



The Montreal Women's Center A welcoming haven in Milton-Parc

BY DENISE BABIN

Tiny in her bright pink bows and caribbean tresses, the little girl has to stretch her arm as she reaches for a cinnamon roll on the big table. But Guena, 4 years old, is at home with her mother in the *Montreal Women's Center*.

The doors are open to all women, even the little ones, at the Women's Center. The center at the corner of Saint-Urbain and Prince-Arthur has been welcoming women from Milton-Parc and Montreal for over 20 years.

"Our goal is to offer tools and give women the means and the resources that will help them gain access to a better quality of life," says Brigitte Dumais, responsible for educational activities at the first line service. Most of the services and activities are free or inexpensive.

The center's roots run deep in Milton-Parc. They go back to 1971 when a group of local women published a practical information newspaper for women.

One thing led to another and it became an information center. Volunteers soon joined the group. They rented office space. Govern-

ment grants followed to help back the women's haven.

In addition to classes in language, computer, and mother-daughter relations, the center offers food and clothing services, legal aid, an incest survivors group and collective kitchens.

The career guidance programme of *Option'elle* offers job search workshops, individual counselling for local and immigrant women, and a job bank. Immigrant women and their families can be welcomed in many languages.

"We help each other," says Marie Antoinette Joubert, a community organizer at the *Immigrant Women's Service*. "We discover that other women are one of our best resources." This service offers information in many languages, free french classes and a buddy programme between local and immigrant women.

There are now 400 volunteers at the center and thirty employees. The reference index contains over 4000 resources for women and their families.

The center helped, counselled, referred, trained, informed, found a job, or supplied food and clothing for 40 000 women in 1992-93.

"Women are going through some real hard times with the recession, violence and poverty," says Dumais. "Sometimes I feel overwhelmed. But I believe in what I'm doing and I enjoy my work."

Violence against women is the

subject of a workshop opened to all women, social workers, survivors, and women in general, on May 25. The center is open year-round.

The *Montreal Women's Center*, 3585, rue Saint-Urbain, telephone: 842-4780. ♦

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CENTRE DES FEMMES

Le centre a aidé, conseillé, référé, formé, informé, trouvé un emploi ou fourni nourriture et vêtements à 40 000 femmes en 1992-93.

«Les femmes vivent de très graves problèmes avec la récession, la violence, la pauvreté», dit Mme Dumais. «Des fois, je me

sens dépassée. Mais ça me tient à coeur et j'aime bien faire mon travail.»

La violence faite aux femmes sera le sujet d'un atelier qui s'adressera aux intervenantes, aux femmes victimes de violence, et aux femmes en général, le 25 mai. Le centre est ouvert à l'année.

Le Centre des femmes de Montréal, 3585, rue Saint-Urbain, 842-4780. ♦

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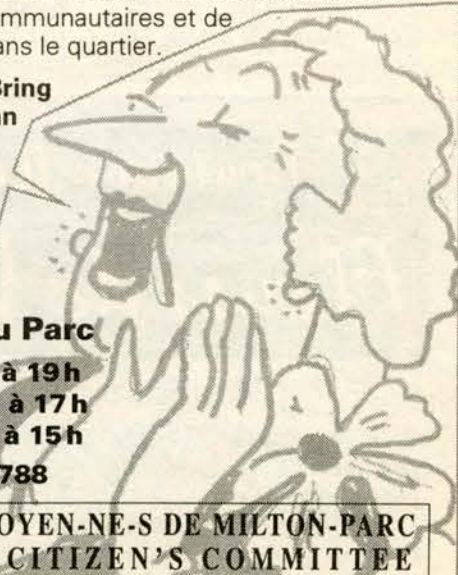
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BAZAR

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- L'habitation (coopératives, OSBL, etc.);
- Les transports publics et la réduction de la circulation automobile;
- Le développement économique du quartier (création d'emplois, soutien aux entreprises locales, technologies appropriées, etc.);
- Cours pour enfants, jeunes et adultes.

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