

## Laurentians CARE Health Fair

November 2011

The first annual Laurentians CARE Health Fair was held in Ste. Agathe on October 17, 2011, and it was a resounding success. People came from all over the Laurentians to learn about the facilities and programs available to them. The entire event was held in English, and showed the strength of the community and the range of services at our disposal.

Tables were set up around the perimeter of the meeting room at the Place Lagny pavilion on the shores of Lac des Sables. These tables, filled with piles of literature, flyers and brochures, were staffed by enthusiastic and knowledgeable representatives of a variety of organizations providing services to the community. The centre of the room contained chairs that were full most of the day as people watched presentations and demonstrations of some of those services.

Between those presentations, the visitors circulated around the room, stopping to collect information and asking questions of the participants in the fair. My location at a table in the middle of the group allowed me to watch the high level of activity all around me when I had the occasional brief break between visitors. Discussion was animated at my table where I explained the purpose and activities of the English Communities Committee of the CSSS des Sommets to dozens of people, and provided them with documentation on services available from the institution, including the flu vaccination schedule that was hot off the press that morning.

Sitting on one side of me was June Angus, who also had lots of visitors learning about the Laurentian Region Cancer Support Group. Sharing my table on the other side was Michelle Le Quellec, representing Palliacco, the organization that provides support and respite for palliative care patients and their caregivers. At another table were employees of Service Canada, the federal department that helps the government deliver programs and services with its fast, easy and convenient single-window access available through service points across the country. At the other end of our group of tables sat employees of the CSSS des Pays-d'en-Haut behind a tabletop laden with uncountable brochures describing their services to the population of their territory. There was a table shared by animal-assisted therapist Kirsten Schrankel, accompanied by two of the dogs she uses in her practice, and by art therapist Debbie Sarjeant, who demonstrated her work by supervising dried flower arranging. Representatives of the Arthritis and Diabetes societies among others were there as well.

Some of the participating organizations also made presentations. These included FADOQ, the Federation of Golden Age Clubs, whose representative, Jean Sabourin, introduced the Senior Aware program designed to educate seniors about fraud and abuse. Huguette Dumay of the group Prévoyance envers les aînés (prevention for seniors) later gave a more detailed presentation on the subject, assisted by an officer from the SQ. Chris Wynn played clips of his moving film, *Forgetful Not Forgotten*, about the struggle his family faced when his father was diagnosed with early-onset Alzheimer's. There were presentations of the PIED program to prevent falls by kinesiologist Louise Bigras of our CLSC, safety and first aid courses available from the Red Cross by Kirsten Young, and Guy Lacoste added his personal experience to Pauline Morin's explanation of geo-locators to help keep track of the location of people suffering memory loss who may be prone to wandering.

Of course, this whole event would not have taken place if it hadn't been for the energy and commitment of Christina Vincelli, founder and director of Laurentians CARE, and her whole team of dedicated volunteers. They organized, recruited groups and sponsors, promoted, set up, provided lunch for the participants, kept things flowing and cleaned up the hall at the end of the event. The English-speaking community of the Laurentians has an invaluable resource in this growing organization.

Over the next number of months, watch this space for more detailed information about some of the groups mentioned above and the services that they provide.

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