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This year's focus: MENTAL HEALTH

It is essential that our network outlines priorities with regards to the needs of our community on a yearly basis. Looking into 2010, REISA has chosen the awareness and promotion of Mental Health as its primary focus and will synergize its efforts along with the efforts of the network members in order to educate the diverse audiences of our community on this very topic.

Servizi and REISA debut on the web

Propage has helped us develop Servizi and REISA's very own, first-ever website! The website will contain information about the Servizi and the East-Island Network, including an electronic resource guide for health and social services in English for use of the general population. Furthermore, network members will be allowed to update information about their organisations

via a *login*; members' events will be included in an electronic calendar on the home page of the website. All of your suggestions are greatly appreciated! Stay tuned for the website launch date!

Reaching out to 4-7 year olds with AMI-Quebec and the EMSB



Surprisingly and unfortunately, research has indicated that children as young as four years old are showing signs of anxiety and depression. With this, REISA has decided to collaborate with AMI-Quebec and the English Montreal School Board in the introduction of a resilience-training program for grade-school children. The program will be tailored by AMI-Quebec for students in a school setting, and piloted in Gerald McShane Elementary School and General Vanier Elementary School in the East-end for the project's first phase. Ms Dora Cesta, Assistant Director of Student Services at the EMSB, stresses the importance of the schools adopting the program as a *way of life* for students, and not just letting it come and go as a *quick-fix intervention strategy*. Ella Amir, Executive Director of AMI-Quebec, reiterated that the project will promote *wellness* and *awareness*, rather than focus on *illness*. The

project aims to develop coping skills amongst young children so that they can be mentally and psychologically equipped for difficult situations as they grow. The tentative start of the project is January 2010. In the next couple of years, the team plans on expanding the project to the center and west of the island of Montreal, taking on board at least another two elementary schools.

DISQMEC 21st century style



The Servizi has shifted from its original focus of diabetes prevention, and along with Dr. Antonia Arnaert, Associate Professor at McGill University School of Nursing, plans to engage in a technologically-friendly project involving the monitoring and management of Diabetes. *Telehealth* will allow nurses from local CSSS' across the province to monitor a select diabetic population through the use of blackberrys; patients' blood sugar levels are transmitted wirelessly through a secured network to their community nurses. If funding is granted, the first phase of the project will be starting in December 2009, and the Servizi is confident that the results will allow for a four-year project extension. *Email me for a copy of the previous DISQMEC project report, claudiam@scciq.com.*

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A facelift for the LMAC CLC

A visit to the Laurier MacDonald Community Learning Center left Janet, Fatiha, Maria and I nothing less than inspired. The center has been revolutionized both *body and mind*. 10,000\$ renovations have widened the room and supplied it with large, circular tables providing for a collaborative environment. This school year, the center is hoping to host over twenty-five workshops for parents and community members on topics such as mental health, nutrition and exercise, eating disorders, exams and anxiety, and drugs and smoking, among many others. Ms Eileen Kelly, Principal of Laurier MacDonald high school, explained to us another use of the center: in-house suspension. "What do you do when your child misbehaves? Do you throw him/her out? I didn't think so." Kids who are suspended are given chores to do during the day and are supervised by a teacher. No free pass here!

After a three-year mandate funded by MELS, it is evident that the CLC has fulfilled its duty and become a community jewel. Now it will be up to the high school and the surrounding community to keep the center running. In October, the center will be taking on a student trainee who will aid the center's coordinator in determining means of self sustainability. *Contact Laurier MacDonald high school for workshop dates at (514) 374 6000.*

The incomparable Center of Dreams & Hopes

A big congratulations to Josie, Carmela and Lina! Friday, October 2nd, 2009 marked the grand opening of the Center of Dreams and Hopes. In fact, the name could not be more appropriate. The CDH is a non-profit organization whose mission is to *provide therapeutic and recreational activities to children and young adults with physical and intellectual disabilities, including autism spectrum disorder*. The CDH will be offering speech and occupational therapy, an early intervention program, creative movement classes, music therapy, a Friday night social club, social skills and anger management groups, and a special needs adult education program for ages 17 and up, under the umbrella of Marymount Adult Centre of the EMSB. Future programs will include a respite program, a day center, a day camp and a creative arts program.



(Left to right: Carmela Piazza, director of the EAST Foundation and the CDH, Fatiha Gatre Guemiri, coordinator of REISA, Massimo Pacetti, Federal MNA, and Josie Primiani, president of the EAST Foundation and the CDH.)

President of the EAST Foundation and of the new Center, Josie Primiani, proudly showed off the new site, which is situated at 12550 Lacordaire Boulevard, in Montreal North. Josie spoke about the challenges she faced raising a child with special needs. She described her

difficulties with finding a babysitter or a daycare who would take in her daughter, and the coming to be of the EAST Foundation. Volunteered labour and material and many years of fundraising allowed for 400,000\$ renovations to a long-awaited center. Mr. Massimo Pacetti, Federal MNA, Mr. Tony Tomassi, provincial Minister of Family, Mrs. Clementina Teti Tomassi and Mr. Joe Magri, city counsellors, representatives from the Agence de santé et services sociaux and the English Montreal School Board, journalists from the Guide de Montréal-Nord and Saint-Léonard, CBC, The Suburban, and partners from the East-Island Network were amongst the supporters who visited the center. Guests were in awe of the spacious bedrooms, beautiful classrooms, high ceilings and facilities of the three-floor building, and were treated to a full-scale buffet, celebratory cake and cocktails.

Earlier this year, the CDH asked Canadian Heritage for funding for an adult cultural, educational and leisure program and the request was refused. With the help of REISA and other private and public supporters, the CDH will be trying again, and this time hopes to succeed in finally receiving well-earned government funding for a leader in providing highly inclusive English-language services.



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Community and public partners work to develop and promote access to English-language health and social services in the east-end of Montreal.