WESTMOUNT INDEPENDENT

Weekly. Vol. 3 No. 8c We are Westmount August 18-19, 2009

Public invited to RMR's 95th anniversary

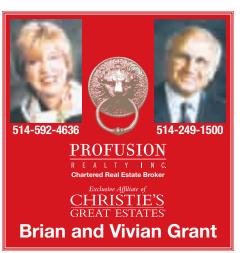
Local militia regiment plans family park events Saturday

BY LAUREEN SWEENEY

Westmount's Royal Montreal Regiment (RMR) will celebrate its 95th anniversary Saturday, August 22, with a family day for the public in Westmount Park including games, contests and a barbecue.

It will also hold an open house at the armoury beside the Westmount arena throughout the festivities (10 am to 3:30 pm). Its museum of military artifacts and





souvenirs will be open during this period (see story p. 6).

"These events allow us an opportunity to meet the community we live in," said anniversary organizer Lieutenant Colonel Toby Glickman, a former commanding officer of the regiment. "The celebration is a kick-off to our 100th anniversary in 2014."

The outdoor activities take place on the north field of the park alongside Melville Ave. Morning events include an obstacle course, a soccer-baseball game and a cornshucking competition. The barbecue takes place from 11:30 am to 1 pm. It will be followed by soccer and softball games.

The celebrations close with a dinner at the armoury for some 200 guests.

Skydiving for charity



WAG flyer sparks more debate about possible arena site

By Laureen Sweeney

A "Save the WAG" flyer distributed three weeks ago in the southeast district contained a number of misleading statements that may have fuelled residents' concerns brought to the August 3 council meeting, according to Councillor Kathleen Duncan.

These include the amount of space that a two-rink arena might occupy at the Westmount Athletic Grounds (WAG) and its impact, which she claims were "greatly exaggerated."

"It is important that these misconceptions be corrected," she said.

Both Duncan and Councillor Cynthia Lulham support a proposal of council colleague Patrick Martin to explore the possibility of using a portion of the athletic field as a site for a new arena. Council had voted against it, however, before distribution of the flyer.

While the flyer "erroneously" states an arena would take "upwards of 50 percent" of the five-acre field, Duncan explained, it would likely require only slightly more than one-quarter (60,000 of the WAG's 234,000 square feet).

District 8 councillor John de Castell, who helped distribute the flyer, explained: "The fact continued on p. 6

Election news
Bowser won't run, see Letters p. 4



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Westmount ink

Tattoos for kids with allergies

Tara Wilkie has a challenge many parents don't – keeping her eldest daughter safe from peanuts – and a novel solution: tattoos. Wellesley, age 5, is allergic to peanuts and has to avoid them in all their forms, including trace elements from packaging equipment used to process other foods.

The problem has become even more tricky as Wellesley grows up and attends more events outside the home. How can other caregivers and adults be warned of her condition?

Part of Wilkie's solution came about when her sister, Shauna, said jokingly, "Wouldn't it be great if you could tattoo her?" The Westmount mum took the suggestion seriously and investigated temporary tattoos already on the market. Finding them too expensive, ugly or not specific to a given allergy, she went out and had her own made.

The tattoos rub on like conventional novelty tattoos, but are resistant to water for two to three days. The inks are carefully chosen to be hypoallergenic. Wellesley gets the idea, correcting the *Independent*'s reporter about the drawing on her hand, "It's not a sticker. It's a tattoo!"

Locally, Wilkie's tattoos (\$9.95 for 10) are available at LMNOP, ArtEnfant and Kidlink, as well as at select stores in Maine, New York and Georgia. Wilkie is not sure about the business prospects of the idea, seeing it mainly as "a way to protect kids"

Marks meets with new municipal affairs minister, asks about grant

BY LAUREEN SWEENEY

Concerns of the 15 demerged suburbs were presented to Quebec's new minister of municipal affairs, Laurent Lessard, July 15 along with Westmount's hope for an infrastructure grant for the arena/pool renewal project.

Representing the Association of Suburban Municipalities, Westmount mayor Karin Marks and Pointe Claire mayor Bill McMurchie met Lessard in his Montreal office, and found him to be open and available. Lessard replaced Nathalie Normandeau in the cabinet shuffle of June 23.

"We had a good and very frank discussion," Marks said. "We found he had been well-informed about our issues and had a sense that our agglomeration issues were not a short-term problem."

Marks said she reinforced the case for Westmount's arena and reported that



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Lessard was already aware of the city's grant application. He also said he was going through the recommendations Normandeau had made.





From left: Islay and Wellesley with their mother, Tara Wilkie.



Restrictions de stationnement modifiées Parking restrictions have changed

Le 10 août, les périodes d'entretien des rues en après-midi ont été modifiées. Si vous stationnez dans la rue, vous pourriez être affectés par ces changements.

Veuillez vérifier les panneaux dans votre rue.

On August 10, parking hours for afternoon street maintenance were changed. If you park on the street, this may affect you.

Please check the signs on your street.



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Letters to the Editor

BOWSER: I AM NOT RUNNING

A recent rather flip comment attributed to me in this newspaper needs some clarification. As a councillor, I worked for my constituents and it was up to me to determine what my workload would be. It may have appeared that I was using it as a bargaining chip for a possible second term, and that is regrettable and wrong.

I will not run for re-election this coming November. It has been an honour to have served as councilor for District 5, and I thank the citizens for their trust. A term as a city councillor is both a challenging and rewarding experience. I have learned a great deal about the city I live in, about the way it is managed and about what it takes to keep it strong.

Mayor Karin Marks has provided this city with resolute, progressive leadership, and carries her responsibilities with fortitude, good humour and unstinting goodwill. I am proud to have been a member of her team, and to have enjoyed her confidence

I am sure that the next council will be as diligent, responsible and responsive as the current one, and that Westmount will continue to be the best possible place to live, grow and raise a family.

GEORGE BOWSER CITY COUNCILLOR (DISTRICT 5)

A PIMBY ARENA ROOF?

Since it began, I have been following the arena/pool debate with more than a little interest. As a park-going, dog-runusing, pool-dipping, hockey-playing family of six, we seem to fit virtually every demographic who might be affected by the plans. Last summer, I spent six hours in the registration line, only to have one son shut out of his hockey program of choice, and another placed on the waiting list. I drive to Pointe Claire each week in order to play women's hockey during "prime time" (weekday evenings), since this option does not exist in Westmount. My daughter, were she inclined to play ringuette, would likewise have to venture outside the city for ice time. Clearly our opinion is that two regulation rinks would be well-used and greatly enjoyed by many.

I do, however, appreciate the concern about the potential loss of green space. Whereas for our family a preserved – albeit smaller – park is an acceptable concession for the tremendous gain, this opinion is clearly not shared by all. But in considering the proposed structures, I wonder if any thought has been given to the possibility of reclaiming some urban oasis, on the roof.

I have no idea what this might entail (in terms of cost, engineering, etc), but it could permit those services coveted by many (two rinks, indoor pool) and possibly result a net *gain* of green space. While some are relishing peaceful contemplation in the garden above, I'll enjoy my Zen moment on the ice beneath.

Regarding the Westmount Park vs. WAG debate, and the host of NIMBY protests that this has inspired, I hereby counter with PIMBY (PLEASE, in my back yard!). Where sports facilities are concerned, I offer, at no cost, the meagre piece of acreage which is MBY. In fact, if you could annex the rink right onto my kitchen, that would be ideal!

Ingrid Kovitch Dannenbaum, Montrose Ave.

SOCCER FIELD WOES

Where have the "increased numbers of registered soccer players" gone?

The Westmount Park playing fields, expressly and expensively fenced for their benefit, are empty these days except for the few players – who the fence was supposed to keep out – fooling around and cyclists enjoying private joy rides.

Also, the city does not seem to have come up with any positive answer to the bike path danger it created by the construction of two new paths that cut across it. Permanent fence posts have now been installed along the south side. But why for only three quarters of the path? And what about children running onto the path from the north side? Is the city "playing it by ear" with the safety and lives of children and cyclists?

In recent weeks, huge orange plastic barriers were placed on the path at the two junctions only to be removed the next day, and confusing signs were put up commanding cyclists to "stop" and "slow down" (expecting cyclists to obey), as well as signs forbidding pedestrians to walk on the bike path (expecting pedestrians to obey.)

And to crown the folly, the massive concrete plant container on the side of the path at the gazebo has now been moved to the west side allowing pedestrians direct access to the bike path. This massive obstacle is now in a choice position to block the views of both child and cyclist when either is rushing unseen towards the other.

And next time, the child or cyclist or both may not be as lucky.

STEPHEN CHIN, SHERBROOKE ST.

WAG ARENA MAKES SENSE

I'm a resident of Academy Rd. with two small children. Until this summer, we enjoyed use of Westmount Park's southern field at our doorstep. That, changed with the new "off limits" soccer field.

It seems that my theory was correct: They built a field so that for a mere six weeks in the spring, tiny tots could kick around a soccer ball for a few late afternoon hours (and rob us of our parking spaces); the field would then lie dormant for the rest of the year but still off limits (judging by the fence and the few times I've been asked to get off the field).

I never thought about bringing this up again until reading a previous issue of the *Westmount Independent* and seeing the articles on the WAG arena proposal.

What a great idea.

I sometimes go to the WAG field with my kids or go there to jog or to shoot boomerang. I always thought that the field was rather large for the use that is made of it. I hadn't realized that it is also used for soccer camp during the summer when

Following up with some facts

In our August 6 Letters to the Editor section last week ("How much has been spent?", p. 6), Larry Klepper asked several questions that we have now had time to ask city director general Duncan Campbell. He and his office came back with these answers:

- Q. How much was spent on 2007's aborted artificial turf project?
- A. \$10,000.
- Q. How much was spent on the fencedin soccer fields in southern Westmount Park near Academy Rd.?
- A. \$905,100.
- **Q.** Does the city include or capitalize the cost of city workers' time for projects like these and the arena?
- A. According to Campbell, no. Only incremental or third-party costs are included.

the new (underused) Westmount Park soccer field could serve that purpose.

The WAG seems to have lots of space and potential for parking, which is the second major point for me, since, as it is, Academy Rd. residents have to jockey for spaces with arena/field/pool users, and this will only worsen with the current proposal – to the point that we would probably have to move.

Mayor Karin Marks' reasoning that current green space is there for residents to use is rather odd since they have all but banned open use of the green space right in front of our home.

Also, whatever you build at the WAG will not get built in Westmount Park, which truly is a park (the WAG having always had a more athletic vocation).

Finally, by building pools in the current junior tennis court area, not only will it be extremely bothersome and noisy for residents on Academy Rd., but also, the relocation of the tennis courts will use up green space elsewhere in the park.

JEFFREY FREEDMAN, ACADEMY RD.

NOT SO ELEMENTARY

I very much enjoyed Gavin Ross's trip down memory lane ("School Days – Part I: It's elementary", July 14, p. 20), but it appears the memory of his early days at Peter Pan Nursery School on Strathcona Ave. may have waned somewhat (as he was peering into his fridge?). The nursery school he attended on Strathcona was not #457, but rather #445 – our home.

His article sent usback to check our house continued on p. 20

WESTMOUNT INDEPENDENT

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Civic Alert

Council's differing views on sustainable priorities emerge

By Don Wedge



A special closed-door session has been called for Wednesday, August 19, during which councillors must choose the priorities for action from more than 200 suggestions culled from their earlier recommendations.

"Without priorities, nothing will get done," said Mayor Karin Marks, who has made the move towards a sustainable city one of the hallmarks of her leadership.

City sustainable development coordinator Joshua Wolfe has written six chapters based on the suggestions made in the various public and private consultations with residents, groups, Westmount city departments and staff since the Vision Statement was endorsed by council on February 2, Marks explained.

Councillors selecting priorities

In recent weeks, councillors have been reading the first chapters and selecting their priorities. Wolfe has brought these together for council's decisions on August 19. Marks is expecting about five priorities to emerge from each chapter.

"Not all will have budget implications," she pointed out, "but where costs are involved we want them built into the ongoing 2010 budget process. The new council is not committed to follow our decisions, but we hope they will."

In their preparations for the meeting, some councillors have been very critical of the report. Outspoken is Kathleen Dun-

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"The report is too broad and too detailed," she claimed. "Even reducing the priorities to 25 or 30 is too many. Given all the work council has to do, we cannot devote so much energy to sustainable development."

Instead, Duncan is arguing that the priorities should be limited to only three in all. "Each should be highly advertised, be given a time frame and be benchmarked,"

Duncan, Lulham want public access

It is hard to assess her claims as the report is yet to be made public. Duncan wants public comments before the priories are determined. "Also, some experts' input would be helpful," she said. "Why should councillors be called on to make the decisions in the often technical areas of sustainable development?"

Likewise, Councillor Cynthia Lulham wishes the report had been available to the public. "I went through the report with Joshua Wolfe and Urban Planning director Joanne Poirier and will make decisions based on what I think residents want. However, I would have been happier if Joshua had gone back to those he had originally consulted.

"It took three years to pass the by-law on monster houses and get buy-in from the public and architects. We are rushing this through. Even the word 'sustainable' creates different visions to different people."

Incidentally, one priority Lulham is certain to insist on is to provide recycling collections in commercial areas. "All 13 La Cache stores that I ran in the US 14 years ago had recycling collected, so why has it taken us so long?

Of course, to even conceive of a sus-

tainable objective for a community like Westmount is a very ambitious undertaking. But successful plans have been introduced in many cities varying from Whistler to Sorel-Tracy and Burlington, Vt. They are pioneering efforts, which may take 10 or even 20 years to show serious

Environment links WAG and arena site

There seems to be growing environmental interest in all we do. Resident Richard Bond made a revealing comment following the August 3 "love-in" between the pro- and contra-WAG arena sides on city hall steps. A common theme had emerged - respect for the environment, according to Bond, who came back inside to report to the council meeting on the unexpected harmony.

Mayor Marks wants to get the sustainable development action plan adopted by this council. It may be ready for the September 8 meeting, but most likely it will be presented on September 16.

In any case, Victoria Hall has been booked for a public meeting on Septem-

It will be interactive and informal, according to Wolfe.

Marks is optimistic for the plan. "I believe it is far enough along that the new council can build on it," she told me soon after announcing her decision not to run

Despite this burst of criticism, implementing change to a new kind of living for a sustainable society is what she will be known for in future decades - not renewing the arena or even beating back Big Montreal.

> Citizen activist Don Wedge's email address is dwedge@sympatico.ca.

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Notaries

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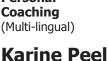
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Lots to see in Royal Montreal Regiment museum

BY LAUREEN SWEENEY

A surgical kit from World War I is among many items that residents will have an opportunity to view Saturday when the regimental museum is opened to the public in honour of the RMR's colourful 95-year history.

Among a special display are uniforms of the day, photos, citations, gear, historical records and other memorabilia.

While the militia regiment dates back to the start World War I, the building of the armoury was made possible in 1925 by funds raised by Westmount residents and the lease of municipal land to the regiment for \$1 a year for 99 years.

Who knew?

The original arena controversy foreshadowed the current debate. See Doreen Lindsay's Westmount Today, Yesterday and Before column, p. 19 and 20.

Raised in August 1914 from personnel in three existing Montreal militia regiments – the 1st Regiment, Canadian Grenadier Guards; the 3rd Regiment, Victoria Rifles, and the 65th Regiment, Carabiniers de Mont-Royal – the new regiment arrived in Britain 1,000 strong as part of Canada's first contingent.

It won many battle honours and hundreds of citations for bravery including two Victoria Crosses. When the RMR returned, the 58th Regiment, Westmount Rifles gave up its standing to the regiment, launching a long association with the Westmount community.

Since then, the militia regiment has contributed soldiers to almost every operation conducted by the Canadian Forces in peacekeeping missions or security operations at home. It currently has troops serving voluntarily in Afghanistan and in UN roles (see *Westmount Independent*, March 3 and March 24).

Former mayor Peter Trent recently retired as the RMR's honorary colonel. Westmounter Andrew Molson now serves as honorary lieutenant colonel.

Cllr. de Castell: No studies support WAG-arena claims

continued from p. 1

is, there are no studies to support either one." But, he added, when you factor in the space and legal requirements for access around the building, "it probably would have to be positioned in the centre of the field, which would ruin the space."

Martin's idea, however, suggests the arena could be placed, Duncan states, so as "not to preclude the use of the area by schools, residents of St. Margaret's home, tennis players, joggers, gardeners, dog walkers, daycares and day camps, the soccer school, and general recreational use of the athletic field."

The flyer states that "most of these activities will be greatly diminished or eliminated."

Asked why the flyer had been delivered even after council had decided not to study the WAG option, de Castell said residents of Hallowell and other streets were "horrified" at losing the green space.

"People were taken aback by council's apparent dual position given that three councillors publicly supported [the concept]."

"We all felt very passionately," explained Greene Ave. resident Patricia Dumais, one of several people who distributed the flyer.

Dumais, who is corresponding secretary of the Westmount Municipal Association, said the optional WAG site had only been briefly mentioned by the citizen group at its meeting July 20 following reports of the proposal in the *Independent* of July 7, and a number of letters supporting further study of the site the following week.

Councillor de Castell said the loss of green space was particularly abhorrent to people in one of Westmount's most densely populated areas, characterized by terraced houses without front lawns. It is used by many for pickup activities that are not being covered in the \$36-million arena/pool renewal project.

The flyer did not mention the proponents' estimated saving of \$8 million by building part of the project at the WAG.

But de Castell said that in terms of future generations "we would be vilified in less than two decades for today's temporary convenience of selling off green space assets for what will then be lunch money."



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Baby bird saved

Former, current Westmounters join forces to rescue robin

July 25 began as a normal Saturday for former Westmounters Kathy Grauer, who now lives in NDG, and her two grown sons, Philip and Marcel, who live in Montreal and Toronto.

They were cycling along Côte St. Antoine near Murray (King George) Park when they spotted a robin that had fallen prematurely from its nest to the road. They stopped and – careful not to touch it with their hands – put the small bird on the grass.



Marcel Grauer works carefully to save the robin.

They did not have anything else at hand to help it, so they rang the bell of the nearest house. Janet Aubert answered the door and was soon joined by her husband, Jean-Phillipe.

Together the fivesome found a box to house the bird, and fed it water, oil and seeds. The next day, the Grauers brought the robin to Le Nichoir, a bird sanctuary in Hudson. It turns out that young birds should be fed cat food and water only, so the young robin had a tough first few days

at the rehabilitation centre. One of the Grauer sons has returned to visit the bird and reports it is now progressing well.

The Auberts' house turned out to be a good pick for the Grauers. The couple used to have birds feeders and they were enthusiastic about offering a hand. "It was the sweetest thing that could have happened to us," said Janet, who praised the Grauers as "a gentle family."

It turns out that bird welfare isn't the only connection between them. When she picked a door at

random, Kathy was ringing the doorbell of her former McGill French professor, Jean-Phillipe.



Philip and Marcel Grauer.

Place Kensington looks to the future, celebrates the past



Aaron Gelber, Norman Sternthal and Michael Gallaman release doves with messages of hope during Place Kensington's 20th anniverary celebration.

BY ASHLEY KARP

Place Kensington residents, employees, and guests gathered this week to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the seniors' residence in lower Westmount. The affair was marked by a series of events taking place at what the residents have come to call "Palace Kensington."

Guests were welcomed at a cocktail reception August 12 in the basement lobby by the musical stylings of harpist Olga Gross of the Montreal Symphony Orchestra. The expansive garden patio set the stage for the ceremony, which included speeches by Place K's director Sylvia Zagury, recreation coordinator Doreen Friedman and Mayor Karin Marks.

Marks praised the organization for offsetting the minimal government services for seniors and for ensuring the best living situation for Westmount's elderly community by encouraging active participation in local society.

To mark the milestone, Place Kensington owners Aaron Gelber, Norman Sternthal and Michael Gallaman, as well as the

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members of the residents' council, released white doves as a symbol of peace for the future. Each dove carried skyward messages from the residents who had written down their hopes and wishes.

Resident Lucille Brisebois' message read, "How lucky our doves have wings to take them wherever they want. Take our best wishes for this beautiful Place Kensington that we love." Resident Pauline Ouimet's message paid tribute to two decades of dedication and hardwork, "Congratulations to Place Kensington on the 20th anniversary of the residence. A million thanks to staff and administration for making this residence first class."

A celebratory anniversary dinner and casino night for all those in attendance followed the ceremony.



Talking politics



Westmount-Ville Marie MP Marc Garneau (right) shares a laugh with possible mayoral candidate (and former mayor) Peter Trent. Both men were attending David Nicholson's August 19 Wednesday salon.

Notebook

Green patrollers look back on their summer experience

By Ekaterina Ianovskaïa and Philippe Joly, *Green Patrollers*

The Westmount Green Patrol's summer program has come to an end for another year.

Much was accomplished during these nine summer weeks. Regular environmental kiosks in the parks, ecological workshops for summer camps, and everyday door-to-door visits represented a tremendous experience for us ecology-oriented university students. Every day, our work was full of interesting meetings, animated discussions and unforgettable events. We remember with deep satisfaction happy faces and glowing eyes of summer camp kids enthusiastically shouting "Reduce! Reuse! Recycle! Recover!"

After personally meeting over 1,500 Westmount residents, we can state that they are very fond of their city and spare no effort to make it cleaner and greener.

They proved to be very responsive to environmental subjects such as composting, recycling, ecological gardening and rainwater collection.

The most promising projects for Westmount are undeniably composting, including vermicomposting, and collecting rainwater for lawn watering. We received hundreds of valuable comments and suggestions from the community, and we would like to express our gratitude to all those who contacted us with vivid interest and a heart-filled desire to improve the environment.

Both of us will keep precious memories of our summer as Westmount Green Patrollers. We appreciated the continuous ecological efforts of the Westmount council which made the city one of the greenest and the most environment-friendly places to live on the island of Montreal.

Thank you Westmount and see you next summer!

Health Round-Up

You are my sunshine

BY BARRY NASHEN

A recent study has shown that the incidence of skin cancer continues to rise by approximately 1.5 percent per year. Indeed it is 50 percent higher today than it was 30 years ago, with nearly 80,000 Canadians expected to be diagnosed with the disease in 2009 alone.

According to the Canadian Cancer Society, skin cancer is the most common form of cancer in Canada. What exactly is skin cancer and what can we do to avoid joining these gruesome statistics?

In brief, skin cancer is a malignant growth on the skin. There are a variety of different skin cancer symptoms. These include changes in the skin that do not heal, ulcering in the skin, discoloured skin, and changes in existing moles. In Canada, the major cause is overexposure to radiation from the sun or from artificial UV light such as tanning beds or sun lamps.

Some other risk factors include: light skin, eyes or hair; skin that burns or freckles easily; a strong family history of skin cancer and having many moles.

Why do cancer rates continue to increase despite the fact that sales of sunscreen are climbing by 2.5 percent each

year, reaching over \$100 million in Canada alone last year?

The answer is straightforward: Skin cancer generally has a 20- to 30-year latency period. Many instances of skin cancer in older individuals today can be traced to their behaviours as young adults in the 1970s and early 1980s. Deep tans at that time were routinely regarded as "healthy." Sunburns represented an inconvenient rite of spring or an awkward preliminary stage in the process of acquiring a "healthy" tan. Severe burns were commonplace.

Today we know this approach to be reckless. Rates of skin cancer in persons over 50 years of age reflect that day's popular ignorance. Interestingly, there are reports coming out of Australia of infants developing rickets, most often caused by a lack of exposure to sunshine due, perhaps, to their overprotective parents.

So then, how much sunshine is the right amount? There is no precise answer, but, I have always used the rule that 10-15 minutes per day is all that is needed to keep our bodies healthy. If you plan to stay outdoors longer, then simply apply a natural sunscreen on all exposed skin.

The longer you plan to stay in the sun,

the higher the Sun Protection Factor (SPF) that you need to use. Because it is impractical to apply sunscreen to your head, it is wise to wear a hat or cap to protect your scalp. There is a lot of controversy about sunscreen use, but I will save that discussion for a future article.

What should you do if you do get a sunburn? Treat your skin immediately with a natural cream or gel that should contain one or more of the following ingredients: lavender oil, aloe vera, chamomile or rosehip. These are natural antiseptics, analgesics or are anti-inflammatory and moisturizing.

If you overdid it in the sun, you hopefully only have a mild sunburn. However, if you have a fever or chills or if you feel

nauseous, dizzy or faint, it's probably a good idea to call your physician, as these are signs of heat exhaustion and require medical attention.

The summers in Canada are short and it's fun to be outdoors to play or relax, but we all need to have a healthy respect for getting too much of a good thing!

Barry Nashen is a Westmount IT consultant who is interested in health issues and shares his personal experiences in this column. He is not a health professional and his comments should be read in that light. Medical problems or remedies should be discussed with a doctor or appropriate health professional. For comments: barry@nashen.com

Please write to us!

For consideration, letters to the editor must identify them as "for publication" and have authors' customary first and last names, and street names, all of which will be published. Please also include contact information (for follow-up purposes only). We do not publish letters regarding consumer complaints or inter-neighbour disputes. Letters will be edited for length, content and style. Please check your letter carefully. We may be unable to make subsequently submitted changes. If you do make amendments, please "redline" them instead of resending the whole letter.

Underdog

From Lebanon to Montreal, Yarreck is looking for a home

By Fern Breslaw



Yarreck was sent over from Lebanon by an organization called Beirut for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (BETA) in February

and has seen more hate, suffering and neglect than we are comfortable sharing here.

His story is a shockingly lucky one although it may sound anything but. Quebec's track record in animal rights is appalling to anyone who opens their eyes, but compared to the situation in Beirut we look like a four-star hotel.

The number of homeless dogs in Lebanon is astronomical and the issue is far from being at the top of their to-do list. For shelters in Beirut, rescuing dogs may be a part of the solution but without anyone to adopt these animals it leaves them with a growing problem on their hands. So BETA has taken to shipping their dogs – as soon as they can find the funding – to parts of the world where these animals have a chance of finding loving homes.

Yarreck is one such dog. He was "fortunately" hit by a car during the war and found himself on the side of the road with mangled legs and a slim chance of survival. We say fortunately because this amazing dog would still be on the street or dead had this not happened. He was found by the BETA rescue team and was operated on. After much reconstruction, he recovered. Only his legs are now not all exactly the same length. Still, he can run, play and get around like the best of them which is as good as anyone could have hoped for.

After surviving war, being hit by a car and undergoing major surgery, Yarreck was put in a crate and sent off for a chance at a better life. He arrived in Montreal six months ago, but guess what? Nobody has taken him in.

Yarreck is only four or so, and he is calm, loving, and good with cats, dogs and kids. He is a beautiful German shepherd mix with a puppy dog face and a life of experience that would put most of us to shame.

He has made it through all this but still has no happy ending to his story. Hopefully and with just a little more luck, one of you reading this will give Yarreck the kind of life that will have made it all worthwhile.

Find out more about Yarreck by contacting Sophie's Dog Adoptions at 514. 523 5052

To sponsor the transport of other dogs like Yarreck, please call 514.574.2004.



Yarreck

Trees aren't always friendly



This tree at St. Catherine St. and Redfern decided to shed some branches on July 19. Unfortunately, someone's car was underneath!



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TRENDSETTER

By Veronica Redgrave

DANA BELL

Dana Bell is currently writing a book about her family, most of whom perished in the Holocaust. Because of this, Dana greatly appreciates life and living "in a free country." And she especially delights in her garden, which brings her peace.

I smile on opening the gate to Bell's charming Victorian garden, strewn with hidden animals peeking out from under lavender and pink flowers. A tiny path takes me to a home full of European elegance.

PERSONAL STYLE

How would you describe your personal style?

I consider myself a romantic.

What is your favourite way of dressing? Relaxed, black tie?

I don't just have one style. I love romantic long skirts. I adore costume jewelery, and of course rhinestones. But at the same time I can wear jeans and a white shirt (with rhinestones of course!) I love the Chanel look. I have gorgeous Chanel shoes with Lucite platform soles. My passion is faux vintage jewelery and wonderful accessories.

On weekends, what do you wear?

I often wear pyjama tops with pants. When we go out, I wear relaxed clothes.

I like to wear white in the summer and black in the winter.

WHILE IN NEW YORK?

You were just in New York ...what did you wear?

I dress comfortably in sneakers. Prada for a day of walking! I wear black pants and a white shirt, and of course accessories. At night I love the glamour of New York. I dress up with lots of vintage jewellery and a fabulous top.



Dana Bell

LIVING

If you had a choice, where would you live in the world (money no object!)

New York. Oh, and a *pied à terre* in Venice would be nice.

Who would you invite to a dinner party if you could have anyone in the world, and from any era.

Anais Nin, Pablo Picasso, Yo-Yo Ma, Yitzchak Perlman, Coco Chanel.

FASHION

What do you think of today's fashions? I miss the elegance of years gone by when everyone would dress with style and grace.

HOME STYLE

Your table settings are renowned for their elegant antiques. Does your home reflect this style?

Yes, my home definitely reflects my table settings. Bill and I love antiques, and we have been collecting special pieces for years. Our home has a European feeling.

Do you have flowers in your home?

Yes, at all times. They lift my spirits. I love my garden and the fact that in the summer I can cut fresh flowers each day. (I had noted the tall, elegant white cosmos at the entrance to the house.) Gardening is my form of meditation. The peace in daily chores such as weeding is amazing.

I depart by the back door where Italianate cypress-style firs stand sentinel in powerful black containers. Even in the darkest shade, Dana has stamped her style.



Terry Evans

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Laroche skydives to support facial-differences camp

Westmounter Danièle Laroche jumped from an airplane for the first time on July 18 at an airport near Ottawa.

That in itself puts her among the minority of Westmounters, but Laroche took on the challenge to support AboutFace Canada's Leap of Faith event, for which she raised \$1,800 by doing this jump.

The group's goal was to raise funds and awareness for Trailblazers, a camp for children ages 10 to 18 with facial differences that usually takes place in September. In total, 41 jumpers raised over \$68,000, up from nine jumpers who raised \$24,000 last year.

Laroche's goddaughter, Shelby, suffers from unilateral coronal craniosynostosis, which is a malformation of the head caused by the premature fusion of one or more of the sutures of a baby's skull.

Laroche volunteered at the Trailblazers Camp in 2006. "It was one of the most humbling experiences of my life," she

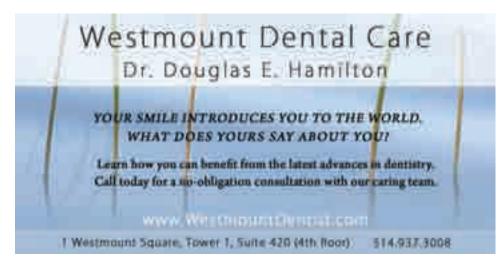
"In this age of artificial beauty, makeovers and cosmetic surgery, it seems more value is placed on physical appearance than anything else. I heard kids tell about what it's like for them to deal with a world that sends them a message that

there's something wrong and they can't hide because it's in their face every day."

To learn more about the event and the camp, go to www.aboutface.ca, call 1.800. 665.3223x23 or write to Laroche at daniele. aboutface@yahoo.ca.



Danièle Laroche safely on the ground.

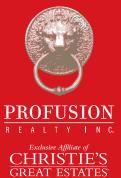




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- Ms. Claire Demers, Club Masterpiece de Symphonia Resident

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Westmount Art Scene

Jensen-Nagle and Grossmann: Diffused imagery

BY HEATHER BLACK

Soft focus sets the mood for photographer Joshua Jensen-Nagle at Galerie de Bellefeuille, and for figurative artist Angela Grossmann at Galerie D'Este.

Joshua Jensen-Nagle at Galerie de Bellefeuille

Jensen-Nagle creates a digital abstract reality. Known for his dazzling white and ethereal prints of the Louvre and St. Mark's Cathedral, these images emit a calm grandeur.

In his most recent work, celebrities set against a dark background emit an elusive aura. Portrayed in distinctive poses, the identity of a "Marilyn", "Elvis" or a young "Liz" Taylor is readily discerned. A pixeled outline creates a soft focus that suggests memory.

Also unexpected, a diffused Warhol's Campbell's soup can, suitably entitled



Jensen-Nagle "After Andy"

"After Andy", is luminous and vibrant against a black background. Combined with earlier works – landscapes, beaches and circus scenes – the effect is one of photographic virtuosity.

Dynamic and interesting, the exhibit continues until August 24 at Galerie de Bellefeuille on Greene.

Angela Grossmann at Galerie D'Este

One of Canada's foremost figurative artists, Grossmann's painting style is similarly diffused – suggestive rather than representative. Often combining photography

with oils, her timeless portraits lend to story-telling and social commentary.

In "Blue Back," a young woman strikes a sultry pose. Painted in blue on vellum paper, the strokes are graceful and effortless. In "Blue Stockings", a young woman's face is detailed against a loosely painted robe. A transferred photograph —



Angela Grossmann "Black Leather Coat"

over painted in blue – the effect is simultaneously of mystery and elegance of times past.

Also hearkening back to an earlier era, a young man in "Black Leather Coat" strikes a formal pose, his faithful hound in the background. A collage of black and sepia-toned images on tent canvas complete with grommets, the image resembles a restored and treasured photograph.

Beautiful and poignant, seven of the artist's works are currently on display at Galerie D'Este, also on Greene.

Signature style

There is no mistaking the work of either Jensen-Nagle or Grossmann. They both maximize their respective medium in a unique and individual manner.

But both photographer and painter, through soft and defused outlines, recall and recreate a memorable era of elegance and gentility.

Social Notes from Westmount and Beyond

Ladies Who Laugh, lunch

By Veronica Redgrave



The Ladies Who Laugh luncheon was held on a sunny (surprise!) July 23 on the tranquil terrasse at Bice, the chic resto in Montreal's Golden Mile. Hosted by superstar Caroline Rhea, a Study graduate who grew

up in Westmount, other comedians included Elon Gold and Bobby Slayton, in town for the comedy festival. They were joined by CJAD morning man Andrew

The event was in support of the Cedars Cancer Institute of the McGill University Health Centre (MUHC) and the riders in the 2009 Cedars Tour de Lance. In particular, the lunch raised funds for Comedy Fest COO Bruce Hills to ride in the Tour for his friend Terry Diab Peterfy, a fighting cancer survivor.

Ladies wore patterned print dresses, sexy stilettos, black leggings and elegant, pretty suits. Sponsors were Ristorante Bice, Corby's, Michael Kors, CJAD and Virgin Radio.

Guests enjoying the huge hydrangeas on each table included the Rossys -Cookie, her daughter Stephanie Rossy-Beauchamp and daughter-in-law Daniele, Dale, and Christine Guerrera, organizer Jennifer Roman, Lorraine Scaff and Westmounters Linda Smith, Leslie Frankel, Suzanne Crawford, and Daphne and Jeff **Shamie**, executive director of the Cedars Cancer Institute (tourdelance.ca).



Kirsten Simon, Gael Hunt and Gillian Yanow



Jeff, Daphne and Sophia Shamie



Pam Hendy and Sylvia Barakett

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9 Lives

Owners desperate to find Tiger

BY LYZANNE



Two years ago, my tiny Persian cat Oliver got out, and we couldn't find him. We were frantic, sticking posters all over Westmount, speaking to Public Security,

calling the SPCA and other rescue shelters. No Oliver. After the second night, we felt despondent and asked ourselves "what next?"

Thankfully, Oliver came back, looking worse for wear and ravenous, but at least he was home safe. We could breathe again and stop the constant worrying that he was hurt somewhere or had been taken.

So, it's time to give back. Our neighbours Tamara and Richard have been looking for their cat Tiger for days and still no luck. You have probably seen their posters, but if you haven't, here's a description of him and their phone number.

Tiger weighs about 7 pounds and his appearance is tiger-ish, but he is unique in that, besides his black stripes which many cats have, both sides of his body are littered with clearly defined spots, much like a leopard, and he has a black-tipped tail.

Tiger wants to come home where he is dearly loved, but he needs your help.

Please check your backyard, storage sheds, under front and back balconies, garages and alleyways and especially areas where there are bird feeders. Then ask your neighbours to do the same, or offer

to do it for them. Or just call Tiger's family, and they will come and check out these areas themselves.

Tiger is somewhere, people of Westmount, we just have to find him and help bring him home. If you have any hunches, please call Tamara and Richard at 514.946.5454.

Your neighbour,

Lyzanne

Artwork by Laura S. Cohendet



Tiger

Répertoire des activités : Avez-vous reçu votre copie?

Sinon, procurez-vous un exemplaire dans un édifice municipal dès maintenant, ou consultez notre site Web pour accéder à la liste complète des activités offertes.

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Westmount

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Info: 514 989-5200 www.westmount.org

Comin' Up

Wednesday, August 19 Special Council Meeting at city hall, 12 pm.

Thursday, August 20

Two-day workshop on eBay and Etsy (learn how to buy and sell online) offered by the Atwater Library and Computer Centre (1200 Atwater). The second class is Thursday, August 27. From 1 to 3 pm both days. Cost: \$65-75. Advance registration required: Call Nisa Malli at 514.935.7344.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 22

RMR 95th anniversary events at Westmount Park and open house at the ar-

moury, 10 am to 3:30 pm. Barbecue in park 11:30 am to 1 pm, rain or shine. See p. 1 for details.

Wednesday, August 26

- Registration for hockey and skating only from 6 pm to 8 pm at Victoria Hall. Info: 514.989.5353.
- "Let's Talk (some more!) about Sex, Baby!", continuing in a series of discussions on perimenopause and menopause hosted by Heidi K. Wiedemann, psychologist. From 6:45 pm to 9 pm at the Argyle Institute (215 Redfern Ave, suite 120). Cost: \$20 (at the door). Register before August 21: Contact Heidi Wiedemann at

514.713.4357 or heidi.wiedemann@videotron.ca.

Thursday, August 27 Registration for all other fall and winter sports and recreation classes from 6 pm to 8 pm at Victoria Hall. After August 27, registration must be done at the Westmount arena during regular office hours (Monday to Friday, 8:30 am to 4:30 pm).

(Monday to Friday, 8:30 am to 4:30 pm). Registration for non-residents begins September 9 at 9 am at the arena. Info: 514.989.5353.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 29 Thomas More Institute's annual book sale and open house, 10 am to 4 pm at 3405 Atwater. New and used books and CDs, fiction and non-fiction, are available for purchase. Discussion leaders will be on hand to talk about this year's new courses. 514.935.9585.

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Bon Appetit

Summer fruit: Simple peach pie recipe



Ву Етту В.

Peach season is upon us, and one slice of this simple peach pie will have everyone asking for seconds.

Preparation time: 1¾ hours. Serves 8. Serve with vanilla frozen yogurt or ice cream.

- Pastry for a double crust 9-inch pie (home made or refrigerated ready to use)
- 5 cups fresh peaches, sliced (or a bag of frozen sliced peaches)
- 1 cup sugar
- ½-½ cup all-purpose flour (½ cup if using frozen peaches)
- ¼-½ teaspoon cinnamon
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 2 tablespoons sugar Preheat oven to 425° F.

Stir together flour, 1 cup sugar and cinnamon, and set aside.

Wash, peel, and slice fresh peaches.

Mix together peaches with the combined dry ingredients.

Turn into pastry-lined pie pan and dot with butter.

Cover with top crust, cut slits in it, seal the edges.

Sprinkle top with 2 tablespoons of sugar.

Cover the edges with foil to prevent over-browning; remove foil for the last 15 minutes of baking.

Bake 35 to 45 minutes or longer until crust is brown and juice begins to bubble through the slits in the crust.

Pie may be frozen for future use.





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WESTMOUNT INDEPENDENT

Westmount Today, Yesterday and Before



BY DOREEN LINDSAY

Question: When was our artificial ice skating rink built? For answer, please turn to p. 20.

August at the Art Galleries

Galerie de Bellefeuille – Joshua Jensen-Nagle, Aug. 13 - 24. 1367 Greene Ave.

Emporium Gallery – Dave Arnold, Aug. 20, Aug 22 - 23. 3035 St. Antoine, suite 74

Parisian Laundry – "Summer in Paris" group show, Aug. 8 - Sep. 5. 3550 St. Antoine.

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History quiz: Ice skating rink

BY DOREEN LINDSAY

Question from p. 19. When was our artificial ice skating rink opened?

Answer: November 14, 1958

To find out when our artificial ice skating rink was built, I began to read through early editions of the *Westmount Examiner* newspaper. What I found was a mirror of the conflicting ideas concerning the site – which was changed three times.

On May 17, 1957, the paper reported that the city of Westmount was "preparing plans and getting ready to call for tenders for an artificial skating rink at the corner of Sherbrooke St. and Melville Ave. on the northeast corner of Westmount Park." The same article reported a door-to-door petition to halt the project. Residents wanted an artificial rink, but they proposed that the site be less conspicuous.

Two weeks later, city manager T. J. Hughes issued an announcement that alternative sites would be studied. On June 28, Mayor Sydney Bruneau said that the corner of Lansdowne and Western (as de Maisonneuve was then called) had been selected as the best of five possible sites. However 700 members of the Westmount Park Emanuel Church petitioned the city to reconsider this second site. They objected to the expected noise of loudspeakers playing music to the skaters.

The confrontation continued.

On August 2, it was reported that Reverend Callum Thompson and his congregation were continuing their opposition. Meanwhile, the city had set August 12 as the deadline for tenders for an open-sided, one-story structure 100 by 300 feet with a precast floor on piles and a closed-in clubhouse at one end. Architects were Wiggs, Lawton and Walkes.

By August 16, we see that the rink site had been moved south of the Lansdowne and Western corner with a promise to retain one group of tennis courts.

During October and November 1957, photographs were published showing the construction of the ice rink. Finally, on October 31, 1958, we see photographs and descriptions of the newly completed artificial ice rink situated at the corner of St. Catherine St. and Lansdowne Ave., south of the park. The official opening was November 14, 1958. One thousand people, many of them children, crowded the rink for the ceremony, as they were reported to do on following Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights.

Once finished, everyone seemed satisfied, and the ice rink was extremely popular

Doreen Lindsay is the president of the Westmount Historical Association.

Westmount Memories

School days - Part 2 (of 3)

By Gavin Ross

After my time at Roslyn came grade 7 at Westmount Junior High (now Westmount Park School).

It was quite an adjustment from being spoon fed at Roslyn. Our "room teacher" was Angus Bernard, a ruddy-faced, seemingly humourless person whose speciality was English.

What a teacher he was – quite unlikeably stern – but his "never give a sucker an even break" is still memorable. He seemed to like corporal punishment, because every day there was a long line up from his various classes outside our cloakroom to receive the strap.

Grades 8 and 9 passed uneventfully except getting strapped twice by Mr. Horsnall, who was a pretty tough math teacher. The first punishment was because I passed a wooden "Dixie cup" spoon over to Carter Powis and the second because I hit him with a blackboard brush that I was throwing at Ian Black.

(After graduation, Bill Horsnall became a good friend. Angus Bernard was honoured by the Westmount High Old Boys' at a banquet at the Windsor Hotel attended by more of 400 of his former pupils and the "Angus Bernard Medal for Proficiency in English" was established).

Senior High

Senior high was fun. Grades 10 and 11. Again, excellent teachers, some of whom had taught us at junior high. Most memorable is Doug Lawley, who taught Latin. He too became a good friend in my later

of at least three that were a direct result of people leaving the arena), we deal with the hockey players standing around drinking and talking loudly at midnight. Why doesn't someone else "deal with it" for a change?

BELINDA BOWES, ACADEMY RD.

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life

He was a character in class and outside of class was a great artist who became quite famous for his paintings of horses atop Mount Royal and wild ponies on Sable Island.

During his classes, he sketched horses on the blackboard and there are many students who knew him who wished they had some of his impromptu sketches. Jake Snyder taught us history at junior and senior high, and taught us to play Crows & Cranes.

In hindsight, pretty well all our teachers were just great, e.g. "Bucky" in chemistry and Wearing in English.

In those days, Westmount had its own school board and could hire its own teachers, many of whom had masters degrees from Oxford or Cambridge.

Weren't we lucky!

Outside of class

Life in Westmount was wonderful outside of school too. We lived in a nice middle-class neighbourhood. There were lots of kids in and around Sherbrooke, Mount Stephen and Springfield avenues.

We had sort of a gang, in the most positive sense of the word. Ian and John Black, 418 Mt. Stephen; Jimmy Platt at 25 Springfield; Tony Skinner, 32 Springfield; Kenny Copland, about 453 Mt. Stephen; Ian "Gingky" Witherspoon; Billy Fell and brother Donald across the street on Mt Stephen; Danny Usher at 22 Springfield and his brother Jonathon; plus some kids on Metcalfe whose names I don't recall.

We used to play Stando against the large wall of the Frasers' house (of Fraser Brothers), which faced on Mt. Stephen and sided on Springfield. Across, at the corner of Springfield and Mt. Stephen, we played Tap the Icebox, a sort of hide 'n seek type of game, ball hockey, and other harmless but fun street games.

We built shacks in "The Battlefield", a vacant lot facing both Sherbrooke & Mt. Stephen, behind the Dionnes' house. (Dionne's Market was at the corner of Drummond & St. Catherine streets.) The lot is now 4501 Sherbrooke, a very nice apartment building.

In our shack, we used to smoke acorn pipes stuffed with string and one time the smoke coming out of it was so thick, Mrs. Goldenberg called the fire department!

We got hell from someone!

Gavin Ross is a former Westmounter. For Part I of "Schools days", see our July 14 issue, p. 20, available online at www.westmountindependent.com.

Letters to the Editor ...

continued from p. 4

deeds, which confirmed that the Veitch family owned the house from 1921 to 1946.

And now for us a mystery has been solved, as the basement floor still displays the markings of a skittles alley, expertly pieced together using linoleum tile.

MICHAEL VACHON, STRATHCONA AVE.

ACADEMY RD. SICK OF 'DEALING WITH IT'

I found it amazing that the *Independent* had to write the editorial "On publishing, policies and politics". I don't know the reason behind it, but it sounds as if the paper was accused of bias. This is very surprising as I have enjoyed the *Independent* since it started publication. I find it informative and interesting.

I have seen you publish more than one side of an issue. I call this giving people the whole story so they can make up their own minds. Isn't this what journalism is supposed to do? I would like to say congratulations on a job well done! You publish a paper I really enjoy reading.

This matter of the arena seems to be a very large bone of contention. I would just like to put forth a couple of comments for people to think about before deciding about it one way or the other.

One question is about the people lobbying to get a building with two officialsize rinks. Why do you need the two rinks? It seems everybody wants larger facilities, but in the end it is a case of NIMBY (not in my back yard).

If they go ahead with the renewal project as it stands, there is talk of moving the junior courts into the park to accommodate the pool. Is this not taking away and building on green space?

The people in the area around the arena and pool have been told to "deal with it." Well, we have been dealing with it every year from June when the pool opens until April when hockey ends.

We deal with the loss of parking, we deal with our cars being damaged (I know

Among the new arrivals at the Westmount Public Library singled out by staff

Adults

Food 2.0: Secrets from the Chef Who Fed Google by Charlie Ayers – The author was hired by Google in 1999 to provide healthy, organic lunches to its 40 employees. When he left in 2005, he had five sous chefs and 150 employees working for him in company cafes feeding more than 1,500 people. His cookbook not only provides healthy recipes, but tips on how to shop for the best products.

WineWise: Your Complete Guide to Understanding, Selecting, and Enjoying Wine by Steven Kolpan, Brian H. Smith and Michael A. Weiss - Honoured as Wine Educators of the Year in 2007, these three authors from the Culinary Institute of America teach beginners the basics of wine selection.

Adult French - Great lives

Courir by Jean Echenoz - Goncourt award winner Echenoz gives us this fictionalized biography of the great Olympic running champion Émile Zatopek. It is an entertaining and humorous account of a life that was not without tragedy, as Zatopek spoke against the Soviet occupation of his country (Czechoslovakia) and was relegated to menial work.

Le lièvre de Patagonie by Claude Lanzmann – Applauded as one of the first great memoirs published in the 21st century, Lanzmann's autobiography is the story of

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a man who was involved in many of the intellectual battles of his times. An intimate of de Beauvoir and Sartre, he created Shoah, a classic documentary film about the Holocaust.

Magazines

The Great Wall of Facebook by Fred Vogelstein in Wire, July 2009, p. 96 - Find out why Facebook presents such a challenge to the multi-billion dollar company

Lectures d'été by Martine Desjardins et Pierre Cayouette in L'Actualité, août 2009,

Picture books for children

Danse avec la nuit! by Ella Burfoot -Luna was looking for something fun to do when Darkness (Sombre Sire) slipped into her window. Rather than being afraid, she decides to dance with him all night long!

Ducks Don't Wear Socks by John Nedwidek - Emily was in a very serious mood taking a very serious walk when she meets a duck on a bike wearing socks! Can Duck change Emily's mood?

Jazz Confidences: 30 Years of Great Music - See and hear jazz at its best with this fabulous two-disc compilation set that celebrates the Montreal Jazz Festival's 30th anniversary.

Lost in Austen - Bored bank worker Amanda Price literally becomes lost in her favourite Jane Austen book after she finds a portal and swaps places with its heroine, Elizabeth Bennet. However, once she gets entangled in the affairs of the Bennet family and dashing Mr. Darcy, things do not always go according to the novel.

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Westmount Profile: Aaron Fraser

Bringing people and food together

BY LAUREEN SWEENEY

e's worked the restaurant scene from the bottom up in Toronto, Whistler, Vancouver and Montreal. And it's a calling that brings together Aaron Fraser's love of people and passion for good food in his efforts to create a sense of community.

As co-owner of the Claremont Café, the Westmount resident resurrected the business some six years ago as an expression of his own personality, giving a new flavour to the local landmark on Sherbrooke St., just a few steps west of Claremont.

"I'm a firm believer in my neighbourhood and in creating a community in which everyone trusts each other," he says. "I think I watched too much *Sesame Street*!"

Natural mix

For Fraser, the heart of his restaurant community comes down to creating a family feeling within the restaurant staff.

He explains. "If they feel like a family, then that transfers into the service they provide and the atmosphere that's created for our guests. People and food are a natural mix."

That's such a part of his life that when he's not working at the restaurant, he's likely concocting and cooking up a new recipe for his wife, Katherine Jones, and their three children: Gabriel, 8, Anna, 6, and Jack, 2. He admits he does most of the cooking at home.

Home is on Hallowell Ave., in the heart of another community to which he feels very attached. So much so, that although he never intended to speak at the last city council meeting, August 3, he ended up quizzing council at question period. He felt compelled to participate because of a proposal to use part of the Westmount Athletic Grounds (WAG) as an arena site. He does not want to lose green space in his neighbourhood.

It's at both his "homes" that he's also able to put his skills in construction and renovation to good use. "When you own a house, there's always something to fix."



Aaron Fraser at the Claremont - in the heart of his "other family".

Growing up in Mississauga, Fraser learned the ins and outs of construction from his father, who worked in the industry. And some of Aaron's early work days at age 14 were in the trade.

"My parents put me in sports, but it took me a while to find out what I wanted to do," he says. Construction didn't cut it, and at age 17, he began working summers and weekends as a restaurant busboy. Still without any clear direction, he enrolled at McMaster University in English literature. "I liked that," he explains. "I've always liked to write."

Took off to snowboard

But after a couple of years, he and a roommate took off to Whistler where Fraser bartended and worked other jobs in nightclubs and restaurants as a sideline to snowboarding.

When the house he lived in with three friends burnt down, he began exploring other options. He had started hitchhiking back and forth between Whistler and Vancouver to work a part-time job, so when he was offered a job to manage a restaurant on the east side, he moved to Vancouver.

"I realized that was what I wanted to do for a living," he said. "So I tried to find the best people in the business to learn from. I worked with them and did everything. Wherever I was, I made friends with the chef."

Educating himself in the business, Fraser learned about wine-tasting techniques and took courses in human resources and personnel training.

It was in Vancouver that he met and married Katherine. She had grown up in Westmount and was working in the film industry. When her work took her back to Montreal in 2000, they relocated here, eventually buying the house on Hallowell.

Hard knocks business

Despite the numerous restaurants in Montreal, he recalls, "I had a hard time getting work here. It's a business of hard knocks." That's when he decided with friends to buy the Claremont.

"It came with a recognizable name but had fallen into disrepair," Fraser said. "We worked hard to turn it into what it should be, starting with the staff, their service and style."

He has created his own hockey team among the staff. They play in an arts league, which includes the CBC and music companies, wherever they can find ice time – usually at the George Mantha (in St. Henri) or the Mont Royal arenas. This type of inclusiveness means "our turnover is very low," he says.

Love of writing

As the Claremont's manager, most of the work "filters to me, from menus and wine list – and the repairs of course." He also tries to pursue his love of writing, especially about food, and has done so in the *Independent*.

"Right now," he adds, "I'm working on a new restaurant concept." While he's keeping the details under wraps, Fraser says he hopes to start up in the same area once he finds a suitable spot. And that's not easy. "The challenges are many in this neighbourhood. Rents are very high."

But whatever life brings, he knows it will ultimately gravitate around people, food and community, because he's found his niche, even if life tweaks it here and there into something he can't yet foresee.



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