

Sam Roberts set to rock MUHC super hospital inauguration



Mike Cohen

Officials from the McGill University Health Centre (MUHC) believe it is time to celebrate the opening of their new super hospital at the Glen site and that is precisely what they will do this coming weekend when local artists the Sam Roberts Band and Stéphanie Lapointe perform on the evenko stage on Saturday, June 20. The following day the hospital will host a Community Festival with plenty of activities and concerts by such world-renowned home-grown talents as Oliver Jones, the Montreal Jubilation Gospel Choir and Nikki Yanofsky.

I had a chance to chat last week with Sam Roberts, who grew up in West Island Pointe Claire and now lives in NDG with his wife and their three young children. "I'm excited to be part of the opening," Roberts told me. "For myself, the new hospital is on the route I take in the morning to bring my

kids to school so I have watched it grow from a hole in the ground. You can't fathom at that point what it is going to become. It is quite incredible."

Roberts' kids are aged eight, six and four, so he has been to the Montreal Children's Hospital and like any parent appreciates what they do. "As a parent," he says, "having a hospital as good as that gives you tremendous peace of mind. You take your child there and they get world class treatment. It can be that strange inexplicable fever in the middle of the night that you just need an answer for."

On Saturday the celebrations will kick off with the Walk for Montreal! (www.walkformontreal.ca), during which the now physically fit Montreal Mayor Denis Coderre will lead Montrealers from Dawson College to the new hospital grounds located at 1001 Décarie Blvd., just across the tracks from the Vendôme metro station. An official ribbon-cutting ceremony will follow, featuring dignitaries from all levels of government, including Quebec Premier Philippe Couillard and Canada's Governor General David

Johnston.

Roberts' 2003 debut album, *We Were Born in a Flame*, earned him popular and critical acclaim. His second single, *Bridge to Nowhere*, won the Juno Award for Video of the Year in 2007. His band members are Pointe Claire native James Hall on bass, drummer Josh Trager from Côte St. Luc, Boisbriand native and Loyola High grad Eric Fares on keyboard and lead guitarist Dave Nugent from Ontario. What will they play this Saturday towards 3 p.m.? "That's always a game time decision," says Roberts. "I expect we will be up there for about an hour."

For details on the new hospital inauguration go to MUHCLOVESMTL.CA.

GUTSY WALK: More than 18,000 Canadians took part in the 20th annual Gutsy Walk recently, raising over \$3 million in 60 communities across the country to help find a cure for Crohn's Disease and ulcerative colitis. More than 400 participants were on the grounds locally at Maisonneuve Park. D'Arcy McGee Liberal MNA David Birnbaum, who has lived with ulcerative

colitis for 25 years, was among the walkers who contributed to more than \$150,000 and counting of funds raised. Montreal chartered accountant Sheldon Miller brought in \$20,000 on his own.

BIALIK ALUMNI: The second Bialik High School Alumni Hockey Tournament, in support of the Segal Cancer Center at the Jewish General Hospital, will take place on Sunday, Aug. 30 at the Samuel Moskovitch Arena. Organizer Bob Nathan, a retired teacher, says the tournament promises to be bigger and more successful than their first effort two years ago. He is now putting the call out to potential players from the community to participate. The event is also in great need of sponsorship, so all donations would be greatly appreciated. For more information log on to www.bialikhockeytournament.com or e-mail rnathan@videotron.ca

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TMR teen wins top national science honors

By P.A. Sévigny
The Suburban

He may be only 17-years-old, but Justin Lessard-Wajcer has already made a big difference in the world of modern medical research. Based upon the successful results of his original research that was done under the direction of pharmacology Professor Hélène Girouard at the University of Montreal, neurological research scientists can now see through the brain thanks to what a TMR teen did to make it possible. During an extensive interview over a cup of coffee in a TMR snack bar, it took only a few minutes for Wajcer to explain how his invention will quickly transform clinical neurological research in all of the most advanced research facilities throughout the planet.

"The brain is still a big mystery because the truth is that we can't really see what's going on in there," said Wajcer. "There's just too much fat."

Following the failure of an initial research project that was looking into the two mutated genes that are the root cause behind the development of breast and ovarian cancer in women who are born with the defective DNA, Wajcer's science professor at the Jean De Brébeuf CEGEP suggested that he go see Professor Girouard who was already beginning to work on the Clarity project in order to produce transparent brain samples for research purposes. "First we had to identify where the brain's vulnerable zones were and that's how we developed the Clarity project," said Wajcer.

As fat makes up 60 percent of the brain, MRI (Magnetic Resonance Image) images cannot provide a clear picture of what's happening within the grey matter that animates our lives. According to Wajcer, original research out of Stanford University indicated how passive diffusion could be used to flush



Justin Lessard - Wajcer.

the fat out of a miniscule (1.3 mm) brain sample. As it took over a month and a half to produce their first successful experiment, Wajcer knew that the entire process had to be speeded up in order to create both the tools and a protocol that could be used to do serious and effective neurological research. Based on further research followed up by endless trial and error, Wajcer thought of using two contact points for a DC (Direct Circuit) electrical current as the sample was immersed in a constantly flowing electrolytic solution.

"That was tricky," he said. "If the electrodes were too far apart, you would lose the circuit and if they were too close together, they would burn the sample. A simple plastic 'O' ring solved the leakage problem in the tiny receptacle and within three days, Wajcer had his first perfectly transparent piece of brain. "It's a big step forward," he said, "... because you only need four samples (from

different parts of the brain) in order to provide a clear picture of the whole brain."

Aside from providing a major research tool for advanced neurological research into a wide assortment of clinical disorders, the 17-year-old CEGEP student had to take a few days off school in order to go to Ottawa after his research project was presented to the judges at the Sanofi Biogenius competition where he won a total of three prizes.

"It was a big surprise when they announced that I won the first prize," said Wajcer. "There were a lot of very smart people in that competition and they were all doing some very impressive work."

Aside from a summer research project at McGill where they plan to use Wajcer's protocol to do further research on human brains, he also mentioned that he was one of the three Canadians who were invited to attend a world-class science convention that's scheduled to be held in Israel in a few weeks.

Wajcer told *The Suburban* that he did not know where he will go for university but he does know that it's going to be "...where there are a lot of smart people, the kind of people who want to do a lot serious research... The kind of research that can make a big difference in the world." ■

Entrepreneurship lives in Montreal!



The Jewish Chamber of Commerce (JCC) recently gave out its Montreal Entrepreneurship Awards. The elegant evening took place in the famed Oval Room at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel in front of a standing room only audience of hundreds. The Promies, as the awards are called, celebrate the best in Jewish entrepreneurship in the Montreal business community. Morris Goodman, founder of Pharmascience, was the recipient of the lifetime achievement award and delivered the keynote address. The Sam Steinberg Award went to Laurent Amram of CDL Laboratories & the Elna Medical Complex. Jeff Mitelman of Thinking Capital received the Morris Goodman award. Mickael Kanfi of Mirum and Aubrey Rosenhek of Mirum (formerly Twist Image), got the Howard Stotland Technology Award. And the Collins Barrow Entrepreneurial Circle Awards went to Rob Decklebaum, Jon Bloom, Mark Pascal, Navi Cohen, Daniel Blumer, Stu Knecht, Joanna Barcessat, Steve Perez, Steven Singer, Karine Sebbag, Jon Silver and Josh Silver.

Pictured above are: Rob Decklebaum, Jon Bloom, Mark Pascal, Navi Cohen, Daniel Blumer, Stu Knecht, Joanna Barcessat, Steve Perez, Steven Singer, Laurent Amram. Bottom row: Mickael Kanfi, Aubrey Rosenhek, Morris Goodman, Karine Sebbag, Jeff Mitelman, Jon Silver, Josh Silver.