Happy Student-Resident Pairings at Ste. Anne's Hospital

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For the past 45 years, the residents at Ste. Anne's Hospital (SAH) have taken part in the Psychosocial Enhancement Program popularly known as PEP, which has any number of benefits. The program is offered in collaboration with John Abbott College (JAC) and pairs SAH residents, some of whom have dementia, with students aged 18 to 22 who are registered for the English course Community and Communication.

By registering for this course, students from a variety of programs (Administration, Nursing Sciences, Political Science, Police Technology, etc.) first compose an autobiographical text describing their strengths and weaknesses, interests, motivators, and other personal details. This text is very helpful during the matching process. After an extensive assessment of those who have registered, those students who are accepted are then paired with a resident. For 14 weeks, they visit the participating seniors once a week for 60 to 90 minutes at a time. The academic component of the course requires them to write journal entries after each visit, as well as writing, analysis, and reading various English-language texts related to aging or dementia.

Through the volunteering component of the course, PEP aims to cover a number of areas, which include familiarizing the students with the fact that there are always activities in which seniors can participate, regardless of their health; that seniors have a great deal to share, be through their life experiences, their interests, etc.; and that their values are often similar to those of seniors.

"The benefits of this program, which encourages intergenerational contact, are numerous and invaluable. It's an opportunity for seniors to share their life

experiences, to counter their isolation, to develop new friendships, and to feel that they are making a positive contribution to these young people. For the students, there is the opportunity to improve their communication skills, develop their interpersonal observation skills, to strengthen their sense of empathy, and to learn how much seniors have to offer," says Shannon Conway, an SAH social worker who is responsible for clinical supervision and acts as a liaison between the facility and John Abbott College.

"The students always come with their instructor, Ms. Liza Szabo-Jones, when they visit the hospital. They also attend presentations by professionals on a variety of themes, such as safety for seniors, helping with mobility, grieving, dementia, military culture, and more," adds Ms. Conway.

During their meetings, the students chat with residents, read to them, watch television, take walks, and even play video games! The students and residents also work on various projects together. Those projects were exhibited at a vernissage on December 8 to mark the end of the Fall 2022 semester, during which 27 students were paired with 27 civilian and veteran residents. All students received a certificate of participation from the PEP program.

Sincere thanks to the social workers, healthcare personnel, and the SAH Recreation Department who actively recruit residents to participate in the fall and winter sessions of the program. A big thank you also goes to the Québec Veterans Foundation, which finances the supplies for these collaborative projects.

The photos and captions below illustrate some of the PEP pairs and projects they have completed.

Photos 1 and 2:
Both JAC student **Olivia** and SAH resident **Robert Steadman** enjoy playing chess and discussing sailing, so they created a painting that reflects both of those interests.
Photo 3:
A vinyl LP with the names of the songs that JAC student **Clara** and SAH resident **Marie-Claude Poirier** listened to and sang together.
Photo 4:
Rachel and resident **Roger Henri Cadieux** were proud to show off their collaborative project, a painting of a poppy field.
Photo 5:
JAC student **Polina** and SAH resident **Leonard Hicks** are an endearing duo.

Photos 6 and 7:
During the fall semester, JAC student **Thomas** and SAH resident **Henri Televi** discovered they shared a passion for poker. So they created a playing surface together. In Photo 7, you can see them, with Thomas as the dealer and Mr. Televi with two other invited players.
Photo 8:
Lesley, a student PEP participant, crocheted a sweater for a teddy bear. She was paired with **Dorothy Jotkus** who may no longer be able to crochet herself but had plenty of advice to offer.
Photo 9:
Alyssa and resident **Emily Busko-Aird** share a love of fashion and worked together to select fabrics and create doll clothes.
Photo 10:

From left to right, JAC student **Isabella** and SAH resident **Lise Rioux**, who were paired, along with **Anna**, another JAC student.