



Innovative Health Literacy Centre Announced

The Montreal General Hospital, McGill University Health Centre, in co-operation with The Centre for Literacy, chose International Literacy Day to announce the creation of an innovative centre at the hospital that will cater to the information needs of traditionally hard-to-reach groups of patients. These include people with low literacy, with language or cultural barriers, and with learning difficulties, physical or cognitive.

Requests for funding are being vetted in several sectors, and the two organizations expect to conduct a detailed needs assessment in the coming year. The proposed centre will offer information and support to patients and families through diverse media and non-traditional approaches; it will also offer training and communications support for health care professionals. The site will serve as a testing ground for ideas and strategies that can be fine-tuned and incorporated into the Patient Information Centre projected as part of the amalgamated McGill University Health Centre scheduled to open in 2004.



l. to r.: Peggy Sangster, Director of Nursing Staff Development, Montreal General Hospital (MUHC), Dennis Trudeau, host of C.B.C. Newswatch, Linda Shohet, Director of The Centre for Literacy, David Dillon, President, The Centre for Literacy.

International Literacy Day 1999

On International Literacy Day, celebrating its tenth year of existence, The Centre honoured Dennis Trudeau and CBC Newswatch Montreal. Dennis has been spokesperson since 1994 for the annual Golf Day for Literacy in Quebec. The Centre has been a co-recipient with Literacy Partners of Quebec of the proceeds of the last two tournaments; our portion partially funded the health and literacy initiatives in local hospitals in 1998 and 1999.

For the second year, on International Literacy Day, we organized a public display on health and literacy in the lobby of the Montreal General Hospital. Three large panels with graphs and data were complemented by information tables where passers-by could ask questions and pick up materials.



Dennis Trudeau makes the first mark on one of the literacy canvases.



The same canvas at the end of the day.

This year we added two large blank canvases where people were invited to paint a literacy message or image. The murals were the brainchild of Open City Productions 2002, a community-based organization dedicated to bringing the arts to the street. They have been helping community groups create a Great Millennial Wall to celebrate Human Rights. At the hospital, people lined up. Young, old, walking, in wheelchairs, with canes, alone, with friends, with attendants, patients, visitors, nurses, doctors, kitchen staff — everyone wanted to leave a mark. People kept

asking if we would be back the next day. The urge to signify presence runs deep.

The literacy murals will become part of the Great Millennial Wall which will tour Canada in the Year 2000.