

La Rose des vents



Office municipal
d'habitation
de Montréal

Office municipal d'habitation de Montréal Tenant Newsletter December 2015 • Volume 14 • No 2

Happy holidays
to our tenants!

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Please note that all the Office municipal d'habitation de Montréal offices will be closed on
December 24, 25, 28 and 31, 2015 and January 1 and 4, 2016.

However, the security and call centre will be open for emergencies: 514-872-6646.



Denis Quirion
Executive Director
of the OMHM

Looking ahead to 2016

Dear Tenants:

At the Office municipal d'habitation de Montréal (OMHM), we are all set to welcome 2016. Our actions will be guided by three key directions: ensuring the quality of the living environments of our 40,000 residents, increasing the offer of apartments and services to meet the needs of some 24,000 households on the wait list, and preparing to rise to the challenges that lie ahead by building on the expertise of our employees.

In order for our organization to perform better, we rely on a strong, qualified and committed team. For example, as of January 2016, the work done by maintenance and repair teams will be organized in a whole new way. Serge Villandré, Assistant Executive Director, Low-Rent Housing Management, outlines these changes on page 4 of this

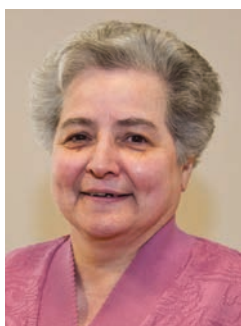
edition of *Rose des Vents*, changes from which both tenants and employees will benefit.

Major renovation work always takes up a significant portion of our overall budget. The year 2015 was a record year for the OMHM, with investments totalling more than \$100 million. In its 2016 replacement, improvement and modernization budget, the OMHM took into consideration priorities expressed by the Comité consultatif des résidents (CCR or Advisory Committee of Tenants) on behalf of tenants: renovation of occupied apartments, improvements to ventilation systems, and space planning for waste collection. In the article on page 7, you will also see that tenants have the power to influence the work that gets done. Consultation meetings held before a project is undertaken give tenants a voice so that they can express their concerns and opinions.

Lastly, during this season of festivities, tenant associations are more active than ever in organizing all sorts of activities in their buildings. This is the best time to get to know your neighbours and build friendships. Neighbourhood community organizations with which our Community and Social Development Department works regularly are pleased to welcome low rent housing residents to their events. In order to help people who might be feeling lonely during the holiday season, the Wellbeing column on page 15 provides tips and referrals to organizations that bring comfort and support to those people.

I wish you a wonderful end to 2015 as you look ahead to 2016, which I hope will be filled with many happy moments. Happy holidays to you all!

Rep Rap



Francine Cayer
Tenant OMHM
Board Member

Let's get involved!

After two years on the Office municipal d'habitation de Montréal (OMHM) Board, I always get excited about changing things up and am now pleased to see that changes are taking place, albeit over time. The transformations that the OMHM is currently proposing are the perfect opportunity for tenants to really get involved in managing their living environment.

With the shift to keep things closer to home announced by Serge Villandré, Assistant Executive Director, Low-Rent Housing Management, there are significantly more directors of

maintenance and repairs who will now be spending more time out in the field (to learn more, read the article in this edition of *Rose des Vents*). As for participation forums, sector and sub-sector meeting dynamics have improved. These meetings are becoming more lively and the way in which they are conducted will encourage participation by tenant representatives.

Tenant associations must speak up any time an opportunity presents itself. Don't be shy! A recent article referred to low-rent housing tenants as experts when it comes to their everyday lives.

They are the ones who know the strengths and weaknesses of their environment best and their impact on their wellbeing.* We are therefore in the best position to drive discussions. Let's then seize this opportunity to engage in a lasting manner and become vital partners in improving our living environments.

Being a tenant representative, not out of ambition but to look after the wellbeing of my neighbours, is an experience I relish and want you to share!

* HOULE, Janie, Simon COULOMBE et Geneviève BOILEAU. « Recherche participative centrée sur le bien-être en milieu HLM », *Quadrilatère, La revue du Regroupement des offices d'habitation du Québec*, vol. 14, no 1, mars 2015, page 13.



Nicole Vallières
Tenant OMHM
Board Member

Thank you for your commitment!

During the general meeting of the Comité consultatif des résidents (CCR or Advisory Committee of Tenants) on October 6, we talked about the importance and role of tenant associations, the prime forum for tenant participation. Having a chance to express our needs, defend our rights and have our requests heard by the Office municipal d'habitation de Montréal (OMHM) Board speaks to the strength our commitment. In addition, associations organize countless activities in their buildings and in so doing combat isolation among residents.

As tenants, we have the power to change things and to improve our living environment and our quality of life. By getting involved in an association, we gain a right of representation in our sector. Association delegates elect members to the Advisory Committee of Tenants and, ultimately, tenant representatives who sit on the OMHM Board.

Through their work and their collaboration with the OMHM, these tenant representatives get a lot done. We need to continue this work and think about injecting some new blood. You do not need a university degree to get involved and have your voice and opinions

heard. Just be yourself, with all your strengths and weaknesses, and learn to make yourself heard.

Elections took place on December 3 in the three sectors to elect a new Advisory Committee of Tenants for 2016–2017. New and returning members will be working together in the new year to bring tenants' concerns to the table. Congratulations to those elected, and good luck in this new adventure!

I wish you happy holidays with family and friends. Never forget that together, we can make a difference.



Advisory Committee of Tenants survey results

By Hélène Morin

In an effort to validate the survey results published by the Office municipal d'habitation de Montréal (OMHM) last year, the Comité consultatif des résidents (CCR or Advisory Committee of Tenants) decided to survey tenants itself. During three sector meetings in the last spring, 101 tenant representatives completed a house survey.

While the Advisory Committee's sample is less impressive than that of the OMHM, it does have the benefit of targeting people involved in the community life of their building and those for whom tenant services are intended. These people are well aware of the problems and want to find solutions.

The survey results clearly show what concerns low-rent housing residents typically have. Respondents expressed their dissatisfaction with snow removal (58.3%), the work done by construction contractors (45.3%) and grounds maintenance (44.2%). "These issues come back year after year," says Sylvain Labrecque, CCR member and president of the tenant association of Habitations Jacques-Cartier in the East Sector. These concerns are also shared by Serge Villandré, Assistant Executive Director, Low-Rent Housing Management, who has undertaken to improve maintenance, repairs and contractor monitoring.

Mr. Labrecque feels that the OMHM responded well and is targeting the right problems. "The new maintenance and repair

standards implemented this year and the \$7 million boost for renovations of occupied apartments show that the OMHM is doing everything it can to address the shortcomings to the best of its ability."

Not everything looks bleak in the survey, according to Sylvain Labrecque. "Respondents are impressed by the work of community organizers, with a satisfaction rate of 86.2%," he points out. There is also an 82% satisfaction rate with OMHM publications, including *Rose des vents*. Sanitation efforts follow behind with 68.3%. Relationship with maintenance and repair workers rates on par with building repairs (64.9%). These numbers show that tenants appreciate the efforts that staff members make to improve their living environments.

Adjustments to maintenance and repair work in low-rent housing: a more tight-knit team!

By Jocelyne Dorris

In order to build closer ties with tenants and to maximize and better support the work done by employees out in the field, the Office municipal d'habitation de Montréal (OMHM) has made adjustments to the way that the work done by maintenance and repair teams is organized.

Serge Villandré, Assistant Executive Director, Low-Rent Housing Management, outlines this new work organization structure, which will be effective January 1, 2016.

The number of directors of maintenance and repairs will increase from 13 to 20. This means that every director will have responsibility for fewer apartments and will have fewer people to supervise. This way, they will have more time to support maintenance and repair workers and security agents in their work. Having more directors of maintenance and repairs out in the field will make this work more effective and will provide the workers and agents with the support they need. Maintenance and repair workers look after 160 apartments on average.

Mr. Villandré explains the advantages of such changes: “The goal of directors of maintenance and repairs will be to spend 80% of their time out in the field. They will work closer with tenants, with whom they will have a chance to build lasting, productive relationships. They will also be there to support their employees in situations requiring higher authority and will be able to check maintenance and repair work done by suppliers on the spot.” A Director of Operations Management has been appointed in each sector to supervise the directors of maintenance and repairs and to provide them with technical and administrative support.

Implementing new janitorial service standards—work methods, frequency, tools and products used—is one of the challenges that needs to be overcome. An external expert was consulted to compare OMHM methods to those in the private market in order to determine maintenance best practices that currently exist in the area of building management.

The OMHM is also continuing its initiatives to encourage skill development among its employees. “Over the past couple of years, we have reduced the amount of work we subcontract. Our teams have shown that they do better quality work and that this work is appreciated by tenants. It’s now our turn to lend a hand to those employees out in the field who are the first to tackle maintenance and repair work. We’re going to shift towards keeping things closer to home, something from which our tenants will benefit. Providing our employees with proper support is one of the conditions for success. I’m convinced that we will begin the new year with a more tight-knit team than ever before!” concludes Mr. Villandré.

	March 31, 2015 13 Directors of maintenance and repairs	January 1, 2016 20 Directors of maintenance and repairs
Number of apartments (On average)	1560 apartments each	1000 apartments each
Number of maintenance and repairs workers (Reporting to a director of maintenance and repairs)	12	8
Number of security agents (Reporting to a director of maintenance and repairs)	11	7



Directors of maintenance and repairs out in the field will be better able to provide maintenance and repair workers with the support they need. In the picture, left, maintenance and repair worker Benjamin Dakinson, and Director of maintenance and repairs, Steve Benoit, at Habitations La Pépinière.

A passion that had been growing all summer Flower and Garden Club members: still sowing the seeds on fertile ground

By Jocelyne Dorris

With a wonderful season now ended, shovels, spades and rakes have been stored away until next spring. The some 800 members of the Flower and Garden Club have reaped the fruits of their labour and already can't wait to get gardening again!

For its fifth season, the Office municipal d'habitation de Montréal (OMHM) broke new ground by offering its members four guided tours of Sentier Urbain's Circuit Jardins. The tours took place between the end of June and mid-August, and had many members participate with interest.

Various topics were covered depending on the garden that was toured: flowers and pollinators (bees, butterflies, etc.); the tree—a treasure trove waiting to be discovered; wildlife and habitat; and introduction to ornithology (bird watching). Visitors were also able to enjoy musical performances, which helped make the experience



Silvia Sabash, accomplished musician and low-rent housing resident in the borough of Ahuntsic-Cartierville, captivated visitors with her guitar.

even more rewarding. "We wanted to offer our members something different this year. Each visit was a chance for them to learn more about Quebec's flora and fauna and to ask our specialists questions. This participatory activity is a fun way to learn," says Nicolas Joly, the OMHM's Director of Sustainable Development.

An inclusive activity for all ages

The Club's popularity has been going strong over the years and the number of members, all low-rent housing residents, is growing with every year. The horticultural achievements bring tenants many compliments from the neighbourhood. For the OMHM, tenants' contribution to the greening and beautification of low-rent housing is invaluable. Gardening means taking real action that is good for the environment, such as reducing heat islands and countering illegal dumping. An activity that mixes business with pleasure!

From a personal point of view, gardening helps residents build friendships and break the isolation that some may be feeling. The OMHM supports members by distributing supplies free of charge. For the 2015 summer season, this support consisted of 4320 bags of compost, soil and mulch, 90 small cedar boxes for balconies and 20 large containers of earth, which were distributed to members who had asked for them. In addition, 126 gift certificates to nurseries were randomly drawn and awarded to members in April. Our thanks go out to the following participating nurseries: Angel Jardins, Frank Fleuriste, Mega Centre Montréal, Les serres Noël Wilson et fils, Pépinière Jasmin, and Willy Haeck et fils.

Membership Form



Together, we make life beautiful!

Over \$12,000 in prizes up for grabs!

Draws will be held among members. Members can register in different categories (balcony, garden plot or vegetable garden) and work alone or as a team.

For further information, go to the "Existing Tenants" section under the "Thinking Green" tab at www.omhm.qc.ca.



Sustainable development

The purpose of the Club's youth segment is to get young people living in low-rent housing interested in greening their environment by encouraging them to take an active part in development projects. With the Club's support, some 15 organizations helped 100 or so young residents complete their horticultural projects.



Ms. Bogdanova and Lucie Vallée, from Sentier Urbain, are proud of the results at Habitations Plateau Mont-Royal.

A valuable partner for members

Lucie Vallée and her Sentier Urbain team generously provide advice to help tenants' projects succeed. Throughout the summer season, Ms. Vallée met with more than a hundred members to give them encouragement, trained groups and got her hands dirty on more than one occasion. "The approach taken by the Flower and Garden Club is in line with our organization's mission, which is to foster community engagement towards social greening," she says.

"The Club has become a summer tradition that lets its members develop a sense of community and mutual support. The entire Montréal community benefits from it," concludes Nicolas Joly.

Kudos to all participants. See you next season!

Visite our website to see more photos : www.omhm.qc.ca/en/flower-and-garden-club



Young low-rent housing residents also help beautify the environment.



Joined by tenants, Sentier Urbain employees, and OMHM Director of Sustainable Development Nicolas Joly (far left), OMHM Executive Director Denis Quirion (second from right) was there for the first visit.

First and last name _____ Address _____ Apt. _____ City _____

First and last name of the head of the household (if different) _____

Postal code (____) _____ Telephone _____ Name of your building _____ E-mail _____

Which of the following best describes your project? Do you work on your project alone or as a team?
 Balcony Flower garden Vegetable garden Individual Team* Team name : _____

*N.B.: Two or more people living in the same apartment must indicate "Individual". Two or more people living in different apartments must indicate "Team". For the "Team" category, please attach a sheet with the contact information for all members. Also, please clearly indicate the person in charge of the team.

For further information, go to the "Existing Tenants" section under the "Thinking Green" tab at www.omhm.qc.ca.

Send your membership form to the following address:

OMHM - Club Fleurs et Jardins
 415, rue Saint-Antoine Ouest,
 2^e étage, Montréal, Qc H2Z 1H8

Information:
514-872-2016

A confirmation of registration will be mailed to you.

By registering in the contest, I authorize the Office municipal d'habitation de Montréal to use my photo in various publications.

Tenants and the power of their influence

By Ingrid Dirickx

Tenants are experts on the use of the premises; liaison officers and projects directors responsible for major work at the Office municipal d'habitation de Montréal (OMHM) have no doubt about it.

For some time now, the OMHM has been seeking tenants' input to influence its decisions. It consults, informs and guides them the entire way, and takes into account the concerns they express during meetings to improve the work being done. Such meetings are also an opportunity to foster cooperation between the tenants, the OMHM and the contractor. An important asset when projects take several months to complete! Here are some examples of productive consultations.

Habitations Drolet A and B

Since 2012, the OMHM has organized many meetings with Habitations Drolet tenants. The concerns they raised included lighting and water entering through windows and patio doors. The Project Director and the Liaison Officer consulted them to propose a comprehensive project, which involved adjusting the lighting and replacing all the windows and patio doors in the building.

Habitations De La Mennais

Major renovations began at Habitations De La Mennais in June 2015. The Liaison Officer very quickly arranged several individual and group meetings to hear what concerns tenants had. At one of these meetings, only 20 out of the 80 residents showed up. The Liaison Officer felt that he no longer had a sense of the situation and that tenants appeared to have lost their drive. The project was entering

a critical phase and, what is more, the contractor had requested permission to start demolition at 7 a.m. to avoid having to work on Saturdays. The five OMHM liaison officers joined forces and knocked on every door to find out what tenants had to say. It turns out that tenants were all for the extra hour a day!

Habitations Montmorency

Sometimes, renovation work is a chance for tenants to get together. That was the case at Habitations Montmorency. Twice a month, eight tenants meet to talk with the Liaison Officer, to share their concerns and to find solutions that will minimize the impact of the work. In addition, they make certain that their needs are taken into account during the project. They also raise questions about certain situations on the job site, particularly the time when workers made a lot of noise just before work was scheduled to begin and then not a single sound the rest of the morning. The contractor, who happened to come into the common room, told them that he would get the message to the workers straight away: be more mindful when arriving at the job site in the morning.

Habitations DROLET

Project Director, Isabelle Breault, explains the extent of the work to tenants.



Habitations MONTMORENCY

For some, being part of the committee, is a chance to socialize and for others, to discover their building from a different perspective. On the left, Liaison Officer, Julie Chalifour, with some of the tenants.



The OMHM Foundation lends its support to four new community organization projects

By Martin Després

The Foundation is continuing its mission to serve young people living in low-rent housing. After launching a new assistance component through which individual scholarships are awarded to students in their third year of secondary school, it has stepped up to the plate again by providing financial backing for new community organization projects.

“Panel members had the difficult task of reviewing a dozen proposals from as many low-rent housing organizations,” explains Fabien Cournoyer, Chair of the Foundation’s Board of Directors. “The projects proposed were all interesting and relevant to youth. However, the panel based its selection on clearly established criteria: the context within which the project will be rolled out, particularly the vulnerability and socio-economic reality of the environment; the objectives and expected results; and the project’s sustainability. The members also considered geographical distribution so that some of the financial assistance would go to more remote organizations and so that efforts would not be concentrated within the same sector.”

The selected projects are:

- *Art et Réussite scolaire en contexte de HLM*, submitted by Maison des jeunes de Pointe-aux-Trembles;
- *Ne lâche pas!*, submitted by Carrefour communautaire de Rosemont l’Entre-Gens;
- *L’Envol des jeunes du G.A.L.T.*, submitted by Groupe d’Actions Locales Terrain (borough of Côte Saint-Paul–Ville-Émard); and
- *Mentorat et persévérance scolaire*, submitted by Projet Rousselot Créations Etc. (borough of Villeray).

“I want to thank all organizations that proposed a project for their commitment, day in and day out, to young people living in low-rent housing. Their presence, initiatives and actions guarantee a promising future for all those touched by their activities,” adds Mr. Cournoyer.

Since its creation in 2011, the Foundation has given three organizations invaluable assistance that spanned three years. These organizations shared more than \$205,000 to develop projects that are still benefiting dozens of young people living in low-rent housing.

Foundation benefit a success!

The OMHM Foundation held its annual benefit on May 26 on the Palais des congrès de Montréal terrace.

No fewer than 400 people turned up for the event, allowing the Foundation to raise around \$75,000 through the generosity of attendees and sponsors. The theme of the event, hosted by Danielle Ouimet, was *Donner une voie aux jeunes* (giving young people a voice) and featured young songwriters and composers who discovered or honed their musical talents at the Meunier Tolhurst multi-purpose studio. The studio was created with assistance from the OMHM Foundation, in cooperation with the Montreal Real Estate Foundation for Kids.

The Foundation’s mission is to encourage young people to stay in school and play an active role in Montréal and Quebec society. For more information and to contribute to the Foundation’s goals, visit its website at: www.fondationomhm.qc.ca.



From left to right: Fabien Cournoyer, Foundation President; Danielle Ouimet, benefit host; and Patrice Bernier, Impact de Montréal team captain and Foundation spokesperson, surrounded by young artists.

Fire safety in low-rent housing: it's serious business!

By Jocelyne Dorris



Alain Hébert, Director of the OMHM Call Centre and Security Department, greets firefighters from the SIM public education department.

During Fire Prevention Month this past October, the Call Centre and Security Department of the Office municipal d'habitation de Montréal (OMHM) worked jointly with the Service de sécurité incendie de Montréal (SIM) to raise tenant awareness about the importance of fire drills.

"Drills help us assess what's working and what needs to be improved, if anything, in our procedures. Unfortunately, these drills are not always taken seriously. It's true that some false alarms can be annoying, but tenants should always leave when they hear an alarm. We should never forget that drills can save lives," explains Alain Hébert, Director of the OMHM Call Centre and Security Department.

Firefighters from the SIM public education department were there with tenants during the drills, carried out in 36 buildings across the Southwest Sector. This specialized brigade is specially trained on prevention, not response. This means that the firefighters arrive discreetly: no big red truck, tall ladder or hoses.

"The key to success is good collaboration between the different people involved from the OMHM and the SIM, of course, but we shouldn't forget that cooperation with the tenant association and the tenants themselves is also vital," says Ludovic Scholl, Director of Maintenance and Repairs in the Southwest Sector, who took part in several drills. Mr. Scholl is very pleased with the turnout and outcomes in the buildings across the Southwest Sector. "We can say 'mission accomplished' because the evacuations took about 15 minutes, which is a good average."

Ludovic Scholl describes what it takes to prepare for and carry out a drill with the SIM:

- » Before the drill begins, the security agent makes sure to have a list of residents with disabilities and reduced mobility who will require assistance during the evacuation.
- » He or she ensures, along with the other OMHM staff, that a technician from the alarm company is on hand to trigger the alarm at the scheduled time.
- » The elevators are locked on the ground floor.
- » When the alarm sounds, tenants leave their apartments. Firefighters take positions on the various floors and direct people to the stairs, reminding them where to gather outside. They then calculate the time needed for everyone to leave the building.
- » The drill participants are then counted.
- » Staff members assigned to the evacuation check all the apartments and ask tenants who did not participate in the drill why they chose not to.
- » Before tenants go back to their apartments, the OMHM staff, firefighters and drill participants meet in the common room for an information meeting. Tenants are reminded of the importance of knowing what steps to follow in the event of an emergency evacuation and of participating actively in drills.
- » The SIM provides helpful prevention tips on its website at: <http://ville.montreal.qc.ca/sim/>.

Habitations Albert residents proud to welcome Espace Michel-Perreault

By Jocelyne Dorris



From left to right: Denis Quirion; Jean-Louis McRae, tenant association president; André Perreault, brother of the deceased; Vicente Pérez, coordinator of the Coalition de la Petite-Bourgogne; and Benoit Dorais. In front: Nathalie Morin, Director for Social Promotion and Consultation, in charge of the OMHM project; and Huguette Perreault and Lisette Thibodeau, Michel's mother and wife, respectively.

Dedicated, committed, human—there is no shortage of words to describe Michel Perreault, the former OMHM Assistant Executive Director who passed away suddenly in May 2013.

This premature departure left an emptiness in the hearts of tenants and employees of the Office municipal d'habitation de Montréal (OMHM). To mark his contribution to Montréal's social housing, a space in his memory was unveiled in October in the yard of Habitations Albert in Petite-Bourgogne.

Choosing Petite-Bourgogne as the location is significant because it was in this neighbourhood that the first low-rent housing projects took shape. On the site stands a row of Corten steel panels inscribed with 27 words symbolizing the number of years of service that Michel Perreault dedicated to the OMHM. These words evoke the man and his values.

The ceremony was attended by a large number of guests, including members of Michel's family, Sud-Ouest borough Mayor Benoit Dorais, OMHM Executive Director Denis Quirion, OMHM management staff and employees, neighbourhood organization representatives and, of course, many Habitations Albert residents. "Even after two years, Michel's absence is still felt within our organization. We now have a place for people who knew him to gather. Thanks to Espace Michel-Perreault, passersby will find out who this man was and, by extension, learn about our social mission," says Denis Quirion.

Habitations De Mentana is going green

By Jocelyne Dorris

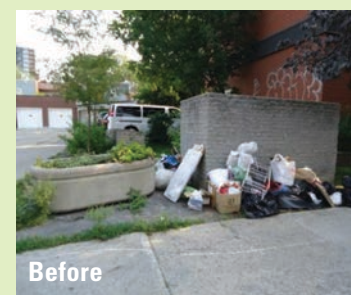
Where just a year ago there was nothing but litter, there is now beautiful landscaping.

You could say that the residents of the De Mentana housing complex in the Plateau-Mont-Royal borough went to great lengths to tackle a persistent problem of trash on their property. When three OMHM employees (community organizer Michèle Daniels, sustainable development project officer Brigitte Laliberté, and maintenance and repairs director Alain Dion) launched an environmental awareness and involvement project, the residents were all on board.

This project was made possible by the tremendous effort invested in increasing awareness, accountability and consultation with residents about trash management and landscaping. The title "De Mentana, un milieu de vie fier de prendre le virage vert" clearly reflects the pride that comes from greening one's living environment. Several

local partners teamed up with the OMHM: Cuisines collectives du Grand Plateau, Place aux familles, Projet Changement, l'association des aînés de la tour De Mentana, Sentier Urbain, Société écociyenne de Montréal, l'arrondissement du Plateau-Mont-Royal and the CISSS Jeanne-Mance.

A successful first phase...and now onto the next Phase one, which involved landscaping the area around the low wall, which was once littered with trash, was completed this summer. All those who contributed to the work are very proud of the final product, judging from the fact that the area has been kept clean ever since. Phases two and three started this fall, with consultations with residents about the possibility of creating a green path and inner courtyard. The project may appear ambitious, but the results to date have been very encouraging. Just look at the before and after shots of the low wall and see the improvements for yourself!



Before



After



ID²EM

Low-rent housing tenants get down to work on 14 projects

Under its ID²EM program, the Société d'habitation du Québec (SHQ) has granted funding to 14 projects that will be carried out by tenants of the Office municipal d'habitation de Montréal (OMHM) and partner organizations. Subsidies amounting to \$71,200 were granted this fall to start or carry on with community initiatives.

The objective of the ID²EM program is to improve the collective empowerment of low-rent housing tenants so they can fight poverty and social exclusion, to raise their awareness of sustainable development and to engage them in environmentally responsible projects that allow them to improve their physical, social and community environment.

A nice variety of projects

Using the subsidies received, 19 tenant associations will introduce a variety of activities, working together with organizations. Plans include community kitchens and a citizen grocery store, homework help, talks on the role of parents and art workshops. On the environmental front, composting, community gardens, beautification and landscaping will be organized.

Progress from year to year

Six of the projects selected by the SHQ continue or improve on work that was started in past years. For example, at Habitations Meunier-Tolhurst in the Northwest Sector, following the



Since the creation of the art studio at Habitations Saint-Sulpice, art has even been spilling over onto the asphalt!

establishment of community gardens maintained by tenants, the focus will now be on developing healthy eating habits. Food will be central to a number of activities, including community kitchens and workshops.

Habitations Notre-Dame-de-Grâce and Habitations Alexandra in the Southwest Sector and Habitations André-Grasset in the Northwest Sector are joining together this year with Habitations Saint-Sulpice, also in the Northwest Sector. The four associations will work together to establish art therapy studios, which foster pride and confidence among participants and make it easier for them to be open toward others.

This type of activity strengthens the sense of belonging that tenants have in their living environment and creates networks that make life easier on a day-to-day basis.

For a list of projects subsidized by ID²EM, see the table on page 4.



Adults and children worked together to set up the community gardens at Habitations Meunier-Tolhurst.

As we move into 2016, let's make plans!



First, congratulations to all the members of the Comité consultatif des résidants (CCR or Advisory Committee of Tenants) elected on December 3.* We extend a warm welcome to the newly elected members and welcome back the members who were re-elected.

A very special thank you as well to all the delegates who came out on December 3 to elect the new CCR and the tenant representatives on the auditing committee. Your commitment to the tenants in your buildings deserves to be recognized.

It will be a pleasure to get down to work with the CCR in January 2016. Together, we will explore various ways of promoting community life and encouraging tenants to live together in harmony, thereby implementing one of the priority directions in the Office's new strategic plan.

Have you accomplished something that has been a success, or are you thinking of starting a project that deals with these aspects? If, for example, you have an original way of welcoming new tenants to your building, you can share this type of information with your community organizer. Who knows? Your approach to managing conflict or improving security in your building could be adopted in other housing projects. It could make life easier for hundreds of tenants!

The holiday season is in fact a good opportunity to build ties with the people in your building. Consult them to find out what they would like to do together to mark the holiday season. Ask them to help with organization in order to share this responsibility. This will lighten the load for each person while decreasing the sense of isolation felt by some tenants. You will be killing two birds with one stone!

In closing, our hope is to cultivate inner peace in 2016 so we can influence our living environments and have a constructive and harmonious relationship with the people around us. Happy holidays!

Esther Giroux, Director
Community and Social Development Department

* At press time, the elections had not yet been held. The tenant representatives will be presented in the March issue of *Interaction*.

The CCR tables its report and prepares for what comes next

On the morning of October 6, the Comité consultatif des résidants (CCR or Advisory Committee of Tenants) tabled its report for 2014-2015 at the Annual General Assembly (AGA) of representatives of tenants of the Office municipal d'habitation de Montréal (OMHM). That annual event, which is very important to tenant action in low-rent housing, was organized in its entirety by the CCR.

Two committee members, Nicole Vallières and Marie-Benoite Bukuru, provided a brief description of the major items dealt with during the year, including the in-house tenant satisfaction survey (see the results on page 3 of *La Rose des vents*) and the creation of a tenant employability committee. They also made note of the CCR's contribution to updating the tenant association guide, *Ensemble pour agir (Together for Action)*, available in French only), reorganizing the sector meetings and creating the ENHARMONIE CCR (provisional) for residences in that network.



Tenant representatives listened very attentively to the CCR's presentation and then made many comments.

This year, the CCR tabled opinions with the OMHM Board on the renovation of occupied units, waste management and ventilation in common areas and units. Several other important projects also came to its attention. For example, progress is being made on the issue of three-wheel and four-wheel scooters. The CCR is hoping to see a conclusion before winter.

Mental health problems and loss of autonomy were mentioned a number of times among the priorities to focus on during the coming year. Several tenant representatives would like the OMHM to take concrete steps to support associations in these matters. The CCR promised to convey their requests to the OMHM Board. In the afternoon, delegates also attended a presentation by the Montréal fire department followed by a presentation by Serge Villandr , Assistant Executive Director, Low-Rent Housing Management, on adjustments concerning maintenance and repairs.

Visit to low-rent housing in Martinique



Accompanied by low-rent housing managers and tenants from Martinique, the small group of Quebecers on a study tour, including Julie Laprès, climbed to the top of a mountain, where they were able to look upon the entire island of Martinique.

This past summer, Julie Laprès, a member of the Comité consultatif des résidents (CCR or Advisory Committee of Tenants) representing low-rent housing for families in the East Sector, participated in a study tour to Martinique with Professor Paul Morin and his assistant, Jeanne Dumoulin, from the Université de Sherbrooke.

"We toured the island of Martinique and visited several low-rent housing projects," she says. "The greatest difference from our Office is that managers there don't really have a mandate for community and social development. Although they are concerned about tenants, their priorities are rent payment and building maintenance. The tenants in

Martinique were therefore impressed by the very open and productive relationship we have with our community organizers."

One thing that struck Ms. Laprès was the fact that low-rent housing is not exclusively for those who are less well off and that tenants can even become owners of their small houses! She also says that, in Martinique, former low-rent housing tenants can continue to be on a tenant committee even though they no longer live on site.

Julie Laprès will never forget the trip, which allowed her to build a relationship with some extraordinary people with whom she hopes to remain in contact.



Meeting at the crossroads
Seeking ways to live together in harmony

Cultivating mutual support between generations

One fine day this past July, the OMHM's clean-up and greening brigade came to support the seniors at Habitations André-Corneau with their vegetable garden project. "It was an excellent event," says Martine Hilaire, an outreach worker from the organization Temps d'une pause, répit et soutien aux aînés. "The seniors felt important; they expressed their needs and felt like they were being listened to." It seems that there was a lot of laughter mixed in with the advice and comments they provided to the young people from the brigade.

With support from Ms. Hilaire and Éco-quartier, the seniors had first prepared the land, seeded, planted stakes and weeded a little, but they ran into some problems, such as dangerous spots, an invasive vine and debris on the ground.

That was when community organizer France Vallières suggested that the brigade get involved. The young people cleaned up the land, cleared paths and literally dug up the vine, which was threatening to engulf a tree. They then did some landscaping and planted a lilac with the support of a horticulturist from the Sentier Urbain organization. The seniors made hot dogs and served them, with juice, to the young gardeners. "It did them

good to have young people in their yard interacting with them," adds Martine Hilaire. And they really like the nice clean yard and the garden, which has been easier to maintain since the brigade's visit.



The young people from the OMHM's clean-up and greening brigade posed with the seniors from Habitations André-Corneau whom they had come to help.

New Tenant Committees

Six elections were held in Montréal's low-rent housing from mid-September to mid-October, including two elections to create new associations. Congratulations to the 33 elected members. We wish them a successful term of office.

NORTHWEST SECTOR

Jean-Talon **S**

Louis Leconte
Lydie Gisele Guebediang
Abdelkader Mazit
Mohamed Baadie
El Masri
Abdul Majid Chohan

Jean-Valets **S**

Rosika Bekiarian
Pierre Joseph Florival
Maritza Obaldia
Parweede Permaul
Hagop-Magar Sheikh Al Beiti
France Gill

Manoir Aimé-Léonard **S**

Andrée Legault
Diane Tardy
Claire Desjardins
Diane Belzil
Lise Berthold

De Bellechasse **S**

Francine Therrien
Marie Ange Lalancette
André Plaisance
Ronald Coleman
Manon Dupuis

SOUTHWEST SECTOR

NEW ASSOCIATIONS

Monkland **S**

Elizabeth Ann Patterson
Sandra A. Shera
Dora Tyson
Jennifer Aumond
Jacques Ratelle
Doris Jones

De Carillon **S**

Jean-Pierre Mallette
Ginette Primeau
Madeleine Dufour
Juanita Carroll
Michel Rollin

S OMHM low-rent housing for seniors

This information is provided as a guideline and is subject to change as tenant associations evolve.

Projects subsidized by ID²EM in 2015-2016

PROJECTS SUBMITTED BY ASSOCIATIONS

Sector	Housing	Project name*
Northwest	Meunier-Tolhurst	Let's cook together!
	De la Visitation	Understanding for better living
	Rosemont (families)	Feeding the roots for a sustainable future!
East	Les Jardins Châteauneuf	Seniors in action
Southwest	Paxton, De l'Érablière et Workman-Delisle	Thinking about the next generation together
	Walkley, D'Arcy et McGee	Walkley women's kitchen
	Téléspore-Savaria	Dinner meetings
	Place Lachine	Celebrating fruits and vegetables!

PROJECTS SUBMITTED BY THE OMHM

Sector	Housing	Project name*
East	Boyce-Viau	Boyce-Viau low-rent housing in action
	Terrasse Ontario, Saint-André, small buildings of the Association des voisins des cinq continents	My yard is full ... of life!
	De Mentana (seniors and families)	Together we're developing a living environment that's proud to go green
Southwest	Petite-Bourgogne low-rent housing for families	The future lies with young people: a Petite-Bourgogne project
	Petite-Bourgogne low-rent housing	My citizen grocery store in the heart of low-rent housing
Northwest and Southwest	Saint-Sulpice, André-Grasset, Notre-Dame-de-Grâce and Alexandra	When art becomes popular

* Titles originally in French only, English translation provided for your information.

Upcoming training courses

These training courses will give you the tools you need to perform your role effectively. Take advantage of them—they're free!

Title	Date	Location	Metro station
How to prepare an annual general assembly	March 24, 2016	Terrasse Ontario 1100, rue Sherbrooke Est	Sherbrooke
Roles and responsibilities of directors	April 7, 2016	Habitations De Maisonneuve 2485, boul. De Maisonneuve Est	Frontenac

Courses are given from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at a low-rent housing building located near a subway station. Lunch is provided, but participant travel costs are usually covered by the tenant associations. To register, contact Suzanne Morissette by telephone at 514-872-2104 or email at suzanne.morissette@omhm.qc.ca.

Please note that courses are held in French. Titles are given in English for your information.



A tenant association brings together all the tenants in one or more buildings. To take decisions, the tenants meet at a general assembly. They also elect a tenant committee composed of at least three tenants.



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Please send your comments and suggestions to suzanne.dupaul@omhm.qc.ca.

Arabian Nights

Three low-rent housing buildings working together on a remarkable work of art

By Daniel Deslauriers

Three paintings that fit together to form one whole: that was the challenge that 50 or so participants took up this summer as part of a joint project in the Saint-Michel sector.

The theme? Arabian Nights, which fired the imagination of many generations. Over the course of five weeks, tenants from three low-rent housing buildings (Des Carriers, Bruchési and Laure-Conan) tapped into their creative side. Guided by artist Marie-France Lafleur and Valérie Beaulieu, head of educational services at TOHU, these budding artists—all seniors—showcased their talent to the public. The final product was unveiled on August 15 during *La Falla*. This fun event open to the world is also one of the last summer celebrations, full of exhilarating activities. TOHU is located in the heart of the Cité des arts du cirque, in the borough of Villeray– Saint-Michel– Parc-Extension.

Positive experience

Once again this year, and for the third time, feedback has been positive, according to Martine Hilaire, an outreach worker with the organization *Le temps d'une pause, répit et soutien aux aînés*, who contributed to the project along with her colleague Micheline Gravel. Their role? Support seniors in their individual endeavours and build bridges between these residents and the community.



The three paintings made by the participating low-rent housing residents combine into a remarkable work of art.

“I think we’ve helped bring residents together. They took part in a project in which they would never have thought of participating. Yes, there is going to be a second installment. People are telling us that it helped them break the isolation and talk to neighbours. Others tell us that they’ve learned to work together. It’s encouraging,” concludes Ms. Hilaire.



gets on board with the OMHM!

By Daniel Deslauriers

FREE
membership

The Office municipal d’habitation de Montréal (OMHM) has signed a partnership agreement with Communauto that enables its residents to take advantage of this service.

Communauto is a company with a social, urban and environmental vocation that has been around for some 20 years. Its main activity is to enable, manage and promote the sharing of its cars among its members on a self-service basis.

This means that OMHM tenants will be able to use this service by paying only the user fees, and will be exempt from the membership fees. They will have no fewer than 75 cars at their disposal in OMHM parking lots, out of the thousand cars currently in service throughout the island of Montréal.

So many benefits

“There are so many benefits,” pointed out OMHM director of sustainable development Nicolas Joly. “First of all, there is no more need to get a loan to buy a car. There are no oil changes, maintenance,

or insurance contracts. People pay only for the time during which they use the vehicle. They pick up the car at point A, and return it to the same spot once they are done with it. The new Auto-mobile service also gives them the option of picking up the car at point A and of dropping it off elsewhere.”

OMHM employees can also take advantage of this offer, and the formula has been very popular with them. In fact, more than 50 of them have used this service since 2011 for their work-related needs. We hope to see all OMHM residents respond the same way.

People can sign up online, in person or by phone. Communauto’s offices are at 1117 Sainte-Catherine West, 8th floor, in Montréal. For more information, call 514-842-4545 or visit www.communauto.com. Specify that you are an OMHM tenant!

A greenhouse built in an abandoned parking lot!

By Jocelyne Dorris

A revitalization and greening project that is benefiting the residents of La Pépinière and all the people in their neighbourhood.

The construction of a three-season greenhouse in the former parking lot of the La Pépinière low-rent housing complex, located in the Mercier–Hochelaga-Maisonneuve neighbourhood, has completely changed the area. This innovative project, run by the Projet Harmonie organization, which also involved OMHM community organizer Nathalie Dufort, and sustainable development project officer Brigitte Laliberté, is part of the move to reclaim the parking lot next to the La Pépinière residences. The greenhouse, which was inaugurated this summer, is used for environmental education and to prepare seeds for the next growing seasons.

To improve relations with the neighbourhood

Projet Harmonie, which has been part of the life of La Pépinière since 1993, offers different family-oriented activities. In 2013, the organization used its Vert l'Harmonie project to spearhead the parking lot's revitalization after it had gotten overrun with litter, not that this ever kept the kids from playing there. This greening, urban agriculture and civic engagement project aims to enhance the connection among the residents and to improve their relations with the immediate

neighbourhood. Crime, loitering and unsanitary conditions have strained relations among neighbours over the past few years. Thanks to this project, the area is now safe for children to play in, as well as in other regards.

Thank you to the financial partners who made this project possible: programme Quartiers 21, Caisse populaire Desjardins Mercier-Rosemont, Home Dépôt and Evergreen.



Nathalie Dufort, community organizer, with residents of La Pépinière at the greenhouse inauguration in July.



Suzanne Provost: a lovable pest!

By Daniel Deslauriers



Ms. Provost is unrecognizable in *Les Détestables*.

She insults people and provokes them. Who is she? Suzanne Provost, one of the eight stars of the TV show *Les Détestables* on Monday nights on Canal V.

This resident of the De Fleurimont residence is living a childhood dream. “As a child, I wanted to be an actress. Unfortunately, fate decided otherwise,” explains the 68 year-old.

Everyone has their part to play in the show. “In my case, I play the cranky old woman, the most hateful one, the one who gets the toughest roles. Let’s just say that I am at higher risk,” she points out. However, Ms. Provost does not like to play the insults game. She already had a few run-ins following one of her more unruly antics. “I had my arms squeezed and was called names. But in general, people laugh at the absurdity of the situations.”

Les Détestables is a concept that was imported by producer Louis Morissette, who also drew from *Surprise sur prise*, which was very successful in Quebec. The only difference is that all of the actors in the shenanigans in *Les Détestables* are older, between 68 and 75

years of age. And it works! The show is already in its fifth season, and because of its popularity, the TV station doubled the number of episodes this year, from 13 to 26. “We want to show that older people can be daring. We want to debunk the notion that they don’t move, do nothing, are boring and unable to talk about sex, for instance,” explains Suzanne Provost.

The chance of a lifetime

Ms. Provost never thought that she would get a chance like this. “I was surprised when I was asked to stay after the auditions. In a sense, I created my own character. I had to be daring, and I think they liked it.” Ms. Provost, it should be pointed out, spared no effort in delivering the image of old people that the production crew was looking for. She cut her hair very short and let the gray take over. According to her, she managed to age herself by 10 to 15 years.

Ms. Provost will be the first to admit it: this adventure has completely changed her life. “I stepped into a world I did not know, and visited parts of Quebec I had no idea existed,” she indicated. She fondly remembers one evening, at a fight gala, where the *détestables* attacked a fighter with a chair.

Today, she is a member of the Union des artistes, has her own agent, takes part in promotional activities, has skits on the Web, and appears in a few TV shows. “I am taking acting lessons, and my circle of friends has grown considerably. People stop me on the street, but I don’t play the star. In fact, I don’t think of myself as one. I am just like everyone else. But of course, I feel that people are proud to have a “star” in their building. But my biggest reward is when people tell me how much good the show’s humour does them. That’s worth all the money in the world.”



The real Suzanne smiles a lot more.

The clean-up and greening brigades

A summer project for youth living in low-rent housing is bearing fruit

By Nicole Halpert

Fifty young residents living in low-rent housing worked at the Office municipal de Montréal (OMHM) in the summer of 2015. Of these, 37 were assigned to the different sector to be part of the clean team, and 13 became members of the green patrol and helped maintain OMHM properties.

Every brigade was accompanied by a local official to guide them in their work in the field. As well, the young people took advantage of the horticulturalist from the Sentier Urbain organization, a partner of the OMHM at the Flower and Garden Club, who taught them the basics of gardening and landscape maintenance. This summer, the brigades visited 46 low-rent housing complexes. This was the first labour market experience for these young people. “We would like to train as many young people as possible, so we are always recruiting new patrols. They see the ad on the MOUV Facebook page on the



At right, Ismertha Raciús, youth coordinator, with a few members of the green patrol.

OMHM Web site or on posters in our family residences,” indicated youth coordinator Ismertha Raciús.

During the summer, the young people also received training on job interview skills, on work standards, on leadership and on the OMHM. The purpose of this training is to help set them on their work path and to prepare them to improve their chances in the labour market.

Giving a young resident living in low-rent housing a summer job provides them with training, a salary and a chance to add to their CV, and also to improve our properties, which are certainly initiatives that the OMHM encourages!

Young people from the Habitations Rousselot produce

By Jocelyne Dorris

In July, the Office municipal d’habitation de Montréal (OMHM) and MU inaugurated the mural entitled *Comme un jeu d’enfants* at the Habitations Saint-Grégoire. At the same time, just a few streets away, youth from the Habitations Rousselot created their own mural.

While the professional mural created by French artist Seth was taking shape, about ten budding artists were busy on their mural. They were assisted in this endeavour by the Création Etc. organization’s Rousselot intervention project, which is currently sprucing up the stairwell in their building in the Villeray–Saint-Michel–Parc-Extension borough. This production is part of the OMHM-MU partnership aimed at giving youth living in low-rent housing the chance to learn about mural art.

Since 1995, Création Etc., in collaboration with the Villeray CLSC, Ville de Montréal and the OMHM, has been offering young people in the Rousselot housing project guidance and a variety of activities. This program which has an education, culture, sports and community focus, aims to enhance self-esteem and encourage school success. It gives parents a hand in helping their kids develop their full potential. It should be noted that the mission of Création Etc. is in line with that of the OMHM Foundation, which is to encourage the young people living in low-rent housing to stay in school and become actively involved in Quebec society.

About MU

MU is a volunteer organization that transforms public areas in Montreal by arranging to have murals created for communities. The OMHM and MU’s joint efforts have led to the production of 13 works on 10 low-rent housing walls. To find out more, go to www.mumtl.org.

Breaking the isolation during the holidays

By Mélanie Samson-Beaulieu, Office municipal d'habitation de Montréal social worker

The holidays often remind us of childhood, big family dinners, human warmth during the cold season...

For those who still get to enjoy this, the festivities remain a source of joy and profound recognition for all the love we feel for those who share our lives. However, for those who are alone, these moments often revive feelings of nostalgia, memories of losses, and distress. We miss the people with whom we shared so many celebrations a little more than usual.

Not everything about being alone is negative. It is often a time to take a step back, to think about things. However, if the feeling becomes overwhelming and does nothing but remind us of how alone we are, then what should we do?

First, remember that you are not the only one who is alone. In Montréal, one out of five people eats alone. A number of activities and resources are made available during the holidays precisely to break that sense of

isolation. Maybe there is a community lunch or dinner in your building? That's no substitute for a family, but it could help reduce the sense of loneliness and give you a chance to make new friends. Ask your tenants' committee if that kind of get-together is organized.

An attentive ear to give you comfort

Volunteers with services such as Tel-Écoute, Tel-Aînés and Tel-Aide will lend you an ear so you can chat briefly with someone who understands your situation. They will also be able to recommend organizations that are there for people who are on their own during the holidays. *Les petits frères* for instance, always prepares Christmas meals for older (75 and over) people who are on their own. You can reach the mat 514-527-8653.

Remember to contact your CLSC and ask for your Christmas basket, and for help if you are going through a difficult time. Generally, you do not need to make an appointment to meet with a worker.

The Centre de référence du Grand Montréal publishes a list of activities during the holidays. Call them at 514-527-1375 to find out more or to ask any question about resources in your sector.

Tel-Aide
514-935-1101

Tel-Écoute
514-493-4484

Tel-Aînés
514-353-2463

a mural just like the pros



The mural created by young people living in the Rousselot low-rent housing



The *Comme un jeu d'enfant* mural at the Habitations Saint-Grégoire, on Papineau Street

My neighbour, my support

By Michèle Marchand and the Centre de formation sociale Marie-Gérin-Lajoie team

Do you sometimes feel cut off from the people around you? Do you ask yourself how you should react when you realize that a neighbour is in trouble? If so, here are some possible solutions.

We live in a society that values people and their rights. We have become individualists! Maybe a little too much so, because we have unfortunately lost some of our sense of community and our connections with one another. This situation has led many people to feel isolated and insecure. This is why it would be a good idea to give your social reflexes a little “vitamin” boost.

Many seniors living in low-rent housing have pointed out that they are closer to their neighbours on a day-to-day basis than to their families and friends. So, what if we started connecting with our neighbours? This is something that should be done slowly, starting with a friendly little “hello”. Then, little-by-little, we can introduce ourselves, talk about the weather, and ask about their health and children. Essentially, we gently weave a network that is particularly valuable in case you or your neighbour run into difficulties some day.

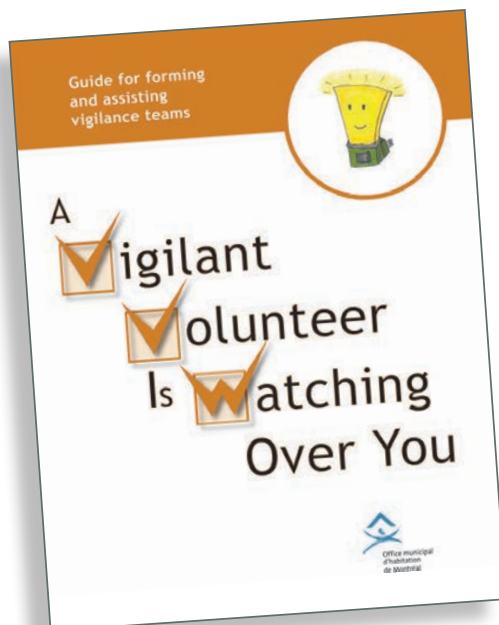
Help out, but how far out of your way should you go?

It is likely that now that you know your neighbour, you’ll lend him/her a hand in case of difficulty. But how far should you go? You might worry about coming across as somebody who meddles in things that don’t concern you or as being indiscreet. You might feel that the situation is more than you can handle. It’s normal to feel that way! Still, you must not let it dictate your behaviour. As always, tact and discretion are in order, as is respecting others’ limits and abilities.



We should start from the principle that it is better to do a bit too much rather than not enough, especially if our only intention is to help a person in difficulty. It is important to listen to the other person. We have to let others express their needs and we have to respect their wishes, even if, for reasons of their own, they do not want to open the door to us. Then, for the sake of safety, we have to ensure that the right people are notified about the situation and can intervene if necessary. And if someone appears to be in danger, then be sure to call 911.

Because after all, the best thing about living together under one roof is being able to share and help your neighbour.



Do you know this program?

A Vigilant Volunteer is Watching Over You is the name of a program that was set up by the Office municipal d’habitation de Montréal in collaboration with the tenants and tenants’ associations. It aims to enhance the tenants’ sense of safety and encourage them to reach out to one another, be good neighbours and watch out for one another. For additional information, contact Kanaga Veerapatrapillay at 514-402-6630 or you can find the guide on www.omhm.qc.ca/sites/omhm.demo.savoirfairelinux.com/files/Guidevigilant_OMHM01.11ang.pdf

Balancing your budget during the holidays? It can be done!

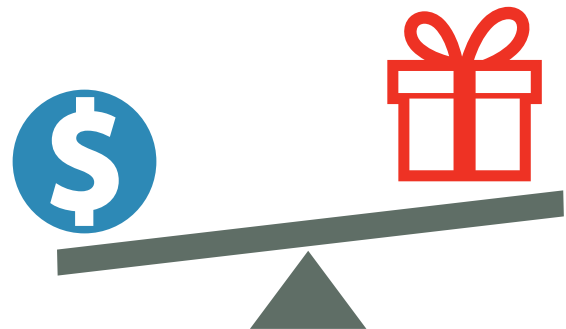
By Emilie Bernet-Pelletier, consumption education advisor, Association coopérative d'économie familiale (ACEF) de l'Est de Montréal

The holidays should be all about joy and sharing. But far too often, December becomes a time of anxiety, because it is a time of expenses, excesses and, far too often, indebtedness. The following advice will help you find a sense of balance during the holidays.

Christmas and the New Year have become highly commercialized holidays, and at every turn it seems as though someone is trying to convince us to spend more. It gets to the point where we forget the reason that brought us together. Giving the end-of-year holidays back their meaning, means not forgetting the values that are important to us, such as sharing family time or getting together with friends. So this year, why not plan holidays our way? Change your habits! Suggest one gift per guest. Think up a game for giving the gifts. Get people to be creative by limiting the price of gifts. You can propose a simpler meal for the holidays, one that is easier on your stomach, or have a potluck where everyone pitches in, so it's easier on your pocketbook!

Simple tips for reducing expenses

Preparation is still the best way to ensure that the holidays don't translate into indebtedness. Every month, set aside a little money so that when the holidays roll around you can pay cash instead of using your credit card. When you have a little time to spare, you can make your own gifts, which ends up being far less expensive and will be much more appreciated by the people receiving them. No need to be an artist to be creative! You can always offer your skills as a gift. For instance, you can offer to babysit, prepare a cake mix and offer it in a recycled glass jar, knit a scarf, etc.



All you really need to organize a successful holiday is to create good feelings among the guests. You can ask each guest to tell a story about themselves that they've never told before, bring board games or sing old Christmas songs. Remember that, as a rule, guests are more comfortable when things are kept simple.

Once the holidays are over, it's a good idea to rebalance your budget. Don't wait until you have all the figures. If you paid by credit card, pay off the full balance, or pay a little more than the minimum payment required; work out an agreement with your creditors if you are late paying any of your bills, and tighten your belt a little in January. You should be aware that the Associations coopératives d'économie familiale (ACEF) can help you set a budget or find a solution if you have debts. This service is free! Be sure to take advantage of it!

The Centre de référence du Grand Montréal (514-527-1375) can give you the phone number for the ACEF closest to you.



A number of tenants and workers attended the premiere of the film *Les Vaillants* with film director Pascal Sanchez (left) and the Mayor of the Villeray–Saint-Michel–Parc Extension borough, Anie Samson (third from left).

Spotlight on VAILLANTS tenants

By Marie Bouchard

Les Vaillants is the title of a documentary filmed in Habitations Saint-Michel Nord over the course of more than a year. The film was shown to hundreds of people to mark the start of Montreal International Documentary Festival on November 12. For more than an hour, the audience was immersed in the world of this low-rent housing building. They laughed and also experienced very touching moments as they discovered colourful and endearing characters: children and youth growing up in this living environment, tenants getting involved in their association and dedicated workers. This documentary shows that community and volunteer action can make all the difference. This is definitely a beautiful film to see. It will screen in movie theatres in spring 2016 and will no doubt be shown on TV afterwards. We will keep you posted!

Rubbing Shoulders

A bunch of members to visit Sentier Urbain's Circuit Jardins

Flower and Garden Club members learned a lot about Quebec's fauna and flora during their visits to Circuit Jardins last summer. Each visit was led by Ariane Picard, an environmental guide from Sentier Urbain.



The Henri-Gratton residence celebrates 25 years

The tenants' committee went all out to celebrate the 25th birthday of the Habitations Henri-Gratton. From the napkins to the appetizing cake with the photo of the building reproduced in the icing, every aspect of the decorations reflected the importance of the event to the residents, and their pride in belonging to the community. Several OMHM employees made sure to be on hand. Even the provincial MPP for the constituency, Gerry Sklavounos (3rd on the left), was there! Congratulations!



A local activity for Ahuntsic seniors at Des Hirondelles

On September 30, seniors' month, the Des Hirondelles residence hosted the "Salon des ressources pour les aînés dans Ahuntsic", a first public activity, focusing on resources for seniors, presented by the *Table de concertation et d'action pour les aînés d'Ahuntsic* committee addressing isolation among seniors. The plan is to present the activity in all neighbouring low-rent housing for seniors by May 2016. It is to be expected that this initiative will make it easier for seniors to access local services and resources, and help reduce the isolation of seniors living in low-rent housing!



Two self-serve libraries for residents of the Boyce-Viau low-rent housing

Two self-serve public libraries were opened at the Centre des Jeunes Boyce-Viau in Hochelaga-Maisonneuve. The purpose of this project is to spark interest in reading, and to create a place where residents of Boyce-Viau can get together. Young and old will have ready and free access to culture thanks to this fine initiative financed under the *Transforme ta ville* project.



The seniors at André-Corneau celebrate their grand old lady

The community hall in the André-Corneau residence in the borough of Villeray–Saint-Michel–Parc-Extension turned into a full-fledged party to celebrate the 100th birthday of Cécile Exalus Cirmus. "It's not every day that one gets to spend time with a centenarian," correctly pointed out the residents.



Artists at work at the Manoir Charles Dutaud

The *Arts et Métiers* vernissage took place on September 24 at the Manoir Charles Dutaud. More than 60 works and archival items prepared by the residents were exhibited. Organized by Gilles Cousineau, this exhibition gave other artists like him the chance to enhance their reputation. Congratulations to our artists and to all those who helped them along their way!



The Women's Centre of Montreal can help you find your way.



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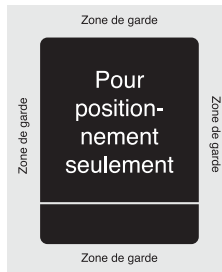
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Invitation to share

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