

Oratory's wooded lots to become nature reserve

BY LAUREEN SWEENEY

A large swath of wooded land in Westmount owned by St. Joseph's Oratory is to be protected from development for at least 25 years as a nature reserve – as long as a request to the Quebec government is granted.

The virgin land – a total of 11 building lots the city has long feared would be sold to developers – is located north of Devon and through Lexington and Summit Crescent, adjacent to the shrine.

"The city has been looking at ways to preserve this valuable green space since 1998," said Mayor Peter Trent.

One option was to buy the land, which would have been very costly. The other was

to strike an agreement with the oratory to support its application to designate the land a nature reserve. A resolution to this effect was on the agenda of the city council meeting March 1 after press time.

"They'll get a bit of tax relief, and we'll get the green space," Trent said. "This is the beauty of it."

The oratory's tax revenue to Westmount would be reduced by some \$13,000 a year, according to city calculations based on 2009 rates, explained city clerk Mario Gerbeau.

The oratory has also been under pressure from preservation groups to protect the land, said Trent, who is a board member of one, Les Amis de la
Montagne.

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Architect: City is 'changing the rules of the game'

PAC: Cedar home still too large

BY LAUREEN SWEENEY

Plans to build a controversial home at 3283 Cedar remain in limbo following the city's rejection February 9 of recent revisions that leave the architect claiming rules are being changed in the middle of the game.

The modifications, submitted by architect Bruce Anderson following a public meeting on the project February 1 (see story "Council rejected Cedar project" February 9, p. 1), included lowering the entire house as requested by the Planning Advisory Committee (PAC), which still finds the house too massive.

"Now they want even more – including a stylistic redesign – which we feel is being inconsistent," he said. "We believe we've

complied with what they have been asking for and that they're changing the rules in the middle of the game."

Efforts by property owner Shatha Al-Musawi to build a house of at least 19,000 square feet are hotly contested by neighbours. Al-Musawi has been in and out of court since 1999. An \$8-million lawsuit against the city is still pending.

Anderson, the most recent of several architects who have worked on the project, said he was disappointed by the spirit of the latest rejection, which he felt ran contrary to reconciliation efforts extended publicly to Al-Musawi by one of the opposing neighbours. Immediately after the February 1 meeting, Howard Hoppenheim had suggested all

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'493' Lansdowne in the spotlight

Council reviews another two projects

BY LAUREEN SWEENEY

Two major building projects were slated to be examined in public by city council at its March 1 meeting as part of a move to open up the permit process.

One involves the second phase of work at 24 Summit Crescent, which would include the demolition of a pool house and construction of a two-storey extension to the home. The addition would incorporate a new pool house, garage and rooms upstairs.

The other is the building of an "ultra-modern" house to the south of 495 Lansdowne Ave. with which it would share a common wall as a semi-detached house. The new home is to be built by the new

owner of number 495.

"I will encourage councillors to comment on both these projects," Mayor Peter Trent told the *Independent*. Each has been recommended by the city's Planning Advisory Committee (PAC).

The Lansdowne project, however, was expected to generate lively discussion because of its architectural style and addition to an already densely built block between Sherbrooke and Côte St. Antoine.

A group of 19 neighbours have already signed a petition against it, spearheaded by the owner of a duplex immediately south of the proposed new home. "We have 14 windows that will be blocked to light as a result," said
Monique Lord. "We only *continued on p. 3*



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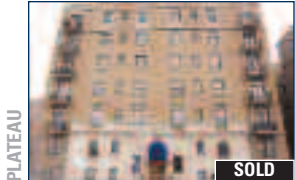
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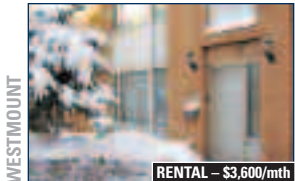


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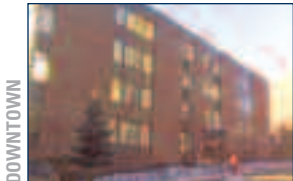


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Life saved on Sherbrooke St.

Dawson Blues Community basketball coach revived at Y

The letters “YMCA” mean fitness and living longer to many, but late last year that connection became a lot more meaningful for one man. He is likely alive today because of the staff, volunteers and members of the Westmount Y.

On December 30 at about 3:40 pm, a coach of the Dawson Community Blues bantam basketball team collapsed on the court at the Sherbrooke St. premises and lost consciousness. According to team parent and Westmounter Beverly Poisson, whose children were not present, the man is in his 30s and suffered a complete cardiac arrest.

The team and its coaching staff are not affiliated with the Y and were there renting space on a short-term basis.

“A number of people responded, including a member, staff and volunteers,

and 911 was called,” said YMCA executive director Gary White, who was not in the building at the time and was careful to qualify his remarks given the Y’s limited knowledge of the victim’s medical record.

Firefighter-to-be first on scene

Poisson explained that a firefighter-in-training was working out in the gym above the court and was the first to start mouth-to-mouth and CPR. Y staff arrived soon with the institution’s defibrillator.

“To the best of our knowledge,” said White, “the victim was not breathing and did not have a pulse. People performed CPR and the Y’s defibrillator was used to issue a shock. To the best of our knowledge, the first shock did not work and the man still had no pulse or breath, so there was an attempt to deliver a second one.

The machine is designed to not allow that in certain cases and it would not deliver one, so people continued CPR.”

The Montreal fire department arrived, followed quickly by Urgences Santé, both of which continued life-saving measures.

“Our understanding is that by the time he left building in the ambulance, his heart was beating,” said White.

After some time in the hospital, the patient is alive today, but still recovering.

Y was ‘terrific’

“The kids are okay,” Poisson told the *Independent*. “The Y was really terrific with the kids, getting them out of the room and talking to them. They even offered after-the-fact counselling, which we didn’t feel the need to take them up on since they hadn’t really seen anything.”

“I am incredibly proud of the way our staff, volunteers and even a member put this man’s well-being ahead of their own,” said White. “I came in right away and heard about all the steps that had been taken. It is incredible how many quick decisions are made in a situation like this. It seems like one of these decisions was the one that saved his life – we can’t be certain.

“I can say how important it is to have a defibrillator on the wall of areas where people gather, be they public buildings or ones where sporting activities are held.”

Poisson has the same thought. “My husband and I have 20 people at our company and it made us think about getting everyone trained in CPR and getting a defibrillator.”

Does proposed Lansdowne house fit streetscape?

continued from p. 1

found out about the building plans to build two weeks after purchasing our home this summer.”

Explaining the approval by PAC, the city’s Urban Planning director Joanne Poirier, said the proposed house was considered to be well suited to the block,

Nature reserve

continued from p. 1

While only the oratory’s land located in Montreal falls within the Natural and Historic District of Mount Royal, its property in Westmount lies on the fringes and as such is also home to birds and other wildlife.

Nature reserve designations come under Section 54 of Quebec’s Natural Conservation Act, which states that “any private property having significant biological, ecological, wildlife, floristic, geological, geomorphic or landscape features that warrant preservation may be recognized ... as a nature reserve on the application of the owner; the recognition may be perpetual or for a term of not less than 25 years.”

In this case, the oratory is seeking the designation for 25 years, Gerbeau said.

The Quebec government has the right, however, to revoke the classification in certain circumstances.

Six other lots on the east side of Surrey Gardens, former oratory property, are in various stages of being sold or developed (see February 3, 2009, p. 1 for story).

which has other houses “of more contemporary expression.”

Westmount’s building guidelines and the PAC “don’t dictate architectural style,” Poirier added. Their goal is to ensure “the proper insertion” of style into an existing streetscape or character area.

“There is some concern,” Trent said, “about agreeing to a radical building design because there are already a number of derogations from traditional Westmount style on a street.”

On the other hand, the work on Summit Crescent involves a large property and is not considered to generate negative impact on the neighbourhood. No demolition permit is required for tearing down an accessory building – in this case, a pool house.

The public discussion of these projects before approval is “a small piece” in opening up the permit-granting process and

nounced recently by Councillor Cynthia Lulham, Trent said.

“We’re moving slowly in that direction to create a mechanism whereby neigh-

bours can have an opportunity to express their opinion on projects that might make an impact on their properties.”



Lansdowne Ave. showing the proposed building lot and the house to the left at 495, to which the proposed home would be attached.

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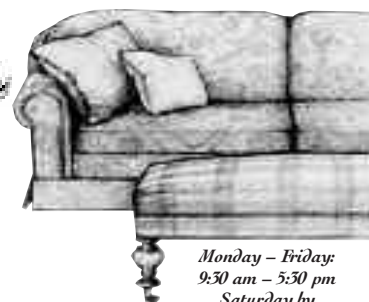
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Mayor Peter Trent replies to Don Wedge

‘I cannot see how he can fault me for lacking in transparency’

By Peter F. Trent, Mayor

I was quite taken aback on reading Don Wedge’s column of February 16 (“Whatever happened to transparency...?”, p. 7), a piece that contrasted with his usually even-handed approach to municipal matters. I immediately wrote a rebuttal that was not for publication, yet that somehow got leaked. You are reading the adulcorated version.

Though clouded with a couple of contradictions and non sequiturs, the thrust of Don Wedge’s column was that I and our four-month-old council lacked transparency. I most strongly disagree with him. He can fault me (or the city) for being disorganized. He can fault me for handling the budget the same way I always did as mayor for ten years (and, before that, as Finance commissioner), but I really cannot see how he can fault me for lacking in transparency. Let’s examine the “evidence” that Don Wedge levels at me and at council:

Pot and kettle?

“There was even talk of ‘the pot calling the kettle black.’” By giving this unattributed quote Wedge suggested that I was hypocritical: that Westmount was as secretive in giving out budget information as Montreal was. He confused two different

things. All cities only release detailed budget information to the *public* once the budget is tabled or adopted. The city of Westmount then freely gives any citizen any budgetary information he or she desires. My complaint about the city of Montreal was of a completely different order. Montreal and the 15 island cities are supposed to be partners in the agglomeration council. I was named to the *ad hoc* budget committee to examine its budget. My work started in mid-December, but I did not get any real budget numbers from Montreal until the budget was actually made public at the time of its tabling. *That’s* a lack of transparency. Then there was my public question as to why the agglomeration got charged \$91.9 million for topping up pension funds while the city of Montreal itself was only hit with \$20.8 million: this question only got (poorly) answered an hour before the aggro budget was actually adopted two weeks later. *That’s* another example of lack of transparency.

“The speech and many details of [Westmount’s] budget’s components are posted on the city’s website. In fact it is the lead item. But bold numbers do not replace the discussion that took place at the final presentation of the previous council’s arena/pool project plan.” What has one to do with the other? The budget presentation and an arena project information

meeting? And what’s the point of discussion if, as Don Wedge himself admitted, virtually no one shows up at budget meetings? And if people want pre-budget sessions in order to give their suggestions, fine. But we won’t go to that trouble if no one shows up. We could always adopt Montreal’s practice of tabling the budget and then adopting it – usually completely unchanged – two weeks later, after debate with opposition councillors. However, we have no party politics and so all members of Westmount council have input into the budgetary process from the beginning. And if Westmounters’ longstanding budgetary incuriousness remains, it would all be for naught.

Standing committees

Members of the past council advised me to scrap the standing committees. Even though I’m the one who kept standing committees going in 1991 after Mayor May Cutler (and I) introduced them, I agreed to get rid of them on getting re-elected four months ago. If things don’t work out, then we will bring them back. But don’t call this streamlining a “lack of transparency.” Standing committees were held in camera, they often wasted time, they dealt with too much minutiae, and they slowed things down by adding an additional step. Wedge also wrote, “Though incomplete and delayed, the minutes of those [standing committee] meetings gave some clues of council’s work.” Well, why is it any different now? The minutes of general committee, into which the standing committees were subsumed, are made public.

“The formal mid-month meeting has been eliminated.” This assertion is completely wrong. The mid-month meeting was only held to approve building permits – plus any other minor matter that was urgent. They usually lasted only a few minutes. Mid-month meetings were never used for anything major; otherwise, they would become a way of sneaking important legislation by the citizens, as few, if

any, of them attend. Mid-month meetings have not changed. The only change is that they are held at 5 pm and not at noon. But we are going further. We will be debating major building projects in public at the main monthly meetings: something past councils did not do.

Don Wedge and a few regular councilgoers have been on about memorializing what is said at the question-and-answer period at council meetings. They want to go back to written summaries. I am not sure what this matter really has to do with transparency, as all exchanges are now audio-recorded and freely available on our website. The practice of composing summaries is perhaps more a matter of convenience, yet it can give rise to debates as to the fidelity of the summary. We haven’t discussed this in council as yet, but I have no problem having a public debate about it. Considering complete recordings are available, the lack of summaries is a pretty trivial matter.

“Hardly anyone mentions the arena/pool project.” This is because, as has been reported, we intend to inform *all* Westmounters about a new proposal in a month or so. There are also user, operating cost and traffic studies underway: studies that should have been done years ago. If we had simply gone ahead with the plan presented on September 26, 2009 by the previous council, it is my view that it would have been handily voted down when it came time to seek loan by-law approval. This is why we have sought a radical new approach to the design. And, lest anyone think that working with architects and builders on various schemes before going public is evidence of a lack of transparency, it must be stated that you can’t design a building in public. You *can* get input once you have something to show. Which is precisely what we’ll do.

Thank you for this opportunity to set things straight. I look forward to the resumption of Don Wedge’s thoughtful, balanced, and well-researched columns.

Correction

In “Whatever happened to transparency...” by Don Wedge (February 16, p. 7), there was incorrect information about city council’s mid-month meetings. These special meetings are continuing under the new council, but have been moved to 5

pm, one Monday per month. The most recent one was on February 15; if there are permits to approve, the next one is scheduled for Monday, March 22 at 5 pm.

Wedge received incorrect information from a usually reliable source.

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City and citizens' challenges to achieve Sustainable Westmount



Civic Alert

DON WEDGE

The unveiling of some immediate goals towards Sustainable Westmount marks a new reality for the city. It is a small step in the long march that we have embarked on. Yet clearly the new mayor and council have picked up the task that their predecessors had outlined. Are we, the citizens, as ready?

At times, I wonder how serious we are. The world is incredibly wasteful. Governments cannot agree on stopping climate change. In the developed countries, children no longer walk to school. We poison the Great Lakes and thousands of other waterways. Automobiles, power stations and industrial processes pollute the air we breathe as if by right. Basic and non-essential food supplies are brought to consumers only after cross-continental journeys.

Worst of all, we refuse to recognize that there are limits to this destructive path.

The End of Oil may over-dramatize the situation, but it is folly to ignore its consequences, particularly on the supply and price of food that awaits future generations.

That is the negative view. In fact, many communities have recognized that things have to change, and they have embarked on new ways of living.

In the last 20 years, there have been local changes. Smoking in public and private has declined dramatically. The notion of public transit is front and centre of urban thinking. However, the collective mindset is not yet ready to welcome cyclists more decisively.

New optimism

Despite that, I have a new optimism about Westmount's ability to move forward with Theodora Samiotis, the councillor whom Mayor Peter Trent has entrusted with the sustainable development portfolio, at the helm.

Her participation in the Federation of Canadian Municipalities' conference last month and her interface with other sustainability leaders from across the country has led to her endorsement of Westmount's plan.

She shared with many peers the critical next phase of translating local plans into action with manageable first steps.

However, I can imagine some people will be disappointed at the scarcity of new deliverables among the 2010 priorities. At a second look though, and one realizes how many tricky issues must still be resolved.

Heat loss from homes

Some 17 or 18 years ago, I remember talking to Bruce St. Louis, the city's director general at the time, about the enormous heat loss from Westmount homes and the dubious economic benefit of trying to stem it. (The "end of oil" would certainly provide new incentives.).

It is a complex issue both for the city and, even more so, for the homeowner. So are many of the other items on the list. For example, water conservation is vital in a global sense, but how important is it here? Yet many residents want to be able to collect and use rain water – or reuse "gray" water. Do our laws support them? If not, how much should they be changed, not least to assure continued health and safety?

There is much work to be done to re-

solve these and almost every other issue selected.

In fact, Sustainable Development coordinator Joshua Wolfe's role in helping the other managers define their sustainability pathways is as essential as Samiotis' role with her elected colleagues. I even wonder if one person can provide the support necessary for the departments to move ahead at an acceptable speed.

Jenny Patton, chair of the Healthy City Project's environment committee and sustainability pioneer, found this when working with Wolfe and Recreation director Mike Deegan to convert the annual highly-attended Family Day in the Park into a zero-waste event. Their efforts may not show up on any priority list – and it won't be totally reached at this year's event on Saturday, May 29.

Nevertheless, their plans demonstrate how city departments are re-orienting in ways that will challenge the population to cooperate.

Sustainable Westmount will become a reality when "good thoughts" are changed into "good deeds." Citizens have even more to do than the city.

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

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Next step not known for Cedar

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parties sit down together to find a solution (see February 9, p. 9).

Anderson said he did not know what the next step would be.

City Urban Planning director Joanne Poirier told the *Independent* she would be pleased to meet with Anderson and the property owner to try to find a resolution.

She said the PAC's latest requests stemmed from concerns raised by the council and citizens at the public meeting. Despite the design modifications, the committee felt the home's "massing" was still too large for the neighbourhood and that its impact needed to be reduced.

Anderson said he felt the new requests were not consistent with the tone of what councillors had said they would be pre-

pared to accept, especially in terms of architectural style (see separate story "What they said then").

One of the new requests by the PAC was that the house be more "picturesque" in style.

"Not only is its style traditional," he said, "but the Palladian style of the 18th century is considered to be 'picturesque.' It includes classical elements, symmetrical with wings and positioned in a park-like setting."

Many of the new requests, such as a sloping roof, were among those suggested at the meeting by architect and former PAC chair Julia Gersovitz, who represented some of the opposing neighbours on the south side of The Boulevard, whose houses back onto the Cedar property.

The Priory time-travels back



Massimo Di Silvestro, grade 4 at The Priory shows off his Vimy Ridge project. The school hosted the 10th annual Heritage Fair, February 24, giving K-6 students a chance to explore Canada's roots. While younger classes collaborated on subjects such as native tribal history, older students presented individual exhibitions on topics ranging from the Battle of Vimy Ridge to maple sugaring in Quebec.

WHAT THEY SAID THEN

BY LAUREEN SWEENEY

City council took two hours of public hearing February 1 to reach its unanimous decision not to approve a building permit for a new house at 3283 Cedar Ave. Revisions have since been made but turned down (see p. 1).

Here's what councillors had to say, in order of speaking, when a resolution to that effect was tabled by Urban Planning commissioner Cynthia Lulham. She had come to the meeting armed with two resolutions: one for the permit, another against it.

The adopted resolution stated that in accordance with the recommendation of the Planning Advisory Committee (PAC), the permit application be refused on grounds the proposed home's elevation and impact of neighbours was not acceptable.

CYNTHIA LULHAM: Leading off the discussion, Lulham said she agreed with the PAC that the house was too big and that its siting and massing needed to be worked on.

KATHLEEN DUNCAN: "The new home is substantially larger (than the original). It looks absolutely massive."

GARY IKEMAN: Citing the city's building guidelines for ensuring that new construction harmonize with the area, he said that while "it's a beautiful house" he could not support the project.

PATRICK MARTIN: Calling it "a gorgeous building," he said he firmly believed the impact on neighbours was important. Knowing the houses on The Boulevard had been designed around light, he felt the new house as presented "will detract terribly from that." He hoped the recommendations of the PAC could be worked on with the owner. He was "not against the construction of large homes" but was concerned about communities and neighbours and "how we all live together."

TIM PRICE: It was the responsibility of council to protect the architecture and integrity of the community, and there must be some sensitivity to neighbours. He encouraged the reworking of the proposed side wings to the house.

THEODORA SAMIOTIS: Noting it wasn't "up to the council to build houses," she was nevertheless concerned by the size of the house with double the floor area of the original one and the environment in which it is located.

VICTOR DRURY: Echoing the comments of Samiotis, he said the project, "while laudable" showed a house of 19,000 square feet was not in keeping with the size of other houses in the area which had 3,000 to 5,000 square feet.

NICOLE FORBES: Also referring to the "lovely design," she said she would like to see further work on the design with the PAC.

Mayor Peter Trent chaired the meeting and did not comment or vote.

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PÉRIODE D'INSCRIPTION. Réservée aux résidents de Westmount.

Du 22 mars au 1^{er} avril

de 8 h 30 à 16 h 30 : les lundis, mardis et le vendredi

de 12 h à 20 h : les mercredis et jeudis

Lieu : Aréna de Westmount.

Renseignez-vous sur la nouvelle démarche à la page 3 du répertoire des activités.

IMPORTANT DATES

REGISTRATION PERIOD. Reserved for Westmount residents.

March 22 to April 1

8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.: Mondays, Tuesdays & Friday

12 p.m. to 8 p.m.: Wednesdays & Thursdays

Location: Westmount Arena.

Learn more about the new process on page 3 of the activities guide.



March at the Art Galleries

Division Gallery

Bonnie Baxter: "Jane's America" photography. Vernissage and book launch: March 10 at 5 pm. Exhibit continues to April 24. New location: 1368 Greene Ave., 514.938.3863.

Galerie de Bellefeuille

Mark Lang: paintings. Exhibit continues to March 10.

Yehouda Chaki: paintings. Vernissage: March 13 at 1 pm. Exhibit continues to March 24.

David Drebin: photography. Vernissage: March 27 at 1 pm. Exhibit continues to April 7.

Joan Pujol: paintings. Vernissage: March 27 at 1 pm. Exhibit continues to April 7. 1367 Greene, 514.933.4406.

Galerie D'Este

Peter Fischer: paintings. Vernissage: March 6 at 2 pm. Exhibit continues to March 21. 1329 Greene Ave.,

514.846.1515.

Gallery at Victoria Hall

Diana Bruno, Richard Lock and Jaroslava Miler: photographs. Exhibit continues to March 13.

Anthony Hobbs: paintings. Exhibit March 25 to April 21. 4626 Sherbrooke St., 514.989.5226.

McClure Gallery – Visual Arts Centre

Sylvian Bouthillette. Vernissage: March 4 at 6 pm. Exhibit continues to March 27.

Annual Student Exhibition. Vernissage: April 1 at 6 pm. 350 Victoria Ave., 514.488.9558.

Parisian Laundry

Janet Werner: "Who's Sorry Now?" Exhibit: March 12 to April 10.

Jake Moore: "Pet". Exhibit: March 12 to April 10. 3550 St. Antoine St., 514.989.1056.

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Philip Surrey, RCA

Is poverty a life sentence? Teen photographer seeks the answer

BY MARTIN C. BARRY

An exhibition of photographs at Westmount Park United Church on March 5 focuses the spotlight on the work of a 16-year-old high school student from Westmount who wanted to document the lifestyle of Montreal’s homeless population.

“Poverty: A Life Sentence?” showcases 15 high-contrast black and white images produced by Villa Maria student Katherine Belisle. They were shot as part of a special program of photography studies Belisle started at Dawson College two-and-a-half years ago. She took them during a four-day festival for the homeless held in a public square last summer near the Berri-UQAM Metro.

While she learned the basics of photography using a relatively straightforward point-and-shoot digital camera with just a few controls, by the time Belisle did her assignment on the homeless, she had graduated to a Nikon D60, which is an entry-level single-lens reflex digital camera that is a little closer to what a professional photographer would use.

“Because I learned with a point-and-shoot, I kind of had to teach myself how to use an SLR,” she said in an interview. Still, just 18 months later the images in the show demonstrate that Belisle either learned very quickly, or has a natural aptitude for photography.

The centrepiece of the exhibition, which Belisle readily admits she is most proud of is a medium-depth, high-contrast image, in which a terrier’s head, in sharp focus, dominates the left-hand foreground, while the master, a hardened street-wise young man sitting on a bench, looms in soft focus in the background. She took the shot with a wide angle zoom lens set at 18mm, so that the depth-of-field was enhanced.

Traditionally, black and white has been the medium for photojournalism and candid street photography, and Belisle was determined to use the style to achieve maximum impact. “I really wanted to capture the dramatic kind of mood in the picture,” she said. “A lot of portraiture is in black and white and I felt I could preserve a lot of detail that way.”

While clearly Belisle has a talent for tak-



Katherine Belisle

ing pictures, she hasn’t decided whether or not to pursue photography as a career. “Photography has become very competitive,” she pointed out. “Everyone has a digital camera these days, a lot of people take pictures, and a lot of them are very good at it.”

“Poverty: A Life Sentence?” will be taking place from 4:30 to 7 pm on March 5. Prints will be available for sale and all proceeds will be going to Sac à Dos, a multi-service day centre for Montreal’s homeless.

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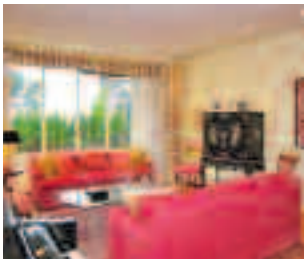


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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

ASKING NOT TO NEED TO ASK

I was disappointed after reading Don Wedge's February 16 column (p. 7) "What-ever happened to transparency...", which highlighted the general silence surrounding very important issues. Wedge asked: "Whatever happened to transparency?" He also mentioned that regarding the Westmount budget "there was no attempt at public consultation or much explanation," while Mayor Peter Trent is quoted as replying: "'I don't call it lack of transparency. I make everything available to those who ask for it.'"

I don't think that citizens having to ask for information is an example of transparency. I think that information should be provided in a timely way so that people can make rational decisions.

The biggest election promise from all candidates was that there would be openness and transparency on this council. I think that transparency means being genuinely open about important information and not holding it back.

I think that Mayor Trent overreacted to Don Wedge's piece. But the proof will be in the pudding. We will watch and see how the openness and transparency question unfolds in this council.

MARILYNN GILLIES, MELVILLE AVE.

KUDOS TO PUBLIC SECURITY, CLLR. LULHAM

My bedroom at Place Kensington overlooks a private lane, used by the employees of the engineering firm next door for parking. Twice during a blizzard late last year, this lane was plowed – noisily – in the middle of the night. Cynthia Lulham, councillor for Ward 7, informed me that Westmount had passed a by-law (No. 1367, article 13) to prohibit such activity between the hours of 9 pm and 7 am.

I wrote a letter to the firm in question informing them of this fact and during the snowless weeks that followed, thought no more about the matter, other than keeping the phone number of Public Security handy, Ms. Lulham having informed me that I should call them if the plowing happened again.

At 4 am on February 19, following the overnight snow fall, the plow came back and I called Public Security. The polite person there informed me that he believed Ms. Lulham to be mistaken in her opinion and that snow clearing was indeed permitted. When I phoned Ms. Lulham again that morning, I of course found she was not mistaken, and she went so far as to tell me that should this happen again, to phone her, not Public Security, no matter

what the hour. Subsequently, she left me a message to say that she had been in touch with a senior officer at Public Security, who would take action.

Following this, Sgt. McBain left me a message to say he had visited the firm in question and made them understand that the by-law was in effect and to inform the snow plow company accordingly. This they agreed to do.

I am sure that everyone in Westmount will agree with me that we are more than well served by our councillors and Public Security. Thank you, Cynthia Lulham and Sgt. McBain.

SARAH STEVENSON, ST. CATHERINE ST.

WHAT IS RENOVATION? WHAT SHOULD BE STUDIED?

In the February 16 *Independent* ("Arena studies progressing as part of total package", p. 3), Mayor Trent is quoted as saying "the former council has calculated [an arena] renovation figure of \$14 million." The Concise Oxford Dictionary defines "renovate" as "To restore to good condition; repair."

1. Does anyone seriously believe that just to restore to good condition and repair the arena will cost taxpayers \$14 million?
2. To have come up with a cost of \$14 million, what luxury embellishments and aggrandizements were included?

Every property owner knows that there are renovations and there are renovations, but the \$14-million estimate does not meet any sane definition for the word "renovation" and can be interpreted as having been done to justify spending many millions on constructing a new mega sports and hockey palace.

In the same article, it is reported that the city of Westmount will be conducting three separate arena studies. They are:

1. A needs assessment,
2. A traffic survey, which for anyone living near the present arena is obviously unnecessary,
3. An internal operational cost survey.

How many thousands of dollars will be spent on these studies when much more important studies could be undertaken, including:

1. How many Westmount citizens are unemployed and struggling to meet mortgage, tax and rent payments?
2. How many families and retirees have seen their life savings and pension plans seriously eroded?
3. How many citizens have had to stop spending on luxury items, along with private schools for their children?

4. Most sadly, how many citizens are struggling to put food on their tables?

If Mayor Trent and council had already thought about these important concerns then they would not be spending money on needs assessment and traffic surveys.

LARRY KLEPPER, ST. CATHERINE ST.

OVER 60, HOCKEY-PLAYING AND ARENA SKEPTICAL

Referring to Peter Naylor's letter of February 16 "60-plus set wants ice time," for the record, I am a hockey player and I am also over 60.

My statistical training, equivalent to that of most 14-year-olds, leads me to conclude, from my interpretation of Statistics Canada census information, that a second full-size rink is folly and a completely unnecessary expense.

Mr. Naylor's comment that the Executive league can only schedule one game per week and does not permit (believe this or not) sufficient practice time is outrageous. That the 60 percent or so of Westmounters who live on fixed incomes should have to subsidize a couple of dozen seniors/executives who, as Mr. Naylor states, are forced to suffer the indignity of travelling a couple of kilometers to arenas elsewhere, is absurd. That we permit such hardship on our hockey elders is unconscionable.

The fact that other municipalities are renting space to Westmounters simply demonstrates my point: these municipalities are unable to use their own rink capacity for their own citizens.

Westmount is not obliged to provide every last citizen with ice time. It should be expected to do the best possible within its financial constraints.

We need a modern, affordable, well-run, year-round arena with a similar configuration as we have now.

Comparing Westmount with other municipalities with multiple rinks and three to four times the population is not reasonable.

DAVID SCHACHTER, ST. CATHERINE ST.

THINK ARENA, MARCH IS HERE

In March, Mayor Trent and city council will present citizens with a new plan for the arena/pool project, but many Westmounters feel somewhat fatigued by this issue. The mayor, however, takes this turning point very seriously, as he has indicated in a quasi-public letter written to Don Wedge and circulated to the Westmount Municipal Association and others on February 20. Here are some of Mr.

Trent's own words:

"If we had simply gone ahead with the plan presented September 26, 2009 by the previous council, it is my view that it would have been handily voted down when it came time to seek loan by-law approval. This is why we have sought a radical new approach to the design."

The sub-text here is obvious: the previous arena design was so massive that it would have provoked by-law defeat, with citizens denying the city the money to proceed.

The "radical new approach" will be an attempt by council to reconcile the views of two different groups of citizens: those who want two big hockey rinks, and others who prefer one-and-a-half rinks and a year-round swimming pool. Furthermore, two councillors – Theodora Samiotis and Gary Ikeman – have been largely elected by their constituents to ensure that the project will not damage existing greenspace in Westmount Park or at the Westmount Athletic Grounds. Mr. Trent himself has spoken to me of his own view of planning: cities must work from what they already have and mega-projects should not be dumped on neighbourhoods.

Critics of the previous arena projects are not against hockey. This debate is all about scale – and not destroying what we have. Because the two big-rink obsession tyrannized previous planning, up until now all sorts of alternative ways of adding ice space have been ruled out, *a priori*.

There is one further point. We are not a suburb. Westmount is an urban place, and the arena area will soon be engulfed by more intense pressures – the Turcot construction, the Superhospital and new development along the escarpment.

We should be able to build a lean, elegant and green project. The new plan, I believe, must meet two principal requirements: no significant new traffic should be added to the existing arena area and no existing greenspace in Westmount should be sacrificed to this project.

PATRICK BARNARD, MELVILLE AVE.

Correction: In Stephen Chin's February 23 letter "Westmount 450 years behind the times" (p. 4), the subject of the final sentence was inadvertently changed. It should have read: "[George Bowser's] Ruminations are about 450 years out of date."

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Reporting from Station 12

Alert citizen leads cops to fraud arrests at local banks

By DAVID GOLDBERG

One alert citizen strolling along Sherbrooke St. may have led police to an arrest of two fraud suspects.

The witness was on Sherbrooke St. near Victoria Ave. on the morning of February 21 when he noticed two men dressed a little suspiciously, who were making the rounds at local banks.

"The witness said he saw the two men enter the Royal Bank, the CIBC and the Laurentian Bank, all within a short period of time," said Constable Adalbert Pimentel. "The witness thought it looked strange, so he called 911 and gave us a description of the men and the car they were driving."

Constables Carl Ethier and Hany Sepieh responded to the call, and they tracked down the suspects' Mazda on Sherbrooke near Clarke.

"We were told the men were wearing hats with earflaps and sunglasses, and when the officers looked in the car, they found those items on the back seat," said Pimentel, who added those weren't the only articles spotted by the constables.

"They also found five Wal-Mart cards, \$2,300 in cash, a screwdriver altered so it can pry open small objects, a mini crowbar and a card reader."

Police believe the suspects allegedly used cloned debit cards to withdraw money from the banks' ATMs. They say the tools are the types that are used to manufacture cloned cards.

"Typically, a 'key catcher' is placed in card-swipe units used in stores or gas stations. The type of tools found in the suspects' car is consistent with what's necessary to place a key catcher in these units," said Pimentel. "After a period of

time, the key catcher is removed, and it will have memorized the magnetic strip and PIN of every card that was passed through the unit. Then that information is used with the card reader to clone new cards."

Arrested in this case were a 37-year-old Montreal man and a 41-year-old man from Laval. The investigation is now in the hands of the SPVM fraud squad to see what charges will be laid.

"They will investigate to see if these men were acting alone or if they were part of a much larger network," said Pimentel. "Also, did the suspects commit these crimes just for the money, or was that money to be used to finance other criminal acts? In this case, Immigration Canada is also involved to see if the suspects are in this country legally."

Pimentel said this case is a prime example of one citizen potentially being key in snuffing out what could be a large crime ring.

"Here was a citizen who saw something that looked strange, got a good description of the suspects and called the police. If everyone was this vigilant, who knows how much crime could go down?" he said. "Some people think they're not affected by this type of crime, but in reality, it affects everyone's quality of life. There is a financial loss here, and that means insurance rates and consumer costs go up, which is very unfortunate."

Pimentel wanted to remind Westmount residents that if they see something which doesn't look quite right, to call 911 immediately.

Sustainability projects named for 2010

By LAUREEN SWEENEY

Promotion of energy efficiency and public consultation on the possible closure of Summit Circle are two of several projects designated to take place this year as the city's plan to create a "Sustainable Westmount" begins to unfold.



Theodora Samiotis

Theodora Samiotis said February 25 at a press briefing to announce the priorities the council would be adopting at its meeting March 1.

Presiding as commissioner of the Environment, Samiotis unveiled 10 priorities the city had singled out from a long-term plan compiled last year. Many were generalities that had to be further detailed.

Some, such as ensuring safety in the streets and parks, or raising awareness about idling engines, have been the focus of city attention over a number of years. Now, she said, sustainability will be considered as part of all city practices.

"The real difference will be made when people's behaviour changes."

In moving forward with the challenge of implementing the plan developed by the previous council, Mayor Peter Trent explained that the proposals for this year came from that list.

Since costs were missing from the plan, he said, the city had earmarked a special amount of \$200,000 in the 2010 budget as a global amount for sustainability. Some initiatives would cost relatively little, others could be quite costly. Therefore the selection of projects had to be assessed according to cost versus impact.

Others include a natural landscaping pilot project at King George (Murray) Park, the expansion of recycling to businesses, stores and parks, and even a possible composting pilot program for apartment buildings.

"It's important for the city and the community to work together," C o u n c i l l o r

Projects planned

Summaries of the 10 "actions" for 2010, posted in full on the city website, are:

1. Draft sustainable architectural guidelines

- Integrate into existing guidelines those for the use and installation of solar panels and other sustainable alternatives.

2. Launch a program for energy retrofitting of municipal buildings

- Prepare and implement a self-financing multi-year program based on a 2009 preliminary energy audit.

3. Promote energy efficiency among residents

- Launch energy-wise diagnostic survey in connection with Hydro Quebec to be introduced in April by an information session by the Healthy City Environment Committee.

4. Make green spaces more sustainable

- Consult public about removing a portion of Summit Circle within Summit Park.
- Pilot natural landscaping projects, starting with Murray Park.

5. Promote cycling

- Start preparation of an "Active Transportation and Master Cycling Plan".
- Work with Montreal toward installation of Bixi stations.

- Evaluate costs and benefits of keeping the de Maisonneuve bike path open year round.

- Add more bicycle parking at key locations.

6. Raise awareness regarding light pollution

- Publish a pamphlet on "Dark Sky" conservation.

7. Ensure main walking streets and parks are safe and comfortable for pedestrians

- Refurbish Greene Ave. and St. Catherine St., Atwater to Greene.

- Conduct a Safety Walk to help identify problems.

8. Evaluate current traffic-calming measures for safety to pedestrians and residents and meet visual quality standards

- Publicize reasons for traffic calming measures to drivers.

9. Expand recycling to commercial areas, parks and other public places

- Launch this summer a mobile recycling collection unit specially designed for size and flexibility to overcome some of the challenges identified in these areas.

10. Support community-based initiatives

- Encourage Westmounters to conserve water, participate in Safety Walk and Earth Hour.

TOM HOPKINS

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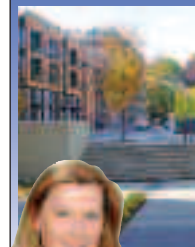
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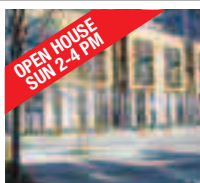
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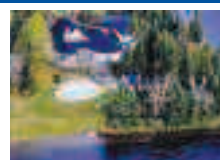
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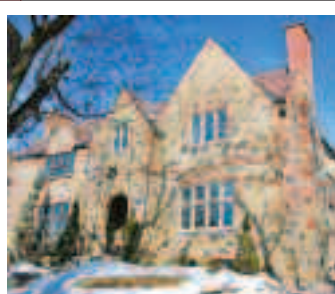
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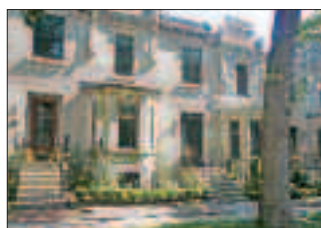
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TRENDSETTER

By VERONICA REDGRAVE

LOUISE VERNIER BLOUIN

I have noticed Louise Vernier Blouin at many galas. She is always elegantly dressed, often in couture by Quebec designer Yves-Jean Lacasse. Her husband, lawyer Michel Blouin, is honorary consul of Denmark in Montreal, so they attend many diplomatic functions and galas as well as entertain in their art-filled home. Both are actively involved with the Musée des Beaux-Arts (MMBA), where Michel is special treasurer, chairman of the finance and nominating committee, as well as being on the board and the executive committee. Louise chaired the magnificent Yves Saint Laurent exhibit at the museum.



Louise Vernier Blouin

Style

How would you describe your personal style?

I am an emotional dresser. My clothes reflect my moods. I wear red when I'm in a stressful situation, and black when everything is fine.

What is your favourite way of dressing? Relaxed, dressy?

Actually, my 2010 fashion resolution is to dress more casually, but I always look ready to attend a board meeting, even when I am playing bridge!

For most of the consular events, do you wear long or short dresses?

Well, for the Diplomatic Ball, I wouldn't wear short as there is a dress code. When Michel was appointed honorary consul of Denmark 20 years ago, every event was formal. Black tie was *de rigueur* at private dinners. Today, this scene has

changed a lot. Often an invitation will read "tenue de ville" (business attire).

Do you find the dress code different for consular events in Europe?

We had the privilege of being invited to consular conferences in Copenhagen, Denmark. Queen Margrethe and the Danish government hosted several dinners and receptions. For these events, we received very precise instructions as to the attire – right down to long or short gloves. *On weekends, what do you like to wear?*

I wish I could say jeans and a crisp white shirt – but I can't! I usually wear a tailored jacket with pants and a bright pashmina – orange, pink or red. Cashmere sweaters in winter, cashmere sweaters in summer. I could live my life in them.

Living

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

Buenos Aires. Michel is an opera fanatic, and the opera house there is outstanding. The mood in that city is very European. There is also a sense of melancholy, along with the exuberance. I have wonderful memories: seeing tango dancers in their 80s at the Antique Market for example. Oh, and Argentinian red wine is delicious.

Do you have flowers in your home?

I need the beauty and charm of flowers in my daily life. Especially tulips, mimosas and freesias in the winter.

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

I would love to have another opportunity to dine with Kent Nagano, but at a dinner where the mood is informal.

Fashion

Fashion is changing fast. The elegance of haute couture is almost a thing of the past. What do you think of today's fashions?

It seems to me that people today are wearing jeans and comfortable clothing more than ever before. The economic situation of the past few years has influenced everyone. But I do miss the elegance that one used to see in Montreal's Golden Mile. I had the honour of chairing the "Homage à Yves Saint Laurent" at the Musée des Beaux-Arts. His clothes are timeless and supremely elegant. Many women who attended the opening cocktail must have been influenced by his magic. They looked wonderfully chic.

Who are your favourite fashion designers?

For day, I love Quebec designer Michel Desjardins. Jacques Auray is a man with great panache in his personal life, and his creations reflect this style. Marie Saint Pierre understands women, and I like her feminine designs. For their theatricality, sharpness and sheer beauty, I love Armani, Chanel and Christian Lacroix. Yves Jean Lacasse's fantasy fashions are also wonderful.



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Bought & Sold: Real estate transferred since January 15, 2010

Address	Price	Evaluation	Buyer	Seller	Date
482 Mount Pleasant Ave.	\$2,250,000	\$2,111,000	Louis Weider	Jacqueline Sommereyns	26-Jan
627 Clarke Ave.	\$2,100,000	\$1,740,000	James Fisher	SP Immobilier Inc.	25-Jan
18 Renfrew Ave.	\$1,477,500	\$1,103,800	Jason Yujnovich & Zoe Ryan	Cynthia Van Frank	15-Feb
84 Belvedere Rd.	\$1,475,000	\$855,000	Stéphane Dubreuil & Douglas Choy	Suzanne Lemire & Jean Lamothe	29-Jan
701 Victoria Ave.	\$1,365,000	\$935,000	Yi Zheng & Xiang Bin Xue	Mary Gulotta	03-Feb
416 Wood Ave.	\$1,280,000	\$916,200	James Shannon & Maude Leblond	Peter Gross & Doris Black	15-Feb
4386 de Maisonneuve Blvd.	\$1,195,000	\$714,000	Robert Gordon & Beatrice Bousser	James Keon & Kathleen Baktis	02-Feb
474 Strathcona Ave.	\$1,100,000	\$838,400	Mary Gallery & Timon Deichmann	Michael Hagn	27-Jan
217 Edgehill Rd.	\$1,001,400	\$1,338,500	David Tanner	Westmount Capital Corporation Inc.	10-Feb
4329 Montrose Ave.	\$980,000	\$800,000	Élaine Lalonde & Éric Simard	Stephanie Brenhouse & Brian Wolfe	04-Feb
628 Victoria Ave.	\$960,000	\$726,000	Martine Laberge & Vincent Bégin	Jill Freeborough & Hugh Berwick	16-Feb
5 Springfield Ave.	\$640,000	\$598,800	Dan Wolfensohn	André Masella	26-Jan
3017, 3019 & 3021 St. Antoine St.	\$540,000	\$478,400	The Zalmaev Family Trust	Paul Leblanc	04-Feb
Vacant lot on Surrey Gardens	\$496,975	\$645,033	Frédéric Girard & Stephanie Lariviere	Construction Jean Houde Inc.	25-Jan
50% of 12 Burton Ave.	\$281,500	\$226,250	Jonah Prevost Kirkwood	Cristina, Ann & Madeleine Ross	29-Jan
50% of 12 Burton Ave.	\$281,500	\$226,250	Laura Vogelesang	Cristina, Ann & Madeleine Ross	29-Jan
109 Lewis Ave.	\$262,500	\$325,800	Sandra Perreault	Dominique Delage	23-Feb

The seller of 509A Claremont Ave., as listed in the February 2, 2010 edition of Bought & Sold, was the Estate of Aaron Besner.

When the Bell Rings: Westmount Students Speak Up

PRESENTED BY PHILIP CUTLER
AND MICHELLE WARNER

We asked students who live or go to school in Westmount to answer the ques-

tion, “What are your March break plans?” Here is what some students from Vanguard Intercultural High School had to say.
“My March break plans are that I am

going to Florida to chill on the beach and go swimming in the ocean.”

Liam K., grade 8

“I might go to Quebec City for snowboarding or simply go south to Cuba or somewhere similar. To be honest, I have no idea since my parents are keeping it a secret.”

Cynthia U., grade 8

“Over the March break, I’m going to have a party with my friends. We’re going to dance and eat a lot. After dancing and eating, we’ll go outside to play. We play games like cops and robbers, soccer and kickball, and we have races. The party is from 8 pm to midnight. We’ll just party all night and have fun with friends.”

Jose Antonio M., grade 7

“Well, I’m going to be skiing, tubing, playing hockey, and going to see my family and friends. I’m certainly going to

sleep!”

Samuel N., grade 8

“I am going skiing during the March break. I will also sleep over at my friend’s, go shopping, go on my computer, and watch TV. I also want to see the movie *Le journal d’Aurélie Laflamme*. I will do some cooking and celebrate my best friend’s birthday.”

Camille T., grade 7

“I don’t have big plans for the March break. First, I’m going to babysit for two days. I like babysitting because I make money, and I love young children. I’m going to spend one day at my friend’s house. Another day, my best friend and I are going to see *Valentine’s Day*. I’m also going to go to my friend’s birthday party. I will relax and sleep too!”

Virginie B., grade 8

continued on p. 21

Hogg Hardware is open!

In order to get our new Westmount location ready, we have moved to the corner of Vendome Ave. and Sherbrooke St. (5128 Sherbrooke St. W., near À Votre Santé)

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What a difference a year makes



About a year ago (February 24, 2009, p. 13), we published a photo essay about nine store sites for rent in the Victoria village. Five are now occupied. Is the economy turning a corner?



These two stores on Victoria Ave. below Somerville have been empty for over a year.

Foot Solutions is where Bead Emporium used to be.



Casa Fina is where Madame de Pompadour used to be (Prince Albert and Sherbrooke).



JavaU replaced an earlier incarnation of itself, and is now open for business again.



This building was the site of the Underdog Gallery in the second half of 2009, but has been sold. The space is now for rent again.



JoshuaDAVID has moved in since last year.



The former site of Collins Lefebvre Stoneberger is still empty a year after the gallery changed names to Beaux arts des ameriques and moved to St. Denis.



Must has moved in where Pied à terre used to be.

Looking for Charlie's angel

BY: JESSICA GHERSI



I know you're tired of me asking you to give money and adopt underdogs, so this week, I'm going to do something a little different. Just kidding. I'll do the exact same thing – and the next week, and the next week. Basically, I'm going to keep on doing it until there are no more underdogs out there – which could take a while.

This week's underdog is Charlie. This is a major underdog, although it may not seem like it at all. Charlie's a Cockapoo, or some combination thereof. He's well behaved, house-trained, neutered and vaccinated. And he doesn't shed! (Although I just discovered an amazing brush at the dollar store that picks up dog hair like it's going out of style. Was dog hair ever in style? I digress...) Back to Charlie.

He is quite the little character. He gets along really well with dogs and

cats and likes playing this game where he steals your slippers and socks, though doesn't destroy them. Because then the game would be over, and what's the fun in that?

Did I mention he's calm, quiet, only barks when someone's at the door and even waits for permission before eating? Basically, he's perfect. Except for this one little big thing. Charlie has epilepsy.

This little imperfection is costing Charlie the chance to find a loving home and family. Not just a regular family. One that's willing to put in the extra effort this guy needs.

Let's be real. There's going to be a lot of vet visits, monitoring and making sure he's getting the right meds to keep his condition in order. That's a whole lot of pa-



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tience and attention.

If you want to be Charlie's angel (by adopting him or making a donation), contact Susan at 514.569.2228.

For more info about the club, visit www.underdogclub.org.

Sophie's Dog Adoption is urgently look-

ing for foster homes for five dogs. In alphabetical order by breed (so as to not offend the dogs). 1. chow/bouvier who sheds a lot. 2. French spaniel who needs another dog 3. and 4. Two pitbull/husky puppies 5. St. Bernard – 3 yrs., can't climb stairs.

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Westmounters celebrate Inuit art



*Social Notes
from Westmount
and Beyond*

VERONICA REDGRAVE

Late last year, the Canadian Guild of Crafts held a chic cocktail in honour of Cape Dorset Kinngait Studios, which was celebrating 50 years. Often referred to as Canada's longest continuously running

print shop, Kinngait is famed for printing the work of such renowned Inuit artists as **Kenojuak Ashevak, Kananginak Pootoogook, Ohotaq Mikkigak** and **Pitaloosie Saila**.

The reception at the guild echoed events held at Ottawa's National Gallery of Canada, which had also exhibited prints to celebrate this anniversary. A private tour of the guild's permanent collection was offered to partygoers, who enjoyed hearing **Diana Perera's** fascinating information on the symbolism and history of the works.

Guests bid on the silent auction items, the most popular of which were the prints from the Cape Dorset 2009 Collection.

A beautiful soapstone sculpture of an eagle by William Skye was much coveted, with bidding rising incrementally and quickly!

Board members present included Westmounters **Constance Pathy** (president) **Nancy Cleman, Peter O'Brien, Nicole Sharp, Mary Stikeman** as well as **Dixi**

Chorlton, Alain Fournier and **Erin O'Brien** (Peter's niece).

Recognized for supporting excellence in Canadian crafts, the guild is a treasure-trove of beautiful hand-made artisan objects – a tactile haven in a technical world. For information, visit canadianguild-ofcrafts.com.

If you are interested in advertising exclusivity for this page, kindly contact Arleen Candiotti at 514.223.3567.



Westmounters Constance Pathy and Nancy Cleman, on either side of Erin O'Brien.



Westmounters Lorna Telfer and Peter O'Brien.



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Westmount couple victim of ‘grandson scam’

RCMP says the nationwide phone scam is on the rise

BY ISAAC OLSON

When a couple living in 4300 de Maisonneuve got a call from whom they thought was their grandson pleading for help after a drunken car wreck landed him in a Mississauga jail cell, they did what most loving grandparents would do – they opened their hearts and their wallets.

The voice, using their grandson’s nickname, was hard to hear over the sounds of what seemed to be the inside of a jail, explained Westmounter John Mason. The caller said he only had two minutes to talk, asked them to not tell his father and that his legal aide would call with further instructions.

Mason and his wife were eventually conned out of about \$8,000 between February 4 and 5, wiring cash with hopes of bailing their otherwise well-behaved, home-owning, 21-year-old grandson out of a sticky legal situation. Their actual grandson, however, had never left Montreal and had no idea his grandparents were receiving such a call.

“You’re totally embarrassed after you find out what has happened to you, because you figure ‘Oh my God, how stupid can you be?’” Mason said. “But what I keep coming back to is, in the heat of the moment, you stop thinking logically. You’re thinking about family.”

Mounties Louis Robertson and Tim Caron both said this type of “emergency scam,” commonly called a “grandson scam,” was first identified about three years ago and it has been on the rise the last six months.

“Grandparents always have a little soft spot in their heart for their grandchildren,” said Robertson, an Ontario-based media relations officer with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police’s (RCMP) Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre (CAFC).

Caron, a corporal who manages complaints for the commercial crimes section

of the Westmount-based RCMP, said fraudsters will play recordings of a jail in the background, employ rushing tactics and use gathered personal information to trick victims into believing the story.

Caron said these criminals aren’t targeting Westmounters, but instead operating across the country in a random, hit-or-miss scheme. The “don’t-tell-my-parents” request is a solid indicator of a scam, he continued, and he recommends always verifying a story before taking any action.

Citing the request to wire cash as another sign of fraud, Robertson recommended taking note of any clues about a suspicious caller, be it phone numbers or names, and then report it to the RCMP and CAFC.

For now, Mason and his family have established an identifying codeword to be used in any suspicious situation. Caron recommends other families employ similar tactics.

“This type of scam is taking advantage of a person’s good nature and willingness to help out another,” said Caron. “That’s why it works so well.”

Robertson said these criminals are difficult to catch because it is a global issue. They will buy a cheap, pay-by-the-minute cell phone in Vancouver, for example, set it up with a Montreal area code and then scam somebody in Toronto, he said. Reporting the crime is the first step, said Caron, as Mounties work to quickly make arrests and eliminate these telemarketing criminal organizations.

In 2009, Canadians reportedly lost nearly \$60 million to identity thefts and mass market frauds, with \$4.6 million worth coming from Quebec, according to the CAFC’s annual report. Those numbers, however, represent about five percent of the actual amount, noted Robertson, because fraud is often not reported.

Students speak up

continued from p. 16

“My March break plans are to relax and go to my friend’s house to shoot cans with my rifle and play on the computer. I also want to spend time with my father.”

Jérémie B-C., grade 8

“Well, my friend is going on vacation, so I think I’m going to play with my dog, Mia, and go walking and rollerblading. I’ll go to my grandmother’s house for supper

and the rest of the time, I’m going to stay home with my family and take care of my dog.”

Emily R., grade 8

Send your answers to this week’s question, along with your name, grade and school to whenthebellrings@gmail.com. The deadline is Saturday, March 13 at noon.

This week’s question: What are the Canadiens’ chances of making the playoffs?

Comin’ Up

THURSDAY, MARCH 4

Rhythm and Stomp youth concert at Victoria Hall, 1:30 pm. Performers Bruno Roy and Louis-Daniel Joly journey through percussion history, the world over. Cost: \$3 per child; accompanying adults are free. Info: 514.989.5226.

FRIDAY, MARCH 5

• Atwater Library (1200 Atwater) lunchtime series celebrates international women’s day with professor Jane Everett who talks about **Gabrielle Roy’s** reflections on the lives of women, 12:30 pm. Coffee. Free admission, but donations invited.

• “Poverty – a life sentence?” photography exhibition by student **Katherine Belisle** at Westmount Park United Church (4695 de Maisonneuve), 4:30 to 7 pm. Prints for sale and donations accepted. Proceeds go to Sac à Dos, a multi-service day center for Montreal’s homeless.

SUNDAY, MARCH 7

“Power of Movement 2010” fundraising for **arthritis research** at Sacred Heart School (3635 Atwater Ave.), 11 am to 12:30 pm. Arrive 20 minutes early; bring a yoga mat, water and towel. Join in on a large scale yoga mega-session taking place in ten Canadian cities. Register and collect pledges at www.powerofmovement.ca.

TUESDAY, MARCH 9

• First of a free 4-week series of “**Laughter Labs**” at Contactivity Centre for seniors. 11 am to 12:30 pm. Beat the winter blues with comedy films, jokes and an overview of the role of comedy throughout history. Westmount Park United Church, 4695 de Maisonneuve. Info: 514.932.2326.

• The Westmount Horticultural Society presents speaker Ismael Hautecoeur on **rooftop gardening**, 7 to 9 pm at Westmount Library. Cost: \$5 for guests.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 10

Westmount Library’s **2 O’Clock Series** presents “How He Lied to Her Husband” with the Golden Stagers. Westmount Room, 2 pm. Info: dlach@westmount.org

SATURDAY, MARCH 13

West Hill Grandmothers Group presents a concert of Celtic music with the Arisaig Trio at Westmount Park Church (4695 de Maisonneuve), 2 pm. Refreshments, suggested donation \$15. Proceeds go to the Grandmothers to Grandmothers campaign of the **Stephen Lewis Foundation**. Info: 514.932.1383.

SUNDAY, MARCH 14

St. Patrick’s Day Parade, 12 pm. Bus leaves Victoria Hall at 11:15 am to bring people to float downtown and return to Westmount after parade. Volunteers welcome. Info: 514.989.5265.

Always On

Spaces remain for Centre Greene’s after-school program: gym & park time, homework hour & snack. Ages 5 to 12, \$195/month (sliding scale and family discounts available, please call and inquire). Full or part time, PED day options available. Info: 514.931.6202 or www.centregreene.org.

TUESDAYS AND THURSDAYS

Tumbling Tots playgroup at Centre Greene, 1090 Greene Ave., from 9:30 to 11 am. \$3.50/child per morning. Info: 514.931.6202 or www.centregreene.org.

WEDNESDAYS

Volunteers needed for Stroke Club at Temple Emanu-El- Beth Sholom, 9 am to 1 pm. Arts & crafts, speech stimulation, light exercise, games, social outings. Info: Audrey MacGregor 514.931.6942.

THURSDAYS AT 2 PM

Ballroom Dance Classes for those living with stage 1 or stage 2 Parkinson’s at Centre Greene. Must bring an able-bodied partner. The goal of this class is to learn to dance and have fun. For info or to register: Ellen Rubin at 514.484.2016. No drop-ins.

Electronic Independents available

Enjoy the *Indie* at supper time on Tuesdays!

Sign up by writing us:

office@
westmountindependent.com.

Important Community Notice

A major survey will be undertaken to find out about the needs and concerns of English-speaking people in the province of Québec in matters such as health and social services, education and employment. CROP will be calling thousands of Anglophones in all regions of Québec over the next few weeks and if you are called we urge you to accept to participate in the survey.

Community Health and Social Services Network is an organization dedicated to improving access to health and social services in English for Québec's English-speaking communities



If you have questions about the survey, please don't hesitate to call Tracey (418) 684 2289



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Tree barbers



A photo taken during the first half of February from the POM building (looking north over the Lansdowne dog run and the arena towards the mountain). "Our favourite tree was getting a haircut," one resident told the Independent. He was relieved that the tree was not getting cut down. It may be the largest one in Westmount.



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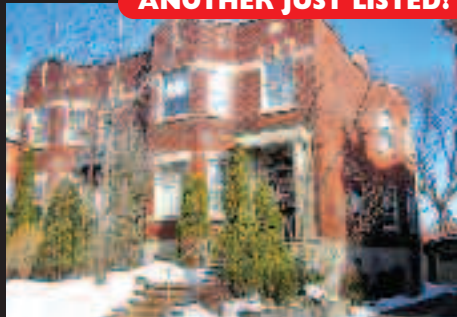
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