

Saint Columba House

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Annual Report 2006

"We abuse land because we regard it as a commodity belonging to us. When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect." -Aldo Leopold

The green doors that welcome hundreds of people daily to Saint Columba House are a wonderful symbol of our links to the history and heritage of the community of Point St. Charles and its Irish roots. We hope that soon they will also symbolize a new direction Saint Columba House is taking as it embraces a ministry of ecology and works toward becoming an environmentally responsible institution.

In Quebec, over 80% of recyclable material still ends up in landfills, the largest culprits being institutions of all kinds, including churches. In 2006, Saint Columba House worked with other United Church partners and with the **Eco-Quartier of Point St. Charles** on the Green Church Project, an initiative to provide churches with guidelines, resources and inspiration to improve their environmental practices and provide leadership to others to do the same. We hope to have the web-site up and running in early 2007.

In the meantime, we have worked hard at Saint Columba House to identify concrete goals and to implement change. We now compost all our kitchen scraps which will be given to collective gardens in the community. We have greatly improved our recycling practices and are working to reduce, reuse, redistribute and refuse (voluntary simplicity!). We have reduced energy loss and have a sound winterization plan. Environmental education and action are now promoted in all our programs.

Yet we still have a long way to go to achieve our goals! The values that will inspire our future efforts and light our path are:

ECOLOGY - the call to responsible use of land and resources
UNITY - to work in solidarity with others on a common vision
PEACE - in a spirit of acceptance, inclusion and empowerment

We hope you will support and join us on this journey as we strive to answer the call to do whatever each of us can to respect and protect God's creation, and to ensure that future generations can behold its magnificent beauty.

Patricia Murphy, director



Social Work student, Fannie Couture, has worked to educate and organize action around responsible environmentalism at Saint Columba House. Four composters by the side of our building will provide beautiful rich compost to be used in collective gardens in the community.

2006 at a Glance

2006 was a great year for community solidarity and action. Our enormous efforts as part of the **Action Watchdog Community Coalition** to prevent the Montreal Casino from moving to Point St. Charles were rewarded when the unpopular project was cancelled. In September, we picked up the torch once again to work with the parents of **St. Gabriel School** to keep open this last English school in the community. We strengthened many of our partnerships with other organizations to serve the community better through collaboration and sharing resources. This resulted in a joint effort with the **Y des Femmes** to offer an empowerment camp for girls last July. The **Eco-Quartier** of (Con't on page 2)

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Point St. Charles was key in helping us get the **Green Church Project** off the ground and to begin to implement environmental changes at Saint Columba House. We worked with the **Saidye Bronfman Centre for the Arts - Special Needs Program**, to offer an art class to Hand-in-Hand participants. We are also grateful to the **English Montreal School Board** for its support of our After-School program and its inclusion of our staff in training opportunities.

2006 was indeed a year of celebration. In April, we celebrated the immense contributions of our 100+ volunteers with a special volunteer recognition breakfast at Saint Columba House. In June, we celebrated the Feast of Saint Columba with an Open House and vernissage of the beautiful art works produced by Hand-in-Hand participants in their art class. In October, we joined with our community partners to fête the authors, including Myrna Rose and Donna Leduc of Saint Columba House, at the book launch of **The Point is ... Grassroots Organizing Works!** - a history of community action in Point St. Charles as told by the women who lived it.

Our programs and team have been greatly strengthened by the addition of two dynamic new staff members, Debora Millitzer (Youth Program Coordinator) and Michelle Duchesneau (Alternate School teacher). We have also been very fortunate to welcome **McGill Social Work** student interns Heather Keith, Fannie Couture and Tammy Harrigan and **MCC Harmony Program** intern, Myra McHattie. Our volunteer team continues to grow and makes major contributions to all our programs.

Finally, 2006 was a year in which we completed an in-depth review of our mission and vision. Working with the themes **Building Community, Empowerment, Social Change and Hope**, we took stock of where we have come from, of the new directions we are pursuing and of the changing and emerging realities within the church and community. We greatly benefited from the visionary leadership of Dr. Lynn McAlpine who led the staff and board through this year-long process. Many innovative ideas and concrete results arose from this, including a new Mission and Vision Statement, a plan of action to map out our next steps, and a renewed sense of energy and commitment to the ministry of social justice that we live out daily at Saint Columba House.

Mission Statement

Saint Columba House is engaged in seeking justice through empowerment, education and social action as a Community Ministry of The United Church of Canada in partnership with the Point Saint Charles community.



All are welcomed at the Saint Columba House Lunch program which serves a hot, nutritious and affordable meal in a friendly and environmentally-friendly atmosphere each day from 11:30 - 1:00

Program Reports 2006

For over 80 years, Saint Columba House has worked in partnership with Point St. Charles, a neighbourhood with a rich tradition of community-building and innovation. Saint Columba House addresses issues of social and economic injustice and works for change. It offers a range of programs in which education and community participation have high priority. The following are some highlights from our programs in 2006.

Lunch Program

Each day, close to 100 meals are served to community residents, volunteers, staff and guests at Saint Columba House in a welcoming family-like environment. Efforts were made this year to improve nutritional quality of meals, and to offer more vegetarian options, as well as menus that better reflect the ethnic diversity of the community. The Lunch Program has taken a leadership role in embracing the Green Church Project by setting up a composting program and improving recycling. We also converted to fair-trade coffee, bio-degradable cleaning products and recyclable drinking cups. All are invited to join us for lunch from 11:30 to 1:00. We hope to welcome you soon!

Alternate School Program

The Alternate School program offers a head-start pre-school program to children aged 2 to 5, teaching basic literacy, numeracy, second language and social skills. Much of the emphasis of this program is on parental involvement to empower parents to become effective participants in the process of their child's education. As more of the families of the Alternate School reflect the growing ethnic diversity of Point St. Charles, there has been a greater need to prepare children to integrate into the French school system and our program has become more bilingual and culturally sensitive. This has produced challenges as well as great opportunities for cross-cultural awareness and collaboration, which we have fully embraced.