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APPLAUSE SUSAN SCHWARTZ

Benefit roast honours 'irresistible' volunteer

Outgoing Foundation of Montreal chairman

More than 400 people attended a benefit roast honouring Marcel Côté, who stepped down last month as chairman of the board of directors of the Foundation of Greater Montreal; the June 15 event grossed \$247,000.

At the roast, several guests took delight in roasting Côté and telling amusing stories and anecdotes about him; they included Isabelle Hudon, president of Sun Life Quebec, and honorary chair of the evening; Louise Roy, president of the Conseil des Arts de Montréal; Marie Chouinard, choreographer and founder of La Compagnie Marie Chouinard; Daniel Denis, partner of SECOR, the strategic management consulting firm of which Côté was a founding partner; Suzanne Côté, partner and head of the Montreal litigation group at Osler; Gérard R. Tremblay, partner of the Montreal litigation group at McCarthy Tétrault; and former Liberal MNA Monique Jérôme-Forget.

Côté has been involved with the Foundation of Greater Montreal since its inception in 1999 and, although he is no longer chairman, he remains on the board. He is also on the board of nearly a dozen not-for-profit organizations. "In addition to his active professional life and his many contributions to the non-profit sector, he is recognized for his relentless energy, enthusiasm, non-stop advice to anyone and everyone, and irresistible personality," Marina Boulos, CEO of the foundation, wrote to Applause.

Richard Pound, a partner at the law firm Stikeman Elliott, former chancellor of McGill University and a former vice-president of the International Olympic Committee, replaced Côté as chairman at the foundation's annual general meeting, also held June 15.

The Foundation of Greater Montreal (www.fgmt.org) is a charitable organization that establishes and manages permanent endowment funds and distributes their income in the form of grants to charitable organizations working in the areas of



Warm Hands volunteers June Friedman (left) and Carolyn Polak, chair of the program; Allison Cobrin, senior development officer, Federation CJA; Warm Hands volunteer Shelley Kernan.

health, social services, arts and culture, education and the environment; the funds raised at the benefit roast will help the organization to continue to pursue its mission.

Since 2003, the foundation has awarded grants of more than \$7 million to organizations in the Greater Montreal area. The foundation is a member of Community Foundations of Canada, a grouping of close to 180 community foundations with collective assets of more than \$3 billion.

It began as a grassroots initiative: mothers and daughters knitting together as the girls logged community-service hours. Then it grew.

A project known as the Warm Hands knitting project has already surpassed its goal - collecting 600 hand-knitted children's scarves by June - by nearly 100 pieces, and scarves are still coming in.

Warm Hands is a project of Women's Philanthropy of Federation CJA known as the Tikun Olam Volunteers; the project looks to connect

community-minded individuals with volunteer opportunities.

The scarves will be packaged with hats and mittens and delivered to children in need at an annual back-to-school giveaway event of school supplies, clothing and other essentials organized by Federation CJA and Agence Ometz, a social-service agency and a Federation constituent agency, for children and teens who are Ometz clients.

Word of mouth was the only form of advertising for the Warm Hands project - and evidently it resonated for people: there were hand-knitted scarves dropped off at the Federation building on Côte St. Catherine Rd., for instance, and one woman called from Florida to offer to knit a scarf; a Lacolle woman whose home had been flooded knitted scarves to pass the time as she bunked in with her daughter; Community organizations contributed as well: the knitting group of the Caldwell Residences for seniors, for instance, contributed 76 scarves to the project.

"We were provided with an important opportunity to contribute in a meaningful way to our community and I am blown away by the response we've received," said Carolyn Polak, the volunteer chairing the Warm Hands project. "We realized that women really connected to this project and understood that by giving of their time, they could make a real impact in the lives of those in need. We are so excited by this success and we are still happily collecting scarves from anyone who wishes to contribute."

A new online charitable fundraising platform called GIVGroups (www.GIVGroups.ca), in which individuals, companies, foundations and charities come together to support charitable causes, is holding its inaugural campaign.

It works like this: charities are listed online; people can read about them and, if they choose to, make a tax-deductible donation.

Each charity is paired in a GIVGroup with a corporate sponsor; one donation from the public reach a pre-determined target, the corporate sponsor matches that amount with its gift.

In the first GIVGroup, then, Media Experts is supporting On Our Own, a Montreal-based group that provides young families with support services and affordable transitional housing that enable them to live independently in the community; Canada's largest independent media-services firm has pledged to match funds raised during the Putting Families First campaign at www.GIVGroups.ca/campaign/14.

GIVGroup is an online initiative of GIV3 (www.giv3.ca), a campaign launched in 2008 to encourage more Canadians to be more charitable: to give three per cent of their income to charity, for instance, to volunteer three hours a month, to tell three friends about the importance of charity - that kind of thing.

"The GIVGroups platform allows companies and individuals to 'multiply their good' by joining together to help Canadian charities," explained John Hallward, chairman of GIV3. Both are programs of the Hallmont Foundation, a registered Canadian charity. "Sponsors can do more for the causes they support without spending more money and Canadian charities are the ones who benefit," he said.

Jennifer Douglass, search marketing analyst with Media Experts and a member of the On Our Own board of directors, said, "The GIVGroups platform provides a wonderful channel to connect Canadians with charitable organizations in their community."



Marcel Côté and his wife, Louise Drouin, laugh during a roast organized by the Foundation of Greater Montreal for Côté, who stepped down in June as chairman of the board of directors of the foundation.

FOUNDATION OF GREATER MONTREAL