

AVATIL
Activity Report
2014 - 2015

May 2015

I am pleased to present a report of AVATIL's programs and activities for 2014-2015.

AVATIL's mission is to promote autonomy, social participation and a satisfying quality of life in the community for adolescents and adults with mild cognitive or social limitations.

In order to fulfill its mission and its important commitment to the clients it serves AVATIL continued to develop its collaboration with a number of individuals and groups as well as community and financial partners this past year.

STRATEGIC PLAN

AVATIL's strategic plan 2014 - 2017 has been distributed to family members and our community and funding partners. AVATIL's objectives in the areas of finances, clientele, space, communication/visibility and structure have been identified. An Advisory Committee is in place to oversee the implementation of the strategic plan and beginning this summer, a number of Board committees will be developed. The committees will welcome the participation of clients, family members, volunteers and professionals in the community. A strategic plan update is outlined in the next section of this AGM package.

On April 1, 2015, a reorganization of health and social services was implemented. Public establishments merged to form integrated health and social services centres (CIUSSS). As part of this reorganization, The West Montreal Readaptation Centre is now part of the CIUSSS West Island. WMRC's service contract with AVATIL is now, by default, within this CIUSSS, until the contract ends on March 31, 2016. This service contract represents the majority of AVATIL's funding. A priority in the next year will be for AVATIL to determine where it can find the greatest stability of funding while maintaining its autonomy and its global mission of working both with individuals with a mild intellectual disability and those who do not have a diagnosis. In the next year, AVATIL will be working closely with CRADI, the CIUSSS West Island and the Agence.

SUMMARY OF CLIENT CENSUS

During the period April 1, 2014 – March 31, 2015, AVATIL provided services to 200 clients in the following service categories: Residential: 12; Community Support (apartments): 65; External/Social development (groups/activities): 55; Young Adult Outreach: 47; Adolescent Outreach: 9; Adults on autism spectrum (pilot project with WMRC): 5; Assessment: 7.

While clients are listed in one service category based on the primary service received, social development services are offered to all AVATIL clients.

AVATIL had 158 joint clients with WMRC at March 31, 2015. AVATIL continues to meet WMRC's client accountability measures on individual client interventions and reviews of client objectives every 90 days.

AVATIL's clients are primarily located in the West Island and in the west part of Montreal. However, applicants living outside these areas are accepted if they can travel on their own to receive our services. While AVATIL continues to provide services primarily in English, individual services are offered in English and in French.

ACTIVITY REPORT

AVATIL services to clients are divided in the following general categories: adolescent and young adult outreach, community support and social development services. Services to clients are offered on an individual basis and in groups. Social development services (groups and activities) are provided to all AVATIL clients. The following is a summary of the client programs and activities offered during 2014-2015.

Along the continuum of services AVATIL provides to its clients, from adolescent services to services to individuals over the age of 40, AVATIL emphasizes the development of networks of support throughout their lives.

INDIVIDUAL WORK WITH CLIENTS

Young Adults: Young adults who attend the weekly young adult group and who are accepted in the transitional living program have access to an individual counselor to provide orientation meetings prior to moving in. This includes understanding the skills that they need to continue to develop at home, as well as the rules and responsibilities of the residence, establishing a budget system, and getting to know resources in the area. The three clients who moved to the transitional living program in July 2014 benefited from these services.

Residential Clients: Individual assistance in the area of practical skills development is provided to the 13 residents that lived in our 3 residences in 2014-2015. Four residents participated in The Fay and John Bland transitional living program in Lachine, which prepares individuals to live on their own in the community. Residential activities included a cooking program Mondays to Thursdays, a weekly life skills group, a weekly residents meeting and Saturday morning apartment organization and grocery shopping. A monthly social activity is also organized. Kiwanis House, located in Lachine, provides an additional transition period to residents who leave the Fay and John Bland residence before they integrate in the community. Three residents participated in the residential program this past year. A cooking program was held Tuesdays-Thursdays, a residential meeting and cleaning program were held weekly. The Bessborough Co-op, located in NDG, continued to provide a residential alternative to six residents for the longer term. The residents continued to benefit from external help with cooking and cleaning. Staff members assist residents with weekly groceries, cleaning and residential meetings.

When residential clients are ready to leave our residential resources, they receive assistance in finding an apartment and signing a lease as part of the community support services that they will continue to receive on a long term basis.

Community Support Clients: AVATIL's individual interventions with clients are provided as part of long term community support services offered to clients who live on their own in the community. Sixty-five clients received these services this past year. The individual services offered included: practical skills support such as apartment organization, assistance with budgeting, menu planning and grocery shopping; advocacy and counseling around personal issues; resource linking with community resources to reduce the risk of social isolation and to ensure that clients are participating actively in the community; up to date health profiles to ensure that medical appointments are up to date and accompaniment to health-related appointments, as needed.

CHALLENGES

AVATIL continues to be vigilant around factors which make it more difficult for our community support clients to enjoy a good quality of life in the community, and factors that also place them at risk for social isolation.

Health: We continue to note a significant increase in the health-related needs of a number of clients over the age of 40. AVATIL continues to provide accompaniment to health care appointments and to provide a liaison with health professionals on behalf of clients so that they can continue to live in their apartments for as long as possible.

Residential: AVATIL clients living on their own in the community typically live below the poverty line and the majority of their income is used to pay for rent. Very few residential options exist. AVATIL recommends and offers assistance to each client living on his/her own to apply for a low cost housing subsidy. While some new social housing units have developed in Lachine in the last few years, and some clients who had applied many years ago were accepted, the majority of our clients remain on waiting lists. Older clients on welfare are also eligible for a government rent rebate.

Vocational: There are fewer vocational options available to our clients. A number of AVATIL clients had been benefiting for years from their participation and the allocation received from Emploi Quebec's PAAS Action program. While the program's emphasis was on social integration activities, the criteria is now based on a potential to enter the job market in the next one to two years. This will restrict access to the program for many AVATIL clients in the next year. In addition, Emploi Quebec has reduced funding available for subsidized work placements. As well, some WMRC socio-pro files for our younger clients have been closed.

CLIENT REVIEW MEETINGS

Client review meetings are held every 1-2 years for community support clients. During these meetings, clients identify their goals and priorities in areas such as residential, health, vocational and finances, and timelines are established. The client objectives are reviewed with staff members every 3 months. Families are invited to participate at client review meetings, with the consent of clients. Professionals such as WMRC integration agents are also invited to the meetings. Residential meetings are held every six months for residents of the transitional living

program and their families. Goal planning meetings are held with young adult clients who are accepted in the transitional living program and their families.

SAFETY AND SECURITY PROJECT FOR COMMUNITY SUPPORT CLIENTS

Safety and security: Clients living on their own in the community benefit from a yearly smoke detector and emergency flashlight verification and a free battery replacement. With their consent, their names are also added on a list with the fire department.

The second phase of our safety and security project has been completed. Clients living on their own in the community receiving community support clients have received a laminated key tag with emergency contacts and medical information. A bank of photos of community support clients to keep on file in case of an emergency is being completed.

GROUP WORK (discussion and social groups)

Group work continues to be an important component of the services AVATIL provides. Through group discussions and activities, AVATIL aims to promote the development of effective communication, social skills and conflict resolution skills. Groups also provide valuable opportunities for adolescents and young adults to develop friendships, while for older clients living in the community, groups present opportunities to maintain social supports and to reduce social isolation. Weekly discussion/social groups are offered to adolescents, young adults, 'Grads' aged between 25-40 and Comitas clients, who are over the age of 40. The following is a summary of the discussion/social groups offered this past year:

- Adolescent group: Tuesdays 4-6 pm. An average of 3-4 adolescents participated
- Young adult groups: Mondays 4-6 pm and Tuesdays 4:30-6:30 pm. An average of 5 young adults participated in the Monday groups and an average of 10 young adults participated in the Tuesday group.
- "Grad groups" for clients in the 25-40 age group living on their own in the community: Mondays and Thursdays 6-8 pm. Each group averages 5-8 participants.
- Comitas (Moonlighters alternating with Sunshiners) for clients over the age of 40: Wednesdays 6-8 pm. These groups each had 12-15 participants.
- Assessment group: weekly meetings Wednesdays 3-4 pm for a three-month period with 4 applicants to the program.
- Residential groups: A weekly residential meeting in each of 3 residences for a total of 12 residential clients.
- ASD group held every 2 weeks for five clients with WMRC (pilot project).

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT SERVICES (groups, activities and special events)

The program of social and recreational activities consists of an expanded lunch and games program, social and recreational activities in the community, a summer calendar of activities and larger special events that bring together clients, family members, and the larger community. The following is a summary of the AVATIL activities and special events animated by AVATIL staff members this past year.

Weekend Activities :

- Adolescent social activities one Saturday per month with 3-4 participants.
- Young adult social activities one Saturday per month with 6-8 participants.
- Comitas social activity one Saturday per month and 3-4 art classes per year with 8-10 participants.
- Comitas potluck lunches every six weeks on Saturdays and a yearly Comitas Christmas dinner and anniversary event with approximately 30 - 40 clients, family members and volunteers at each event.
- Night on the Town one Saturday evening per month with over 20 participants.
- Christmas Choir: weekly meetings October-December with 12-15 participants.
- Choir: meetings every second Saturday between April - August with 10-12 participants.

Special Events and Activities

- Monthly shared suppers: held on the last Tuesday of each month with an average of 40 participants
- Winter camp: February 2015 (3 days and 2 overnights) at Perce-Neige camp with 20 participants
- Walkathon: June 2014. Annual fundraising event with over 80 participants
- Travel and Culture Committee Activities: Trip to Niagara Falls in July 2014, 3 days, attended by 16 clients. Day trip to St-Bernard in August 2014, attended by 19 clients and 1 volunteer.
- Meg and David Day: Day trip to Upper Canada Village in July 2014, attended by 25 clients and two volunteers. This annual activity is held in memory of two AVATIL clients who passed away.
- Summer camp: August 2014 (5 days and 4 overnights) at Perce Neige camp, attended by 16 clients.
- Annual Christmas party: December 2014. Attended by over 200 clients, family members and friends
- Cabane à sucre: Annual activity held in March with 38 participants.

Day Program of Lunch and Games

The Lunch and Games Club took place Mondays and Wednesdays 11 am - 3 pm. In May, a second expansion was made to the program, from two days to three days, providing greater opportunities for AVATIL's aging clientele to socialize with friends and to benefit from a nutritious, low cost meal. An average of 10 clients participate at each lunch. The activities following lunch included games as well as arts and craft activities.

Summer Program

AVATIL clients looked forward once again to a full calendar of summer activities in 2014. Activities were held all day Mondays to Fridays between 11am - 8 pm and Saturdays alternating between day and evening outings. The program included popular weekday lunches and suppers (an average of 12 - 15 participants per meal), monthly shared suppers (average of 40 participants) as well as a number of day outings throughout the city, cultural activities and popular rehearsals for the end of summer variety show. Four full time summer students animated the summer program of activities.

Summer Community Kitchen Meal Service

AVATIL summer staff, with the assistance of PAAS Action participants, continued to provide low cost, nutritious meals to clients living on their own in the community. The service provided 15 clients with two frozen meals per week during the summer.

CLIENT PARTICIPATION IN DECISIONS AND FEEDBACK

Our individual interventions with clients are guided by our clients own objectives. AVATIL also promotes the participation of clients on AVATIL committees and in groups. Clients participated in the following AVATIL committees this past year: Travel and Culture Committee, Client Fundraising Committee, Friends of Comitas, AVATIL Board of Directors and the Fay Bland Award Committee.

Client participation at residential meetings and input in decisions are important components of our 3 residential programs. AVATIL staff members also encourage clients to share their opinions and feedback on our programs and activities. The Meg and David Day activity is chosen each year based on client interests and feedback.

VOLUNTEERS

AVATIL benefited once again this past year from the participation of a number of volunteers that included Board members, family members as well as volunteers in the community. Our volunteers devoted their time on various committees, with building repairs and with the organization and animation of a number of activities and special events. In the past year, the Comitas volunteers (Friends of Comitas) planned weekend activities and potluck lunches as well as a 19th anniversary event. The Parents Committee helped with residential repairs, published a newsletter, and completed a garden project in the AVATIL back yard.

COLLABORATION AND OUTREACH IN THE COMMUNITY

AVATIL maintains collaboration with a number of establishments and organizations in the community, and participated in a number of information meetings and community events this past year.

English Montreal School Board: AVATIL participates at a yearly information fair for young adults and family members. Unfortunately, our partnership with the EMSB's community kitchen ended in June. I would like to thank special education teachers Melanie Shields and Milena Tognarini for their commitment to the program.

Lester B. Pearson School Board: AVATIL maintains a liaison with their adult education program both to refer clients as well as to receive client referrals. We are also exploring a partnership with their adult education services for a special education teacher for the lunch and games program.

Logements James Turner: AVATIL's partnership with Logements James Turner, which owns and manages the 3 buildings that house AVATIL's residential programs, provided 12 AVATIL clients with residential services and low cost housing this past year.

CSSS Lachine-Dorval-LaSalle and West island (now the CIUSSS West Island) and CSSS Sud-ouest (now the CIUSSS Centre-Est): AVATIL maintains contact with these establishments for client referrals as well as for the provision of home care services to our clients living on their own.

West Island Local Table for Intellectual Disability and Autism (WILT): AVATIL continues to participate actively on this Table where it has a co-leadership role. The Table brings together approximately 15 agencies and organizations in the West Island. AVATIL has been participating on a WILT ageing sub-committee that meets monthly to develop a tool that clients and family members can use in planning for retirement. There is a general consensus that transition planning for retirement has not been prioritized for clients as they age. Areas for planning include residential, vocational, social and health.

WIAIH: AVATIL and WIAIH, in collaboration with the Table de quartier sud de l'Ouest de l'Île (TQSOI) organized a focus group of AVATIL clients living in the community to find out what their needs are in the community.

Altergo: AVATIL participated at their annual 'speed dating' event with over 60 community groups in attendance.

Table de concertation DI-TED sud-ouest: AVATIL participates at this Table that meets 5 times per year. The Table brings together over a dozen agencies and organizations. AVATIL participated at a forum organized by the CRDI-TED de Montreal's User's Committee as part of the Table's activities during DI-TED week.

CRADI (Comité régional des associations pour la déficience intellectuelle): AVATIL participated in the following CRADI activities this past year: CRADI's strategic planning days, Annual General Meeting day and information evening regarding Law 10. AVATIL also participated in committee meetings held throughout the year to monitor and evaluate the impact of Bill 10 on community organizations such as AVATIL that have service contracts with public establishments. I would like to thank Thérèse Colin, who retired in December from her position as executive director of CRADI, for her guidance and support for so many years, and for assisting us in our own strategic planning process. I would also like to thank Marie-Noelle Ducharme, the new executive director, for sharing her expertise with the CRADI member organizations.

AMDI (Association de Montréal pour la déficience intellectuelle): During the past year, AVATIL participated in the planning of a forum on housing and residential skills for adults who want to live on their own and family members (Un Toit pour Toi) that also included the participation of Rêvanous, Corporation l'Espoir, APDITED, and CRADI.

Action Main-d'oeuvre: AVATIL clients benefit from the subsidized employment services offered by Action Main d'oeuvre in the West Island. I would like to thank Nicole Marchessault, coordinator of West Island services, and her team for their support.

McGill School of Social Work: AVATIL maintains an ongoing collaboration with the school of social work and continues to be available to provide fieldwork placements for social work students.

Volunteer West Island: AVATIL continues to benefit from their ongoing support for the recruitment of volunteers.

Borough of Lachine: AVATIL organizes a number of its groups and activities in venues that AVATIL can reserve for free in the Borough of Lachine. We thank them for their ongoing collaboration.

RBC (45th Ave Branch in Lachine): In October 2014, RBC held a special photo event for AVATIL clients who use RBC banking services. The event highlighted the personnel's commitment to providing good quality services to our clients. It also provided an opportunity for the AVATIL Board of Directors, staff members and clients to extend their appreciation to the RBC personnel for their exceptional customer service to our clients.

Outreach to young adults: Presentations were given at Summit School, the West Island YMCA and the EMSB.

AVATIL'S FUNDING PARTNERS

AVATIL continues to maintain a number of longstanding funding partnerships through service contracts, grants and subsidies from the following agencies and organizations for its operations:

The West Montreal Readaptation Centre (now part of the CIUSSS West Island): AVATIL maintains an important service contract with WMRC up to March 31, 2016. WMRC is a funding partner, but also an establishment with which we maintain a collaboration in our work with clients. I would like to thank Rhoda Root, director of adult services, for her ongoing collaboration and assistance with our more complex client needs and for our recent collaborations with the co-facilitation of an ASD group and an expanded day program of activities. I would also like to thank WMRC for offering staff training sessions once again this year to our staff members. Staff members attended 15 training sessions this past year, including ASD training.

Agence de la santé et des services sociaux (PSOC program): The PSOC program provides AVATIL with recurrent funding towards its global mission - to work both with individuals who have a diagnosis of a mild intellectual disability as well as those who do not have a diagnosis and who fall in the cracks of existing services. AVATIL continues to benefit greatly from this funding as well as development money we receive.

West Island Community Shares: For the past ten years, AVATIL has been benefiting from funding from WICS. I would once again like to thank their Executive Director, Caroline Tison, and the WICS fund distribution committee for their support of AVATIL and for their commitment and energy in raising funds for the benefit of 40 community groups in the West Island.

Human Resources Development Canada: AVATIL once again received a subsidy under the Canada Summer Jobs Program in 2014 to hire two full time students.

Emploi Québec (PAAS Action program): Eleven AVATIL clients participated in a social integration program this past year and as of April 1, eight clients will be participating at what is now a preparation to work program. Participants receive a monthly allowance for their participation and AVATIL receives funding to oversee the activities related to each client's participation.

DONATIONS

We have once again this year received many generous donations - individual donations from family members, volunteers, from clients through sponsors, as well as memorial donations and donations from service clubs and foundations. Your support has a direct impact on the quality of life of our clients. Donations received are placed in AVATIL's special projects account and the funds are used to subsidize projects and activities that government funds do not cover. This past year, some of the donations received were used to subsidize client activities such as the Meg and David Day and two Travel and Culture Committee activities. Funds were also used to benefit clients living in the community. An emergency fund allows clients in need to obtain grocery vouchers and funds to purchase essential apartment items or furniture. The Client Fundraising Committee, which manages money raised by clients at our yearly walkathon, ensures that funds raised by clients are used to subsidize client projects and activities. Members of the AVATIL community can submit subsidy application forms if they have ideas for client projects. This past year, the client fundraising committee subsidized a choir activity, and client tickets to our Christmas party.

AVATIL'S 50th ANNIVERSARY IN 2016

AVATIL will be celebrating its 50th anniversary next year, in 2016. A Public Relations Committee will be developed this summer, and we will need your help to make this a special event for the entire AVATIL community. I am also inviting the Comitas clients and volunteers to actively participate in the organization of the event as they will be celebrating their own milestone 20th anniversary next year.