



## Atwater Library Honours David Angus

### Description

## Annual benefit cocktail party raises \$80,000

By **Byron Toben**

Westmount is doubly blessed to have two wonderful libraries. In addition to the Westmount public library is the Atwater Library and Computer Centre. The Atwater is located at the very eastern edge of Westmount, where its lawn hits the boundary line of the city of Montreal.

One of the “must attend” events of the year is its annual benefit cocktail party, which, in addition to being a pleasant evening, is essential to its vitality. Why? It has no endowment fund and only receives less than \$50,000 a year from governments in core funding plus short-term project grants. It survives and grows thanks to a huge number of volunteers helping the lean staff, led by executive director **Lynn Verge**.

This year’s edition raised about \$80,000 from tickets and silent auction purchases.

The silent auction was for various items supplied by 49 generous donors. They ranged from hockey tickets to books to travel to jewellery to scarves and other goodies. Among the most popular were various framed ‘Aislin’ original cartoons of which I finally won one. I bid each year and am soon outbid by others. Mine was of Hillary Clinton putting on an Uncle Sam hat as she exclaims “It fits!” (Not sure if the election results will increase or diminish its value as a collectible.)

In the crowd was hockey great **Bob Gainey**, a long time Atwater Library supporter and reader, reminding me of literary athlete Gene Tunney, world boxing champ of the 1920s who memorized most of Shakespeare. I noted that Mr Gainey had put in a bid for yoga lessons but am not sure if he won.

Emcee for the evening was CTV anchor **Mutsumi Takahashi**, who substituted for perennial Dennis Trudeau who was not available this year. She introduced the guest of Honour, the **Hon. W. David Angus, Q.C.** who served in the Senate of Canada from 1993 to 2012.

The animated Mr Angus, who has donated and led campaigns for the library’s doors and windows, led a group cheer of “We love the Atwater”.

Throughout the evening, cool jazz was supplied as usual by the **Dave Turner Trio** (all Concordia profs) with Dave on alto sax, **David Gelfand** on Bass and **Gary Schwartz** on Guitar. Among their selections were *Witchcraft, Alone Together, You and the Night and the Music, Black Orpheus*



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, and the seasonal *Autumn Leaves*.

Mr Schwartz and I are both quasi-vegetarians and we confided to each other that we “pig out” here each year on the tasty smoked meat provided at this party by Dunn’s Famous. We did not feel guilty for this secret pleasure when we spotted none other than Gazette columnist **Bill Brownstein** (author of Centaur Theatre hit *Schwartz’s: The Musical*) chomping down on a heaping mound of rival Dunn’s.

Also noted in the crowd was Westmount mayor **Peter Trent** (who played the guitar in his youth) and lawyer **Richard Pound** of Olympic fame and himself a former honouree of this event.

The Atwater, which attracts over 100,000 user-visits a year, is a National Historic site. It was founded 188 years ago as one of many Mechanics Institutes across North America and is the last one existing in Canada. The present building was constructed in 1920 and it has adapted to the changing times with many outreach programs, computer courses and the like.

Among its fans was the late (as of a week ago) Leonard Cohen, who dubbed it “My Dear Atwater Library”.

*Images: courtesy of the Atwater Library*

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*Byron Toben is the immediate past-president of the Montreal Press Club*

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