

WESTMOUNT INDEPENDENT

Weekly. Vol. 17 No. 11d We are Westmount November 28, 2023

‘Extraordinary’ public meetings can still take place
Public council meetings to be reduced to one per month

By LAUREEN SWEENEY

Reverting back to the previous traditions, Westmount will eliminate current mid-month council meetings open to the

This issue is our third-to-last one before our usual Christmas break
Issues: December 5 & 12
No issues: December 19 & 26 and January 2 & 9
First issue of 2024: January 16

public, starting in January 2024. This was announced at the council meeting November 20 – one of the mid-month sessions – when the council approved an agenda item to this effect.

As a result, the 12 regular statutory sessions are listed to take place on the first Monday of each month unless that date falls on a holiday such as July 1, Canada Day, in which case it is moved to the Tuesday.

In the event that another meeting is needed – to approve a contract or permits, for example – an “extra-ordinary” public meeting continued on p. 3

Westmount, ‘Lac St. Louis’ girls kick off hockey season



Westmount Wings (in pink) bump fists after getting the puck in the back of the Storm Sud-Ouest net at the first hockey-season kick-off held at the Westmount recreation centre. Both teams are in the Lac St. Louis league’s M9-3F division (age nine and under). See p.16 for story. PHOTO: RALPH THOMPSON.

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‘No consultation, just a notice’
Garbage collection changes questioned at council meeting

By LAUREEN SWEENEY

Changes in garbage collection were raised at the council meeting November 20, particularly those that will require all garbage to be picked up from the front of houses. Collection of garbage from the rear or side has long been a Westmount tradition, especially for those backing onto lanes too narrow for a garbage truck.

The new collection system would go into effect May 1, according to notices sent to homes but not presented or discussed at council meetings (see story, November 14, p. 1).

“What’s really bothering me is that there was no consultation, just a notice,” said Alvin Shrier of Abbott. His row house, he told last week’s council meeting, has had its gar- continued on p. 3

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Council meetings, cont'd from p. 1

will take place, Mayor Christina Smith said.

"We are the only municipality that holds two public meetings a month," she explained. Given that these are typically not well attended and take time to organize, the city will revert back to one a month, though it will continue to hold the usual closed-door mid-monthly "general committee" meetings. These include all the councillors, the mayor and the relevant city staff.

The second monthly public meeting began during the council terms of either Peter Trent or Karin Marks, Trent said. "Either I started them, or Karin did, as a service to citizens" in order to "shave off two weeks from the wait time to get a permit. Very rarely did citizens show up and

there was no question period." (Permits have to be approved at public meetings.)

Mayor Smith told the *Independent* that if an extraordinary meeting took place, it would be announced 48 hours ahead and "Zoomed" for later viewing.

Table of Contents

Letters to the Editor, p. 9

Pet page, p. 12

Police Report, p. 15

**Social Notes:
Atwater Library
honours Jones. p. 17**

Garbage collection changes, cont'd from p. 1

bage picked up from a rear lane where someone from the garbage crew carried it down the lane to the truck.

How can residents over age 70 on his street, he asked, be expected to carry a heavy garbage can down one "uneven" lane at the back and then down another lane, especially when it's icy? "It puts people at risk. It's nothing to do with the environment," he added referring to the city's aim to reduce garbage going to landfill.

Since residents' taxes pay for the collection from the rear, he suggested, maybe the city could arrange for a small city truck to service the lanes inaccessible to a large garbage truck.

Mayor Christina Smith replied that things had changed over the years and that under the current contract, the collectors who were not familiar with the backs of houses sometimes missed picking up from certain bins.

A period of relative chaos and "hopping mad" residents when contractors changed in 2019 was eventually brought to an end when the new contractor was told of all Westmount's quirks and unique situations (see "City point-person works full time to resolve garbage issues," June 25, 2019, p. 1 and box at right).

While contractors may change, the city has been outsourcing its garbage collection since the system was first contracted out some 40 years ago by then public works commissioner Peter Duffield.

Mayor Smith also told Shrier that she too would now be one of the residents carrying garbage from the back to the front, because she too lived in a row house. Shrier persisted, however, repeating the needs of residents who might not be able to do this.

The issue of back door access is not only limited to the many row houses below and

just above Sherbrooke but also to those higher up the mountain that back onto lanes such as one that services houses on the south side of The Boulevard.

"Someone from the garbage crew cheerfully picks up all our garbage and carries it out the lane to Mount Pleasant," explains Patrick Martin, a former councillor who was public works commissioner. "Since the average age in Westmount is over 60," he added, "this garbage plan is in contradiction to the accessibility report. If it ain't broke, don't fix it."

Past perspectives on the quirks of Westmount garbage collection

Extract reprinted from "City point-person works full time to resolve garbage issues," June 25, 2019, p. 8

At one apartment building on Victoria that adjoins the Metro parking lot, its heavy metal bin is almost inaccessible, hemmed in by parked cars and a fence.

"The former contractor used to throw the garbage over the fence," says Silvia "Sisi" Bortoluzzi, whose Boutique Bodywares Sisi along with Café Crème is one of the two commercial outlets at the building's ground level.

Depending how the contractor pushes the bin against the fence, it can be too difficult to open or close and Bortoluzzi fears the attraction of rats.

"It's a learning curve for the new contractor. They had no one to pass them the torch," said Barry Friedberg, whose office building at 310 Victoria has faced irregular pick-ups. – LS.



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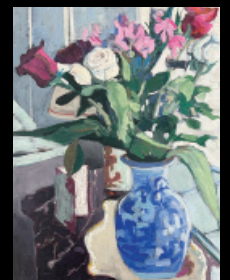
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Friends of the Library sale raises \$16,640 at quality sale

By LAUREEN SWEENEY

The pre-holiday quality book sale for Westmount Public Library generated a total of \$16,640 November 18 and 19 at Victoria Hall. This compares with \$10,422 raised at the same time last year when the number of donations from residents had been put on hold due to lack of space.

In announcing the proceeds, library director Anne-Marie Lacombe said the event was “heavily attended” with the usual long Saturday line-up waiting for the door to open. “In three hours, the children’s books were all sold out.”

The sale has taken place twice annually for more than 10 years since the group of volunteers called Friends of the Library was formed in 2000. It focuses on quality donations to raise funds to improve the library’s collections and service.

Lacombe said it was not yet known what the proceeds from this year would be used for, but it has been reported that because the library’s 124th anniversary is being celebrated next year, some of the revenues might go toward the festivities.

The Friends group are volunteers who contribute their time, skills, experience and energy to the library. Their purpose is to stimulate interest in its resources and facilities and to raise funds to improve the library’s collections and services. The unsold leftovers from this year were taken to a new program at Renaissance, Lacombe said.

A “Donate Book and more page” was created this year to detail what happens to donations brought to the library.

The volunteers include Carolyn O’Neill (president), Pat Machin, (secretary), Anne Moffat (archives), Lily Lam (publicity) and Jean Williams (web page liaison).

Lights given out on park bike path



Members of the Association of Pedestrians and Cyclists of Westmount November 16, from left, are Malcolm McRae, Marilyn Gilles and Virginia Elliott.

PHOTO COURTESY OF APCW.

By LAUREEN SWEENEY

Following the time change November 5, it may be dark on the evening ride home for many cyclists. This resulted in some 400 sets of free bike lights given out November 16 on the bike path in Westmount Park. The lights were funded by the Association of Pedestrians and Cyclists of Westmount (APCW).

With the lights, cyclists were also told that many seniors live in Westmount so “please watch out for them,” said Dan Lambert, APCW president. “Prepare for them to step unexpectedly into the bike path. With lights, drivers and pedestrians can

see you. By respecting them, they will respect you.”

Approximately 75 percent of cyclists surveyed had lights, however 25 percent did not “and that is too high. With the growing popularity of electric bikes, more cyclists have lights, since most electric bikes come equipped with them.”

The light sets include white for the front and red for the back. They are purchased by the association with funds from its cycling education courses to Westmount children in May each year at the Westmount recreation centre (WRC), Lambert said. “In those courses, we repeatedly stress the importance of respect for others.”

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

CITY’S NEW NEWSLETTER
CREATES MORE WASTE (1)

Last week, the city introduced a new waste management initiative, one of the goals being to reduce the amount of waste and therefore help the environment.

But, right on the heels of that initiative, Westmount has now started to print and deliver copies of a new monthly multi-page publication called “InfoWestmount.”

So, on the one hand we want to reduce waste and on the other we produce this document that simply creates more of it.

In an era where many are going paperless, this newly minted newsletter appears to be somewhat hypocritical and possibly a contradiction of values.

ALLEN RUBIN, LEXINGTON AVE.

CITY’S NEW NEWSLETTER
CREATES MORE WASTE (2)

Recently city hall introduced the first edition of a monthly newsletter. What a waste of public money and paper! The information it contains is or could be made available in the *Westmount Independent*.

This new publication is a perfect example of misusing taxpayers’ funds.

ANNA COATES, CLAREMONT AVE.

Editor’s note: I too wonder why the city hasn’t just purchased the equivalent number of pages in the *Independent*. Such a purchase would get its message out, in its own words and using its own layout, and also allow us to bring more articles and col-

umns to its taxpayers, whose money the politicians and employees are spending. (We add pages of content as we add advertisements.) Residents: how do you want your money spent? – DP.

LESS WASTE COLLECTION
LIKELY MEANS LESS WASTE

I would like to congratulate Westmount city council on our city’s measures to reduce the frequency of waste collection. While this decision seems to cause dissent among some citizens, as evidenced in last week’s letters to the editor, this initiative is a responsible step towards improving sustainability in our community. Fellow citizens complain they were not consulted, and some even proposed that the issue be the subject of a referendum.

In the name of efficiency and effectiveness, a responsible city council cannot and should not consult its constituents for very decision it undertakes, especially those that are based on common sense and sound evidence.

Our existing waste collection system has citizens separating compost, recyclable materials and residual household waste. With proper management of these waste streams, there should be minimal residue left for collection on a bi-weekly basis. Some individuals seem to question the environmental benefits of this change, labelling it as “greenwashing.” However, the reduced frequency of waste collection translates to fewer trucks, fewer trips to

landfill sites, and, consequently, lower emissions.

More significantly, experiences in other communities have indicated that reduced collection frequency should foster heightened awareness of consumption habits and packaging choices, resulting in decreased waste generation and, ultimately, less strain on landfills. Given Quebec’s standing as a global “leader” in its dependence on landfill, change in our waste managing habits is necessary.

While cost reduction may not be the primary objective in council’s decision, it remains a significant benefit. I propose that the savings resulting from these measures be invested in purchasing proper recycling bins for the citizens of Westmount.

A recent tour of our recycling sorting facility highlighted challenges posed by wet paper and cardboard collected from our open bins on rainy and snowy days. Additionally, placing recyclable items in plastic bags further complicates the sorting process as these bags cannot be recycled here locally and are sent to landfill. Distributing closed bins would help address these issues and improve the efficiency of the recycling process.

I encourage fellow citizens to support our common goal of waste reduction and embrace other measures that will make Westmount a leader in environmental stewardship.

Let’s hope for more environment-friendly initiatives from the city.

RICHARD DUFOUR, ANWOTH RD.

RESIDENTS SHOULD DISPOSE
OF WASTE PROPERLY

Re: New garbage collection plan

Westmount has just announced its plan to change its household garbage collection to every two weeks instead of weekly for the winter months. This plan is being advertised as an environment-saving plan.

However, if this is not to be simply a thinly-disguised cost-saving measure, Westmounters will have to make some radical changes in their waste disposal habits.

No more dirty peanut butter jars in the recycling! No more plastic, food waste or construction materials in the garbage bag going to the landfill!

These rules* have been in place for years, but are not enforced. When will Westmounters wake up to where our waste is going and when will the city get tough on residents’ garbage excesses?

PATRICIA RILEY, ARGYLE AVE.

***Editor’s note:** To the best of my knowledge, the use of the city’s recycling and composting pick-up is not compulsory. – DP.

PLEASE KEEP WEEKLY
GARBAGE COLLECTION (5)

I am upset that the garbage pick-up will go down to every second week. In my opinion, with the rat problem that we already live with in Westmount, this is a poor decision.

MARGARET MARTIN, VICTORIA AVE.

PLEASE KEEP WEEKLY GARBAGE
COLLECTION (6)

I refer to Laureen Sweeney’s recent article about proposed changes to trash pick-up practices in Westmount. As much as I respect Councillor Bostock’s point of view – we don’t need to bring our city “in line with most other neighbouring communities.”

We should rather do what’s best for us and lead by example.

Westmount public spaces have been getting dirtier and dirtier over the past three years. The unsightly overflow of garbage and recycling bins in Victoria village or on Greene Ave. is bad enough – we don’t need this to creep onto our residential streets because of even less frequent trash collection.

This is precisely what will happen if we reduce the already reduced practice of once-a-week pick-ups.

Furthermore – the idea of doing away with the long held Westmount practice of keeping one’s trash out of sight until it is picked up – whether that be behind or at the side of one’s property – is one of the few remaining civilized Westmount traditions that help keep our city clean and beautiful. Garbage should be kept out of everyone’s face and whenever possible out of plain view. To change this practice and force people to leave their refuse out on the street or sidewalk for what will now be scarce bi-weekly pick-ups is unsanitary at best and a health hazard at worst. Bring on the vermin.

What happens when it snows and trash is no longer stored in a covered off-road container but rather out on the curb when the plows go by?

The city is responsible for regular and efficient trash pick-up – and its citizens are the ones that pay for it. The people deserve a say here and we must all do our part to maintain the beauty, character and above all cleanliness of Westmount’s streets.

Once-a-week trash pick-up is already a bare minimum – and nobody needs to see more garbage out on the street at any time of the day or night. Here’s hoping city hall will ask the citizens what they think and reconsider this unnecessary initiative.

BARRY GARBER,
SUNNYSIDE AVE. continued on p. 10

WESTMOUNT INDEPENDENT

We are Westmount

Editor

David Price: 514.935.4537
editor@westmountindependent.com

Chief reporter

Laureen Sweeney

Graphics

Ted Sancton

Advertising sales

Arleen Candiotti: 514.223.3567
advertising@westmountindependent.com

Classified ads

www.westendclassifieds.com

Accounting

Beth Hudson: 514.223.6138
office@westmountindependent.com

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‘Common front’ encamps in front of local schools



By JENNIFER BALL

Dawson College's de Maisonneuve Blvd. entrance near Atwater Ave. on November 21.

Four Quebec unions known by their initials – CSQ, CSN, APTS and FTQ – have formed what they call a “common front” and are striking together, including at local public schools. Striking teachers are demanding better pay and working conditions. The *Independent* reached out to teachers at two Westmount schools for

more detail.

Martin Braunwell is a special needs child care worker at Westmount High School and he said, “if I had to choose between a salary increase and better working conditions, I couldn’t! Salary is very important and I would not encourage my son to [pursue a career as a support staff worker].”

In terms of working conditions, he said “they are giving me more and more children, but in reality I can only handle five.”

Louisa Hadley, who is the president of the Dawson teachers’ union, was contacted on November 23 for a statement for details regarding teachers’ demands, but no response came in time by print time.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

NON-RESIDENT HAPPY WITH *INDEPENDENT*

I’ve been receiving your informative *Westmount Independent* online for several months. I couldn’t be more happy in my decision to subscribe.

There is far more information about important topics that affect many within Montreal as well as Westmount specifically. It is a well-rounded publication. While I live in a nearby borough, I frequent your wonderful city for its diverse offerings.

The community spirit is evident. I live vicariously looking at the beautiful properties, love Lysanne Fowler’s [pet adoption]

column and frequently find out things that are not published elsewhere.

Your Police Report is evidence of raising public awareness, and information recently published about the Lachine recycling plant was an eye opener. Gives one pause of what can and can’t be recycled.

Thank you for providing a non-resident with up-to-date information.

JUDY KOLONICS, NDG

PLEASE SIGN TO OPPOSE BILL 15

The Quebec Community Groups Network (QCGN) urges all Quebecers to quickly sign a petition (www.assnat.qc.ca/en/exprimez-votre-opinion/petition/Petition-10545) demanding the provincial

government put an immediate hold on Bill 15, which would launch a massive centralization of health-care management and eliminate community input in the governance of health and social services institutions everywhere.

The government wants to ram the 300-page bill through by December 8, so quick action is required. At a recent QCGN webinar on Bill 15, experts explained that this bill will do nothing to address the crises in our emergency rooms, delays in surgeries or the lack of family doctors.

What it will do is centralize government control under an umbrella organization called Santé Québec, while abolishing the boards of local institutions, and eliminating any role for patients, families, volunteers and communities – people that the health-care system exists to serve.

In addition, the regional committees that oversee English-language access programs would be replaced by a single body, reducing local input.

Our petition attracted more than 2,500 signatures in less than a week. For the government to consider our demand for more consultation on a complex piece of legislation that needs amending, we must have many, many more.

Please sign today and share with your own networks.

EVA LUDVIG, QCGN PRESIDENT

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Jelly doughnuts can be the culinary star of Hanukah

Symbolism and the holiday season go hand in hand. For those of Jewish heritage who celebrate Hanukah, there is more than one prominent symbol of the holiday that endures. The widely recognizable menorah fits that bill, and jelly doughnuts also have withstood the test of time. Many celebrants enjoy a specific variety known as sufganiyot.

According to *My Jewish Learning*, jelly doughnuts are one of the more symbolic dishes associated with Hanukah. Oily foods are made to represent the miracle of Hanukah since the first celebration, and fried jelly doughnuts became tied to Hanukah during the Middle Ages. Early on, they were known as “ponchiks” because they were modelled after the doughnuts served in Poland around Christmastime. But eventually they took the name sufganiyot, from the “spongy dough” mentioned in the Talmud.

Enjoy this recipe for sufganiyot, courtesy of Martha Stewart, for your next Hanukah celebration.

Sufganiyot

Yield: 20

- 2 tablespoons active dry yeast
- 1/2 cup warm water (100 to 110°F)
- 1/4 cup plus 1 teaspoon sugar, plus more for rolling
- 2 1/2 cups all-purpose flour, plus more for dusting
- 2 large eggs
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter, at room temperature
- 1/2 teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 3 cups vegetable oil, plus more for bowl
- 1 cup seedless raspberry jam

In a small bowl, combine yeast, warm water, and 1 teaspoon sugar. Set aside until foamy, about 10 minutes.

Place flour in a large bowl. Make a well



in the center; add eggs, yeast mixture, 1/4 cup sugar, butter, nutmeg, and salt. Using a wooden spoon, stir until a sticky dough forms. On a well-floured work surface, knead until dough is smooth, soft, and bounces back when poked with a finger, about 8 minutes (add more flour, if necessary). Place in an oiled bowl; cover with plastic wrap. Set in a warm place to rise until doubled, 1 to 1 1/2 hours.

On a lightly floured work surface, roll dough to 1/4-inch thickness. Using a 2 1/2-inch-round cutter or drinking glass, cut 20 rounds. Cover with plastic wrap; let rise 15 minutes.

In a medium saucepan over medium heat, heat oil until a deep-frying thermometer registers 370°F. Using a slotted spoon, carefully slip 4 rounds into oil. Fry until golden, about 40 seconds. Turn doughnuts over; fry until golden on other side, another 40 seconds. Using a slotted spoon, transfer to a paper-towel-lined baking sheet. Roll in sugar while warm. Fry all dough, and roll in sugar.

Fill a pastry bag fitted with a #4 tip with jam. Using a wooden skewer or toothpick, make a hole in the side of each doughnut. Fit the pastry tip into a hole, pipe about 2 teaspoons jam into doughnut. Repeat with remaining doughnuts. – MCG

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4 fun facts about December

December is arguably the most festive month of the year and a busy time. But that there's more to it than the holidays.

1. Armchair linguists might know that the Latin word "decem" means "ten," which is a little curious given that December is the twelfth month of the year. So why isn't December the tenth month of the year? Like other months on the modern calendar, including October and November, December once occupied a different place on the calendar. Back then, December was the tenth month on the calendar. Though its position changed when a version of the current calendar was adopted, its name remained the same.

2. It's easy to overlook in a month populated by holidays like Hanukah and Christmas, but the winter solstice is a significant day on the calendar as well. According to the Farmer's Almanac, the 2023 winter solstice occurs on December 21 at 10:27 p.m. EST for the northern hemisphere. The winter solstice might not be sun worshippers' favourite day of the year, as it's the day with the least amount of sunlight all year long. However, one positive to keep in mind is that, once the winter solstice occurs, each

day thereafter experiences a gradual increase in daylight. That should give anyone yet another reason to celebrate in December.

3. December has historically been a month of firsts, particularly for women and politicians. On December 1, 1919, Lady Nancy Astor became the first woman to serve in the British house of commons. Exactly 69 years later, Benazir Bhutto was nominated for the role of prime minister of Pakistan. Bhutto ultimately became the first woman to be elected as head of a democratic government in a Muslim-majority country. Political firsts in December are not limited to events involving women. A year after Bhutto was nominated, Russia's Mikhail Gorbachev became the first Soviet Russian leader to visit the Vatican and meet the Pope.

4. January might be the month people most associate with efforts to change their fortunes, but the birthstone of December also is considered a symbol of good fortune. The Farmer's Almanac notes that one of the birthstones of December is turquoise, which some believe is symbolic of good fortune and success. – MCG

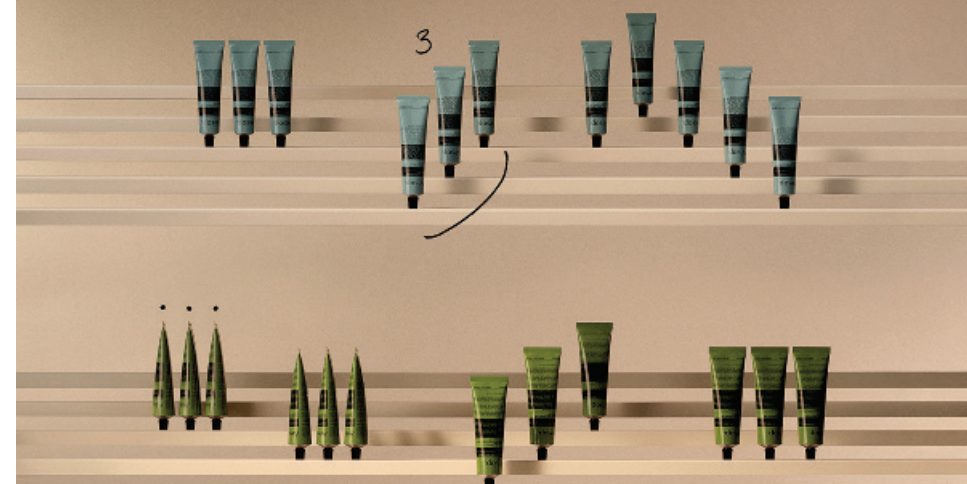
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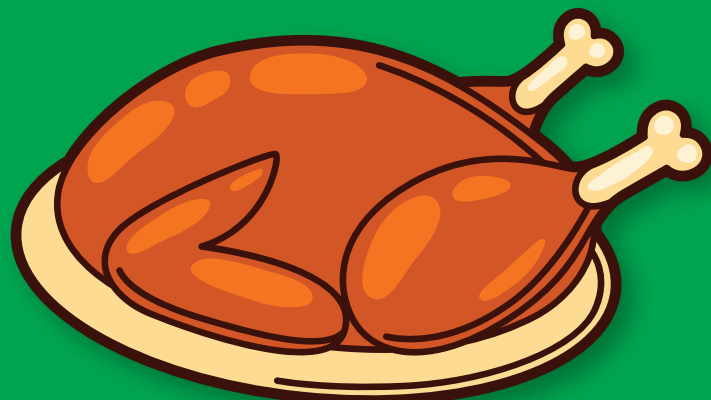
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Fun ways to enjoy the start of winter

This year, Winter begins on December 21, and ends on March 19. Many people lament the arrival of winter, perhaps thinking the colder temperatures and shorter hours of sunlight will compromise their chances to have fun. Even though particularly chilly thermostat readings or stormy conditions can hamper some plans, when people dig deeper they may find that even the coldest days present opportunities for enjoyment.

When winter begins, the following activities can make for an entertaining way to celebrate the arrival of the season.

- Build a snow creation. Use the first significant snowfall of the season to organize a snowman, snowwoman, or snow-animal-making event or contest. Waterproof gloves are a necessary piece of equipment, as are buckets for moving snow, shovels, carving and shaping tools (which can be plastic cutlery), and accessories to dress up the final product.

- Go sledding on the best hills. Sledding is a popular wintertime activity that doesn't require too much equipment. Sledders of all ages should consider wearing helmets to protect against injury.

- Host a winter block party. Many

cities and towns across North America participate in WinterFest events, which run the gamut from food and craft festivals to sporting events. Individuals can take cues from these type of activities and plan neighbourhood festivals right on their streets. Hot cocoa and cider stations and warm treats can keep everyone from feeling too cold. Electric slow cookers can keep everything from soups to chilis to stews warm.

- Visit an ice rink. Whether a rink is indoors or outside, ice skating is a quintessential wintertime activity. Skaters of all skill levels can take to the ice and enjoy some exercise and laughs. Check local rink schedules to take advantage of open skate times when hockey games or practices are not dominating the ice.

- Mark the winter solstice. The winter solstice, also known as the start of astronomical winter, is the shortest day of sunlight. It occurs when either of the Earth's poles reaches maximum tilt away from the sun. In the Northern Hemisphere, this occurs on December 21. Because there will be only roughly seven hours of daylight, take steps to make the fact that the sun will set at its earliest a little easier to swallow. – MCG



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Festive facts about fruitcake

Fruitcake, sometimes referred to as plum cake or Christmas cake, can be prepared in various ways. However, a dense bundt-type cake dotted with dried, candied fruit and often soaked in rum or brandy has become the standard. Loathed or loved, it is typically mocked as the ultimate re-gift. Consider these fun facts.

- The texture of fruitcake can vary from cake-like to more of a sweet bread like brioche. Italians dig into *panettone*, Germans delight with *stollen* and Jamaicans serve black cake.
- The first fruitcakes weren't eaten. According to historians, fruitcakes were initially made by ancient Egyptians, who tucked the desserts into the tombs with their dead so a sweet treat could be enjoyed in the afterlife.
- Fruitcake gained popularity as military rations, as everyone from Roman soldiers to Crusaders found fruitcake provided a diverse array of nutrients and an energy boost in battle. Fruitcake also stores well, which can be beneficial for military personnel.
- Fruitcake seemingly is indestructible. Tastemade says if a fruitcake is kept in an airtight container and stored in a dark, cool place, it could be reheated years after being baked. Starch crystals and dried fruit in the cake will release stored water when warmed, rehydrating the cake.
- Romans, as early as 100 AD enjoyed a version called "satura," made by mixing stale bread with pine nuts, pomegranate seeds, raisins, and then soaking it in a barley mash and an alcoholic beverage brewed from honey.
- Fruitcake became a popular dish to serve at British royals' weddings. Queen Victoria, Princess Diana and Prince William served fruitcake.
- The Smithsonian Air and Space Museum in Washington, D.C. has a fruitcake on display. It travelled on Apollo 11 in 1969, but was never eaten.
- Seth Greenberg, who worked in his family's New York City bakery, attests that fruitcake is delicious when made with the right ingredients. The neon-coloured, dry and overly sweet fruit that many bakers use is the problem with poor cakes. But proper ingredients like brandy, glace cherries, apricots, figs, and dates can make it delicious.
- The average fruitcake weighs between two and three pounds. However, the heaviest fruitcake on record, according to *The Guinness Book of World Records*, came in at 9,596 pounds. – MCG



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Christmas stocking decorating tips and tricks



Hanging Christmas stockings is just one of the many traditions that fill the days leading up to Christmas. One theory regarding the origins of stockings says the tradition began when a poor widower who had three daughters worried about having enough money for their wedding dowries to help secure the daughters' futures. The women, who had hung their stockings by the fireplace to dry, woke up to find solid gold spheres inside. This legend suggests kindly St. Nicholas visited the home in the night and left the presents, helping ensure the daughters could marry well after all.

Christmas stockings were the first places where gifts were stowed, before under the boughs of Christmas trees became the primary spot for placing gifts. Then stockings were secondary vessels reserved for small trinkets. Today stockings are largely Christmas decorations rather than places to place gifts. Still, they're a key component of holiday magic.

When including stockings in holiday festivities, follow these tips for whimsy and more.

- Utilize stocking holders. Stocking holders are either metal or wooden devices that are placed on mantels. Hooks on the holders suspend the stockings. Just be sure the holders are sturdy enough to handle the weight of a stuffed stocking if you

plan on filling it with goodies.

- Determine your style. There are Christmas stockings that coordinate to just about any interior design style. From farmhouse to modern to traditional, choose one that fits with your aesthetic. That isn't to say you can't mix and match stockings if you prefer a more eclectic, homespun feel.
- Enhance your stocking look. If stockings are strictly decorative, enhance their look with a few tricks. First, use tissue paper or balled up shopping bags to stuff the stockings and give them shape. Fill a small baggie with sand or florist glass and place in the heel of the stocking to balance it out and prevent the stocking from blowing around in the breeze.
- No fireplace; no problem. Stockings are traditionally hung from the fireplace mantel, but if you don't have a fireplace there is no need to fret. Simply use ribbons to hang them from the bannister of a staircase, or hang stockings right on walls with removable hooks, or from sturdy shelves. You also can think creatively and hang larger stockings on a door like you might a wreath.

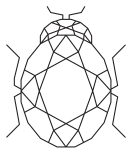
Whether they're decorative or functional, stockings can be an integral component of holiday décor in a home.
– MCG

Holiday wreath do-s and don't-s

No greenery is more recognized during the holiday season than Christmas trees. However, wreaths take a close second when it comes to green décor.

It is important to treat wreaths with care in order to maximize their longevity and beauty. The following tips can help ensure wreaths remain fresh and festive throughout the month of December.

- Select a wreath that is not too busy nor too boring. It is important to strike the right balance. A good wreath has a focal point, which may be a festive bow or another decorative piece. Keep in mind this is a wreath that should have lots of greenery on display, rather than flowers that characterize other seasonal wreaths.
- Weigh your wreath. Take a moment to ask how heavy the wreath is when you purchase it. Knowing the weight of the wreath will help you identify the proper hanging mechanism.
- Determine your hanging method. Once you know the weight of the wreath, you can figure out how to secure it to a door or window without having to drill holes into any structures. Removable adhesive strips are one option, provided you attach something like cardboard or another material to the back of the wreath upon which the adhesive strips can be stuck. Otherwise, over-the-door wreath hangers are wise investments that can support large, heavy wreaths.
- Consider the safety of pets. When decorating with plant material, it is important to know what is safe for pets in the household. According to the Virginia-Maryland College of Veterinary Medicine, most holiday plants cause irritation of the mouth. Pine trees produce oils that can cause gastrointestinal issues.
- Exercise caution with storm doors. If you hang a wreath between a glass storm door and your front door, the air around the wreath will heat up and cause the wreath to turn brown.
- Choose a cool spot. In addition to avoiding heat that builds up between doors, you should select a cool spot out of the sun. Many pine trees, like balsam fir, react more favourably to cooler temperatures and will keep their colour and fragrance more readily.
- Go artificial. If you want to hang a wreath indoors, opt for an artificial one. Prolonged warmth inside may prematurely dry out a wreath, ultimately turning it into a fire hazard. – MCG



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New book: 'Israel 201'

American-Israeli comedian Chasnoff visits Shaar

By JENNIFER BALL

Joel Chasnoff introduced his new book, *Israel 201*, October 31 at the Shaar Hashomayim synagogue. The comedian is American-Israeli. He answered questions from Shaar congregants about the state of affairs within the borders of Israel post-October 7. He lives there with his wife and daughters.

Rabbi Mark Fishman of the Shaar,

which is located at on the corner of Côte St. Antoine and Kensington Ave., said "... he is somebody who has been a lone soldier, who went to Israel and joined the IDF [Israeli Defense Forces], and he has the gravitas and ability to speak from a place of knowledge and informed opinion."

Israel 201 was just published last month by Chasnoff and Benji Lovitt. It promises to be your guide to life in the Holy Land, from the serious to the not-so-serious.

The book probes into how did Jerusalem's cat problem spurs religious debate. And what are the pitfalls of coalition governments? And when are Israeli athletes going to excel in sports where shoes are worn? (Thus far, gymnastics and swimming seem to be their fiefdom.)

After Chasnoff spoke about his book, he took questions from the audience. A theme that dominated was how the Hamas attack could have been orchestrated, given the robustness of the IDF, in which practically every Israeli citizen over the age of 18 who is Jewish, Druze or Circassian must serve.

Chasnoff was eager to unpack it. "So why is it that the night before they had these signs and nothing was done? Why is it that the next morning that it took sometimes not just eight, but as long as 24 hours, when people were in their safe rooms, before the army was able to show up?" he considered.

"We don't know the full story, but what I can tell you is the correct question is not 'Why did we miss it?' The correct question is not 'How did our intelligence fail to pick this up?'"

"We picked it up..."

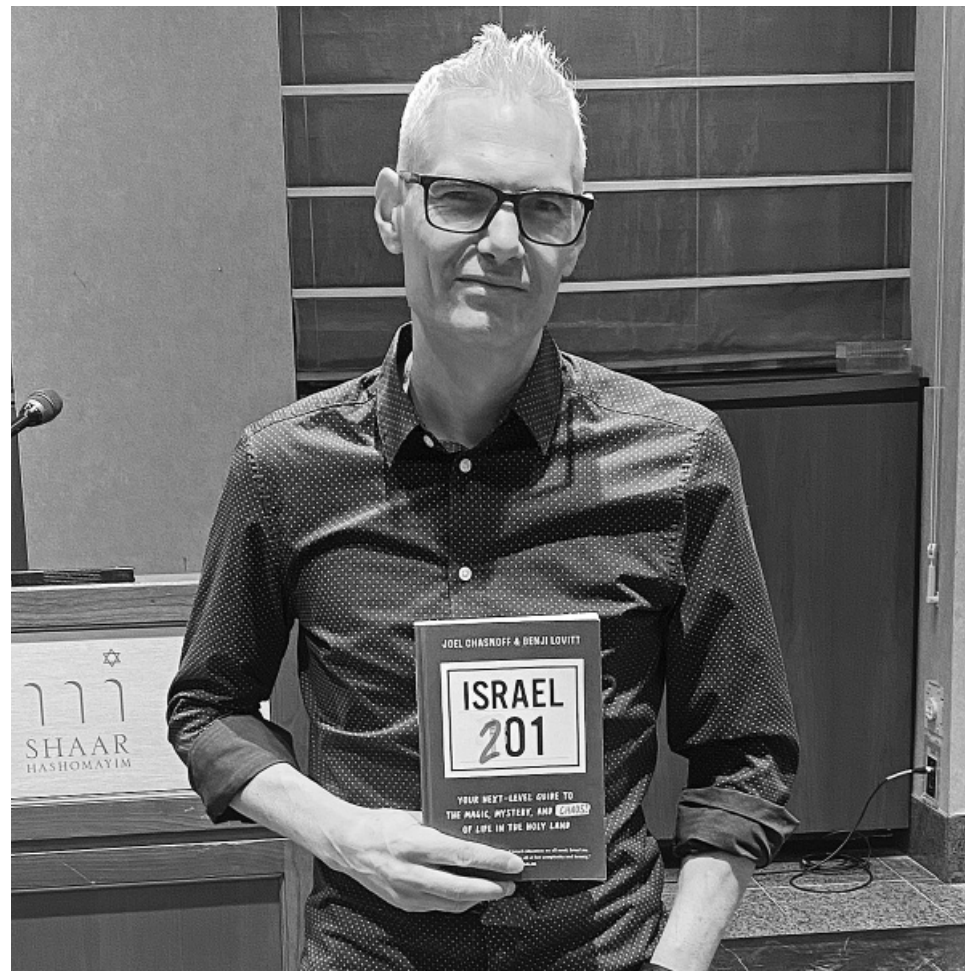
"The question is: 'Why wasn't anything done?' I can give you my opinion, having been in the army myself..."

"... what we found out was that there were 21 IDF divisions next to the West Bank and three IDF divisions next to Gaza, so all our strength was up there, and it was also Sukkot."

Chasnoff says that people cannot afford to forget that "20,000 to 30,000 Gazans were coming into Israel every day with valid work permits." In his opinion, some of them were probably scoping where the gates were to the kibbutzes. "They knew exactly where the fuse boxes were so they could cut the power."

Why was the army so slow to respond? "The two main bases down there were overrun so those soldiers who would have been the first line of defence ... were completely overrun. [The Hamas operatives] were able to overtake these bases."

Chasnoff said that more will come out in an inquiry, but that the mood in Israel right now is to move forward. "We have confidence in the IDF and no one believes that the IDF isn't ready. We may feel that they were not activated early enough but we have full faith in the army."



Joel Chasnoff at the Shaar Hasomayim on October 31.

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2 Our donation page at CHU Ste-Justine – site.fondationstejustine.org/westmountoldtimers2023?langPref=fr-CA

3 Our online silent auction at app.galabid.com/westmount-oldtimers, for nearly 100 items, including gift certificates to dozens of local restaurants and stores, Habs tickets, a team signed Habs jersey, an Austin Mathews signed Leafs jersey, first class Via Rail tickets and a hotel stay.

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He likes his cuddles but he is weary there. It is not a family that offers him constancy and a sense of belonging. Hugs from strangers don't mean much when missing a previous owner and looking forward to love again.

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Your neighbour,
Lysanne



trasted by his high-necked white shirt, mittens and booties to style him well.

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Atwater Club, Selwyn House receive 'Green Legacy Hiroshima' ginkgos

BY JENNIFER BALL

The Atwater Club, located at 3505 Atwater Ave. near the corner of Sherbrooke St., was the recipient of a "Green Legacy Hiroshima" ginkgo tree on November 8. Dawid Jagiello was the project coordinator on behalf of the 97-year-old racquet and sports club, which is located just east of

Westmount.

Rev. Whitehouse of Westmount Park United Church spoke at the tree-planting about the aftermath of the atomic bomb that was dropped on Hiroshima, Japan on August 6, 1945

"One and a half kilometers from the epicentre of the bomb is the survivor tree... 'Everything was black and white and

horizontal, but some structures remained, including trees, and so they became places of shelter and meeting places because there was nowhere else to locate yourself. Most people did not believe that the trees would come back to life. But, of all the life to return to Hiroshima, the trees were the first...

"Against all the despair that we may have, these stories really, really count."

Westmount Park United has partnered with Chris Adam at Dawson College to nurture 12 such trees that were grown from seeds from a ginkgo that emerged from the ash.

Peace map gets a pin

Now two of them – one at Selwyn House School in Westmount and the one at the Atwater Club – will be added as "pins" on Dawson's existing peace trail map. The next International Day of Peace will be in September 2024 and Dawson College – which won Sustainability Institution of the Year at the International Green Gown Awards in 2022 – will update the map in time.

The map currently includes a tree at Dawson College (4011 de Maisonneuve), Westmount Park United (4695 de Maisonneuve) and the Unitarian church at 5035 de Maisonneuve in NDG, just west of the border with Westmount.

The original Japanese tree is a symbol of the natural world's resilience despite malice and its progeny was offered to Westmount Park United by the Green Legacy Hiroshima project, which accepts requests for seeds to be sown around the world to share the hope that trees gave to survivors after the bombings.

Selwyn's tree

Meaghan Scholefield, who is a grade 4 teacher at Selwyn House, collaborated with



Selwyn House's ginkgo on May 15 in front of the Lucas building, before its eventual planting across the street.

the church in the spring to receive a tree. The story of the tree was explained at the school's grade 6 graduation ceremony as well as the school closing ceremony for grades 1 to 5 in June.

The tree resides in front of the Macaulay building, on the northwest corner of Côte St. Antoine and Stanton. Scholefield's grade 4 boys helped her plant it, while learning about its provenance and significance.



From left, Dawid Jagiello and Rev. Neil Whitehouse at the Atwater Club on November 8. It is on Atwater just east of Westmount's border with downtown.

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Westmount Battery tours island of Montreal



Montreal East mayor Anne St. Laurent gave “a warm welcome” to the Westmount Battery, according to its president Patrick Martin. The battery fired one of Westmount’s 1810 cannon three times as part of the Remembrance Day ceremonies at the East End city’s cenotaph, which took place November 11.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF P. MARTIN.





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Police Report

Burglars target Victoria Ave.

By MARTIN C. BARRY

Police at Station 12 are advising business owners along Victoria Ave. to be especially careful when closing up at the end of the day after several break-ins, including some at a local veterinary clinic where the perpetrator has been as many as three times.

“There seems to be someone breaking into businesses from the back door, sometimes even through the window, and all they’re stealing is cash,” said Cst. Mike Yigit, community relations officer at Station 12. According to Yigit, the suspect stole money in the veterinarian’s premises the first time he broke in. On a second occasion, he managed to break in again, but nothing was found to have been stolen afterwards.

After the third attempt, the investigators found only damage on a door, indicating the suspect tried to get in once again, but without success.

Yigit said that he and another officer from Station 12 dropped by the veterinary clinic last week, as well as other businesses nearby, to remind them to be more vigilant and to advise them on how to improve

their security with new measures, including video cameras.

‘Car crimes’

According to Station 12 incident reports, two car thefts and one car break-in were committed on Westmount’s territory over the past two weeks or so. All involved sports utility vehicles. A Ford Explorer parked on Metcalfe Ave. was broken into during the early hours on November 17.

According to Yigit, the owner found the vehicle in the morning where he had parked it, but with the steering column removed from the dashboard.

He said it was probably an unsuccessful attempt by the perpetrators to bypass the ignition to start the car.

Then a Jeep Sahara was stolen outside 3259 St. Antoine St. in lower Westmount, also overnight. In this case, according to Yigit, it was a rented vehicle belonging to Enterprise Rent-A-Car.

Finally, a Toyota RAV4 was stolen on Olivier Ave. Again, this theft was committed under the cover of night. The owner said in his incident report to the police that broken glass was found on the street where the car had been parked.

Artisans Westmount generates record start for food drive

By LAUREEN SWEENEY

Westmount Public Security is off to what could be called a record start for its food drive thanks to donations at the door for admission to Artisans Westmount’s weekend fair November 11-12. Along with \$2,265 in cash, came some 10 recycling bins full of non-perishable food and other essentials. This compares with last year’s \$1,675 and five blue bins.

The number of donations indicates the amount of attendance to the event organ-

ized by Emily Gamble of the city’s Community Events, who said she was very “heartened that we had such a successful year.”

Artisans Westmount “is very close to my heart,” she said last week. “It was the first project I started on when I began working at Community Events several years ago, and I really enjoy working with our many artisans, whether they are returning vendors or brand new to us. We always hope that the selection of crafts is diverse and exciting for the community.”





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Girls 9 & under invited to WRC’s first-ever hockey-season kick-off

By RALPH THOMPSON

The Westmount recreation centre (WRC) hosted its first-ever hockey-season kick-off, and it was female players 9 and under who were the invitees to the November 25 event. Eight teams from the Lac St. Louis M9-3F league, about 100 excited hockey players, came for a friendly competition.

The league includes teams from as far away as Châteauguay, Valleyfield and Vaudreuil.

“There’s no score sheet,” said organizer Andrew Maislin, WRC operations manager, president of Westmount Minor Hockey and a vice president of Hockey Lac St-Louis, where he focuses on developing girls’ hockey. “We are trying to encourage young girls to play hockey, but it’s not just about hockey. It’s about engaging with others who share the same interest, developing as athletes and improving social skills.”

Hundreds of skaters to recruit from

There are hundreds of young girls taking skating lessons at the WRC and Maislin would like to see them playing hockey. The president of Hockey Lac St. Louis, Jean-Pierre Fortier, was also there cheering along the fledgling players.

“I’ve been involved with hockey since I was a kid in Rouyn Noranda. I see the benefits of playing hockey. Young people motivate me to be here. As long as my involve-



The Westmount Wings’ goalie, 7-year-old Hayley, crouches to block a shot on goal from a Storm Sud-Ouest forward. Hayley’s mother Jodie Frenkiel looks on from behind the glass standing next to organizer Andrew Maislin, WRC operations manager.

ment brings something to the table, I’ll continue to put a smile on the players’ faces.” The officials may not have been keeping a score sheet, but there was plenty of competition on the ice. When one pint-sized Westmount Wings player swept down the ice and slapped the puck between the legs of the Storm Sud-Ouest goalie, there were

celebratory fist bumps and big smiles from the other players. A large crowd of parents and fans lined the balcony, providing encouragement and supporting applause. Jodie Frenkiel, mother of Westmount Wings M9-3F goalie Hayley said, “Our whole family plays hockey. I play hockey

and so do my four kids. We don’t mind the bumps and bruises. It’s all part of the game. I have a big bruise on my leg from hockey.” There would have been plenty of bruises to nurse that evening, but there were lots beaming faces, lots of energy on the ice and no losers.

Pre-Christmas crowd attends Treats & Treasures at Centre Greene

By MARTIN C. BARRY

Just in time for Christmas, volunteers and staff at Centre Greene held their annual Treats & Treasures artisan fair on November 18, drawing hundreds of people eager to get an early start on shopping for hand-crafted and original holiday gifts. The bazaar included more than 30 artisans displaying their handiwork. There were also baked goods, a raffle for prizes and booths with Chez Doris mittens and the Empty Bowls Project. A light lunch was served and all proceeds are going towards supporting Centre Greene’s community programs. Among the new artisans this year was John Scott Bailey, a Westmounter who decided during the COVID pandemic when he had some time on his hands to devote more of his efforts to painting watercolour images of familiar landmarks in Westmount, St. Henri and other neighbourhoods. Although his originals are not for sale, copies are available of familiar Westmount



Left, Anita Low (centre), who specializes in beaded jewellery from Ghana and other African countries, was among the 30 artisans who displayed and sold their wares during Centre Greene’s Treats & Treasures bazaar. Right, Centre Greene executive-director Heather Hodges (right) is seen here with Westmount watercolour artist John Scott Bailey.

scenes such as the stone railway archway on Glen Rd.; the CN level crossing and the abandoned Canada Malting factory in St.

Henri; and the Marché Westmount grocery store on Sherbrooke St. just over the border from Westmount in NDG.



“This has been extremely popular,” Bailey said regarding the demand he encountered for copies of the latter image.

Atwater Library honours Jones, prepares for its ‘third century’



Social Notes

VERONICA REDGRAVE

While sometimes I am tempted to breathlessly report on Very Important Trends such as the “Return of Red Lipstick,” it is a touch more noteworthy to speak of other worlds: in this case, books.

So, let us go then, you and I, to the Atwater Library and Computer Centre. There, the annual benefit cocktail party honoured Westmounter **Scott Jones**, CEO Nova Steel.

He was introduced by **Bruce Bolton**, library board president. Board directors are **Geoffrey Dowd**, **Helgi Soutar**, **John Aylen**, **Caroline Nalbantoglu**, **Daniel Boyer**, **Carol Christie-Olsen**, **Richard Conrad**, **Peter Dunn** and **Helen Malkin**.

Noted amidst the crowd were library executive director **Lynn Verge** and former senator **David Angus**, former Westmount mayor **Peter Trent**, **Julie Keith** and **Richard Pound**, **Diane Sharpe** and **Yves Langevin**, **Betsy Mit-**

continued on p. 18



Scott Jones, Lynn Verge and David Angus.



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Social notes, cont'd from p. 17

chell, Elizabeth and Michel Côté, Annabel Soutar, Jason Tsadilas, Janice Winslow, Cherry Williams, Nancy Brown, Susan Doherty and Hal Hannaford, and lawyer Nancy Cleman, who presented a Zoom talk for the library the next day.

Her presentation “Managing your Digital Assets” gave information on online banking and privacy protection.

Noted admiring the timeless wit of the signed Aislin works he donated to the silent auction were Morag and Peter Howlett, and Bruce McNiven and his wife Mary Senécal-Tremblay with whom I discussed *kintsugi* (I am attempting to repair a ceramic bowl using that Japanese art...but I digress).

Aislin’s wife, Mary Hughson (aka Gigot) exhibited her art with a percentage of sales donated to the library.

Also seen were Valerie and David Shannon, John Blachford, Larry Cannon, Peter Letko, Lorne Steinberg, Dora Koop and Stephen Phizicky, Olivier Setlakwe, Fiona MacLeod and Michael Goldbloom, Thomas Leslie, executive director Macdonald Stewart Foundation; Katherine Nikidis, head of school, Trafalgar School for Girls; and McGill University’s Guylaine Beaudry, Trenholme dean of libraries; Peter McNally, professor emeritus; and Nathalie Cooke, literature professor.

Enjoying the Dave Turner Jazz Trio were Gabriel Safdie, Leah Trineer, president University Women’s Club of Montreal; Beverley Hutchison, Margaret Lefebvre, Jodi Lafranière and Scott Pritchard, Rosalind and Tom Davis, Anna and Phil Belec, Susan Stevenson, Lori Baird-Morgan and Lucinda Chodan, former Montreal Gazette editor in chief.

Hors d’oeuvres were offered by Intermezzo and everyone raved about the delicious Dunn’s smoked-meat sandwiches, perfectly accessorized with pickles. The library’s upcoming Third Century Campaign is co-chaired by David Angus and Richard Pound.



Terry Mosher/Aislin and Mary Hughson/Gigot.



Nancy Brown, Julie Keith and Nancy Cleman.



Marie Senécal-Tremblay and Bruce McNiven.



Elizabeth and Michel Côté.

The Atwater’s building is just over one hundred years old (see “Atwater’s library turns 100, exactly,” February 4, 2020, p. 1), but the institution was founded, as the Montreal Mechanics’ Institution, in 1828. The name “Atwater Library of the Mechanics’ Institute of Montreal” was adopted in 1962 and was later changed to the Atwater Library and Computer Centre.

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



Peter Trent.



Richard Pound.



Janice Winslow and Cherry Richards.

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The public stairs from The Boulevard to Upper Roslyn appear to have been hit by a vehicle some time before November 1, the date of the photo at left. They are open again, centre, after the removal of the lower, damaged portion of the banister and the wrapping of the remaining banister's beginning with duct tape (right), as seen November 15.

PHOTOS: INDEPENDENT.

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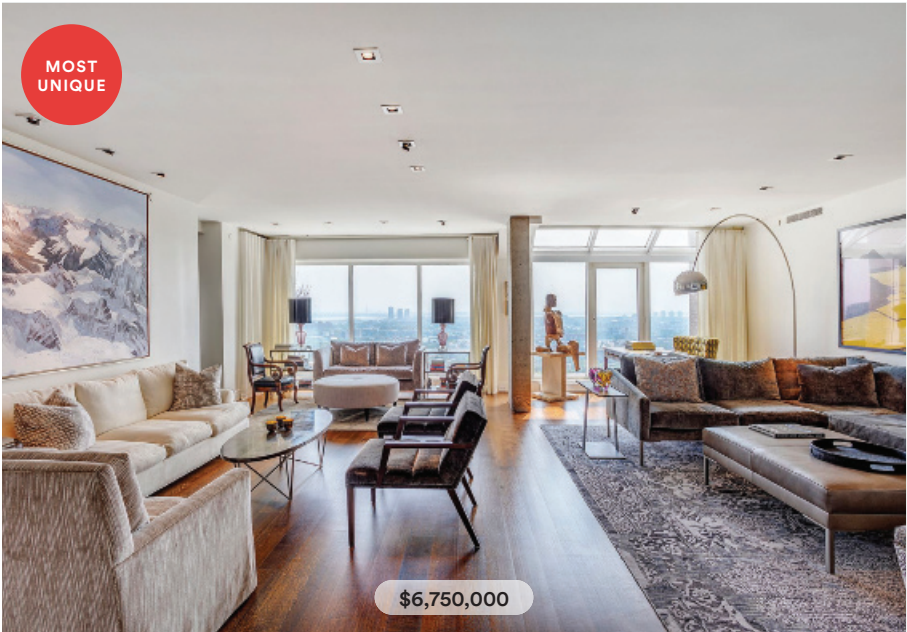
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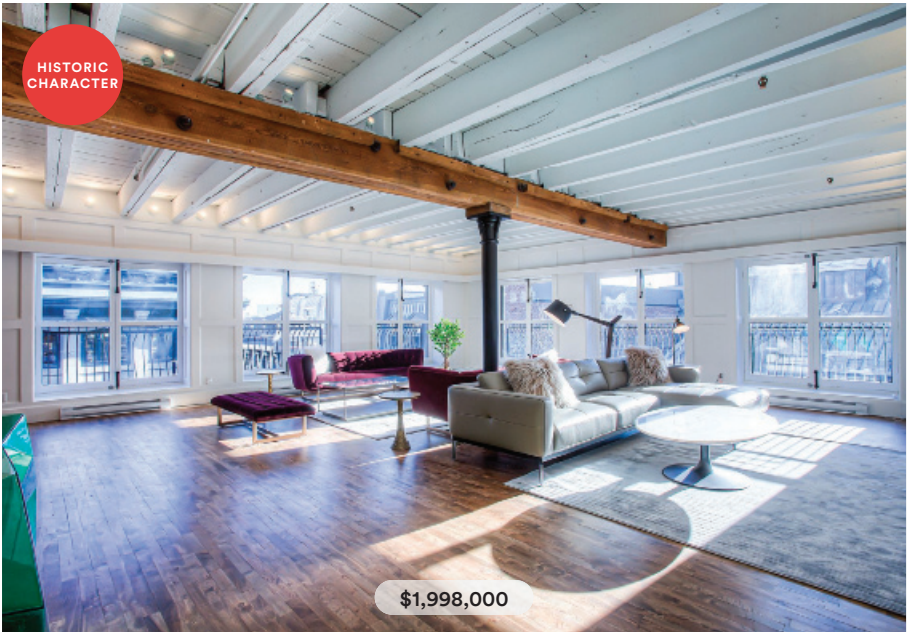
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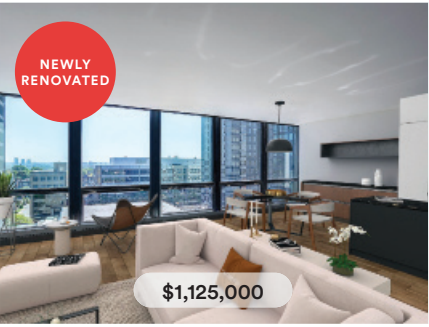
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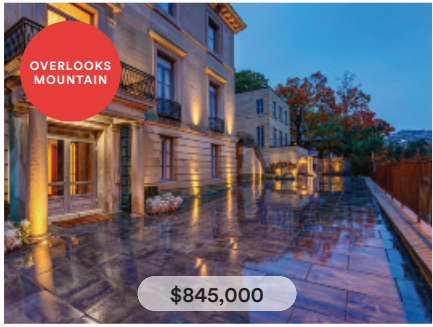
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