



Action Center

Annual Report 2020 - 2021

Live a life without limits...

Centre Action

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Message from the President of the Board of Directors



Dear Friends of the Action Centre,

The 2020-21 fiscal year was more challenging than most years in a number of ways. The Covid-19 pandemic shut down all of our on-site programs. We did not have a permanent management team in place. Our board members were relatively new to the Action Centre. Several aspects of general operations needed immediate attention and our building needed important renovations. Thankfully while most of our board members were new to the Action Centre, they were not new to the management of a community organization. Each one brought a specific area of expertise crucial to the successful functioning of the Action Centre. I am very grateful to the members of the Board who stepped in when needed and successfully helped keep the Action Centre in a position where it could continue to serve its members. I also extend my thanks to Amine Rachi for keeping the Centre running as our Interim Director.

Given the absence of an Executive Director, the board took on operational responsibilities and oversaw changes in the Centre's organizational structure, outreach, fundraising, programming, and facility management. We used the downtime in day-to-day operations to assess where the Centre was, where we wanted it to go, and how we could get it there. In line with the Strategic Plan, we made changes to the logo, website, organizational structure, and programming content. We believe that these changes meet members' needs, position the Centre for growth, and help us prepare for the safe return of our members and staff to the Centre.

On a positive note funding, and especially government funding, increased in the past fiscal period. We find ourselves in an excellent cash position and may have the opportunity to invest in up-to-date office equipment as well as invest in equipment that will make our members' experience better. We are very thankful to all those who supported us financially during this past year.

It has been a year of change at the Action Centre and I thank everyone who patiently worked with us to structure and facilitate our progress. I especially thank the members who have had an extraordinary year. It was not easy to suddenly stop coming to the Centre, end socializing with their friends in person, and no longer be able to participate in on-site programming. COVID affected their daily routines and disrupted respite care for their family members. Fears of contracting COVID, learning to use proper protective gear, and rapidly becoming digitally literate became the new reality. I applaud all of our members who endured the hardships of this past year and pivoted with us to new ways of living, learning, and socializing. We are all hopeful that next year will be better.

We have much to look forward to at the Action Centre. We have a new Executive Director in place, a new website, new interesting program options, and we find ourselves in a good fiscal position. We are poised to reopen the Centre and we anticipate a very good 2021-22 fiscal period with new, meaningful, relevant programs and activities for our members.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Benita Goldin".

Benita Goldin, President

WHO ARE WE?

Mission

The Action Centre's mission is to provide a safe, welcoming environment for physically disabled adults so that they can access and participate in a variety of educational, social, cultural and recreational programs in a community setting. It also focuses on raising public awareness about physically disabled adults' needs, rights and the Action Centre's philosophy of living a life without limits.

Values

Action Centre members, staff, the board of directors and partners all contribute to the Centre's success. Our work together is reflected in organizational values that emphasize the following:

- Respect for everyone's contribution
- Commitment and teamwork
- Responsibility
- Initiative
- Diversity and inclusiveness
- Independence
- Active participation

Living Life without Limits

Action Centre firmly believes that everyone with physical disabilities can live without limits and has the right to the opportunity to thrive in a safe environment where respect, support and encouragement prevail. The Action Centre's services have a direct and indirect daily impact on a significant number of adults in and around Montreal.

Members

We are a community center that participants should become a member of. Members have free access to all structured activities and can take advantage of reduced fees on certain programs and activities.

To be eligible, participants must be twenty-one years of age or older and meet the following criteria:

- Have a physical disability
- Want to participate in the Centre's programs and activities
- Pay a yearly \$25 membership fee

- Comply with the Centre’s code of conduct
- Pay additional fees for certain outings and social activities

Action Centre team as of March 31, 2021

Board of Directors

Benita Goldin	President (community sector)
Suzanne Cloutier	Vice President (public sector — retired)
Arik Azoulay	Treasurer (private sector)
Mélissa Lemelin	Secretary (community — participant)

Administrators

Nigel Bicknell	(community — participant)
Maria Mustillo	(community — participant)
Ron de Paola	Representative of the Habilitas Foundation (private sector)
Andrew Lindsay (private sector)	Keith Hardie (public sector — retired)
Lisa Westaway (public sector)	Amina Talib (public sector)

Management and Operations Team 2020–2021

Iham Bouzouma	Director (sick leave)
Amine Rachi	Assistant Director / Interim Director
JunJie Mu	Supervisor

Personal Support Worker

Mélissa Goudreau
Abdellah Elouazzani
Asmae Alhamdani
Jia Liu

PACC and CREP Teachers

Jean Claude Mousteli (CREP)
Andrea Pinto (PACC)
Denise Curie (PACC)

Attendants

Jessica Aubé

PAAS-Action Team

Neville Blair
Sébastien Leduc
Natasha Zielinski
Mireille Breton
Cindy Patricia McKay
Daniel Miville
Ivo Rotili
Francis Lefebvre

Maintenance Staff

William Georges
Fanny Proulx

Art Teacher

Linda Goedike

Volunteers and Trainees

ACTION CENTRE DURING COVID-19:

PROGRAMMING AND ACTIVITIES

The pandemic has affected the Action Centre. Nevertheless, from the start, the Centre has been committed to supporting its members and reducing the harmful effects of lockdowns and isolation. Thanks to the collaboration of staff, members and their loved ones, and school boards and their teachers, the Centre succeeded in rapidly setting up adapted virtual programming through the Zoom platform and also psychosocial support by phone. This program enabled reaching about 130 members who could connect and enjoying fulfilling activities. During the pandemic, the Action Centre has gone through three periods:

The first period (March to July 2020): The Centre decided to close its doors and cancel all activities to protect its clientele and staff.

The second period (August to September 2020): After the easing of health measures for Covid-19, the Action Centre reconfigured its premises to comply with health and safety guidelines in order to welcome the members who were able to attend the activities in-person.

Third phase (starting October 2020): Unfortunately, after the second wave, the Centre was forced to close its doors once again, but it started to offer an enriched virtual program to its clientele.

Virtual Programming

Since early January 2021, a two-phase pilot project was launched to reach out to the rest of the members who had not participated in virtual activities. It took two simultaneous actions:

The First Action: Ninety Members Connected as of March 31

At the end of 2020, sixty members had participated in our online activities. The goal of this phase was to add thirty new members proficient in virtual programming to reach a total of ninety members by March 31, 2021.

Thanks to the help of our partner PACC, who provided us with Chromebooks, the number of members connected online increased from sixty to seventy-eight. Seventy-one percent of our members were connected online. According to our latest survey in March 2021, more than ninety-five percent are satisfied with the online programming.

Our program has about thirty activities: Key Ideas, Relaxation and Fun, Conversation, Music Exercise, Food, Relaxation, Singing and Dancing, Slice of Life, Zumba, Book/Cinema Circle, Self-awareness, Media Works, Internet Explorers, Travel Club, Go on an Adventure, Zoo-Action, Worldwide Sports, General Knowledge and Memory Exercises.

The Second Action: The Phone Support Project (CA Phone)

The goal of this activity is to reach fifty members who are not proficient in online technology. It also made it possible to provide them with psychosocial support. To do so, the Centre hired two Dawson College interns and a staff member to make regular phone calls to members. Topics were selected based on the members' interests, such as news or personal topics, and were discussed during fifteen-minute conversations. **Twenty-nine percent of our members have been reached by telephone through the project.** Ninety-two percent of the members responded in a survey that they find the phone program very valuable and helpful.

Activities

Centre Action quickly adapted and became virtually accessible to members and the community.

The Action Centre's 2020 Annual General Meeting was attended by ninety-two participants from its members and partners. The Centre also held its virtual Christmas party in December 2020 during which forty-two members shared the holiday spirit and enjoyed socializing and music.

Who are Action Centre's beneficiaries?

- An annual average of **170 members** who participate daily in our educational and recreational activities and workshops.
- **Hundreds of caregivers** who benefit from respite care.
- Countless **health and social services professionals** who rely on our services and see them as valuable resources for adults with multiple physical disabilities.
- About **ten members** per year who derive great satisfaction from contributing to the Centre's operation by participating in the socio-professional integration program (PAAS Action).
- The Centre is a fertile environment for interns and **researchers** from various institutions with different specialties to carry out their projects and gain unique experience.
- The Centre also offers a suitable atmosphere to get involve many **volunteers**.

Members

Number of memberships as of March 31, 2021: 128 members

Gender: 57% M, 43% F

Age: ages 21–35 (4%); ages 35–45 (15%); ages 45–55 (18%);
ages 55–65 (26%); ages 65 and older (37%)

Languages spoken: French 38%, English 42%, Bilingual 20%

Types of disabilities: Visual 9%; Auditory 20%; Motor 71%

Types of residences: Private 55%, Semi-private 10%, Governmental 35%

Volunteers:

Action Centre provided volunteer opportunities to 18 volunteers for a total of 1,555 hours of volunteering in governance, phone support and group and individual interventions.

UPDATE FROM THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

THE STRATEGIC PLAN

The Centre has made many changes at all levels while working within the strategic plan's framework:

- Stabilizing governance
- Reviewing organizational structure
- Developing and improving programs and activities
- Improving visibility
- Improving accessibility in the Action Centre
- Seeking out new sources of funding during the pandemic

Governance and Ethics Committee (Chair of the Committee: Benita Goldin)

This year's goal was to recruit new board members and improve board productivity by forming work committees, which is a common board practice.

Organizational Structure Committee (Chair of the Committee: Keith Hardie)

This year's goal was to assess the Centre's organizational structure and recommend changes. The Action Centre began an in-depth review of its operations and the decision to reposition itself through renewed programming that is more focused on the organization's mission. This has made it possible to review managers' tasks and eliminate less useful positions in order to achieve optimal efficiency. The committee recommended a new administrative structure, and the board of directors approved it. The new implemented structure includes the following:

Executive Director
Program Coordinator
Administrative assistant
Accountant

Programming Committee (Chair of the Committee: Suzanne Cloutier)

This year, the focus was on modernizing and improving the programs offered to members. It also involved moving from in-person to online programs. The Centre put in place new programming adapted to members' needs and the requirements of the current situation—namely, Covid-19, where online teaching has become vital. So, thanks to the programming committee's and the school boards' hard work in consultation with our teachers and members, the Centre developed new programming based on improving our members' tangible and intangible skills while remaining within the framework of our four (4) focal points: Education, Art and Creativity, Health and Well-being, and Community Participation.

Based on the Programming Committee's recommendations, the new programming was officially adopted in February 2021. The programming consists of thirty-two well-structured activities led by teachers from the CREP, PACC and facilitators from the Action Centre.

The programming committee has adopted a new approach to programming based on diversifying and continuously evaluating activities while using necessary resources to satisfy our clientele and foster a favourable environment for conversation and learning.

Focal Points	Activities
Health and Well-Being	Key Ideas, Relaxation and Fun, Conversation, Music Exercise, Food, Relaxation, Singing and Dancing Slice of Life, Zumba, Book/Cinema Circle, Self-Knowledge
Education	Media Works, Internet Explorers, Travel Club, Go on an Adventure, Zoo-Action, Worldwide Sports, General knowledge and Memory Exercises
Community	Online games, Human relations, Dream Jobs, Trivi'action, AC Telephone, PAAS-Action, AC Conference and the Newspaper <i>ActionRéaction</i>
Art and Creativity	All-Art Exploration (or Artistic Adventures), Drawing, Arts & Crafts, World Music

Focal Points	Goals
Health and Well-being	Stimulation of the heart and muscles; increased circulation and oxygenation of the brain; reducing pain, stress, depression and promoting happiness
Education	Promotion of cognitive abilities, curiosity, manual dexterity, self-esteem and self-confidence
Community	Promotion of social inclusion, community engagement and participation, communication skills, independence, connection, relaxation, joy and reduction of social isolation
Art and Creativity	The promotion of imagination, creativity, resourcefulness, assertiveness, self-esteem and self-confidence

Visibility Committee (Chair of the Committee: Benita Goldin)

This year, the goal was to create a new image and improve visibility: The Action Centre has begun a project to improve its visibility that consists of designing a new logo and website that will reflect the Centre's new approach and strengthen its professional image in its community. Today a new logo has been designed and adopted, and the website is under construction. It will be operational this fall. Other visibility actions will be undertaken, such as developing communications and strategic marketing.

Building and Facilities Committee (Chair of the Committee: Andrew Lindsey)

This year, the goal was to prepare the Centre for public health guidelines related to COVID-19. This involved evaluating the options for the current location. To meet COVID-19 requirements, the Centre needed to review the layout of rooms, spaces and equipment. This was also done to facilitate safely hosting the members when they come in person. The committee also considered options for renovating or relocating the Centre.

Finance Committee (Chair of the Committee: Keith Hardie)

This year, the focus has been on securing funding during the pandemic and finding new funding for the future. The government and other private institutions and foundations have provided community organizations with significant emergency assistance and subsidies to help them reduce the pandemic's negative impacts. The Action Centre successfully applied for and received COVID-19 emergency funds:

- PSOC Emergency Fund, which covers part of the salaries and costs of the equipment
- Canada Emergency Rent Subsidy (CERS)
- Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (75% and 10%)
- Bank loan or Canada Emergency Business Account
- Assistance from the Foundation of Greater Montréal

TESTIMONIALS

Mélissa Lemelin
Active member of the

The Action Centre's online workshops are like A BREATH OF FRESH AIR in my week. Filled with lightheartedness and friendship, those moments almost make me forget that we are all isolated. Thank you Action Centre!

Through online programs, I can feel a little more integrated in other members' lives. I love the ease with which I can attend meetings on Zoom because they give me something to do and something to look forward to.

Nigel Bicknell
Active member of the Centre

Jean-Claude Mousteli.
Teacher, CREP

For my part, the Zoom experience during the pandemic was an **EXCEPTIONAL** experience allowing adults to receive a personalized education that promotes diverse social activities.

Denise Currie
Teacher, CREP

The Action Center took **ACTION** as quickly as possible to be inventive and creative with hosting our members in a new type of online class—and we succeeded together.

Ramanjot Kaur
Intern, Cégep Lasalle

I had a VERY POSITIVE learning experience thanks to members and staff. All the members, teachers and supervisors made it easy for me to be part of the Centre.

One of the Centre's greatest assets is its ability to adapt to each situation and solve problems. During COVID-19, I had discussions with members online and on the phone every week. Without the members' energy, the Centre is just an empty space. It will be a great day when we can all return to the Centre—I **CAN'T WAIT!**

Mélissa Goudreau
Action Centre Employee

AKNOWLEDGMENT

The Centre is deeply grateful to all its partners for their direct and indirect involvement in carrying out its global mission. Our partners provide us with financial, human, material and informational resources:

- AlterGo
- Centre d'action bénévole
- CIUSSS de l'ouest de Montréal
- CIUSSS du Centre-Sud-de-l'île-de-Montréal
- School boards: LBSP, CSSDM
- Red Cross
- Déphy Montréal
- Employment and Social Development Canada
- Emploi Québec
- Fondation Desjardins
- Foundation of Greater Montréal
- Habilitas Foundation
- L'Institut National pour l'Équité, l'Égalité et l'Inclusion des personnes en situation de handicap (INÉÉI — PSH)
- La Ville Lasalle
- Moisson Montréal
- Nutri-Centre
- RIOCM
- Service Canada
- Correctional Service Canada
- Table de Développement Social de LaSalle
- Trajet
- YMCA

TRIBUTE

With great sadness, the Action Centre lost three of its members to COVID-19. They were:

- *Denis Allen*
- *Robert Pichette*
- *Debbie Siguin*

We will miss you, and you will always be in our hearts.

On behalf of the Action Centre's members and staff, we extend our deepest condolences to their loved ones.