**AVATIL**

**ACTIVITY REPORT**

**2018-2019**

We are pleased to present AVATIL’s activity report for 2018-2019.

During April 1, 2018 – March 31, 2019, a total of 196 clients in the following service categories had access to AVATIL services: Community Support (apartments): 65; Social development (groups/activities): 63; Young Adult Outreach: 41; Adolescent Outreach: 11; Residential: 10; Adults on autism spectrum (pilot project with CROM): 6.

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 continues to primarily serve individuals in the West Island area. However, applicants residing outside this area can be accepted to receive services if they are able to travel to Lachine.

Languages: Individual services to clients are provided in both English and in French. The majority of AVATIL clients are English-speaking.

Hours of Work: AVATIL is open 9am-8pm Mondays - Thursdays and 9am-5pm on Fridays and Saturdays. A client activity is offered during one Saturday evening per month. Clients who work or who participate in day programs have access to AVATIL services during the evenings and on Saturdays. This includes access to individual staff support services.

Information on Services and 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.

Communication/contact with Members: Client group members and volunteers receive their specific calendar of groups and activities by mail every 3 months. These include Adolescents/Young Adults, Grad group (clients aged 25-40) and the Comitas program (clients aged 40+). In June each year, the summer program of activities is sent by mail to all clients. Invitations to special activities such as the annual Christmas party are sent by mail to all clients and family members. Invitations and information regarding the annual fundraising activity, AGM and memberships are sent by mail to all clients and family members as well as donors and fundraising partners. Family members also receive information by email. Information on groups, activities and events is updated regularly on our web site at [www.avatil.org](http://www.avatil.org).

**SUMMARY OF PROGRAMS AND SERVICES 2018-2019**

AVATIL provides 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. This includes both individuals who have a diagnosis of a mild intellectual disability as well as individuals who are too high functioning to receive a diagnosis.

AVATIL provides programs and services where these vulnerable individuals can develop a sense of competence, autonomy and self-worth. Through its social development services, clients have the opportunity to increase their social participation, develop their networks of support and to reduce their social isolation.

**ADOLESCENT/YOUNG ADULT OUTREACH**

AVATIL continues to work in collaboration with the EMSB and Lester B. Pearson School Boards as well as the CIUSSS West Island (and CROM) for client referrals, especially young adults who have left or are about to leave the school system.

This past year, adolescents and young adults have benefited from an expanded cooking/baking group on alternate Saturdays. The additional program hours on Saturdays allowed for a greater variety of activities as well as monthly outings in the community.

Young adults who are planning to eventually live on their own in the community 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 into the transitional living apartments. When the decision is made, a goal planning meeting is held with the client and his/her family to establish residential goals.

**ASD GROUP**

The Aspire Group began 5 years ago 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. The transfer of clients to AVATIL enables the participants to continue to receive support and it enables CROM to form a new ASD group among clients on its waiting list. Six clients participate in a discussion group held on alternate Mondays. This group continues to be offered in the context of a pilot project.

**RESIDENTIAL CLIENTS**

AVATIL provided services to 10 residential clients in 3 residential programs this past year. Staff members provide program assistance such as cooking, apartment organization and helping residents resolve issues that arise. Each resident also receives individual support from an AVATIL staff member.

The Fay and John Bland residence in Lachine: Three residents participated in the transitional living program this past year. Staff members assist residents with the following: preparing group suppers Mondays – Thursdays 5:00-7:00pm, Saturday morning cleaning and groceries well as residential meetings. During these meetings, discussions are held regarding programming and residents are encouraged to raise issues in the residence and to resolve any conflicts. A weekly life skills group is held on Mondays 7:00-8:00pm. Meetings with residents and family members are held every 6 months. Another important mandate of the residence is to provide a period of respite of up to one year to individuals living on their own who are experiencing difficulties.

Kiwanis House in Lachine: The residence is providing 3 residents with an additional transition period before living on their own in the community. Residents have the opportunity to implement the skills they learned in the Fay and John Bland transitional living program. Staff members assisted residents with weekly residential cleaning program and residential meetings. One staff member animates a weekly residential meeting.

Bessborough Co-op in NDG: The co-op provided an average of 4 residents with longer-term housing this past year. An emphasis is placed on co-operative living and joint decision-making. Staff members assist with the preparation of one meal per week and with the weekly residence cleaning program.

Safety and Security in residential programs: Safety measures are reviewed regularly with residents. Fire drills are held every 6 months. Smoke detector batteries in each room of each residence are changed every 6 months.

**COMMUNITY SUPPORT SERVICES**

AVATIL provided community support services to 65 clients this past year. Over half of staff interventions this past year continue to involve the provision of community support services.

Community support services are provided to AVATIL clients who live in their own apartments, alone or with a roommate. The goal of these services is to provide supports that will enable our clients to continue to live on their own and to enjoy a good quality of life. The intensity of services provided varies depending on the clients’ objectives, their needs, as well as other supports provided by family members and others in their network of support as well as any services received from a CIUSSS. Services to AVATIL’s aging clients living in the community who require an increasing intensity of supports continue to be a challenge for the organization. Clients living on their own are at risk for social isolation. They are encouraged to participate in AVATIL activities as well as to be active participants in the community.

Staff members have an important educational role in helping our clients develop and maintain independent living skills in the community. The following is a summary of the various components of our community support services:

Home visits: All clients receiving community support services receive home visits. Services can include help with apartment organization, bed bug inspection, evaluating overall quality of life in areas such as nutrition (quantity and quality of groceries) and safety measures in the apartment and verifying if medication is being taken regularly. Home visits also provide opportunities to communicate apartment issues with the landlord or superintendent of the building.

Support services in the community: This includes accompanying clients for groceries and providing guidance in choosing healthy foods, accompanying clients to medical appointments, shopping for clothing and apartment furnishing. Staff members also accompany clients to become familiar with new resources in the community. A health profile including a schedule of health-related appointments is maintained for each community support client. 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.

Services provided at AVATIL: Meetings with clients at our offices provide opportunities to share information and for staff advocacy. Clients discuss any concerns they have including personal issues. Most of our clients living on their own require weekly assistance with the management of their finances. This includes assistance with paying rent and bills. Most clients are social solidarity recipients and manage very limited finances. Assistance is provided with applications for low cost housing. Access to a low-cost housing apartment continues to be the single most important way to increase our clients’ standard of living when they are living on their own.

A client-oriented and goal-based approach: Clients participate in a review meeting along with family members and other significant persons in their support network. Meetings are held every 1-2 years (average of 1,5 years). Client objectives are reviewed in the following areas: Residential, financial, health, vocational and social. Family members play an integral role in supporting their sons/daughters and ensuring that clients maintain a good quality of life in the community.

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.

Additional financial assistance continues to be 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 financial difficulty.

**SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT SERVICES**

WEEKLY DISCUSSION GROUPS: September – mid-June:

Topics vary per group and clients are consulted in selecting group topics and themes. Clients also evaluate the group at the end of each year.

Young Adult Group: Tuesdays 4:30-6:30 pm. Attended by an average of 12-14 young adults. Events were held with young adults and their families in December and in June;

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) group for clients over the age of 40: Wednesdays 5-7 pm alternating with Comitas (Sunshiners) group held Fridays 12-2pm. Each group had an average of 8-9 participants;

Residential Groups: A weekly residential meeting was held in each of 3 residences for a total of 10 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 at AVATIL held in one apartment continues to be very popular. The program is held on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays 11am - 3pm. Participants benefit from low cost, nutritious meals ($2.50). Activities following lunch include baking, games, movies, arts and crafts and quilting. At least 15 clients per day attend the program. Due to space limitations, attendance continues to be limited to 15 participants per day, two days out of three, to give a greater number of participants the chance to participate. One of the goals of the 40th Avenue building project is to create a larger and more comfortable space for day program participants.

SATURDAY ACTIVITIES: September – mid-June:

Cooking/Baking Group for adolescents and young Adults: Held on alternate Saturdays 11am -4pm with an average of 7-8 participants.

Young adult social activities one Saturday per month with 6-8 participants.

Comitas: 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, as well as Friends of Comitas volunteers and family members.

Summer Choir: Practices on alternate Saturdays April - August with 12-15 participants.

Christmas Choir: Weekly Practices October - December with 14-15 participants.

Night on the Town Activities: One Saturday evening per month with an average of 10-15 participants.

MONTHLY SHARED SUPPERS: They continue to be held the last Tuesday of each month at the Teapot in Lachine with an average of 35 participants. Shared suppers are followed by a bingo activity. During the summer months, when the activity is held in the AVATIL back yard, family members and friends are encouraged to attend.

SUMMER PROGRAM: Mid-June – end of August: AVATIL clients look forward to the summer program each year. The program calendar of activities and events took place Monday – Saturday between 11am - 8pm including some Friday and Saturday evening outings. Thanks to a subsidy from HRDC, 4 full-time summer students were hired to organize and animate activities during a 12-week period, for 52 hours of program activities per week. A staff member assisted with the coordination of the program.

Many of the summer 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, therefore accommodating a large number of clients who attended either occasionally or on a regular basis. Activities included: Lunches and suppers: 5 lunches and 4 suppers per week each with an average of 14-18 participants for each activity; 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 for annual end of summer variety show. Once again this past year, thanks to the collaboration of the borough of Lachine, the variety show was held near the Lachine waterfront.

YEARLY ACTIVITIES AND SPECIAL 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 activity in April with approximately 40 participants.

Comitas 22nd anniversary activity held at the Ceramic Café in May. Attended by over 12 participants and family members and volunteers.

Meg and David Day: Day trip to Granby Zoo in July. Attended by approximately 35 clients and volunteers. The annual activity is held in memory of two AVATIL clients who passed away.

Summer Camp held in August (5 days and 4 overnights) at Perce Neige camp, attended by 16 clients and 2 staff members.

Walkathon held in August 2018. This annual fundraising event was attended by over 75 participants, including family members and volunteers.

TCC cultural activity held in September: Day trip to Upper Canada Village attended by 20 clients as well as staff and volunteers.

Annual Comitas Christmas lunch (attended by over 40 clients, family members and volunteers).

Annual Christmas party attended by over 180 clients, family members, friends and volunteers

Winter camp held in February (3 days and 2 overnights) at Perce Neige camp, attended by 12 clients and 2 staff members

**BOARD, VOLUNTEER AND CLIENT INVOLVEMENT**

A number of board committees have been developed and are still in place since the implementation of AVATIL‘s first strategic plan 2014-2017 and the development of best practices for community organizations. These committees promote the involvement of family and non-family members in the organization as well as clients.

Admissions Policy Committee: A meeting was held in the fall. The committee has a mandate to oversee the smooth functioning of the admissions process, review admissions information and to make recommendations as needed to the board.

Finance Committee: This committee met several times this past year to oversee the budget, and to make recommendations to the board including the following year’s budget.

Program Committee: AVATIL’s admissions process is currently being reviewed.

Travel and Culture Committee (TCC): The TCC, composed primarily of clients, organized a trip to Upper Canada Village in September. The committee has been meeting regularly this past year to plan a seven-day trip to the Dominican Republic in June of this year. Fourteen clients and two staff members will participate on the trip. In 2017, the TCC organized a trip to Cuba.

Best Practices Committee: AVATIL developed a Best Practices Committee 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. During the past year committee members focused on implementing emergency procedures for residents and clients. This work will be completed in the next year. We are also updating our existing Harassment Policy to ensure it meets the guidelines in place as of January of this year.

Building Project Committee (and sub-committee): Both committees, consisting primarily of members of the AVATIL and Logements James Turner boards, met regularly this past year to oversee the planning of the 40th Avenue building project and to outline in detail the specifications for the building renovations.

AVATIL Families Planning for the Future Committee: This Board committee was activated in April 2018 in response to parents who were worried about who would take care of their sons/daughters in the future. Over 40 family members attended the first meeting. The committee, consisting of family members, met 3 times this past year. It is developing a guide/checklist to help family members develop a plan in their absence.

**AVATIL STRATEGIC PLAN 2019-2022**

AVATIL’s Strategic Plan 2019-2022 is the organization’s second strategic plan. It is, however, the first plan developed following the transfer of our subsidy from the CIUSSS West Island to the PSOC.

Some modifications were made to the mission. It now places greater emphasis on a collaboration between AVATIL, the client and his/her family members, volunteers and others in the client’s support network to promote our clients’ autonomy and social participation. This change acknowledges and validates more clearly the importance of the support our clients receive from family members and others in the network of support. It also clarifies AVATIL’s collaborative role as opposed to a coordinating or ‘intervenant pivot’ role. In so doing, it acknowledges the competence and expertise of those in the support network.

For AVATIL, this represents an important shift away from the CROM (CIUSSS West Island) model integrated in our service contract for many years through accountability criteria and measures. With the transfer of this funding to the PSOC and the development of a new strategic plan, AVATIL is now in closer alignment to its origins as a community organization founded by family members and rooted in the community, free to determine its mission, orientations, approach and practices.

The implementation of AVATIL’s first strategic plan 2014-2017 mobilized a number of members of the AVATIL community to become involved in new committees to implement the plan. In 2018, a number of new best practices were developed and implemented. The committees now in place will facilitate the implementation of the new strategic plan over the next 3 years.

The 4 strategic plan orientations 2019-2022 are: finances, programs, building project and involvement. A summary of the orientations and objectives as well as AVATIL’s revised mission, vision and values are presented separately during the AGM and in the AGM information package. A complete strategic plan report will be available in August.

**COLLABORATION, TRAINING AND INVOLVEMENT IN THE COMMUNITY**

We thank the establishments, school boards and community organizations that we worked with for their ongoing collaboration and support.

In January, AVATIL participated at the “*Salon DI-TSA 18 ans et plus: Quoi faire après le parcours scolaire”* where AVATIL had its own kiosque along with approximately 40 other resources. We had the opportunity to reach out to hundreds of individuals in attendance. The event was also an important opportunity for our organization to network with the other resources present, including community organizations, the CIUSSS’s and school boards in the Montreal region.

School Boards: AVATIL continues to collaborate with the English Montreal and Lester B. Pearson School Boards, in particular their adult education programs. In January, we contracted with one of the EMSB’s adult education programs to prepare two meals per week for clients in our weekly supper discussion groups.

CIUSSS de l’Ouest de l’Ile de Montréal: We have maintained collaborations with the CIUSSS personnel for client referrals, joint service provision and AVATIL’s Asperger’s group pilot project. A meeting was held with Brigitte Auger, director of DI-TSA services this past year to explore strategies to facilitate communication of AVATIL services to their staff members and increase referrals.

In November, AVATIL attended the CIUSSS’s Public Information Session which included networking workshops.

CIUSSS West-Central-Montreal: in November, AVATIL participated in a one day workshop entitled “Building a Collaborative Network” which brought together public sector and community participants to identify common issues in providing supports to individuals with disabilities and their families and to build a collective vision for change.

West Island Local Table for Intellectual Disability and Autism(WILT): This table, which brings together approximately 15 organizations in the West Island, has not been active this past year. The table has requested the help of the CIUSSS West Island to provide a community organizer to re-start and facilitate the coordination of the Table.

CRADI (Comité Régional pour l’autisme et la déficience intellectuelle): AVATIL continues to participate on the *comité habitation* in collaboration with AMDI, Rêvanous and l’Archipel de l’Avenir. AVATIL has participated at meetings organized by CRADI including their AGM, where member organizations help determine CRADI’s objectives and priorities.

RPPADIM (Regroupement de parents de personnes ayant une déficience intellectuelle de Montréal): In January, AVATIL participated at a presentation and discussion hosted by Compagnons de Montréal of the RPPADIM’s document «*Un réseau en perte de mission: les services aux personnes ayant une déficience intellectuelle».*

WIAIH: AVATIL participated in a training program hosted by WIAIH to orient employers on the new law regarding cannabis. In October, members of AVATIL’s Families Planning for the Future Committee attended a workshop hosted by WIAIH entitled ‘Curatorship and Power of Attorney, Wills and Trusts’. There has been ongoing collaboration with WIAIH regarding how to help parents plan for the future for their sons and daughters in their absence.

Rêvanous: In January, one AVATIL staff member participated in their workshop on active listening with a DI-TSA clientele.

Logements James TurnerInc.:It owns and manages the 3 buildings that house AVATIL’s residential programs. These programs provided 10 AVATIL clients with residential services and low-cost housing this past year. Both AVATIL and LJT have been participating on a joint Building Project Sub-Committee to develop the 40th Avenue building project.

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

Student Internships: AVATIL maintains an ongoing collaboration with the McGill School of Social Work and with Vanier College. This year, a new collaboration was initiated with the CEGEP du Vieux Montréal’s social service program. One student completed her fieldwork placement from this program. Supervision was provided by two staff members.

Volunteer West Island: AVATIL continues to benefit from their ongoing support and for the recruitment of volunteers for programs and services as well as for board committees.

Borough of Lachine: AVATIL continues to meet the requirements of the “*Politique de reconnaissance et de soutien aux organismes à but non lucratif de l’arrondissement de Lachine”.*  AVATIL benefits greatly from the borough’s support by providing us with venues and equipment at no cost for our client activities and events such as the Teapot (la Maison du Brasseur), LaSalle park chalet and La Vieille Brasserie. As well, a conference room at the Centre d’Accueil de Lachine is accessible to the board of directors for monthly board meetings.

Centre St-Pierre: This past year, AVATIL developed a new personnel evaluation form in collaboration with staff members and Karine Joly at the Centre St-Pierre.

RIOCM: AVATIL benefitsfrom the ongoing information updates it receives from the RIOCM. In February, AVATIL participated in *a journée de réflection* on the topic of alternative sources of funding for community organizations.

Western Lachine Recreation Centre: Each summer for the past 30 years, the centre, which manages a private swimming pool close to our building, has generously allowed AVATIL clients free access to their pool.

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. This past year we worked in close collaboration to plan joint interventions with one vulnerable aging client.

*Service d’incendie de Montréal (SIM):* AVATIL sends updated information to SIM on clients living on their own in the community to this service each year.

SPVM: Station 8 of the SPVM provided AVATIL with cadets to accompany clients along the walking path during our annual Walkathon in August.

Canada Revenue Agency and Revenue Quebec: For the past several years AVATIL has been registered with their volunteer program that provides our clients with completion of income tax returns at no cost. Approximately 35-40 clients benefit from this program each year.

**FUNDING PARTNERS**

AVATIL greatly benefits 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 14 years, AVATIL has been benefiting from funding from WICS. Many thanks to their new Executive Director, Sophie McCann, and the WICS fund distribution committee for their ongoing support of AVATIL.

Human Resources Development Canada**:** During summer 2018, 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): Our staff members have been able to provide greater structure, guidance and feedback to our program participants 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.

Donations to Special Projects Fund: AVATIL benefits from generous donations from family members, service clubs and foundations from its fundraising event and throughout the year. Donations are placed in a special projects account and the funds are used towards projects that are not funded by government sources. AVATIL has designated funds in its special projects account to be used towards the 40th Avenue building renovation project.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Thank you 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**

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**STUDENT INTERN**

CEGEP du Vieux Montréal: Audeline Granger

Social services program

**VOLUNTEERS**

Thank you to our 33 volunteers who this past year contributed over 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 for their valuable support and to Mr. Ernest Thayer with his great assistance with our building repairs.