

A magazine of CIUSSS West-Central Montreal

FIRST EDITION

Well-being

ACCESS TO HEALTH MATTERS.



Recreation doubles as therapy, with

Kim Weippert
of Donald Berman
Maimonides

Free health
services and activities
in your area

Need a
blood test?

FREE

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page 3

Message from Dr. Lawrence Rosenberg
and Francine Dupuis

Page 4

Treating residents like family at Mount Sinai

Page 5

List of blood test centres and family medicine groups (GMFs)

Page 6-7

List of free services in the west-central area

Page 8-9

Using leisure to keep the elderly fully engaged
in the “game of life”

Page 10-11

Helping the blind experience the world through braille

Page 12-13

List of our sites in our network, plus contact info

Stephanie Malley

Editor-in-Chief
Chief of communications

Glenn J. Nashen

Associate Director
Communications
and Media Relations

Henry Mietkiewicz

Senior Writer

Marie-Josée Lavoie

Translation

Marie-Claude Meilleur

Graphic design

JGH Audio Visual Services

Henry Mietkiewicz

Photography

Lisa Blobstein

Leyla DiCori

Marisa Rodi

Contributors

For further information
on articles appearing in
Well-being, please contact
Laure-Elise Singer at
lsinger@jgh.mcgill.ca.

**Centre intégré
universitaire de santé
et de services sociaux
du Centre-Ouest-
de-l'île-de-Montréal**

Québec 

**Integrated Health
and Social Services
University Network
for West-Central Montreal**

MESSAGE FROM

Dr. Lawrence Rosenberg and Francine Dupuis



Dear readers,

Welcome to the first edition of Well-being, a magazine of the Integrated Health and Social Services University Network for West-Central Montreal (CIUSSS West-Central Montreal).

Our goal in creating this publication is to help you—as a patient, client, resident or visitor—better navigate the healthcare system.

Our network is comprised of over 30 sites (a full list can be found on page 12-13), which includes CLSCs, long-term care facilities, rehabilitation centres and an acute-care hospital. Within many of these establishments are free services available to you weekly, whether they be breastfeeding clinics or support groups for those affected by cancer.

Your health matters to us, and with that in mind, we want to make sure that the people whom we serve are familiar with the services that are available to them. Often, when we are not feeling well, our initial instinct is to head to the Emergency Department, even though this isn't necessary in many instances. That's why, within these pages, you will find clinic hours, blood-test centres and much more to assist you in getting the medical or social-services help you need—and quickly.

Well-being will be published twice a year, and will include articles on our exceptional staff and users. Although CIUSSS West-Central Montreal is already well past its second anniversary, we are still getting to know one another, and these stories will help showcase our valuable staff and the special users who make working in health care worthwhile.

Sincerely,

LAWRENCE ROSENBERG, M.D., PH.D
PRESIDENT AND CEO
CIUSSS WEST-CENTRAL MONTREAL

FRANCINE DUPUIS
ASSOCIATE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
CIUSSS WEST-CENTRAL MONTREAL

TREATING RESIDENTS LIKE FAMILY AT MOUNT SINAI HOSPITAL



In the landscaped garden of Mount Sinai Hospital in summer 2016, Freda Bialastoka, a long-term care resident, relaxes with her daughter, Rosie Saxe, and her grandson, Jason Saxe.

As Rosie Saxe sees it, exceptional care has its roots in perceptiveness—the ability of one person to almost instinctively “read” another, and then provide the help and support that an individual needs.

It’s this intuitive savvy, neatly meshing with the professional skills of staff at Mount Sinai Hospital, that keeps reassuring Ms. Saxe that everything possible is being done for her 87-year-old mother, Freda Bialastoka, a long-term care resident since 2014.

The challenge is a tough one, given Ms. Bialastoka’s struggle with Alzheimer’s disease, compounded by her physical ailments. Nevertheless, Ms. Saxe says, staff at Mount Sinai “know how to read her moods, and I’ve seen that they’re just as familiar with the other residents. For instance, they know who should sit together at meals, and whom to keep away from each other.”

In particular, Ms. Saxe singles out Paul Pinette, a recreology specialist, “who can really read her. He knows when to suggest that she should participate in an activity and when it’s best to leave her out of something. She kind of thinks of him as her son, which is not surprising. He’s so kind to her, as if she were his own mother.”

Mount Sinai was the last of four facilities—all of them now integrated into CIUSSS West-Central Montreal—that looked after Ms. Bialastoka in 2014, when her condition began to decline.

Ms. Saxe says her mother and father (who is now 94) initially shared an apartment in an assisted-living building, until Ms. Bialastoka’s Alzheimer’s began to worsen, and her husband no longer appeared able to take care of her. The turning point came in spring 2014, when Ms. Bialastoka fell and broke a hip, the second such accident in four years.

It was clear to Ms. Saxe and her family that other living arrangements would have to be made for her mother. But first, the fracture was treated at the Jewish General Hospital, where staff also tried to determine how well Ms. Bialastoka could handle physiotherapy. Her advancing dementia was a major obstacle, says Ms. Saxe, “but the JGH staff thought it was worth a try, and we appreciated that.”

From there, Ms. Bialastoka was transferred to the Richardson Hospital for physical rehabilitation. At first, the results looked promising, but once again, Ms. Bialastoka’s Alzheimer’s was the stumbling block.

“They did try their very best, and at first, she was up and walking,” Ms. Saxe explains. “But it all deteriorated due to her condition, and not through any lack of effort by staff. In fact, the care at Richardson was wonderful. My mother was still social at that time and her moods were good, so she really benefited from the excellent nursing care, the orderlies, a superb physiotherapist and the social worker who helped us figure out what my mother’s next steps would be.”

As the family searched for a long-term care facility, Ms. Bialastoka was moved to the Henri-Bradet Residential Centre. Not long afterward, a bed became available at Mount Sinai, much to Ms. Saxe’s relief.

“Since it’s a small facility, the staff is quite stable and they’ve gotten to know my mother very well, particularly the symptoms of her Alzheimer’s,” she notes. “That stability also means that Mount Sinai has proper continuity of care. On top of that, my mother is much more comfortable—and has less confusion—when she sees the same faces over the long term.”

The employees have also accommodated the family by enabling them to mark special events with Ms. Bialastoka in the dining room or in Mount Sinai’s lush garden. “We covered the tables with a tablecloth and brought in some of her favourite food,” says Ms. Saxe, recalling various family occasions over the past three years. “We continued to have family get-togethers and beautiful memories. Birthdays and anniversaries and Jewish holidays were all still celebrated together.”

At the moment, Ms. Saxe says, she can still hold conversations with Ms. Bialastoka, “but her particular case of Alzheimer’s involves a lot of mood problems. That’s why I’m so grateful about the way Mount Sinai’s staff respond to her. They never take a sharp tone toward her and they never take her anger personally—never. We appreciate that they allow her to express her confusion or underlying pain in behavioural ways, and they try to help her.

“We feel very confident that whenever members of our family are not in Mount Sinai, my mother is as well looked after as if she were with a relative full-time.”

FAMILY MEDICINE GROUPS IN WEST-CENTRAL MONTREAL

Family Medicine Groups are groups of family doctors who work together in a medical clinic along with allied health providers.

GMF Santé Kildare

7005 Kildare Avenue
Suite 14
Côte Saint-Luc, Quebec
H4W 1C1
514-397-0777

GMF MDCM

5515 St-Jacques Street
Montreal, Quebec
H4A 2E3
514-484-0999

GMF Westmount Square

1 Westmount Square
Suite C-180
Westmount, Quebec
H3Z 2P9
514-934-2334

GMF Queen Elizabeth

2111 Northcliffe Avenue
Montreal, Quebec
H4A 3K6
514-937-8000

GMF Herzi (CRIU)

5858 Côte-des-Neiges Road
Suite 500
Montreal, Quebec
H3S 1Z1
514-340-8311

GMF la cité médicale de Montréal

Alexis Nihon Plaza, Tower 2
3500 de Maisonneuve Blvd. West
Suite 1520
Montreal, Quebec
H3Z 3C1
514-788-6484

GMF Forcemédic Montréal-Ouest

1 Westminster Avenue North,
2nd floor
Montreal, Quebec
H4X 1Y8
514-787-1818

GMF St.Mary's

3777 Jean-Brillant Street
Montreal, Quebec
H3T 1M5
514-345-3511

GMF MétroMédic Centre-ville

1538 Sherbrooke Street West
Suite 100
Montreal, Quebec
H3G 1L5
514-932-2122

GMF du Village Santé

Comprises medical team from:

CLSC Métro
CLSC Côte-des-Neiges
CLSC Parc Extension
Maison Bleue Côte-des-Neiges
Maison Bleue Parc-Extension

GMF Santé Mont-Royal

4480 Côte-de-Liesse Road
Suite 110
Mont-Royal, Quebec
H4N 2R1
514-819-6649

GMF SantéMédic

5950 Côte-des-Neiges Road
Suite 220,
Montreal, Quebec
H3S 1Z6
514-733-7381

GMF de la Cité

300 Léo-Pariseau Street
Suite 900
Montreal, Quebec
H2X 4B3
514-281-1722

FREE ACTIVITIES

1. Glaucoma information sessions

Location: Jewish General Hospital
Language(s): French and English
Date(s): Ongoing
Contact: glaucomaed@yahoo.ca
www.jgh.ca/glaucoma
514-340-8222, ext. 24954

2. Smoking cessation program

Location: Jewish General Hospital
Language(s): French and English
Date(s): Ongoing weekly and monthly sessions
Contact: Joseph Erban,
514-340-8222, ext. 23870

3. Hope & Cope, for those affected by cancer – whether patients or caregivers

Location: Jewish General Hospital and Wellness Centre
Language(s): French and English
Date(s): Ongoing weekly and monthly programs
Contact: hopeandcope.ca

SERVICES AVAILABLE AT THE BENNY FARM, RENÉ-CASSIN, MÉTRO, CÔTE-DES-NEIGES AND PARK EXTENSION CLSCS, AND IN THE OUTREMONT POINT OF SERVICE

RAMQ

Renewal of health insurance cards

- **CLSC René-Cassin and Benny Farm**
Monday to Friday: 9:00 a.m. to noon and 1:00 to 4:30 p.m.
Saturday and Sunday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
- **CLSC de Côte-des-Neiges**
Monday to Friday: 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.
Saturday, Sunday and holidays: 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
- **CLSC de Park Extension**
Monday to Friday: 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.
- **CLSC Métro**
Monday to Friday: 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

BIOLOGICAL SAMPLING CLINICS

- **CLSC Benny Farm and René-Cassin**
Monday to Friday: 7:30 to 9:30 a.m.
Weekends and holidays: Closed
- * Please note: Because of the special nature of induced hyperlycaemia and of AC and PC glycaemia tests, please arrive at the sampling clinic before 8:00 a.m.
- **CLSC Métro**
Monday to Friday: 7:30 to 11:00 a.m.

CHRONIC BACK PAIN

The lumbar pain management program runs for six months and includes an evaluation. Individualized programs meet each patient's needs. For an appointment with one of our specialists:

- **CLSC de Benny Farm and René-Cassin**
514-484-7878, ext. 4025

OBSTRUCTIVE PULMONARY DISEASE

The program on living well with a chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) is provided by a nurse clinician.

- **CLSC de Côte-des-Neiges:** 514-731-8531
- **CLSC de Benny Farm and René-Cassin:** 514-484-7878

MENTAL HEALTH

Teams can provide help for emotional or psychological distress, addiction, violence, abuse, poverty and social exclusion, or for mental health problems, whether diagnosed or not. Reception, follow-up, orientation and consultation services are offered to adults, young people and children by appointment.

- **CLSC Côte-des-Neiges:** 514-731-8531
- **CLSC Park Extension:** 514-273-9591
- **CLSC Métro:** 514-934-0354
- **CLSC Benny Farm and René-Cassin:** 514-484-7878

FALL PROGRAM

The PIED program is an intensive, 12-week program to prevent falls among individuals 65 and over.

- **CLSC Park Extension:** 514-273-9591, ext. 6618

HEALTH EDUCATION CENTRE (CES) and ANTI-TOBACCO CLINIC (CAT)

The Health Education Centre (CES) provides guidance in developing a healthy lifestyle.

A facilitator is available to help with healthy lifestyle habits, such as a healthy diet, regular physical activities and abstaining from smoking.

- **CLSC Côte-des-Neiges:** 514-731-8531, ext. 2850
- **CLSC Métro:** 514-934-0354, ext. 7399
- **CLSC Park Extension:** 514-273-9591, ext. 6301
- **CLSC Benny Farm and René-Cassin:** 514-484-7878, ext. 1420

HEALTH AND SUPPORT GROUP FOR WOMEN

Breast cancer evaluation and screening, as well as formalities to access a designated mammogram screening centre (CDD).

- **CLSC Park Extension:** 514-273-9591, ext. 6399
- **CLSC Métro:** 514-934-0354, ext. 7345
- **CLSC Côte-des-Neiges:** 514-731-8531, ext. 5508
- **CLSC Benny Farm:** 514-484-7878, ext. 3554

BREASTFEEDING SUPPORT

Breastfeeding clinics offer mothers and mothers-to-be (and their immediate family) an opportunity to meet with a facilitator who can answer questions about breastfeeding. These meetings are also a chance to share experiences with other mothers.

- **CLSC Côte-des-Neiges:** 514-731-8531, ext. 2214
- **CLSC Park Extension:** 514-273-9591, ext. 6354
- **CLSC Métro:** 514-934-0354, ext. 7355
- **CLSC Benny Farm and René-Cassin:** 514-484-7878, ext. 3550

DIETARY CLINIC FOR EXPECTING MOTHERS

Information sessions on proper nutrition for expecting mothers.

- **CLSC de Côte-des-Neiges:** 514-731-8531, ext. 5087
TUESDAYS

WORKSHOP FOR HEALTHY STRAINED BABY FOOD

- **CLSC Park Extension:** 514-273-3800, ext. 6350

BLOOD TEST CENTRES:

MOUNT SINAI
514-369-2222,
dial O to make an appointment,
Monday-Friday, 8:30 - 9:30 a.m.

JEWISH GENERAL HOSPITAL
Monday - Thursday 7:30 - 8:30 p.m.,
Fridays 7:30 - 4:00 p.m.

EGG-MILK-ORANGE PROGRAM (OLO)

This program supports pregnant low income women on by offering them essential food (eggs, milk and oranges), as well as mineral and vitamin supplements at no cost during their pregnancy and until their baby is two years old.

- **CLSC Park Extension:** 514-273-9591, ext. 6354
- **CLSC Benny Farm and René-Cassin:** 514-484-7878, ext. 1420

PRENATAL CLASSES

Prenatal classes help future parents prepare for the birth and the early days at home with the newborn, including information about breastfeeding as a healthy choice.

- **CLSC Côte-des-Neiges:** 514-731-8531, ext. 5087
Wednesdays
- **CLSC Benny Farm:** 514-484-7878, ext. 3585
French classes: Wednesdays from 7:00 to 9:30 p.m.
- **CLSC René-Cassin:** 514-484-7878, ext. 3585
English classes: Tuesdays from 7:00 to 9:30 p.m.

BABY-TEETH CLINIC

Free dental clinic for babies and toddlers aged 6 months to two years.

- **CLSC Côte-des-Neiges:** 514-731-8531, ext. 1133
- **CLSC Park Extension:** 514-273-9591

SPECIAL NEEDS CHILDREN

Services for children with intellectual disabilities and pervasive developmental disorders, as well for children with physical disabilities and their families.

- **CLSC Métro:** 514-934-0354
- **CLSC Côte-des-Neiges:** 514-731-8531
- **CLSC Park Extension:** 514-273-9591, ext. 6394
- **CLSC Benny Farm and Park Extension:** 514-484-7878

YOUTH CLINIC (12 to 24 years old)

Our team (nurse, doctor and social worker) helps teenagers and young adults (up to age 24) by guiding them in their choices.

- **CLSC Benny Farm:** 514-484-7878
Mondays and Fridays from 10:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.
Tuesdays and Thursdays: 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
- **CLSC René Cassin:** 514-484-7878
Wednesdays from 10:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

Please note: A nurse is available at all times, while a doctor is available on Mondays and Fridays from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m., and on Wednesdays from 3:00 to 5:30 p.m.

SEXUAL HEALTH

Counseling and screening of sexually transmitted and blood borne infections are available free of charge and in complete confidentiality. Info on contraception, family planning and unwanted pregnancy also available.

- **CLSC Côte-des-Neiges:** 514-731-8531
- **CLSC Park Extension:** 514-273-9591
- **CLSC Métro:** 514-934-0354
- **CLSC Benny Farm and René-Cassin:** 514-484-7878

NEEDLE EXCHANGE

Needle exchange and a recovery service of syringes used for injectable drugs.

- **CLSC Métro:** 514-934-0354
Walk-in, Monday to Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.
Saturdays, Sundays and holidays, 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

SCREENING FOR HEPATITIS C

Screening for hepatitis C, including a blood test and consultation with a nurse.

- **CLSC Métro:** 514-934-0505, ext. 7406

CAFE SERVICE (Adolescents, families and children in crisis)

CAFE is an immediate and intensive intervention service for children and adolescents 5 to 17 years old and their families. Within two hours of a request to CAFE, a professional comes to the home and provides a direct intervention. An intensive follow-up service is also aimed at reestablishing balance.

CAFE services are available from 2:00 to 9:00 p.m., 365 days a year. To gain access to this service, a request must be made to the CLSC during business hours. After business hours, requests can be made through Info-Santé (8 1 1) or through the Youth Centres (contact information below).

- **CLSC Côte-des-Neiges:** 514-731-8531
- **CLSC Park Extension:** 514-273-9591
- **CLSC Métro:** 514-934-0354
- **CLSC Benny Farm and René-Cassin:** 514-484-7878

UNWANTED PREGNANCIES

Women receive support in their decision about an unwanted pregnancy. If necessary, they are directed to proper resources. Free pregnancy tests are available on-site.

- **CLSC Côte-des-Neiges:** 514-731-8531
- **CLSC Park Extension:** 514-273-9591
- **CLSC Métro:** 514-934-0354
- **CLSC Benny Farm and René-Cassin:** 514-484-7878

CLSC DE BENNY FARM
Monday - Friday,
7:30 - 9:30 a.m.

CLSC METRO
Monday - Friday,
7:30 - 11:00 a.m.

CLSC RENÉ-CASSIN
Monday - Friday,
7:30 - 9:30 a.m.

USING LEISURE TO NUDGE THE ELDERLY “BACK INTO THE GAME OF LIFE”

First things first: Kim Weippert wants us to understand what leisure is not. It's not a fancy word for “goofing off.” It's not the opposite of doing something important. It's not a time when the mind goes slack.

According to Ms. Weippert, here's what leisure really is: A chance for self-renewal and revitalization. An opportunity to discover and grow. A way to pause and take stock of one's life. A means of gaining—or regaining—a sense of control, independence and self-expression.

This distinction is crucial, because it helps to properly define Ms. Weippert's role as one of the four Therapeutic Recreation Specialists who, along with an Art Therapist, enrich the quality of life of many of the 387 residents at Donald Berman Maimonides Geriatric Centre.

Together, they use the clients' life experiences to develop recreational activities that incorporate the element of play—such as doll therapy, adaptive programs in bowling, memory games, Wii games, music appreciation on personalized iPods, and Skyping with relatives around the globe—in order to open up new worlds.

“What we do is look at each client as a whole person,” Ms. Weippert explains. “When we meet someone new, we take a non-pharmacological approach by finding out what they currently like to do or used to enjoy doing. In effect, our ‘pill’ is leisure.

“First, we assess a person's strengths and leisure interests. Then we make plans with that individual and their family to design activities for them or involve them in a program that's already under way. After everything is arranged, we monitor and document what they do, so that we can track their progress or intervene if something more needs to be done.

“I see our residents' leisure—and our own, as well—as a form of therapy. When we don't have it, all kinds of unfortunate things, both physiological and psychological, can creep up on us.”

Leisure also gives people a sense of purpose, as they try things they may never have considered before, Ms. Weippert says. “This is especially important for an older individual who is coping with an illness. That's why we have to look carefully to see the person behind the illness and determine what that person is still able to do. Then we encourage them to discover how rewarding a particular activity can be.

“Of course, we also have to know what that person can't do from a physical as well as a cognitive perspective, because you don't want to set anybody up for failure. But when they do make that discovery, it's wonderful! We have people here who have become artists and are now displaying their art, even though they never thought in a million years that they'd ever pick up a paintbrush.”

In addition, Ms. Weippert notes that being engrossed in a recreational activity is a way of restoring decision-making capabilities to individuals who have often had to relinquish varying degrees of control over their lives in an institutional setting.

“In certain aspects of their lives, they're now reliant on others, or they're in a situation where some things have to be done in a particular way,” she says. “For instance, they might need help going to the washroom, or their meals always have to be served at a specific time, or they might need assistance eating those meals.

“But that doesn't mean everything is beyond their control. I've seen people start off isolated and depressed, and they don't consider what to do with their leisure time, because they're so focused on their medications and their disabilities—all the negatives. Our job is basically to get them back into the game of life.”

Providing that gentle push is something that Ms. Weippert has been doing, in one form or another, for well over 25 years. After high school, she found the idea of a medical career appealing, but she was also intrigued by the concept of leisure. So, to combine various aspects of these two interests, she enrolled at Dawson College and trained as a recreational technician.



At Donald Berman Maimonides Geriatric Centre, Kim Weippert helps Mera Maidenbaum choose a favourite piece of music from a personalized playlist on her iPod.

“My goal at that time—which continues until today—was to deal directly with the humanity of the person,” she says. “Certain drugs can be very useful in certain situations. But the risk with the pharmacological approach is that, too often, you might find yourself relying on giving somebody a pill, instead of trying to properly comprehend the broad range of their needs.

“That’s where leisure comes in. I see it as an untapped resource whose benefits have yet to be fully acknowledged, developed and incorporated into clinical practice in most institutions.”

That outlook motivated Ms. Weippert to train in recreation therapy at Concordia University, with a specialty in geriatrics. After a brief stint at the Jewish General Hospital, she joined Maimonides in 1997.

One of her most important goals, she says, is to ensure that each client has a voice, despite the complications of dementia or other illnesses. Sometimes “having a voice” is a literal trait—that is, urging clients to speak up about their wishes. And if they’ve lost the ability to talk, they can express themselves by pointing or through other means.

“Having a voice” also encompasses the idea of retaining a sense of one’s identity. For instance, Ms. Weippert says, a person who can no longer walk

should be encouraged to self-propel her or his wheel-chair independently. Similarly, a woman who can no longer communicate her desires should be encouraged to dress and apply lipstick daily, in order to maintain her dignity in ways that are familiar to her.

“Residents with dementia still need to be empowered,” Ms. Weippert notes, “and as healthcare professionals, it’s our job to find the means to create these opportunities for self-determination.”

Each day’s successes are meaningful, says Ms. Weippert, even if they’re as low-key as making someone smile or helping them find a different way of coping with a problem. “We’re on our feet all day, and it’s go, go, go. Maintaining that kind of pace isn’t always easy, but we do a lot of listening, too. And sometimes it’s best not to say anything at all—just hold somebody’s hand.

“That’s why, when I get home with anecdotes and stories about how I’ve spent my day, people can’t help but think that my job is wonderful—which it is!”

“We feel very confident that whenever members of our family are not in Mount Sinai, my mother is as well looked after as if she were with a relative full-time.”

HELPING THE BLIND EXPERIENCE THE WORLD THROUGH BRAILLE

“What matters is the connection with people, rather than just the nuts and bolts of the job,”

says Ms. Diamond, Team Leader of the Braille Production Service at the MAB-Mackay Rehabilitation Centre.

“Transcribing into braille can be a purely mechanical process; our true challenge is understanding the client. Unless you understand whom you’re working with or for, it’s hard to be effective.”

From the way Eleanor Diamond wades enthusiastically into a discussion of the history and technology of braille, you could easily assume that the technicalities of braille are her main focus in converting conventional printed materials into documents for the blind.

But if that’s what you assumed, you’d be wrong.

“What matters is the connection with people, rather than just the nuts and bolts of the job,” says Ms. Diamond, Team Leader of the Braille Production Service at the MAB-Mackay Rehabilitation Centre. “Transcribing into braille can be a purely mechanical process; our true challenge is understanding the client. Unless you understand whom you’re working with or for, it’s hard to be effective.”

“For instance, if I need to prepare something in braille, is it for a 7-year-old or a 15 year-old? Are they good tactile readers? Do they have cognitive difficulties? Have they been blind since birth or have they lost their vision recently? What kind of braille do they like—contracted or uncontracted, single-spaced or double-spaced? These are the kinds of things that come into play, and they’re very personal.

“Commercial companies can transcribe, too, but it’s generic—one size fits all. We, on the other hand, are fortunate to be able to know most of our clients and

their special needs. Once you’re familiar with them, and you’re aware of the client as more than a number, the work comes to mean so much more to you.”

However, in this age of audio books and other digital aids, why learn braille at all? “There is no substitute for the ability to read,” Ms. Diamond insists. “For people who are blind or visually impaired, braille is an indispensable tool in the process of becoming literate.

“Although audio machines and synthesized speech are available, they’re inadequate alternatives to actual reading and writing. Braille literacy plays the same role in a blind person’s life that print literacy does in a sighted person’s.”

The Braille Production Service is something of an anomaly at MAB-Mackay—and in CIUSSS West-Central Montreal—since its mandate is primarily educational, rather than healthcare-related: It ensures that students in public anglophone schools across Quebec can obtain, at no cost, the braille equivalent of any educational or other printed materials that sighted students receive.

As a secondary mandate, the Service provides MAB-Mackay with braille for such materials as mass mailings, signage and business cards. As well, it produces specialty items that might be included in an individual’s overall rehabilitation program, such as an instruction booklet about how to control diabetes.



At the Lethbridge-Layton-Mackay Rehabilitation Centre, Eleanor Diamond chats with Julien Pelletier about a passage from *Hamlet* that he is reading in braille.

Ms. Diamond explains that in 1912, a residential school for the blind was launched by the Montreal Association for the Blind (MAB), whose students received braille materials created by volunteers. Then, in the late 1980s, as the school grew and changed, professional-level braille could be produced, thanks to funding from the provincial government.

As the 21st century dawned, the broader institution—then known as MAB-Mackay—was evolving into a rehabilitation centre. However, the Braille Production Service retained its traditional role of supplying materials to the on-site school, with which MAB-Mackay is still affiliated.

Ms. Diamond's own involvement began in 1986, when she started volunteering for various assignments in the Centre. About a year later, she received her certification in braille transcription from the Canadian National Institute for the Blind. "Then, when the government got involved, I was asked if I wanted a job, and I accepted," says Ms. Diamond, who is now one of two full-time staffers, assisted by about 15 volunteers.

Transcribing text is a fairly straight-forward task, since computer software can augment and accelerate the process of creating braille, a system of raised dots that represent letters or words that can be read by the fingertips.

Much tougher, notes Ms. Diamond, is "the challenge of taking a document replete with coloured pictures and diagrams, and making it understandable for someone who can't see, or who has never seen before, and may have no concept of these visual representations."

Often this involves writing some new text that describes what's depicted in the photo or the diagram. That's when the connection with the recipient assumes its greatest importance, Ms. Diamond says, since the ability to create something comprehensible depends on understanding the background and abilities of the person for whom the braille is intended. "What excites me, more than anything, are the people and their abilities!" she adds.

Even so, after all these years, Ms. Diamond admits there are still times when she learns a quiet lesson about her own attitudes and preconceived ideas. What comes to mind is a Scrabble game not long ago that pitted her against some blind and visually impaired friends.

"So there I am, the only sighted person at the table, and I'm thinking, 'This is going to be a piece of cake. I can see the whole board, so no doubt, I'm going to win.'" With a hearty laugh, she adds, "Of course, I didn't!"

COMPLETE DIRECTORY OF ALL SITES IN CIUSSS WEST-CENTRAL MONTREAL

Catherine Booth Hospital

4375 Montclair Avenue
Montreal, Quebec H4B 2J5
514-484-7878

Father-Dowd Residential Centre

6565 Hudson
Montreal, Quebec H3S 2T7
514-932-3630

Mackay site

3500 Decarie Boulevard
Montreal, Quebec H4A 3J5
514-488-5552

CLSC de Benny Farm

6484 Monkland Avenue
Montreal, Quebec H4B 1H3
514-484-7878

Henri-Bradet Residential Centre

6465 Chester Avenue
Montreal, Quebec H4V 2Z8
514-484-7878

Maison Paternelle Intermediate Resource

1904 Van Horne Avenue
Montreal, Quebec H3S 1N7
514-733-5388

CLSC de Côte-des-Neiges

5700 Côte-des-Neiges Road Montreal, Quebec H3T 2A8
514-731-1386

**Info-Santé/ Info-Social Montreal
Regional office**

514-521-2150

Miriam Home and Services

8160 Royden
Town of Mount Royal, Quebec
H4P 2T2
514-345-0210

CLSC Métro

1801 de Maisonneuve Boulevard W
Montreal, Quebec H3H 1J9
514-934-0505

Jewish Eldercare Centre

5725 Victoria Avenue
Montreal, Quebec H3W 3H6
514-738-4500

Mount Sinai Hospital

5690 Cavendish Blvd
Côte-St-Luc, Quebec H4W 1S7
514-369-2222

CLSC de Parc-Extension

7085 Hutchison Road
Montreal, Quebec H3N 1Y9
514-273-9591

Jewish General Hospital

3755 Côte Sainte-Catherine Road
Montreal, Quebec H3T 1E2
514-340-8222

Outremont Point of Service

1271 Van Horne
Outremont, Quebec H2V 1K5
514-731-1386

CLSC René-Cassin

5800 Cavendish Boulevard
Côte Saint-Luc, Quebec H4W 2T5
514-484-7878

**Manoir Renaissance
Intermediate Resource**

5995 Dolbeau
Montreal, Quebec H3S 2G1
514-739-0001

Plaza site

6600 Côte-des-Neiges Road
Montreal, Quebec H3S 2A9
514-731-1386

**Constance-Lethbridge
Rehabilitation Centre**

7005 de Maisonneuve Boulevard W
Montreal, Quebec H4B 1T3
514-487-1891
Satellite Centre
514-695-7565

La Maison Bleue de Côte-des-Neiges

3735 Plamondon
Montreal, Quebec H3S 1L8
514-509-0833

Richardson Hospital

5425 Bessborough Avenue
Montreal, Quebec H4V 2S7
514-484-7878

Côte-des-Neiges Birthing Centre

6560 Côte-des-Neiges Road
Montreal, Quebec H3S 2A7
514-736-2323

La Maison Bleue de Parc-Extension

7867 Querbes
Montreal, Quebec H3N 2B9
514-507-9123

Le Boulevard Residence

5900 Decarie Boulevard
Montreal, Quebec H3X 2J7
514-735-6330

**Ressource de la Montagne
Intermediate Resource**

7001 Parc Avenue
Montreal, Quebec H3N 1X7
514-316-7457

Lev-Tov Intermediate Resource

6900 Sherbrooke Street West
Montreal, Quebec H4B 1P9
514-489-4448

Saint-Andrew Residential Centre

3350 Cavendish Boulevard
Montreal, Quebec H4B 2M7
514-932-3630

**Donald Berman Maimonides
Geriatric Centre**

5795 Caldwell Avenue
Côte-St-Luc, Quebec H4W 1W3
514-483-2121

MAB-Mackay Rehabilitation Centre

MAB site
7000 Sherbrooke Street West
Montreal, Quebec H4B 1R3
514-488-5552

Saint-Margaret Residential Centre

50 Hillside Avenue
Westmount, Quebec H3Z 1V9
514-932-3630

Les Pavillons LaSalle

400 Louis-Fortier
Montreal West, Quebec H8R 0A8
514-370-8000