



thanks & giving

Imagine what we can achieve together!



Santropol Roulant: Creating a Community

By Courtney Lester

This Thanksgiving I gave thanks by giving to Santropol Roulant, a nonprofit organization that runs a meals-on-wheels program for Montrealers living with loss of autonomy. I spent an afternoon of my long weekend delivering meals to extremely grateful clients. I couldn't think of a more enjoyable way to use my holiday time.

For countless others and myself, Santropol Roulant is a veritable oasis in the middle of a busy metropolitan city. Being part of this organization gives me an individual sense of value – a feeling that is easily lost amid the high-paced demands of life as an urban dweller.

Santropol Roulant has created a very special community through its innovative projects and distinctive approach to running a not-for-profit organization. The meals-on-wheels service provides healthy, ethically-produced, appetizing food to clients who are mostly elderly, while the staff, volunteers and board of directors are largely younger people. This interesting dynamic brings individuals from different generations together on a daily basis and promotes the value of intergenerational initiatives. Moreover, the program fosters these exchanges in a fun and vibrant environment which makes volunteers like myself eager to sign up for more.

The other aspect that makes the Santropol Roulant community exceptional is its commitment to increasing sustainability within a city. In addition to preparing meals, volunteers can help with the rooftop garden. The garden provides fresh produce for the kitchen and a large vermicomposting system helps complete the contained urban food cycle. The kitchen recycles as much as possible and accepts donations from local fruit and vegetable markets – food that would otherwise go to waste. The bicycle workshop offers cyclists a place to repair their own bicycle, learn through interaction and exchange with other community members or even purchase a recycled, repaired or revamped bike. Bicycles are also the central method of delivery for the meals-on-wheels program for a large portion of the year.

But at the essence, why is it so enjoyable to volunteer at Santropol Roulant? Because of the people it attracts. Every time I volunteer there I meet someone new, someone with a story, or someone with similar interests. Surrounded by the consumerism, waste, and superficial ideals that abound in a big city, the individuals I meet through Santropol Roulant are a constant reminder that genuine, down-to-earth people inhabit my city. It's not a surprise that many of these people are drawn to the aims and objectives of Santropol Roulant. Without this experience I would have much less opportunity to meet these amazing people and would probably find life in Montreal more isolating.

The importance of this organization to the community is hard to put into words. It creates a symbiotic relationship in which everyone involved benefits on a personal level, while at the same time our community is nourished.