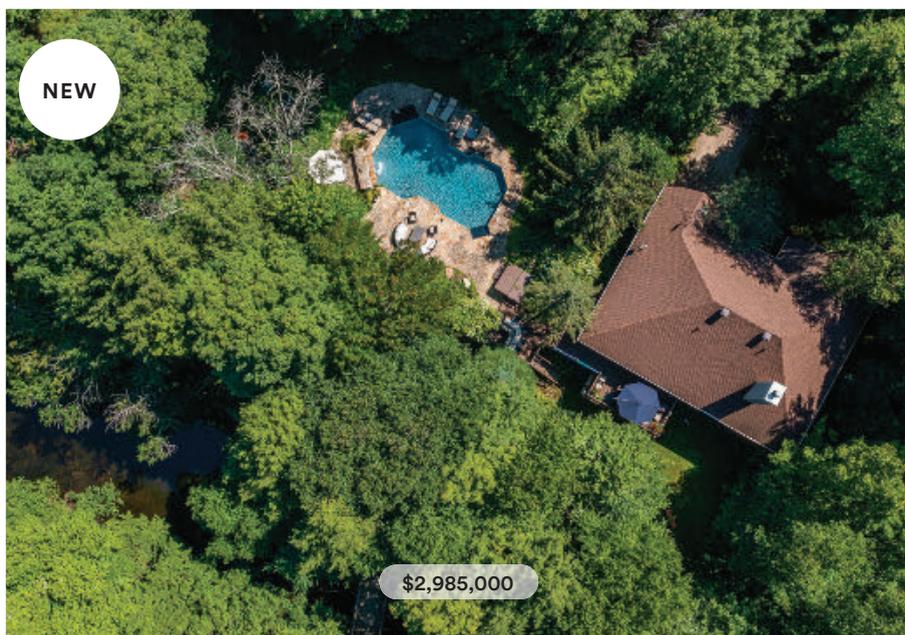


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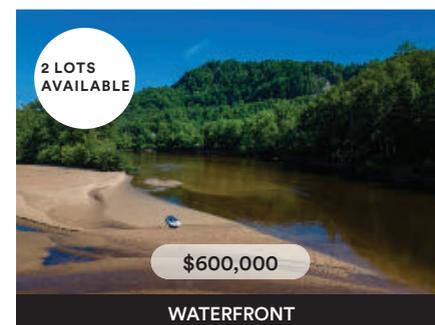
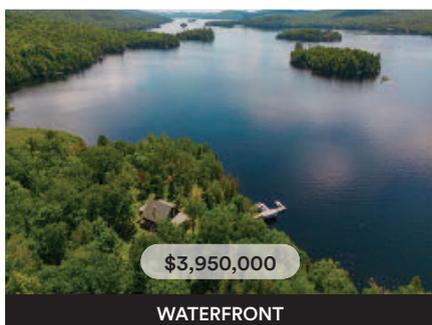
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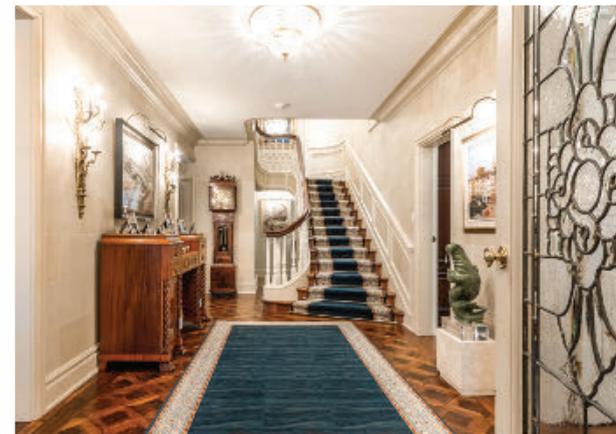
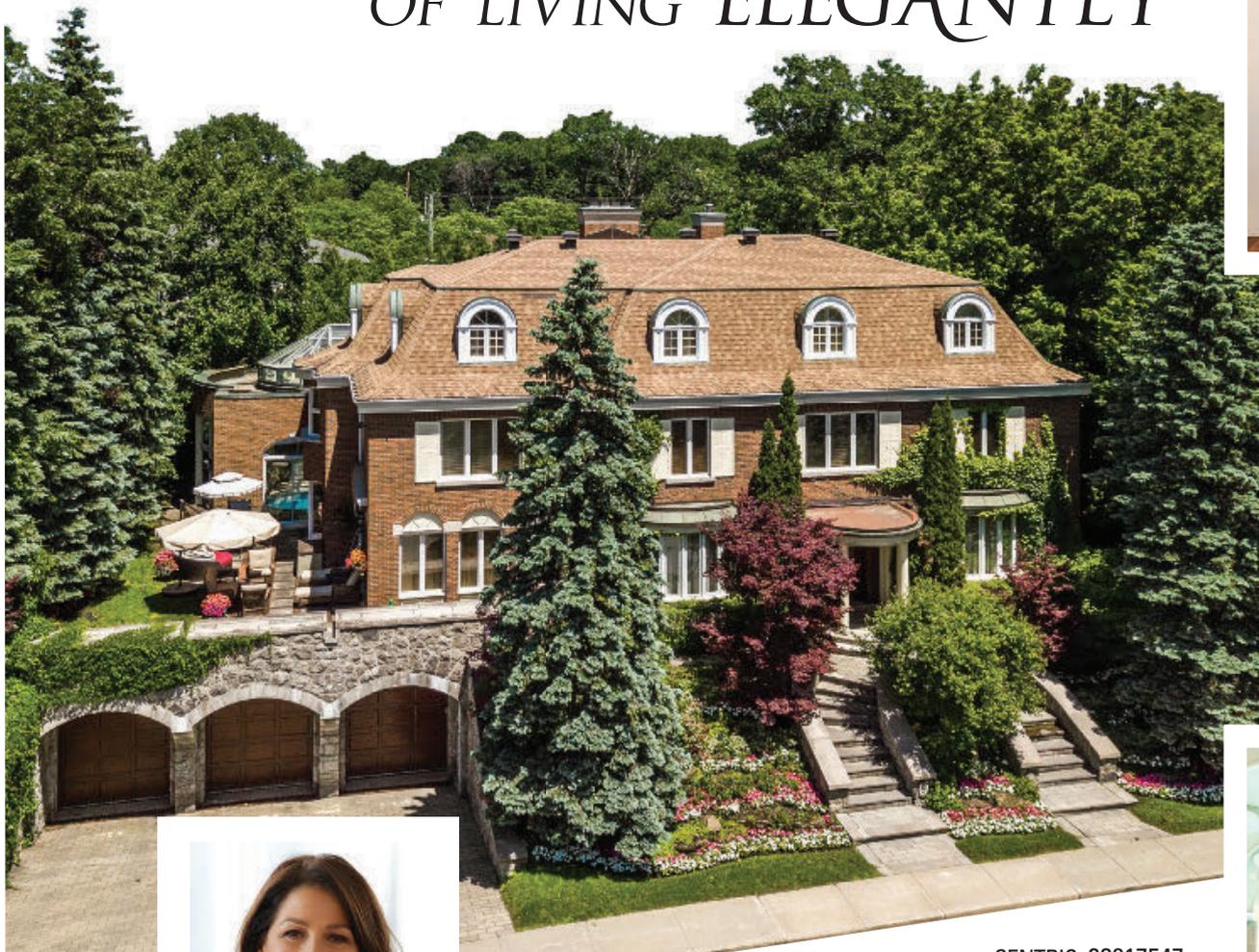
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