**AVATIL**

**ACTIVITY REPORT**

**2017-2018**

I am pleased to present AVATIL’s activity report 2017-2018.

For the past 52 years, AVATIL has been providing services that address the specific needs of individuals who function at the level of a mild intellectual disability and who have the potential for independent living. AVATIL has been providing a place where vulnerable individuals can receive assistance and support based on their goals and where they can develop a sense of competence, autonomy and self-worth. AVATIL also provides, through its discussion groups, activities and collaborations with resources in the community, opportunities for the development of friendships, networks of support and social participation.

During April 1, 2017 – March 31, 2018, a total of 197 clients had access to AVATIL services.

Service Categories: Community Support (apartments): 66; Social development (groups/activities): 62; Young Adult Outreach: 40; Adolescent Outreach: 11; Residential: 11; Adults on autism spectrum (pilot project with CROM): 7. Note: While clients are listed in one service category based on the primary service received, social development services are offered to all AVATIL clients.

Territory: AVATIL primarily serves individuals in the West Island area but applicants residing outside this area can be accepted if they can travel to Lachine.

Languages: The majority of AVATIL clients are English speaking. While AVATIL provide services primarily in English, individual services to clients are also offered in French.

Hours of Work: AVATIL is open 9am-8pm Mondays - Thursdays and 9am-5pm on Fridays and Saturdays. A special client activity is offered one Saturday evening per month. Evening and weekend hours of work ensure that clients who work or who attend other day programs have access to community support services and activities.

Referrals:The CIUSSS West Island (through the CLSC’s and CROM) as well as schools continue to refer clients to our programs. A number of family members contact AVATIL directly for services for their sons/daughters. Potential clients also contact AVATIL directly.

**SUMMARY OF PROGRAMS AND SERVICES 2017-2018**

ADOLESCENT/YOUNG ADULT OUTREACH

Adolescents and young adults have access to a cooking/baking group on alternate Saturdays and a monthly Saturday outing. Young adults who are planning to eventually move into AVATIL’s transitional living program participate in a weekly young adult discussion group. Group topics are based on themes important for independent living such as communication, safety, friendships, relationships and sexuality. Many of the young adults in the program will eventually move in the transitional living apartments. When the decision is made, a goal planning meeting is held with client and his/her family to establish residential goals.

ASD GROUP

The Aspire Group, held on alternate Mondays, has 6 regular members. The group began as a pilot project in 2014 and as part of a joint collaboration with CROM (CIUSSS West Island). The goal is to provide ongoing support to graduates of CROM’s two-year program for individuals with high functioning autism. At the same time, the transfer of clients to AVATIL enables CROM to form a new ASD group among clients on its waiting list.

AVATIL will welcome new CROM group graduates in September. As part of its new strategic plan, AVATIL will decide if this program, still being offered as part of a pilot project, will become integrated in AVATIL’s regular services.

RESIDENTIAL CLIENTS

AVATIL provided services to 11 residential clients in 3 residential programs this past year.

1. The Fay and John Bland residence in Lachine: Two first-year residents and two second-year residents participated in the transitional living program this past year. Staff members assist residents with the following program: preparing group suppers Mondays – Thursdays 5:00-7:00pm, Saturday morning cleaning and groceries, a weekly life skills group Mondays 7:00-8:00pm as well as a weekly residential meeting on Saturdays. During these meetings, discussions are held regarding programming and residents are encouraged to raise issues in the residence and to resolve any conflicts. Meetings with residents and family members are held every 6 months. Another important mandate is to provide a period of respite of up to one year to individuals living on their own who are experiencing difficulties.
2. Kiwanis House in Lachine: Provided two second-year residents with an additional transition period before living on their own in the community. Residents are responsible for implementing the skills they learned in the transitional living program. Staff provide ongoing support and animate a weekly residential meeting.
3. Bessborough Co-op in NDG: The co-op provided 5 residents with longer-term housing this past year. An emphasis is placed on co-operative living and joint decision-making. Staff members assist with t he preparation of one meal per week and weekly residence cleaning.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT SERVICES

Over half of regular full-time staff interventions involve providing long-term community support services to clients living in the community. A total of 66 clients received community support services this past year. Long-term community support services are provided to clients who live on their own in the community. The overall goal of the services is to ensure that our clients living on their own receive the help they need to enjoy a good quality of life. Come services take place at AVATIL (e.g. budgeting) while most services take place in client apartments.

Orientations:

A goal-based approach: Clients, family members and other significant persons in the clients support network participate in client review meetings organized every 1-2 years (average of 1,5 years). Client objectives are reviewed in the following areas: Residential, financial, health, vocational and social. All goals are established by clients.

Providing information, assistance and advocacy: Staff member have an important educational role in learning independent living skills or in helping to maintain skill levels. Assistance is provided in areas such as apartment organization, grocery shopping to promote healthy nutrition and money management. Most of our clients living on their own require weekly assistance with the management of their finances. A number of older clients require more intensive supports in their apartments and require greater assistance with grocery shopping and medical appointments. Assistance is provided with applications for low cost housing: Most of our clients are social solidarity recipients and manage very limited finances. Access to a low-cost housing apartment is the single most important way to increase our clients’ standard of living. Financial assistance is provided as needed through AVATIL’s special projects emergency fund and apartment fund to subsidize the purchase of home essentials and/or to help pay for groceries during periods of greater financial difficulty.

Promoting social participation: AVATIL clients living in the community are encouraged to participate in social and recreational activities at AVATIL and in the community in order to promote the development of friendships and reduce the risk for social isolation.

Promoting collaboration with family members: Family members play an integral role in ensuring that clients maintain a good quality of life in the community. AVATIL will continue to emphasize that it needs to continue to work with families to provide effective community support.

Health: A health profile including a schedule of health-related appointments is maintained for each community support client. Clients are accompanied to appointments as needed. AVATIL provides clients with a client emergency ID card and key tag that contains essential information in the case of a medical emergency. These are updated on a regular basis as needed.

Safety and Security: AVATIL’s safety and security program has become an integral part of the community support services offered. Staff members and one volunteer are involved in its implementation. It has expanded this past year to include an apartment evaluation component. The program is implemented yearly during October and November and includes: inspection of smoke detectors and emergency flashlights; replacement of batteries; client registration with the *Service d’incendie de Montréal* (SIM); superintendent/building owner contact information placed in a visible location in apartments and contact list kept at office; first aid kits distributed; staff members complete a form to signal any safety issues or repair needs observed in apartments.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

AVATIL’s program of social and recreational activities continues to be very popular among clients. Clients receive group and activities calendars by mail every 3 months as well as summer and winter camp notices, summer program calendars and invitations to the fundraising activity and Christmas party. Family members receive invitations and notices by mail and by email. Updated information and photos on activities and events are found on AVATIL’s web site.

Weekly Discussion Groups September – mid-June: Topics vary per group and clients are consulted in selecting group topics and themes. The following groups were offered this past year:

* Young Adult Group: Tuesdays 4:30-6:30 pm. Attended by an average of 12-14 young adults. Two events were held with young adults and family members.
* Grad Group” for clients in the 25-40 age group living on their own in the community: Thursdays 5-7 pm with an average of 10 – 12 participants;
* Comitas (Moonlighters) for clients over the age of 40: Wednesdays 5-7 pm alternating with Comitas (Sunshiners) group now held on alternate Fridays 12-2pm. These groups each had an average of 8-10 participants;
* Residential groups: A weekly residential meeting in each of 3 residences for a total of 11 residential clients;
* Aspire Group held on alternate Mondays for six clients on the autism spectrum.

Day Program of Lunch and Games**:** September – mid-June**:**

The program of lunch and games held in the dining area one of our residential apartments continues to be very popular. The CIUSSS West Island continues to refer participants. The program is held on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays 11am-3pm. Participants benefit from low cost, nutritious meals ($2). Activities following lunch include baking, games, arts and crafts and quilting. At least 15 clients per day attend the program. Due to space limitations, attendance was limited to 15 participants per day and was limited to two days out of three to accommodate a greater number of participants. One of the goals of the 40th Avenue building project is to create a larger space that can accommodate a greater number of participants.

Saturday Activities September – mid-June:

* Cooking/Baking Group for adolescents and young Adults: Held on alternate Saturdays 11am -3pm with an average of 7-8 participants
* Young adult social activities one Saturday per month with 6-8 participants
* Comitas program: Social activity one Saturday per month with 7-8 participants
* Comitas art classes: 3 art classes per year with 6-8 participants
* Comitas potluck lunches every six weeks on Saturdays with 20-30 participants, volunteers and family members
* Choir: Practices on alternate Saturdays April - August with 12-15 participants
* Christmas Choir: Weekly practices October - December with 12-15 participants
* Night on the Town activities: One Saturday evening per month with an average of 10-15 participants
* Monthly shared suppers: held the last Tuesday of each month at the Teapot in Lachine with an average of 30-35 participants

Summer Program Mid-June – end of August:

Once again this past summer, a calendar of activities and events was organized for clients Monday – Saturday between 11am-8pm including some Friday and Saturday evening outings. Thanks to a subsidy from HRDC, AVATIL was able to hire 3 full-time summer students and 1 part-time student to organized and animate activities for more than 10 weeks, 50 hours per week. Two staff members assisted with the coordination of the program. Many of the activities were held in the back yard. The evening and weekend activities enabled clients who work or who attend other programs to also participate in our activities. Activities included:

* A minimum of 5 lunches per week and a minimum of 4 suppers per week each with an average of 15 -17 participants. These include a shared supper the last Tuesday of June, July and August, in which family members and friends are invited (average of 33-40 participants) and a weekly supper BBQ for Comitas clients (Moonlighters and Sunshiners groups combined) with an average of up to 20 participants,
* Daily sports activities, walks, games and arts and crafts activities
* Weekday and Saturday outings to cultural activities and festivals including the Jazz festival.
* Rehearsals twice per week were held all summer for clients to perform at our annual end of summer variety show. This year, thanks to the collaboration of the borough of Lachine, the variety show was held near the waterfront in Lachine. It provided visibility for AVATIL and an opportunity for members of the Lachine community to attend as well.

Yearly activities/events: Once again this past year, clients benefited from a number of annual events and special activities, organized and animated by staff members and volunteers.

* Cabane à sucre: Annual spring activity with approximately 40 participants
* Summer Camp held in August 2017 (4 days and 3 overnights) at Perce Neige camp, attended by 16 clients
* Dance-a-thon held in August 2017. Annual fundraising event with over 60 participants
* Meg and David Day: Day trip in the Old Port in July on a Bateau Mouche lunch cruise attended by approximately 35 clients and volunteers. The annual activity is held in memory of two AVATIL clients who passed away
* TCC cultural activity held in September - Apple picking and visit to Stewart Hall Museum attended by over 20 clients and volunteers
* Annual Comitas Christmas dinner (over 50 clients, family members and volunteers) and anniversary lunch event in May that includes family members and volunteers attended by over 25 participants and volunteers
* Annual Christmas party attended by over 200 clients, family members, friends and volunteers
* Special trip: Cuba trip in June with 14 participants, 2 staff members and one family member. Participants described it as a ‘dream vacation’.

**BOARD, VOLUNTEER AND CLIENT INVOLVEMENT**

The implementation of a strategic plan and best practices for community organizations has led to the implementation of a number of new board committees, providing new and different opportunities for volunteer involvement. These include the involvement of family and non-family volunteers. Admissions Policy Committee: Met in June 2017 to oversee the smooth functioning of the admissions process, to review admissions information and to make recommendations as needed to the board. Finance Committee: Met several times to oversee the budget, recommend an investment policy to the board and to make recommendations to the board for the next year’s budget. Program Committee: Since its implementation three years ago, a different program is selected yearly for evaluation. AVATIL’s application and admissions process is currently being reviewed. Travel and Culture Committee (TCC): A one-week trip to Cuba took place in June. This was the first major trip planned by the committee. The TCC, composed mainly of clients, will soon begin planning its next major trip to take place in 2019.

Best Practices Committee: AVATIL developed a Best Practices Committee this past year to develop the policies and orientations needed to meet the criteria for Best Practices for Community Groups. This is now required by AVATIL’s funding partner West Island Community Shares. The following AVATIL Best Practices were developed this past year:

* Code of Ethics
* Conflict of Interest Declaration: for board members, personnel and volunteers;
* Confidentiality Agreement: for personnel and volunteers
* Risk Management Plan
* Emergency Procedures (in progress - to be completed by fall 2018)
* Fundraising Policy (update to existing policy to be completed by fall 2018)
* Investment Policy
* Volunteer Policy and Contract: includes volunteer rights and responsibilities.

**A NEW STRATEGIC PLAN TO BE DEVELOPED**

A new Strategic Planning Committee now in place will begin to develop a new 3-year strategic plan (2019-2022) which we hope to present one year from now at the next Annual General Meeting. The following are some areas the committee will focus on:

1. The 40th Avenue building project. AVATIL recently learned that it has acquired rights to the use of the building and the grounds, including the back yard. This status enables AVATIL to request construction permits to complete the planned building renovation project. A main objective is to create a ‘centre’ on the main floor that can accommodate an expansion in day programs and also allow for two programs to take place at the same time. Another main objective is to make the building more accessible by adding a wheelchair ramp and changing the slope of the stairs to the basement offices. AVATIL has mandated a new committee, the Building Project Committee, to implement the building project. The Fundraising Committee will develop a fundraising strategy to raise the additional funds needed to complete the project.
2. Evaluation of the ongoing pilot project for individuals with high functioning autism.
3. Evaluation of human resources required to implement the new volunteer policy in order to provide adequate volunteer support, orientation and training,
4. Recommend changes to AVATIL’s mission, vision and values as needed.

**COLLABORATION AND INVOLVEMENT IN THE COMMUNITY**

Thank you to our partners in the community for your collaboration throughout the year.

School Boards: AVATIL continues to collaborate with the English Montreal and Lester B. Pearson School Boards and in particular their adult education programs. In November, AVATIL participated in a youth conference hosted by Champlain College entitled “My life, My path, My PACE” aimed at youth with disabilities. Over 120 young adults were present from 5 different school boards. Our two workshops on independent living reached 50 young adults, while the remaining young adults at the conference received written copies of our presentation.

Logements James Turner*:* Logements James Turner (LJT) owns and manages the 3 buildings that house AVATIL’s residential programs. These programs provided 11 AVATIL clients with residential services and low-cost housing this past year. Both AVATIL and LJT continued to participate on a joint Space Committee to develop the 40th Avenue building project.

CIUSSS de l’Ouest de l’Ile de Montréal: Important ongoing collaborations with CIUSSS personnel for client referrals, joint service provision and AVATIL’s Asperger’s group pilot project.

West Island Local Table for Intellectual Disability and Autism(WILT): AVATIL participates at this Table which brings together approximately 15 organizations in the West Island and is involved in developing a joint project with the Table de concertation DI-TSA du Nord-Est.

CRADI (Comité régional des associations pour la déficience intellectuelle): AVATIL participates on the *comité habitation* in collaboration with AMDI, Rêvanous and l’Archipel de l’Avenir.

Action Main-d’oeuvre: AVATIL clients continue to benefit from the subsidized employment services offered by Action Main d’oeuvre in the West Island.

McGill School of Social Work and Vanier College: AVATIL maintains an ongoing collaboration with the McGill School of Social Work and with Vanier College. AVATIL provided two student fieldwork placements this past year. Supervision was provided by two staff members.

Volunteer West Island: AVATIL continues to benefit from their ongoing support and for the recruitment of volunteers. Volunteer West Island was consulted in the development of our Volunteer Policy this past year.

Borough of Lachine: AVATIL greatly benefits from the support offered by the Borough of Lachine by providing venues at no cost for client groups meetings and activities such as the Teapot (la Maison du Brasseur), LaSalle park chalet and La Vieille Brasserie.

The Teapot: Located in Lachine, this organization for seniors provides a number of AVATIL clients with services such as a collective kitchen, lunch program and foot clinic.

*Service d’incendie de Montréal:* In December, AVATIL participated in a project and information session organized by DéPhy Montréal in collaboration with CRADI. One of the goals is to ensure that SIM understands the needs of our clientele in order to intervene effectively in case of an emergency.

**FUNDING PARTNERS**

AVATIL has greatly benefited from recurrent funding from the following funding partners for its programs and services:

Programme de soutien aux organismes communautaires (PSOC): It provides AVATIL with recurrent funding towards its global mission.

West Island Community Shares: For the past 13 years, AVATIL has been benefiting from funding from WICS. Many thanks to their Executive Director, Leanne Bayer, and the WICS fund distribution committee for their support of AVATIL.

Human Resources Development Canada**:** During summer 2017, AVATIL once again benefited from a subsidy under the Canada Summer Jobs Program to hire two full time students to animate social and recreational activities.

Emploi Québec (PAAS Action program): Once again this past year, an average of 8 AVATIL clients participated in this 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. During the past year we have developed tools to better structure and evaluate the program and to provide participants with a greater amount of feedback.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Many thanks to AVATIL’s board members, staff members, students and volunteers for their dedication and support with AVATIL’s programs and activities and for their participation on committees.

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

*President:* Marjie Rutherford

*Secretary:* Margaret Stevenson

T*reasurer:* Marianne Boesch

*Administrator:* Edward Haase

*Administrator:* Carita Dubuc

*Administrator:* Richard Held

*Administrator:* Lise Hogue (until 01/18)

*Administrator:* Evy Lusthaus (until 02/18)

**STAFF MEMBERS (April 1 – March 31)**

*Executive Director*

Carmela De Lisi

*Admin. / Office*

Mojgan Yazdani

Rebecca Benard

*Staff Members*

Challette Calbert

Deanna Crowshaw

Amanda D’Aversa

Dyana Merino-Arevalo

Maud Le Monnier-Lalonde

Emily Shrider

Olma Soulaiman

*Summer/Part-time Staff*

Victoria Crawford

Collin Dobie

Olivia Emmanuel

Olivia Faulconbridge

Paula Molnar

Jennifer Smiley

Tomie Trepanier

**STUDENT INTERNS**

McGill School of Social Work: Hailey Moore

Vanier College Special Care Counselling: Iesha Dennis

**VOLUNTEERS**

Thank you to our 38 volunteers who this past year contributed almost 1,500 hours of volunteer work! We appreciate your great assistance with animation of groups, activities, special events and trips, gardening, newsletter and building repairs.

Special thanks to the Friends of Comitas volunteers and their chairperson Mrs. Elaine Whitton for their valuable support and to Mr. Ernest Thayer with his great assistance with our building repairs.