

Laval Families

M G Z I N E



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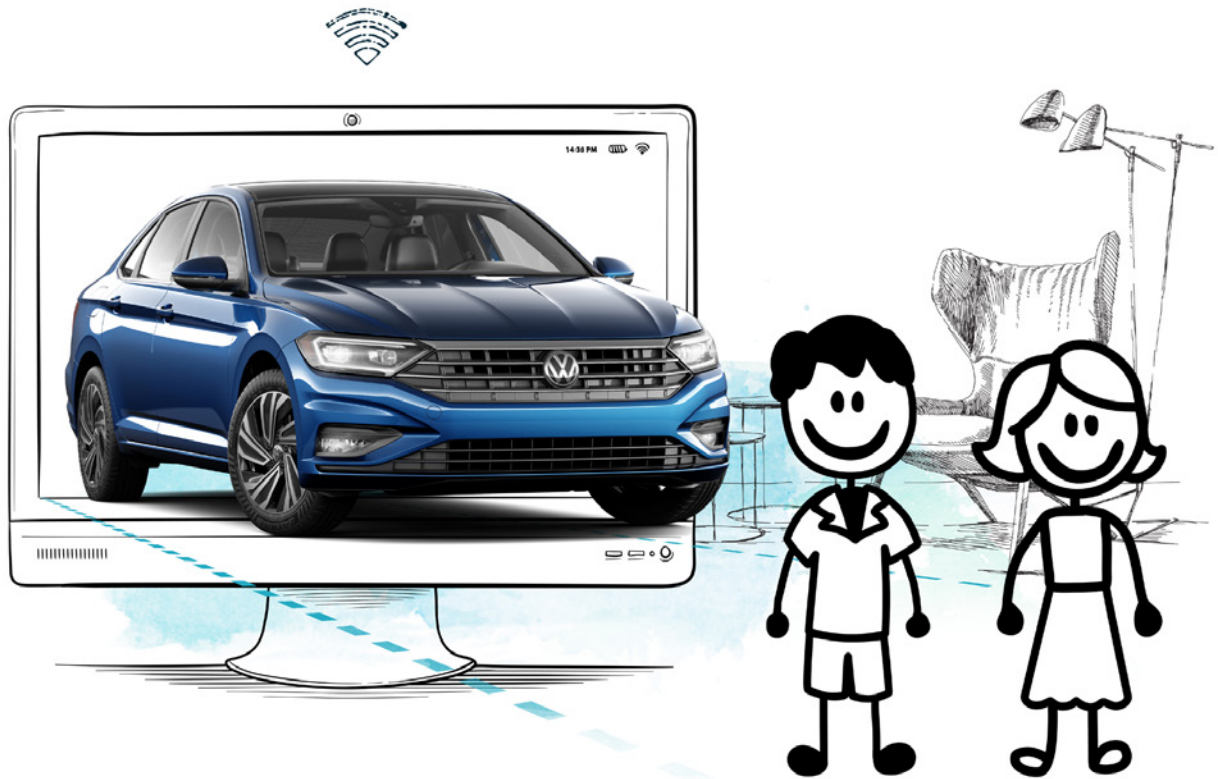
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For the Love of Animals



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Brighter Days Ahead

By Luigi Morabito

As we move into the summer season, we can look forward to brighter and warmer days to soak up the sunshine and fresh air. In this issue of *Laval Families Magazine*, our two cover stories give you plenty of opportunity to get outside and get active.

If you haven't already heard, Decathlon has opened a megastore in Laval and is quickly becoming the go-to spot for sports activity and equipment of all sorts. More than just a store, Decathlon offers on-site physical activity and an online community to find activities that suit everyone's needs and levels. Read about the company's European history and international presence, starting on page 8.

If you're looking for some family-friendly outdoor fun and exploring, check out our other feature story about Miller Zoo! Starting on page 51, find out how Miller Zoo got its start and how the owners went from rescuing a young doe to now having a full-fledged zoo that receives tens of thousands of visitors a year!

If you or someone you know is looking to get back into the workforce or get a fresh start, be



sure to check out the article on page 20 to learn more about Groupe Priorité Travail's Job Search Club in Laval. Or, if you're an entrepreneur looking to embark on business ownership, be sure to check out the article on page 31 for solid advice from YES Employment + Entrepreneurship about buying an existing business. Learn about the pros and cons and gain some helpful insights.

If you already own a business or are just starting out, your marketing strategy might need a helping hand from IND Films, a local company specializing in video production and marketing videos. Learn about the company and its Emmy-nominated founder on page 23.

Despite the 2020-2021 school year coming to a close, it's never too early to start thinking about the upcoming school year. Collège Sainte Anne offers three French-language levels of education: elementary, high school and CEGEP. A brand new state-of-the-art high school will be opening its doors in Dorval in August 2022, and admissions will begin as of August 2021! Find out more on page 17.

While we all hope this summer will allow us to safely enjoy time with friends and family, it's important to stay informed on the evolution of the pandemic and the sanitary measures in place. Stay informed by consulting page 35 and pages 40-41. Learn about the vaccination rollouts and more about the vaccine itself.

Wishing you and your loved ones a safe, healthy, and joyful summer period!

Message from the Chairperson of the Sir Wilfrid Laurier School Board

Dear Families and Stakeholders,

We hope that you and your families are doing well and keeping safe. This year, we were thrown into a new reality of learning that required of everyone to take on new roles with very little time to adapt. Our employees spent countless hours preparing for a new kind of teaching. Although we were faced with much uncertainty, what shined the most was everyone's resilience and strength to adapt and offer the best services for students. Through all these changes, we are thankful that parents took on a more vital role in their child's education. What everyone accomplished this year was outstanding. At times it was less than perfect but we were able to achieve things in a way that we never thought was possible. You all rose to the challenge and came out stronger than when you began the year. Many of you had to juggle working from home while supporting your children with their schooling, in addition to dealing with all of the normal every day challenges of family life.

This year has been an emotional rollercoaster for everyone, but through it all, we continued to work together and support each other. During the summer months, the Sir Wilfrid Laurier School Board will work hard to ensure a safe and smooth start to the new school which we will build on this past years' experience.

The Council of Commissioners wishes you and your family a safe and enjoyable summer vacation that includes lots of family time, laughter and excellent memories. We look forward to welcoming you all back on September 1st, rested and relaxed, for what will be an exciting, new academic year.



Paolo Galati



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The Art of Enjoyment

This summer, things will still be «different», but it will be a great opportunity to enjoy the outdoors! A wealth of family activities awaits you in Laval.

Ville de Laval is continuing to roll out its summer rest areas in the various districts of the city. These facilities are perfect for relaxing and having a bite to eat with your little ones. This year, there will be eight of these areas from now on and public art will be very present there. Discover the works of Laval artists on foot or by bike! In addition, at the Centre de la nature, a magnificent pathway to poetry stations will invite you to recite verses in the heart of nature.

And lastly, don't forget to keep the flame alive! Participate in the *Course des pompiers* reinvented in virtual format. Run from May 28 to June 13. Our firefighters wish to remind you to stay alert when barbecuing... Beware of distractions! Happy summer to you all...



Marc Demers
Mayor of Laval



Preparing the post-pandemic. Laval's relaunch has begun!



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Decathlon: For the Love of Sports

By Melissa Rodriguez



Standing up: Geneviève Goulet, Audrey Susec, Benjamin Loir, Arnaud Briand, Nick Hartmann, Ariane Favero, John Butcher, Mathieu Chenaval, Antonin Valissant
Seated: Sarah Denis, Guillaume Cauvain, Melissa Beaulieu, Arnaud Lagarde, David Proulx, Cédrik Charbonneau

Photo credit : Florent Rouanet

Decathlon, a favourite store for sports enthusiasts, has just opened its new location in Laval! The world-famous French retailer designs, manufactures, tests and sells its own products for both beginner and experienced athletes. The store offers innovative and quality equipment at fair prices, making sports accessible to as many people as possible. Laval Families Magazine had an opportunity to meet with the passionate Decathlon team.

The Vision, The Beginning, Setting Up in Canada

Do everything with purpose. This is what Michel Leclercq's mother always told him. For Leclercq, purpose was intimately linked to the well-being of others. With this in mind, he created Decathlon.

Coming from the Mulliez family, a large European family of entrepreneurs and founders of successful companies, Leclercq has entrepreneurship in his blood. So as not to compete with Gérard Mulliez, his cousin and founder of Auchan supermarkets, Leclercq came up with the idea of opening a sporting goods store. Decathlon was born in 1976, in Lille, France. Its mission: to make the pleasure and benefits of sports accessible to the many.

Leclercq was finally able to identify what meaningful action is all about: you must place people at the heart of every project. This is a principle he applies both to his collaborators—this is how the company refers to its employees—and to the consumers of Decathlon products. This idea is at the center of the company's corporate culture because Leclercq believes that happy employees lead to happy customers. People are also central to the design of Decathlon products because customer feedback and innovation play a big role in the creation and improvement of all products.

Present in 57 countries, Decathlon is an important part of the lives of active individuals around the world—whether they are amateurs or experienced athletes. In France, surveys have even shown that Decathlon is the favourite company of the French. The company came to Canada in 2018. To date, it has five stores in Quebec: at the Eaton Centre in Montreal, at Champlain Mall in Brossard, in Boisbriand, in Sainte-Foy and most recently in Laval. Decathlon has also opened stores in Ottawa and Dartmouth, Nova Scotia. More openings are planned soon for the Toronto area.

What makes Decathlon unique? It's the combination of five things: the importance of people in the business and in the design and innovation processes; the desire to have a positive societal and environmental impact; the customer experience when shopping in-store or online; the best quality products at fair prices; and the digital Decathlon Community platform that allows customers to register for sports lessons and activities. Decathlon strives to establish a coherent, complete experience while respecting these five parameters, not just for Canadians but for its customers across the globe.

Continued on page 10

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Cédrik Charbonneau

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A New Store in Laval!

Decathlon Laval opened its doors at Centre Laval in December. David Proulx, Store Manager, is proud that the store was able to open in record time. Proulx joined Decathlon a year and a half ago as a bike manager at the Eaton Centre store. He explains that it was the perfect company for him to work for because it combines his two passions: business management and sports— especially cycling.

“Opening a store is always a challenge but having such tight deadlines allowed us to forge close ties with all of Decathlon Canada,” says Proulx. “It was a lot of teamwork.”

He explains that the pandemic created a unique scenario for a grand opening. “With the pandemic, we couldn’t have a big opening night. It wasn’t possible to do a lot of promotion, as we wanted to avoid creating large crowds and long lines,” he says. “Despite everything, the opening was a success and the customers responded.”

It is worth noting that sports have become extremely popular since the start of the pandemic. Many have turned to physical activity as a way to relieve the stress that has been created by COVID-19. Decathlon’s quality products and affordable pricing have already won over the sports community.

What does the new store in Laval look like? It’s the largest Decathlon store in Canada. In fact, located at Centre Laval, the store measures nearly 60,000 square feet. There are 7,000 products available for more than 65 different sports; this is a source of pride for Cédrik Charbonneau, Leader of Local Communications. “Never has an opening been completed in such a short amount of time, and we can be proud of the result,” he says. “Three months to open such a beautiful and large store is impressive.”

All Decathlon stores place great emphasis on the customer experience. Before the pandemic, customers were able to visit in-store test areas to test out equipment before purchasing it, while also benefiting from the expertise and advice of Decathlon employees.

In addition to the test areas for products and equipment, all Decathlon stores have a Decadium space, which is a multisport training room used for basketball, soccer, tennis, badminton, volleyball and sports for those with physical disabilities.

The Laval branch stands out because it also has four rooms upstairs dedicated to the practice of sports activities: a yoga studio, a dance and cardio training studio, an area for martial arts and another for spinning. So much more than a regular department store, Decathlon offers a convenient sports complex right on site. Due to the current public health restrictions, the product testing areas and training rooms are either available with limited access or are temporarily closed.



David Proulx

Photo credit : Florent Rouanet

Same Quality Expertise Online as In-Store

If there isn't a Decathlon near you, you can still enjoy the Decathlon experience thanks to its online shopping platform, which offers delivery anywhere in Canada.

Decathlon's online shopping formula strives to provide customers with access to the same expertise they would have in-store, with the help of detailed and precise technical data sheets that identify the specificities and scope of each product. A chat service is available for customers who would like to communicate with an adviser, and product reviews from customers around the world can give further insight into the details of a product.

"With the pandemic, online demand has exploded," explains Charbonneau. "In particular, it should be noted that the online inventory is often larger than in the store, especially for rarer products. With the high demand that we are currently experiencing, many people choose, for example, to buy their bike online in order to reserve it. Then we prepare the bike for them in the store and they can come pick it up when it is ready."



Standing up: William Tallard, Victorien Hoerth, Livia Barbot, Raphael Brian

Seated: Gerard Venmans, Miguel Goderre

Photo credit : Florent Rouanet



Jaylone Lee

Photo credit : Florent Rouanet

The online experience is a priority at Decathlon because the company aims to support all customers, near and far. The customer experience is constantly developing, especially given the current health situation. The pandemic has led to many initiatives, such as the creation of collection points in physical stores, or in store parking lots, to limit crowds.

"There are many initiatives launched by the advisers themselves, in order to be able to continue to offer their expertise and pursue Decathlon's mission, even in this more difficult period," says Jaylone Lee, Chief Marketing and Communications Officer at Decathlon Canada. "For example, the Eaton Centre store in Montreal could not be a pick-up point because it's inside a mall. Collaborators there launched a home delivery service by bicycle. This is a perfect example of initiatives that we encourage and celebrate at Decathlon."

Charbonneau adds that Decathlon Laval is very present on social media networks, in particular their Facebook page. "We find this to be very important, because it allows us to create a community, to get closer to users and, above all, to highlight the human side of the company," he says. "For example, we like to talk about the physical activities that Decathlon advisers practice in their free time. This makes it possible to create bonds. An employee at Decathlon is, above all, a human being who may practice the same sport as you."

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DECATHLON

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More than just a sports store.
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**A WORLD
TO DISCOVER.**

Continued from Page 11

Quality Products at Fair Prices

Decathlon is renowned for its quality products and competitive prices. Decathlon employees prefer the term 'fair prices'. Decathlon manages the entire production chain—from the first sketches to the distribution, including the manufacturing and testing phases. The company partners with suppliers that are handpicked for their capacity, reliability and ethical commitment. This is what allows Decathlon to optimize profit margins and maintain affordable pricing while ensuring the quality and durability of each product and piece of equipment. The entire process is very much in keeping with the goal of making sports accessible to all.

Innovation is at the heart of the Decathlon production process. Employees listen to their customers' needs and suggestions when creating new products and improving existing ones. A great example is the Quechua brand two-second tent that has been around since 2005 and is one of Decathlon's flagship products. The tent was created to meet the demands of campers who wanted a tent that would be easy and fast to set up. In order to facilitate the folding of the tent and improve its compactness, Decathlon continued to research and experiment with different designs. In 2020, the EASY two-second tent, which is more compact and easier to fold up, was launched.



EASY two-second tent



Easybreath mask

While the newer version of the tent can be set up as quickly as the first version, it can also be folded up instantly with an integrated push button. In addition to being innovative, the EASY two-second tent is exceptional from an ecological point of view. The dye used to colour the tent consumes very little water compared to dyes that are generally used.

Decathlon also strives to make certain sports, which may be considered more difficult to practice (such as snorkeling), more accessible to its customers. Breathing with a snorkel can feel unnatural and the mouthpiece is generally considered to be uncomfortable and unhygienic. In addition, a traditional snorkeling mask offers a narrow field of vision. It was in response to these observations that the Subea design teams developed the Easybreath mask, the first full-face mask with an integrated snorkel; this makes it possible to see and breathe under water as easily as on land. Now, both children and adults can explore the seabed with ease and, above all, in complete safety.

Continued on page 14

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Continued from Page 12

A Positive Social Impact on Many Levels

Decathlon's mission is to make the pleasure and benefits of sports accessible to the many. Indeed, practicing sports activities is beneficial for both physical and mental health. But, Decathlon's social impact goes even further than that. The company is dynamic and interested in current environmental issues, which is why the team is exploring many eco-responsible programs locally, nationally and internationally. Mélanie Minjauw, Sustainable Development Leader, and Francis Descombes, local Eco-Responsibility Manager, tell us more about this.

The projects Minjauw is working on have two components: the circular economy—the implementation of second-hand projects for products and the preservation of the environment, and reducing the carbon footprint of stores and warehouses. For instance, Decathlon strives to ensure that the working conditions of its suppliers are acceptable and ethical and favours shipping methods by sea rather than by air. Among future projects, the company wants to modify the energy consumption of its stores so as to be 100%



Arnaud Lagarde

Photo credit : Florent Rouanet

renewable. In France, for example, solar panels have been installed on the roofs of some Decathlon locations.

The focus is also on the quality and durability of the products. Since Decathlon has a hand in the entire production chain, it favours eco-designs and materials that are less harmful for the environment.

Many programs are either implemented or under exploration to maximize the use of a product or piece of equipment. For example, items which have been slightly damaged in the warehouse, or that have been returned by customers, are offered for sale second-hand at a lower cost. Other initiatives that have already been launched in France will be implemented in Canada in the coming years.

On a smaller scale, Descombes explains that several eco-responsible actions have already been implemented in each Decathlon store. Decathlon Boisbriand called on local organizations to create an efficient recycling system within the store. Recovery bins (for compost and recycling) were properly identified with images indicating which waste should go into which bin. Contracts have been signed with local companies for the recovery of the bins. Possible solutions for recycling textiles, such as polyester, are also well underway.



Standing up: Véronique Desgreniers, Geneviève Lefebvre, Romain Gobaux

Seated: Mathieu Orsolini, Alexandre Bruère, Axel Kruk

Photo credit : Florent Rouanet

REACH NEW HEIGHTS

Join the team, we are hiring in the Montreal region! [decathlon.ca/careers](https://www.decathlon.ca/careers)

DECATHLON

Serving the Community

Decathlon is more than a sporting goods store; it's an experience. This is very much highlighted by the company's digital application called Decathlon Community. Available on iOS, Android and as a website, Decathlon Community allows participants to register for sports activities led by certified coaches. As John Butcher, Director of Community Canada, explains, the goal is to make it easier for coaches and sports enthusiasts to come together, and to make physical activity even more accessible. The choice of courses is vast and can range from yoga sessions to martial arts, bootcamps and classes for children. Decathlon Community makes it easy to find physical activities for all tastes and all levels. Classes can be offered online or at the nearest Decathlon location at a lower cost. In the current pandemic context, the availability of in-person activities is dependent on the public health measures in place.

Decathlon Community physical activity sessions are not only available for all ages and all levels, but there are also activities available for people with physical disabilities or motor difficulties. "We are also looking to offer affordable sessions, so that the cost is not a barrier to the practice of the sport," says Butcher. To do this, Decathlon also organizes community events and



John Butcher

Photo credit : Florent Rouanet

free physical activity sessions. For example, about thirty participants have already been able to participate in free Zumba classes organized by Decathlon Brossard.

Sports enthusiasts, it's time to make your way to an innovative and responsible store.

For the love of sports, come to Decathlon!

To learn more, visit [decathlon.ca](https://www.decathlon.ca) and community.decathlon.com.



Ariane Favero

Photo credit : Florent Rouanet



Decathlon organizes free physical activity sessions.



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Mindfulness and Children

By Laura Cipriani

What exactly is mindfulness? And can children participate? In simple terms, mindfulness is slowing down. It's living in the moment and observing what is all around. It's fully feeling the moment. It's teaching how to live in the moment.

People who practice mindfulness are often able to accept their current situation without judgement and able to base an action from a better place within. Children are already sensitive to experiencing each moment as it occurs, however, everyday life of rushing to school, sports and appointments can hinder that gift. Parents and teachers are overwhelmed with everyday routines at home and in the classroom.

There are three aspects of mindfulness to consider when trying to practice. **Intention** is the reason for practicing mindfulness. It may be to help reduce stress and anxiety among children. It may be to promote healthier choices for eating, sleeping and use of screen time. When an **intention** to be fully present is established, it can lead to other healthy lifestyle improvements. It's a great tool for children, parents or teachers to slow down and reconnect with themselves and to others.



Attitude is the focus on certain attitudes and behaviors. This is promoting kindness, compassion, and sympathy. It can also be observing the emotions or behaviors that come from living in each moment from a different perspective. It's reinforcing a positive outlook on difficulties or encounters and relationship building.

Attention is the type of action taken to promote mindfulness. Mindfulness can be incorporated into everyday life. This can be sound therapy by using chimes to promote relaxation. In a classroom environment, a chime instrument can be used to start off the morning class by closing the lights and focusing on the sound it makes. At home, sound therapy can be used to help set the mood for bedtime routines for children who have difficulty winding down at the end

of the day. A few rounds of chimes can promote rest and calmness.

Guided meditation for children can be used to promote tranquility. Meditation can be done in the school yard, classroom, bedroom or even in the car. It's a simple technique that encourages slowing down and being in the moment. Breathing exercises are a great way to calm the mind and bring back the focus. Just like brain breaks for the classroom, breathing breaks can be offered to help encourage mindfulness.

Sensory experiences such as a water or sand table can easily be incorporated in the classroom or at home. Using different play tools for the water and sand table can encourage imaginary play as well. Mindfulness movement is another mindful action to foster a slowing down lifestyle. Simple yoga moves, like cat pose or child's pose can have a huge impact for physical and mental wellbeing.

Practicing mindfulness for a few minutes each day can help lower anxiety, depression and increase memory and clarity. It can boost acceptance and empathy without judgement. Mindfulness is a simple technique to slow down and appreciate life's little moments.

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Sainte-Anne: Educating Tomorrow's Citizens

By Melissa Rodriguez

Founded in 1861, Collège Sainte-Anne brings together three levels of education: elementary, high school and CEGEP. Through its three schools, Sainte-Anne has developed an innovative educational model that places its students at the heart of the learning process, preparing them for the world of tomorrow. Constantly striving to build upon its educational mission, a second high school will open its doors in Dorval in August 2022.



Collège Sainte-Anne has three private French-language educational establishments. The first two, a high school and a CEGEP, are located in Lachine, on boulevard Saint-Joseph. The third, an elementary school, is located in Dorval, on boulevard Bouchard. In August 2022, a fourth establishment will be added to this campus: a new high school in Dorval. To learn more about the innovative educational project that will be implemented in this new school, we interviewed Isabelle Senécal, Director of Educational Innovation and Director of High School Education in Dorval.

Pedagogy with a Contemporary Focus

Collège Sainte-Anne has always strived to provide a creative, collaborative and unique learning environment to keep students are motivated, engaged and happy at school. With this in mind, the new school's programming had to be moder-

nized to reflect more of today's reality and current issues, while meeting ministerial requirements.

In this vein, co-teaching will be at the forefront. The core subjects, namely French, Math, Science and Social Studies, will be taught in an interdisciplinary fashion. The timetable will be decompartmentalized and the teachers will work closely together so that students can make connections between each of the subjects and the skills acquired. Each course becomes more concrete as cross-curricular competencies will allow students to put their learning into practice, combining more than one core subject at a time.

In Cycle I, students will have the opportunity to participate in discovery workshops, so they deepen their learning in areas such as programming and robotics, science and engineering, media and communication as well as the environment. In Cycle II, students will specialize in a subject area from among various choices offered.

Redesigning the School Day

The new high school has redesigned the school day schedule to better meet the needs of teens. The goal is to strike a balance between the guidance students need and flexibility to work independently on their own personal assignments. The day will begin at 9:00 am and end at 4:20 pm. Independent work time for lessons and homework is built into the schedule. In addition, a break is scheduled every Wednesday, where classes will end at 12:15 pm instead.

Several studies have shown that during the long summer break, students can experience one to two months of summer learning loss. To counteract this, the start of the school year will begin two weeks earlier, in mid-August; however, three two-week break periods have been added to the yearly school calendar.

Teachers & Mentors

To ensure that each student develops a sense of belonging and trust with a group and a teacher, the new school has implemented a mentoring program. As Senécal explains, this is a special course where teachers support 18 students through the development of fundamental skills and interpersonal skills. Students will acquire knowledge and tools while practicing collaboration, critical thinking and citizenship—important skills required to succeed in today's society.

A Modern & Eco-Friendly Building

Just like modern pedagogy and passionate teachers are an important factor in student motivation, so are the teaching and learning environment. The new high school building has been designed with this in mind. Modern and bright, it will provide airy and flexible teaching and learning spaces that can adapt to students' diverse needs. The spaces work for three types of learning: sessions in large groups with the teacher, in small groups or individual learning.

The school will also have specialized classrooms and rooms that will be shared with the elementary school, such as a creative laboratory with state-of-the-art equipment, a greenhouse and a small farm.

What's more, the building is one of the first schools in Canada to be completely carbon neutral and eco-friendly. This will also be working into the pedagogy, as students will be encouraged to help maintain this standard of low energy consumption, such as with the use of bicycles that generate electricity.

Admissions will begin in Dorval as of August 2021. Collège Sainte-Anne is the school of the future for the citizens of tomorrow.

To learn more, visit www.secondaire.dorval.sainteanne.ca

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How to Help Children Be More Assertive

By Lydia Lukidis

Assertiveness is a way to communicate feelings, thoughts, opinions and beliefs in a manner that is clear and respectful. It helps people recognize and stand up for their rights, while recognizing and respecting the rights of others. This is a critical social tool for everyone, especially children.

Why is Assertiveness Important?

When children are assertive, they learn how identify their feelings, express themselves and build resilience. Assertiveness also helps them form and maintain stronger relationships.

Psychologist Michelle Bertrand weighs in. “The way I see it,” she says, “Assertiveness is a relational and communication skill that is essential to help ensure good self-esteem, proper boundaries in relationships, and feeling able to get help and support when needed.”

While assertiveness is innate for some, others may have a personality that tends towards being shy or passive. In any case, assertiveness can be taught. When children learn this skill at a young age, it increases their chances of becoming assertive teens and adults.



Assertiveness vs Aggression

Being assertive means you are self-assured and confident, without being aggressive. “The line lies with respect,” says Bertrand. “Being aggressive is interacting in a way that omits respect for the other person. Unlike assertiveness, it is a way of expression that can be belittling, hurtful or inconsiderate of the other person.”

No parent wants their child to be bullied, but by the same token, no parent wants their child to

bully others. Every child should be able to stand up for themselves, voice their opinion or disagree with someone if need be, so long as it is done in a respectful manner.

Children are often taught to resolve things peacefully, but avoiding confrontation is not the answer. Assertiveness gives them the tools to navigate their way through difficult situations in constructive ways.

How to teach Assertiveness

Bertrand recommends that parents practice becoming emotional coaches for their children at an early age. “Kids and adults need to know the difference between their thoughts, feelings and behaviors. This will help them be more self-aware,” she says. How we feel and how we react are two separate things.

For example, parents can tell their children that if a friend says something that hurts them, they should say, “Please don’t talk to me like that, I don’t like it.” They learn to be assertive rather than be reactive in an aggressive way.

[Read the full article at lavalamilies.ca](#)

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We Understand Job Seekers' Reality

By Tracy Artemchuk

What words or thoughts come to mind when you think 'Job Search'? Are you motivated? Frustrated? Inspired? Do you see possibility and potential? Or are you faced with uncertainty and insecurity?

During my 15 years as an Employment Counsellor, I have spent many an hour supporting, encouraging and guiding a multitude of job seekers who have confronted all levels of challenges when searching for their place in the workforce.

My name is Tracy Artemchuk. I am proudly employed with Groupe Priorité Travail. I also occupy the role of Coordinator for Laval's only English Job Search Club. And YES! Job Search Clubs exist and work! There is proof of this every time someone calls, emails or by virtual means announces their success in obtaining a job. Our non-profit organization is partnered with Service-Québec and offers this pre-paid service to any English-speaking resident of Laval.

Born and raised in Regina (Saskatchewan), I always knew I wanted to be involved in helping the population at large. I spent many years seeking the right employment opportunity myself



Tracy Artemchuk, Employment Counsellor and Coordinator at Groupe Priorité Travail in Laval

The list is long, from roller-skating price checker, to waitress, to bartender, to lunch manager. From chambermaid to event planner, sales rep, to coordinator, I merchandised clothing, trained retail staff and became an Assistant Manager. I lived in Banff (Alberta), working in the tourist industry with the Fairmount chain. My education was obtained

in a nontraditional manner through extensive travel, work and university courses.

I moved to Montreal in May of 1996 intending to stay four months; it's now going on 25 years. Like many, French proved to be my Goliath and I struggled to learn and understand it. My first experience in this field came when I was hired to teach Dynamic Job Search methods to an English clientele. Once my contract finished, I found myself again facing the unemployment line. After more French classes and my share of struggles, the door of opportunity opened again, when I arrived at Groupe Priorité Travail.

It was by chance, determination and perseverance. My willingness to try all of what I knew about seeking employment brought me literally in front of a Counsellor who saw my potential. He hired me a week later. That was 10 years ago. You should ask me about it if you get the chance. So, when my clients ask why I put so much effort into helping them, I simply answer that I truly understand their struggles, I love what I do and do what I can to help them seek potential and possibility via our Job Search Club.

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Bus Essentials

By La Société de transport de Laval



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and receive alerts warning you of delays or detours. As for the newsletter, it's a great way to stay current with the latest news, promotions, contests or surveys. And if you're in a hurry, simply text your bus stop number to 511785 to obtain the upcoming bus times for your stop.

How to pay?

Cash is still accepted. That'll always be around! You can pay by credit card weekdays on buses 2, 20, 24, 33, 39, 40, 41, 43, 48, 50, 60, 63, 66,

73 and 902, and on all our buses on weekends. Finally, an OPUS smart card can be loaded with various transit fares for use throughout the greater metropolitan area, on buses, on the metro, and on trains. OPUS cards may be purchased at 40 points of sale, or at an STL ticket office after scheduling an appointment. To book an appointment, go to insriptweb.com/STLaval.

New youth fares

Effective July 1, 2021, children ages 6 to 11 will be able to travel for free when accompanied by an adult with a valid fare, on both our regular and paratransit buses (maximum 5 children per adult). Also, students ages 12 and up will be entitled to a 40% discount on their monthly pass year round.

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A Silver Lining to a Cloudy Year

By Lori Leonard

Tammy Christopher-Joseph, originally from Lufkin Texas, is an elementary school teacher at Morin-Heights Elementary School. She says it was not easy to teach young children during the past year with COVID restrictions.

“It was difficult to remain at a two-meter distance with a five-year old child. There were other difficulties; children found it hard to hear teachers speak while they wore a mask, visor and goggles,” says Christopher-Joseph.

There were tough times for teachers too. “Wearing a mask all day meant we had to speak louder and repeat what we said. Wearing a mask and visor with glasses fogged up our glasses and we sometimes got headaches,” she explains. Despite the challenges, ‘Miss Tammy’, as the students fondly called her, says the children and teachers were real troopers. “The positive attitude of the children and teachers got us through. We encouraged and supported each other. Students took the COVID rules in their stride and had no problem coming to school,” says Christopher-Joseph. “They loved to see their friends and wanted



to attend class as usual. They knew their teachers did not give up so they didn't give up either.”

France Celestino, a school principal, found the first few months of this school year was spent learning study logistics for students and teachers. Celestino was concerned about hygienic practices for students in hallways, classrooms and outdoor play. Parents needed reassurance of their children's safety. “Students adapted quickly and remarkably well. Teachers and staff had meetings about essential learning and kept the students and parents up to date on the latest technological tools,” says Celestino. “When possible, the children spent time outdoors this past

winter to slide, snowshoe and cross-country ski. They were happy to be with their friends and do activities.” Celestino explains that there was great solidarity. “We had each others' backs. We saw lots of kindness, generosity of spirit and resilience. Although we were faced with challenges, we superseded them.”

Maria Popova, Associate Professor, Political Science and Graduate Program Director at McGill University taught undergrads, Bachelor, Masters and PhD students this year. Popova says classes were provided online, lectures were taught on Zoom and students could ask questions to their professors during office hours. On the negative side, many students and teachers suffered ‘Zoom fatigue’, especially when a lecture was three hours long.

Since international students studied from afar, teachers had to consider the time zone. There was a time difference of 10 hours between Montreal and Korea or China, which meant lectures took place at 2 a.m. to 5 a.m.

 [Read the full article at lavalamilies.ca](http://lavalamilies.ca)

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Emmy-Nominated Director Discovers Innovation Amidst the Pandemic

By Al Sciola

Since COVID-19 turned his industry on its head, filmmaker and business owner Israel Bonequi has had to find creative ways to adapt.

Bonequi has never been a one-trick pony as he's dabbled in many artforms throughout his career. When he was 17, he played music for a living as a professional bassist in his home country of Mexico. Upon moving to Canada in his mid-twenties, Bonequi got a Graphic Arts degree at Concordia University, followed by another degree in photography. In 1999, equipped with visual and auditory expertise, Bonequi and a partner started a production company which eventually became IND Films. Since then, IND has produced dozens of television commercials, documentaries, PSAs, and live events with him working as a producer, director and cinematographer on many of them. Their work over the past two decades has not gone unnoticed with IND Films receiving a bundle of awards, including three Emmy nominations in 2011 for the documentary LunchNYC. More recently, Bonequi, 52, has been able to add another item to his long list of skills — remote productions. An innovation that came from necessity.



When all the momentum of running a successful production company came to a sudden halt in March 2020, the cancellations from clients came pouring in as a result of early pandemic restrictions. Like so many 'non-essential' business owners, the new rules left Bonequi with limited options.

"When COVID hit, we had to shut down almost entirely. By late April, I figured this would last a while, so I partnered up with this company, Atmosphere, with the goal of developing remote productions for clients. We started playing with

technology and implementing what we already knew until we came up with something," Bonequi explains. "I called it 'studio in a box' and we took it even further, connecting peoples' cell phones to a virtual control room similar to what you would see on the news."

Bonequi's remote service uses live streaming, pre-recorded material and motion graphics to produce high quality videos. The strategy has been working, with clients like Bombardier and McLaren using the service to curate their own virtual live events.

Adaptability seems to be a common theme in Bonequi's life and career. Whether it's switching artforms, moving to a new country or reinventing business models due to an unforeseen global pandemic, he is resilient and ready to reinvent. That drive, he says, comes from his passion for new experiences.

"I've always been curious and inquisitive. That's what motivates me to go out in the field and challenge myself as a director and artist," he says. "One project is so different from the other and that keeps my creative juices flowing."

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The Importance of Sleep

By Laura Cipriani

Why is it so important to get a good night's sleep? Your body depends on it. Getting adequate sleep helps boost mood and memory. The immune system requires a full eight hours of sleep in order to better fight off any viruses that may be lingering in the body.

Sleeping in may actually help increase productivity. Sleep can even support better creativity as the brain's electrical patterns change. Ensuring your eight hours of sleep is vital for physical health just as much as emotional health.

So how do we actually get better at sleeping? Setting up a routine for sleep is important. Making sure to go to bed and wake up at the same time every day will help your body find its natural sleep rhythm. If napping is required, keep it to a maximum of 15 to 20 minutes to reduce the risk of shifting the sleep pattern and causing nighttime insomnia.

Be physically active for at least 30 minutes a day to improve nighttime sleeping. It may take a few weeks of being active to reap the benefits, but eventually the body will shut down on its own to regenerate. Start resting about an hour before



actually going to bed. Stop doing stimulating activities and allow time to wind down. Some techniques might be to meditate, breathe slowly, take a warm bath or read a book. Some might like to journal ideas or write checklists. This will let you to write what you are thinking on paper in order to get it out of your head, thus allowing the brain to shut off while sleeping.

Manage your daytime stress for a better night's sleep. Prioritize, share tasks, and getting organized can help relieve some everyday stress. Include meditation or light breathing throughout the day. Science has proven that it may help lower anxiety and promote positive wellbeing.

Change the lighting to set the mood. Switch to soft white light bulbs or dim the lighting low to favour relaxation before going to bed. Opt for blackout curtains to reduce any light coming through the window. Remove any items that omit light like alarm clocks, cellphones or night-lights. The use of an eye mask can help shut out lights around you that cannot be turned off.

Get comfy. Literally. Ensure that your mattress is the right amount of softness or firmness that is preferred. Make sure the sheets and blankets are spread out enough to have room to move about in bed. Ensure the pillow is not too flat or too high for your neck. Set the room temperature to slightly cool. A hot or cold room will not favour a restful sleep. Create a relaxing room environment where the bed is just for sleeping. This will re-wire the brain to automatically associate the bed with sleeping.

Make sleep a daily priority and your body will thank you. Focus on implementing these tips one step at a time and see what works best for you. Persistence is key when trying to create a new habit. Happy sleeping!

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What is an IEP?

By Laura Cipriani

What is an IEP? In the simplest of terms, it is best known as an Individualized Education Plan.

It is an adapted plan to help support a student achieve educational goals in a classroom setting. It is a customized learning program for an individual to encourage success and achieve academic levels with support from teachers and professionals.

Who needs an IEP? It may be student who has social, emotional, or developmental challenges or delays. It may be a student struggling to meet the regular developmental milestones for their age group. All students with a developmental delay, such as autism, will receive an IEP in school.

How are IEP's different from regular goals? An Individualized Education Plan is a program executed by many professionals. The student must be eligible for an IEP before the process can begin. Teachers may bring their observations to the school administrator and other professionals to start collecting the appropriate data needed to create the program. Parents will need to be present during these meetings to have a collaborative transition from home to school with the plan.

Professionals will need to meet to review the



strengths, struggles and developmental challenges for that student. The plan is created by using the educational goals and adapting or accommodating it so the student can attain the level in a regular class setting. Once a plan is created, the parents and staff must agree to put forth the educational plan to better support the student.

What does an IEP look like? It consists of adapting and accommodating the classroom lesson plan to better suit the student's specific needs. For example, the student's plan may be to have more time allotted for tests with the support of an aid or computer access. Long written assignments might be separated into sections due over a certain amount of time rather than one big, long essay. It may be offering a different work environ-

ment or space to encourage concentration and focus. It may be to provide basic social, hygiene and life skill experiences.

It can also involve the use of visual charts and personal checklists. It could be providing a smaller task load for writing and reading. It may include a more one-on-one approach with a Special Education Technician to accomplish simpler everyday tasks. An IEP is a very personalized plan that can vary depending on the disability and what the goal and strategy is to reach a successful outcome.

A follow-up is just as important as the IEP itself. Professionals, teachers, parents, and support staff may have meetings on a regular basis to discuss the progress and strategies implemented. Checklists and summary reports may be offered to track progress. An IEP can be modified where needed to improve overall success with the parent's approval. Usually, an IEP is re-evaluated on a yearly basis.

An IEP is an Individualized Education Plan that will help at-risk students succeed in school and move on to the next level or attain a diploma. To learn more about eligibility for an IEP, contact your child's teacher or school administrator.

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Smooth Integration Thanks to the Interconnexion Program

By Denise Proulx

Julio Daniel Huamani Vallejos is a go-getter. When an employee of his Laval bank referred him to the *Perspective Carrière* program, he wasted no time taking several training courses.

“The workshops have been very useful to me. I discovered lots of information about Laval and how to prepare for the job market. I also learned from immigrant colleagues like me. Afterwards, I was able to manage,” says the young Peruvian, who had learned French beforehand in Paris.

Rola Saleh has had a similar experience. After a stay in the United States, the young Lebanese finance specialist was able to take part in the Interconnexion program following a visit to the *Salon de l’immigration*. “I really liked that there was a support service to help me find work. I was introduced to three companies all interested in my experience. I had choices,” says Saleh.

The Interconnexion Laval program, piloted by the CCILaval, has become a real gateway to the labour market for immigrants, thanks to its partnerships with *Perspective Carrière* and the *Gouvernement du Québec*. “The program aims to meet a need for skilled labour in Laval businesses. To do this, we work with people new to Canada, who have been here for less than five years and who have diplomas acquired abroad or in Quebec, and who have less than a year of experience in their field of expertise in Quebec,” explains program manager Martine Lafrance.

Interconnexion does more than support immigrants in their search for employment



Elias Alaoui has benefited from Interconnexion Laval, Business

and their integration into Laval life. The program also organizes training to make companies comfortable in managing diversity and intercultural communications. In collaboration with *Services Québec du ministère du Travail, de l’Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale (MTESS)*, *ministère de l’Immigration, de la Francisation et de l’Intégration (MIFI)*, and other partners such as CEGEP Montmorency, Caisses Desjardins, the City of Laval and employment agencies, Interconnexion



facilitates the obtaining of wage subsidies and, when necessary, the setting up of francization workshops in the workplace.

If necessary, Interconnexion staff provides support in human resources management and job retention, for both employers and employees. This is how Elias Alaoui was able to find staff for his company, *Centre Lavallois de ressources éducatives et culturelles*, located in Chomedey.

“Thanks to Interconnexion, I have found competent teachers on two occasions. It’s an incredible help because some of the selection work is already done. And the organization opened our eyes to grant programs. It saved us a lot of energy,” says Alaoui.

To date, Interconnexion has supported 290 companies seeking personnel. 392 applicants have been admitted to the program and out of these, 202 are now employed. Huamani Vallejos is now a full-time employee working for the Geloso Group. “I had worked in the administration sector in the alcoholic beverage industry in Peru. My occupation is more manual, I take care of production, but it is complementary, because I’m learning other skills of the trade,” he explains.

As for Saleh, she sees a clear pathway to professional advancement at the DCM Group in Laval. “I recommend that all immigrants take advantage of this program,” she says.



Julio Daniel Huamani Vallejos, has benefited from Interconnexion Laval, Candidate





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Getting Over the COVID Hurdle: How Seniors Have Coped with Lockdowns

By Al Sciola

Looking back on it, nearly every person has been affected in some way by the Coronavirus pandemic. But, when thinking of those hit hardest, we are often reminded of our senior citizens.

People over 65 have accounted for more than 80% of COVID deaths and hospitalizations. Along with the physical toll it has taken on them, there has also been a spike in depression and isolation due to harsh lockdown measures. All this to say that the last year and a half has certainly not been easy for the elderly.

Diane Legaré, a 92-year-old Sherbrooke resident, has spent the majority of the last year and a half inside her home. As a natural homebody, she says that there has not been an enormous change to her lifestyle. But still, Legaré says she has felt disheartened by the physical and financial affects of COVID.

“At 92, I’ve seen so much. And with this, it seems that life will never be the same again. Life is now one worry after another... and I feel for the children, and those who have lost their businesses more than anything” she says.

Despite the isolation many felt when lockdowns began, Legaré has found no shortage of ways to keep herself occupied.

“Being the extrovert that I am, it’s been hard but, I’m a very self-sufficient person. I spend my days reading, doing brain games, and puzzles, things



like that. I also keep up with the news and even have pen pals across Europe that I correspond with,” she explains.

Legaré is hopeful that mass vaccinations and warmer weather will bring a positive change. Above all, she is most excited about spending quality time with her children and granddaughter.

Legaré is not alone in her sentiments, as 83-year-old Maria Werner, an Anjou resident, originally from Germany, also feels a change for the better coming. Like Legaré, she too has been keeping busy.

“My coping mechanism has been simple; keep busy. I still cook, bake and crochet. That, and speaking to my grandchildren has kept me going more than anything.” says Werner.

But staying positive during such uncertainty is a lot easier said than done. When asked if there was an event in her lifetime that felt similar to Coronavirus, Werner compared the fear and panic from the early days of the pandemic to some of the experiences she lived through as a child in Europe during World War 2. She is not the first to make the comparison, and only time will tell how history remembers the COVID era.

Luckily, with vaccinations and eased restrictions, the battle is almost won. Older Canadians like Werner and Legaré have finally begun to regain some sense of normalcy after so much sacrifice. And, despite the darkness brought down by COVID, many folks can now see the long-awaited light at the end of the tunnel through some much-needed optimism and resilience.





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RE-Activate Laval, Extended and Improved

By Florence Dujoux

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To support recovery, CCILaval's improved program is available until June 30th, thanks to federal support

Six months after the launch of RE-Activate Laval, it is clear that the pandemic is not over. "The needs are enormous until the economy is revived. Technical assistance is still needed," explains Caroline De Guire, President and Director General of CCILaval. The message was heard by the federal government, who have allocated an additional \$344,165 to CCILaval, allowing for the extension of RE-Activate Laval until June 30th. "By the end of June, we will have been able to support 150 companies in total," she says.

Adapting to the Needs of Small to Medium-Sized Laval Businesses

RE-Activate Laval is an emergency program that provides technical assistance to small and medium-sized businesses in Laval facing the challenges of the pandemic, whether that be in financial, material, human or technological terms. "Each company is in a different situation," emphasizes Luc Dupont, consulting analyst for RE-Activate Laval. "We help them identify their needs and focus on the area that makes the biggest impact."

In the case of restaurants, most of the support is linked to financing. John Concilio owns *Chalet du Parc* which has been closed since October. Thanks to the expertise of his tax advisor, he received an additional loan of \$20,000. Other businesses, like *Studio Mondo Danse*, need marketing support. With RE-Activate Laval, Christine Gauthier received support from a marketing agency to help her grow on social networks.



Improving the Support Program

The duration of personalized support will go from four to 12 hours on average, up to 20 hours in some cases, still at no cost to the business. "Support linked to the company's strategy requires a consolidated intervention," says Dupont. "It can now be organized over time, proceeding step by step, and answering questions to ensure the transfer of expertise."

The program now offers group training to B2B companies as well as and B2C. "Beyond technical support, we want companies to be able to continue to exchange views, collaborate and be supported by experts," says De Guire. At the end of March, the first session devoted to the topic of e-commerce was 'sold out.'

Promoting Laval's Service Businesses

"The more Laval service businesses come forward as potential expert advisors, the better

the support choices will be for those that need it," explains De Guire. "And service-based companies will be able to benefit from the visibility linked to their membership to Prox-Service for a longer period of time."

Outside of RE-Activate Laval, how can we promote service-based businesses, which represent 70% of the local economy? "CCILaval is actively considering creating a community in their image to meet their specific needs, like Prox-Industriel and Prox-Commerce," affirms De Guire. To be continued!

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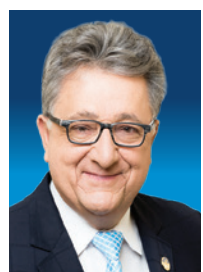
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Buying an Existing Business: What You Should Know

By YES Employment + Entrepreneurship

It might be the perfect time to buy an existing business, as the majority of small and medium business owners are reaching the age of retirement. While this presents a great opportunity for budding entrepreneurs who want to get a foot in the door without starting from scratch, buying a business is also a complex decision to make.

Pros

- You don't have to start from scratch – an existing business is already operational.
- It's easier to secure financing, since lenders are less likely to take a chance on a start-up.
- You'll already have well-established relationships with suppliers and customers, trained staff, and a brand and a reputation to bank on (provided it's a positive one).

Cons

- It may be hard to impose a different vision on a company that already has its own culture and history.
- An ownership change can sometimes prompt key staff to leave and jeopardize customer relationships.

- It's possible to be hit with legal or financial 'surprises' down the line.

Where to look

It can be less than straightforward to find a profitable business to buy. Try search engines like **acquisition.biz**, or look into business brokers and commercial real estate agents. Lawyers, accountants and bankers may also be a good source of leads.

Helpful tips

If you only take two pieces of sage advice in your business acquisition process, let it be these:

1. Be sure the purchase is aligned with your business goals.

Think about your long-term strategy, look into market and industry trends for that region, and determine whether the business is over or under-valued. What relevant skills and expertise are you bringing to the business and what you will need to hire out for? Do you know enough about the industry? Do you want to? Find out before investing.

2. Do your due diligence.

For starters, find out **why** they're selling. Addi-



tionally, it's always smart to look more in-depth into financial statements, tax returns, and legal, financial and business records, as well as sales, expenses, accounts receivable and payable, and inventory—to name a few! Consider hiring an accountant or a lawyer to help you navigate the paperwork. Talk to employees and suppliers alike and check out social media to suss out the business from different perspectives. Based on what you discover, you may have to renegotiate or even back out—but that's all part of the process of arriving at a sound business decision!

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Life on Two Wheels: Getting to Know Jean William Prevost

By Al Sciola

“I couldn’t have dreamed of a better life, and never thought it could unravel the way that it has.”

There are very few people out there who get to live out their dreams on a daily basis. But Jean William Prevost just happens to be one of them. As a professional flatland BMX rider, the 34-year-old has been participating in competitions around the globe for over ten years. He competes full-time while managing his bike part and merchandise brand, IGI. But the road from amateur rider to one of the world’s best has had many stops and detours along the way.

Training Wheels

Growing up in the West Island, Prevost was your average active kid, playing team sports like soccer and hockey. But it was in high school where he decided to stray from the traditional athletic path. “As a kid we all had the opportunity to play team sports like hockey and soccer. I did a lot of that myself, including swimming. But after a while I started to get tired of having a coach breathing down my neck and telling me what to do,” says Prevost. Then one night, the young rider picked up a VHS copy of the 1983 film, *BMX Bandits*. It sparked an immediate interest, and the tape was never returned. And so, while his teenage peers continued playing organized sports, Prevost was spending all his free hours riding.

As he improved, he began to challenge himself by learning and incorporating tricks. Prevost recalls the initial feeling of freedom and control



Carcassonne, France (photo credit Stéphane Bar 2017)

that BMX riding first gave him. “What first attracted me to BMX was the liberty it gave me. Things like freestyling allowed me to be creative,” he says. It was love at first ride for the West Island native, but like most childhood hobbies, Prevost’s parents expected his new obsession for the BMX to be just another phase he was going through. “My family first thought it was a phase until I actually started to compete for real back in 2007, overseas, says Prevost. Overseas wasn’t just a short round trip to the United States; it was halfway across the world.

On the World’s Stage

The turning point from hobby to job came when a friend invited Prevost to perform in Asia. “I was working at a bike company in the West Island at the time, and I didn’t think it was really possible to support myself with BMX flatland. I was still doing the 9 to 5 when a friend of mine, who was doing bike shows in Shenzhen asked me to perform with him over there. I spent a lot of time in China on my first trip (eleven months) and that’s what really got me started in doing what I love as a living,” he recounts. Prevost rode his heart out in those early performances and started making a name for himself in the industry.

He also surprisingly found his second home in a country on the other side of the globe. “Of all the places I’ve visited, China is really special to me. I speak the language and I have travelled more within China than Canada. Asia, overall, for me has been really mind-opening,” he says. Evidently, the apple did not fall far from the tree when it came to travelling. “My dad had visited China over a hundred times before he passed away, so it was always a prevalent topic in our house so when the opportunity came, I took it.” Prevost has visited China over 25 times and says he is excited to return as soon as he can.

Champion and Entrepreneur

Since his debut in 2007, Prevost has competed in dozens of tournaments and showcases, climbing the ranks along the way. Some of his achievements include six Indonesia IOXC PRO CLASS championships, two NORA Cups and the honour of being crowned the 2017 Fise/UCI World Series Champion. He has been consistently ranked among the top five BMX flatlanders in the world. This is no small feat as BMX flatland requires incredible agility and strength. Similar to figure skating, every movement is under scrutiny by the scorers. Most flatland competitions are judged on difficulty, consistency and originality. Prevost



Champlain Bridge (photo credit Dominic Saleh 2020)

admits that finding a balance of these elements is key to finishing high on the podium. “There’s a fine line in riding where originality can become sloppy or ugly. If you want to come up with a new trick, it must follow the untold guidelines of what is beautiful. You also have to push the limits of what has been done before,” he explains. Although incredibly difficult, with some tricks appearing seemingly impossible, Prevost seems to have done just fine for himself.

While winning gold never really loses its appeal, the decorated pro decided to set out on a new endeavour in creating his own company. Prevost founded his brand, IGI, back in 2013. The brand features custom bike parts for riders of all levels along with clothing printed by Prevost himself.

The Future of Flatland

As of now BMX flatland is still not recognized as an official Olympic event but the addition of the sport seems a lot more likely than before. “BMX park was supposed to be introduced at the next Olympics (before the postponing) but flatland unfortunately did not make the cut for Paris 2024, so we’ll have to hope to get in for 2028,” says Prevost. After already organizing a few events in the Montreal and Trois-Rivières areas, Prevost is optimistic about the growth of his sport. “I think that big events are important as well as grassroots

events. It's important for our visibility and the legitimization of our sport," he explains. "That's why I want to get more involved in the organization of these events and grow the sport locally, so that the younger generation can have fun from the lifestyle I've benefited so much from."

Like so many of us, COVID-19 has been a massive strain on Prevost's livelihood. Empty sports stadiums and difficult travel restrictions as a result of the pandemic have shaken up the athletic and entertainment industries alike. "Coronavirus has stolen my life from right under me. I'm unable to train at the moment, but I still have an income so I am definitely one of the lucky ones," says Prevost. Being the optimist that he is, Prevost explains what keeps him motivated: "The thought of being able to make a living from riding my bike... I couldn't have dreamed of a better life and never thought it could unravel the way that it has. I never thought I'd go pro or start my own brand. It's been a blessing."



Flatlark, Kobe, Japan (photo credit Marcioabe 2017)



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How a Spiritual Leader Makes Sense of COVID-19

By Lisa Cipriani

Dr. Domenic Ruso, Founder and Lead Pastor at the 180 Church, reflects on how a crisis such as the current pandemic can make us question but also *reaffirm* our spirituality or religious beliefs, making way for personal and community growth.

“A crisis provides a type of disorientation which we can use to see things in a new way. Spirituality and faith are about getting a glimpse of the person you truly are and the one God is calling you to become,” says Ruso.

Spirituality in 2021

There truly is no better time than the present to assess what spirituality means to you. If you’re having trouble identifying the meaning for yourself, it can be helpful to break it down into its simplest terms. “I’d say spirituality, in a general sense, is to feel that there is more to life than just what we can see or understand. With that comes a longing to know that our lives matter and that our life is purposeful,” says Ruso.

If anything, says Ruso, the pandemic has broadened his outlook on spirituality. He points to



the government’s use of the term ‘mental health’. “Mental health is essential, but we cannot miss or minimize that by ‘mental’ we are dealing with the inner fabric of feelings, desires, dreams, relational connection and our place in the world,” he says. “Spirituality needs to be included as a key component of mental health awareness [...] COVID can and must be a wake-up call for us to get serious about caring for the whole person.”

Ruso says that COVID has added a new challenge of detachment from one another. We are unable to process and explore within our com-

munities. “Community is where our daily actions and our inner spiritual life come together in a beautiful way. When this happens, we know we can make a difference and grow into people we are proud of,” he says. “With this time of extended isolation, we have all been put into spaces where we’ve realized that we need to be more patient, kind and aware of how others process their feelings without overreacting,” he says.

Moving Forward

If you’ve struggled with the emotional toll the pandemic has taken, Ruso insists that it’s okay to feel sad, tired, or frustrated but suggests that you decide not to stay there. “Our broken world and our past regrets don’t get the final word about who we are. Each of us is loved by God and with that at the center, spirituality is about a growing desire to become what God calls us to be,” he says. “When that happens, there is a new confidence we develop to be at peace while the world around us feels chaotic. This is at the core of a spiritual life that is non-negotiable in 2021 and the world we dream of post-COVID.”

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Shifting Trends in Employment

By Tina Quintanilla

The shift in employment trends has been to remote work for administrative jobs. Overall, there has been an increase in demand for healthcare jobs.

Finding a job or starting a career post-pandemic can be worrisome for young adults who are searching for or considering future career options, with no sense of job security. Despite the high unemployment rates during COVID, the future does look bright for those entering the job market with the necessary skills to fill in-demand jobs.

According to a feature by *Slice*, the future of Canadian jobs lies in specific skill set jobs such as in healthcare, remote administrative roles (specifically customer service and cyber security specialists) and creative content roles, including but not limited to writers and bloggers.

Teachers & Educators

Remote learning and tutoring is something new and is most likely here to stay. There has been an increase in demand for specialized online tutors and teachers during COVID due to school shut-



downs and home schooling. Some parents aren't equipped with the knowledge to help their children grasp concepts and act as a tutor or teacher. In-school teaching is also in high demand.

Digital Marketing & Social Media Experts and Logistics

Increasing tendencies of online shopping during lockdown has also demonstrated the need for social media strategists and digital marketers. Shopping patterns have now led to more online shopping, even for essential items. Retailers need to find new ways to engage with their customers so digital marketing jobs will be here to stay. Logistic managers also have to maintain inventories due to supply and demand within warehouses and shipping.

Early Childhood Educators

Early childhood educators and daycare instructors are also in demand since parents in essential services had to return back to work. Schools that have after school daycare programs also need daycare educators. Parents working in essential businesses also need to go to work and leave their children with trusted childcare options. Going forward, due to the many sanitary and healthcare measures in educational facilities, there will be a need for more specialized educators to watch the growing numbers of children attending, more so due to smaller class bubbles.

Healthcare Workers

Healthcare workers such as doctors, orderlies, dentists, nurses and mental health care workers, including specialists, such as occupational therapists and physiotherapists are constantly in high demand due to rehabilitation, care and development. Pharmacy technicians and pharmacists are also considered essential.

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Stefan Jacob: Outstanding Chef, Outstanding Dad!

By William Jacob (grade 6, SWLSB Virtual Campus)

As we were discussing entrepreneurs in my virtual grade six class, I decided to interview my dad, Stefan Jacob, owner of many restaurant businesses including Schnitzel Truck, Bacon Truck, Burger Truck, Le Gras Dur Truck, Le Gras Dur, Maamm Bolduc, McGill catering: La Cuisine Traiteur, and a six-in-one ghost kitchen.

Stefan began cooking at eight years of age, when he helped his parents with cooking at home, and started creating his own dishes. At thirteen years old, Stefan was studying in professional kitchens as an apprentice.

Stefan credits science, math, and cooking as the subjects that have helped him to get where he is today. He also appreciates history because it taught him different cultural food traditions. Stefan's charming personality helps him a lot too. He is funny, happy, acts like a "clown", and is an overall nice guy. Stefan says his business has grown a lot because of these traits as well as having a friendly approach with people.

Being in the restaurant business has its challenges, especially with Covid-19. It's hard being able to cook like before and having to adapt to the new workspace setup. Stefan says that making all people happy all the time is the hardest thing of all.

One of the perks that helps Stefan keep going is that it's a job he is passionate about. He also enjoys experimenting with off menu items to test what is worthy of space on the menu.

Stefan enjoys the amount of support he gets from his family and friends. He says that his ele-



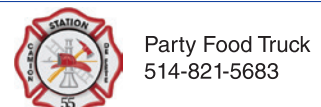
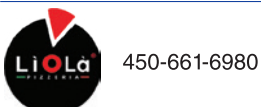
ven-year-old son is someone who impresses him a lot. He sees a lot of himself in his son. Stefan also appreciates his wife for helping him open his first ever food truck.

Stefan says that in order to be successful, you have to stand out and have your own style,

something that you could be known for. His advice is to always have a plan and a process. If you don't have that process, then you're more likely to fail. And of course, make sure to focus in school!



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Does This Mean No More Snow Days?

By Emma C. and Emma D.C. (Grade six students of the Virtual Campus, Sir Wilfrid Laurier School Board)

Have you ever imagined that kids would be attending school online? Me neither! In this article we are going to talk about life in a virtual environment for exempted students from the Sir Wilfrid Laurier School Board.

On the 14th of September 2020, SWLSB exempted students, from kindergarten to secondary five, logged into their virtual campus classroom from the comfort and safety of their homes. The kids that are exempted from school stay home because they, or someone in their immediate family, has an illness or disease that can put them or their loved ones at higher risk if they catch COVID-19.

These students got into online school mainly because themselves or a family member have some sort of medical illness. Virtual school is quite different from real school. Students put aside their pencils and paper, and use apps, websites, and programs such as Google Classroom, Zoom, CommonLit, Mathletics, Jamboard, RazKids, Starfall, Quill.org, and many more. These online resources replace workbooks, exercise books, photocopies and handouts. Not only do these students have to learn the curriculum, but they also have to learn how to use the technology and apps.

There are some challenges that these kids have faced as they learned to adapt to their new "classrooms." Loud background noises, difficulties with technology, many distractions such as video games and other devices with notifications to chat, and the fact that they can't see their friends are defi-



nitely some of the cons. Although distance learning can take some getting used to, there are obviously some amazing aspects that are worth noting. For example, some people may have a comfortable chair to learn from, compared to the plastic chairs at school. For those lucky students who have pets in their room with them during school hours, they have their very own pet therapy session within their class time. One of our favourite pros to online learning is giving up lunch boxes, cafeteria food, and hot meals for fresh, home cooked lunches.

While it's clear that learning from home is possible, we're certain that students are desperate to know, does this mean snow days will be a thing of the past? Does this mean when it is safe for all to return to school, that every time there is a blizzard, students will have to log on from home? Nevertheless, for now, it is easier for exempted students to stay safe and access school learning opportunities online. Although there is a lot to learn, exempted students of SWLSB are adapting to this new normal.



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We all want to know more about COVID-19 vaccination



There are many reasons to get vaccinated, including protecting ourselves from the complications and dangers caused by infectious diseases, but also to stop the return of infectious diseases that are avoidable through vaccination.

The COVID-19 vaccination campaign now underway is aimed at preventing serious complications and death from COVID-19. We also use vaccination as a way of protecting our healthcare system and getting back to a more normal life.

When did the vaccination campaign start?

COVID-19 vaccination in Québec began in December 2020 with the delivery of the first vaccine doses. Because the availability of vaccine is limited, categories of people deemed at higher risk of developing COVID-19 complications have been given priority. As more vaccine becomes available in Canada, the categories of recipients will be extended.

Order of priority of recipients of COVID-19 vaccines

- 1 Vulnerable people and people with a significant loss of autonomy who live in residential and long-term care centres (CHSLDs) or in intermediate and family-type resources (RI-RTFs)
- 2 Workers in the health and social services network who have contact with users
- 3 Autonomous or semi-autonomous people who live in private seniors' homes (RPAs) or in certain closed residential facilities for older adults
- 4 Isolated and remote communities
- 5 People 80 years of age or older
- 6 People 70 to 79 years of age
- 7 People 60 to 69 years of age
- 8 Adults under 60 years of age who have a chronic disease or health problem that increases the risk of complications of COVID-19
- 9 Adults under 60 years of age who do not have a chronic disease or health problem that increases the risk of complications, but who provide essential services and have contact with users
- 10 Everyone else in the general population at least 16 years of age

What supply strategy was used to acquire the vaccines?

The Government of Canada signed advance purchase agreements for seven promising COVID-19 vaccines with the following companies: AstraZeneca, Johnson & Johnson, Medicago, Moderna, Novavax, Pfizer and Sanofi Pasteur/GlaxoSmithKline. The purchases are conditional upon approval of these vaccines by Health Canada.

To date, the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines have been approved for distribution in Canada. Soon, other vaccines from these companies will be used to speed up COVID-19 vaccination.

What types of COVID-19 vaccines are being studied?

There are three types of vaccine currently being studied.

- 1 mRNA vaccines:** These vaccines contain part of the RNA of the virus which has the ability to make the S protein located on the surface of the virus. Once the RNA messenger is inside our cells, they make proteins similar to those on the surface of the virus using the instructions provided by the RNA messenger. Our immune system recognizes that this protein is foreign and produces antibodies to defend itself against it. The RNA fragment is quickly destroyed by cells. There is no risk that this RNA will alter our genes.
- 2 Viral vector vaccines:** These contain a weakened version of a virus that is harmless to humans. Once in the body, the vaccine enters our cells and gives them instructions to make protein S. Our immune system recognizes that this protein is foreign and produces antibodies to defend itself against it. Once in the body, the vaccine enters our cells and gives them instructions to make protein S. Our immune system recognizes that this protein is foreign and produces antibodies to defend itself against it.
- 3 Protein subunit vaccines:** These contain non-infectious fragments of proteins that mimic the envelope of the virus. Our immune system recognizes that this protein is foreign and produces antibodies to defend itself against it.

Will an mRNA vaccine alter our genetic code?


No. Messenger RNA does not enter the cell's nucleus or come into contact with the nucleic DNA. As such, it cannot alter our DNA in any way.

How do COVID-19 vaccines work?

When someone receives the vaccine against the virus that causes COVID-19, their body starts to defend itself against the virus. An immune reaction occurs which neutralizes the virus producing antibodies and activating defense cells.

Most COVID-19 vaccines in development prompt the production of antibodies to block protein S; the protein that allows the virus to infect the human body. This prevents the virus from entering and infecting human cells.

The virus that causes COVID-19 is composed of strands of ribonucleic acid (RNA) genetic material surrounded by a crown-like envelope with proteins that include the S (spike) protein, hence the name "coronavirus."



What side effects can be expected from injection with the COVID-19 vaccine?

Some minor side effects may occur, such as redness or pain at the injection site and fatigue, fever or chills. These symptoms are less common among vaccine recipients over the age of 55, are usually benign and do not last long.

As of now there are no known serious side effects from mRNA vaccines. While other random problems may arise, such as a cold or gastroenteritis, they are not related to the vaccine per se.

Because the vaccine does not contain the SARS-CoV-2 virus, it is not capable of causing COVID-19. However, people who come into contact with the virus in the days leading up to their vaccination or within 14 days of receiving the vaccination could still develop symptoms and get the COVID-19 disease.

As such, following health measures remains important until such time as a majority of the population has been vaccinated.

Why did it take 40 years to develop a flu vaccine but only nine months for one against COVID-19?

Past efforts, particularly during the SARS epidemic in 2003, advanced coronavirus vaccine research and accelerated the fight against COVID-19.

There are currently over 50 COVID-19 vaccines undergoing clinical trials around the world, the result of unprecedented scientific cooperation. Considerable financial and human resources have been invested in the development of vaccines that meet regulatory requirements in such a short span of time.

Public health and regulatory authorities in many countries, including Canada, are working hard to ensure that as many safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines as possible become quickly available to their populations.

Why are two vaccine doses required?

The second dose "reminds" the immune system to continue producing antibodies and ensures long-term protection. In current circumstances, where COVID-19 is spreading very fast, administration of the second dose may be delayed somewhat to be able to vaccinate more people with the first dose.

[Québec.ca/COVIDvaccine](https://quebec.ca/COVIDvaccine)

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COURSE DES POMPIERS DE LAVAL

A Virtual Edition to Keep the Flame Going!

Get out your running shoes—the *Course des pompiers de Laval* (Laval firefighters’ run and walkathon) is back again this year and is inviting kids and grown-ups to run or walk on Sunday, June 6, to benefit the Fondation des pompiers du Québec pour les grands brûlés (Quebec firefighters’ foundation for burn victims). In order to ensure participants’ safety and to follow Québec’s public health guidelines during the COVID-19 pandemic, Ville de Laval has decided to hold a virtual edition. Who will dare to take up the challenge?

“More than ever, it’s important to be active during these difficult times in order to maintain our physical and mental health. We invite children and adults to keep the flame going by participating in this virtual edition. Create your own run or walk. Prove to yourself that you can achieve a goal and have fun, while supporting an important cause,” stated race manager Richard Carpentier, operations captain in the *Service de sécurité incendie de Laval*.

Participate between May 28 and June 13

A number of participation conditions have been adjusted to accommodate as many people as possible. Participants will therefore be able to select the route of their choice in their own neighbourhood or even on their own treadmill. In addition, they will not be limited to June 6: they will be able to take up the challenge at any time between May 28 and June 13, either running or walking.

Registration now under way

Registration is under way on the race website. The distances on the program are 1 km, 2 km, 5 km, 10 km, 21.1 km and 42.2 km. Take note that Laval residents age 17 and under can benefit from a special discount.

For more information:
coursedespompiers.laval.ca



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Summer Camp Safety: Guide to a Safe and Fun Summer

By Kathy Tsolakos

Summer camp is a great opportunity for children to become more independent and make new friends while creating lasting memories and having loads of fun.

For some children, preparing for camp can be worrisome. They may be nervous about what the days will bring. As parents, you want to reassure them and give them good advice to help them brave those days.

Pina Arcamone, Director General of the Missing Children's Network, agrees the number one concern of all parents is safety. Arcamone has a few safety tips for preparing children (and parents) for summer camp.

To ensure a safe summer, Arcamone recommends parents reinforce the following safety rules with their children.

- 1) Ensure your child knows their full name, address and telephone number. Should your child get lost or need to reach you in an emergency, he or she will need this personal information easily accessible at all times.
- 2) Avoid identifying items with your child's name clearly visible. A child will respond more readily



to a stranger if he is addressed by name. Take care to place identification labels on the inside of backpacks and lunchboxes instead.

- 3) Your child should always ask for permission from their counsellors and monitors before going anywhere. You must always know where your child is and keep them informed of your

whereabouts as well.

- 4) Remember, there is safety in numbers. A child that is accompanied by a friend is less likely to be accosted by an individual with questionable intentions. Check out your child's friends and get to know their parents and other adults who spend time with your child at camp all day.
- 5) Make sure your child understands he does not have to engage in conversations with strange adults who approach him. Remind your child to always keep a safe distance of at least three giant steps between themselves and a stranger.
- 6) Teach your child to always stay on the designated route when walking to and from camp and identify safe havens along the route where they can seek refuge if they need help. This can include a police station, a grocery store, or anywhere they can safely call home for help.

Reminding your child of these simple tips and keeping an open dialogue with your children is the best way to keep them safe at summer camp and all year round. For more safety tips from the Missing Children's Network, visit their website www.missingchildrensnetwork.ngo



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Summer Camps: How to Choose?

By Lydia Lukidis

When children make the leap from daycare to elementary school, it's a milestone that brings on a slew of changes, one of which is the schedule, including summers without school. Parents are then faced with the big question; how will they handle childcare during these periods?

The Benefits of Camp

Although some parents keep their children at home for various reasons, many are not able to. "Both my partner and I work full-time, so putting my son in summer camp is a necessity," says Julie Bilmes.

But sending your child to camp is not simply about logistics; there are also many benefits. Children foster friendships, cultivate independence and learn responsibility. But more importantly, they have fun. Bilmes noticed her son really enjoyed the experience. "He loved the swimming activities and all the field trips," she says.

Aside from having fun and developing important core values, camps can also be a place to learn. Some offer specialized programs from ballet to science to karate. Many parents believe that summers should be a time of both play and learning.

How to Pick the Right Camp

It can be initially overwhelming for parents to sift through the hundreds of camps and choose one., but it's easier once you ascertain your main criteria and deal breakers.

For many parents, important criteria center around the activities offered, the qualifications of the staff and the camp's reputation. Other elements to consider are price, location and camp hours. Children can also be influenced by which camp their friends attend.

Top Ten Questions to Ask

Every family is unique and will have different needs and preferences, but no matter what the specifics are, here are some important questions to ask prospective camps.

1. What is the staff to camper ratio?
2. What is the average age of staff and how are they recruited?
3. How is the staff trained?
4. What are the procedures for medical routines and emergencies?
5. What are the camp's philosophies and values?



6. What is the daily schedule, and what activities and field trips does the camp offer?
7. What percentage of the campers return each year?
8. How long has the camp been in business?
9. How many campers attend each summer?
10. What is the background and experience of the camp directors?

Once you've done the initial research and narrowed down your choices, it's a good idea to speak with other parents to get testimonials. You can also visit the camp to see for yourself. With a bit of research and investigation, parents can equip themselves to make the best choice for their family.

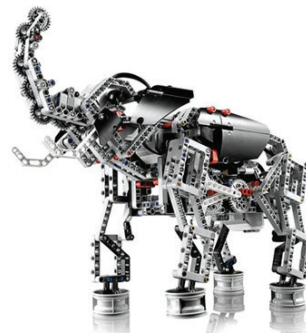
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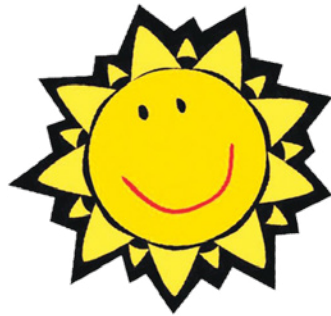
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How does a couple manage a project like Miller Zoo? Ferland explains that she and Miller are very complementary. They do not have the same strengths and weaknesses. “We work together, but we hardly see each other since we don’t take care of the same sectors,” she laughs. Miller, a woodworker by trade, is primarily responsible for repairing trails, building shelters and infrastructure, and more. Ferland takes care of injured animals. “We work as a team when we take care of dangerous animals, to clean their shelters, for example,” she explains.

She admits that the most stressful part is caused by difficult financial times, like in the early days of the zoo. What does the future hold? Miller would like Miller Zoo to become the gold standard in the world of zoos. Ferland, on the other hand, would like to continue expanding the animals’ shelters, so that it’s almost as if they are returning to the wild. “It’s the best of both worlds, as they will have habitats as far as the eye can see, free of predators,” she says. In keeping with an educational perspective, she also plans to create an insectarium. She wants to educate people about insects so that they understand how essential they are and that they should not be feared.

Miller Zoo is an inspiring place that continues to grow with all the love that Ferland and Miller have given to it to help their animals. Miller Zoo is open Monday through Sunday 9:30 am to 5 pm. To learn more about the zoo and to consult pricing, visit the website at millerzoo.ca



shelters and their quality of life. “One of the steps we have taken is to conserve endangered species, whereas before we focused more on rehabilitation,” says Ferland.

The educational mission is also very important within Miller Zoo. “In order to protect animals, you have to understand them and learn to love them. We want to share the history of our animals to raise awareness. People must also be taught to live with animals,” says Ferland. The zoo has installed many explanatory panels that tell the story of the animals at Miller Zoo and allow patrons to learn more about the different species that inhabit it. Several panels also explain the mistreatment that certain animals undergo, in particular because of poaching. Environmental awareness, such as not throwing rubbish on the ground, is also being promoted throughout the park.

Miller Zoo in the Era of COVID-19

Miller Zoo’s biggest challenge with COVID-19 is, like many businesses, the uncertainty of the situation. Not knowing how long the crisis would last, Ferland wondered how she was going to be able to provide for her animals without the cash flow generated by visitors. Now that the situation is improving, she doesn’t want to limit the number of daily visits to the zoo. She and Miller have widened the walking trails and established a one-way circuit so that visitors don’t pass too close to each other. Antiseptic gel dispensers are available to visitors



at the entrance. Posters are seen all over the zoo grounds to encourage physical distancing in a humorous way. For example, one poster encourages visitors to leave the equivalent of a kangaroo jump or the length of a tapir between them.

A Couple that Compliments One Another

Where does Clifford and Émilie’s passion for animals come from? “I have always loved animals. When I was little and came home from school, I picked up ones that were injured by the side of the road,” explains Ferland. “Whenever I could help an animal, I did. I was bullied when I was younger, I was lonely, so animals were my friends. Clifford’s mother had a small stray cat shelter when he was young, so he always lived with animals too. In my opinion, animals make people better people.”

You can feel the passion that drives Ferland as she recounts stories of her animals and the abuse some suffered before arriving at Miller Zoo. She explains that she’s happy to have started her project on a smaller scale, because she was able to learn the best way to take care of her animals before the zoo got bigger and more popular. She also talks about the mutual aid that exists between the different shelters. She doesn’t hesitate to ask for help if she’s less familiar with a certain species, and vice versa. Everyone works together for the welfare of animals.

For the Love of Animals

By Melissa Rodrigues

You may have heard of Émilie Ferland and Clifford Miller from the TV show and book *Un zoo pas comme les autres*. Yet Miller Zoo's story began long before the popular TVA show. It's above all a love story in which animals play an integral part.

It all started in 2011, when Ferland and Miller, founders of Miller Zoo, wanted to rescue a young doe whose mother had been hit by a car. As there was no refuge in the area that could accommodate the animal, they decided to start the process for a license to keep animals in captivity. As they were both animal lovers, they had already been entertaining the idea of opening an educational farm. Already living on the grounds of the current zoo, in the middle of the woods, they lived in an ideal environment to be able to help injured wild animals.

In the first year, they began to welcome deer, raccoons and squirrels. Recognizing that there was a demand from the public to observe animals in their natural environment, they began offering tours of the little farm they had created, using the money raised to help even more animals and by reinvesting it in order to develop new facilities, such as hiking trails. Within the first year, mainly through word of mouth, they were able to attract around 10,000 visitors.



Yet Miller Zoo was not yet a “zoo.” “The name ‘zoo’ comes from a family joke,” explains Ferland. “People were like, ‘Hey, you’ve got a zoo on your hands!’ So, when it came time to register, that was the name we chose.”

That’s how the real story of Miller Zoo began. With a name like that, zoos contacted Ferland and Miller to find out if they were willing to take newborn lions or tigers or those that were at the end of their lives. They realized that there was a need to place exotic animals when there were, for example, unplanned births or if they were not good-looking enough to be displayed at a zoo.

“We were offered two white tigers that no one wanted, so we decided to take the leap in acquiring a professional license to care for animals,” says Ferland. “What’s more, the regulations had just changed. Previously, to get the permit, you

needed a full-time veterinarian on zoo grounds. It was therefore very expensive. Now, you need a full-time vet, which is different. We were therefore able to start the process and become a zoo.” Ferland and Miller seized the opportunity, and the zoo has grown bigger and bigger over time.

Although it’s called a “zoo,” Miller Zoo is more of a zoological garden. Rehabilitation, awareness and education are at the heart of its founders’ values. The park’s hiking trails allow you to observe more than 150 animals of 60 different species in their natural environment. Black bears, deer, moose, wolves, pumas, lions, Asian otters, lemurs and more!

Over the years and with an increasing number of animals, Miller Zoo has evolved, getting bigger and bigger. The money generated by visits is constantly reinvested to improve the animals’



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