

Preparing the scientists of tomorrow

ALEXIS
BELANGER-CHAMPAGNE

Imagine a scientific institute regrouping scientists from all over the world, working hard to help future generations live in a better world. You may believe that such organization could only exist in a futuristic novel, but you're wrong.

Officially created in 1934 in Israel, the Weizmann Institute of Science has been a pioneer in scientific research for many decades. Today, more than 2500 scientists, technicians and students from the Institute collaborate on more than 1000 projects in

many scientific domains such as physics, biotechnology and math. They worked on the use of MRI as a way of detecting malignant tumors without biopsies. They are also behind many things that we use on a daily basis such as sunglasses and vehicle windshields that darken when bright light falls on them.

Overall, the four main goals of the Institute are "to protect the environment, to fight disease and hunger, to expand our knowledge of math and science and to probe physics and the universe", as presented on their website.

Of the 13 chapters of the Institute around the world, three of them are in Canada. One of them is located in Montreal, more specifically in Mount-Royal. "As a chapter of the Weizmann Institute, we have three objectives", explains Susan Stern, the executive director the Institute in Eastern Canada. "The first one is to raise awareness of the research going on. The second goal is to raise money and the final mandate that we have is to stimulate the minds of young people in math and science."

To fulfill the first part of their mandate, the Montreal chapter invites a scientist who works at the Institute every six or eight weeks. During these conferences, they present some of the accomplishments done recently at the Weizmann Institute. For example, the next conference, on April 2nd, will be about the latest research on diabetes. And, thanks to local sponsors, most of these conferences don't have any admittance fee.

In other hand, Mrs Stern feels that it is important to allow everybody to contribute in the research process. "With our programs, we make sure that every person that wants to make a difference can. We accept any donation whether it's a 1\$ million donation or a 12\$ donation."

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of what the Montreal chapter does is showing kids from every ages that science can be fun and have an impact. The Montreal chapter have several programs that involve students of all ages with the scientists of the Institute. "The math-by-mail program allows kids from grade three and up to correspond directly with mathematicians of the Institute", says Susan Stern. Recently, the students were given a booklet about sudoku and were asked to understand the mathematical process behind the game.

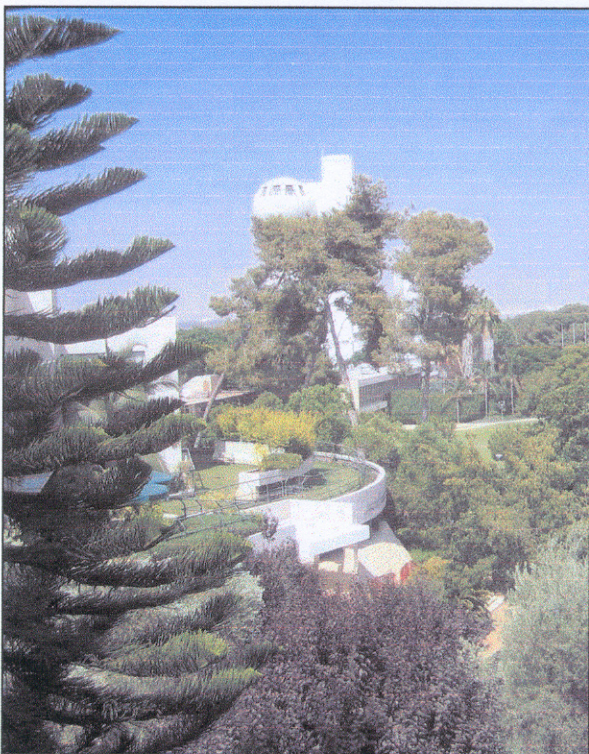
Stern and her team also offer programs such as summer camps at the Institute for the best students in Canada. They have a

similar program for teachers as well. Stephanie Blum, a science teacher from St. George's School of Montreal, located in Westmount, attended a 10 days seminar at the Weizmann Institute of Science in Israel last summer. She says that "this seminar was an extremely valuable professional experience. It was amazingly enriching and I consider myself privileged to have been given the opportunity to learn from and take part in such a wonderful collaboration of science teachers."

In the end, the Montreal chapter of the Weizmann Institute is here to remind us that science has a crucial role in our lives and that anyone can make a difference. They also work on preparing the scientists of tomorrow by making sure that kids have fun with science and have an opportunity to understand that with a little help, they could be the next Einstein.

Résumé

Le Weizmann Institut of Science a été fondé en Israël en 1934 dans le but de «protéger l'environnement, combattre les maladies et la faim, d'élargir notre connaissance en mathématiques et en science et sonder la physique et l'univers». Trois de leur treize bureaux sont au Canada, dont un à Mount-Royal. Ce dernier a trois objectifs, «le premier est de faire connaître les recherches en cours, le deuxième est d'animer des fonds et le dernier est de stimuler les esprits des jeunes en maths et en sciences», comme l'explique Susan Stern, directrice exécutive de l'Institut pour l'est du Canada. Le chapitre montréalais présente donc des conférences de chercheurs étrangers sur les dernières percées scientifiques et offre des camps pour les étudiants et les professeurs ainsi que des programmes d'exploration scientifique pour les enfants de tous âges.



The Weizmann Institute of Science located in Rehovot (Israel) : the Mount-Royal chapter of the Institute sends teachers and students there to attend to summer camps and seminars.
Picture : Courtesy

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redaction@proxima-p.qc.ca

fax 514.736.7855



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514 731-7575
nstephens@remax.net



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