



MARIE-FRANCE COALLIER THE GAZETTE

Marie-Claude Giguère with client Margaret Mellor, who moved into the Fulford seniors' residence last week.

Name: Marie-Claude Giguère

Her business: Helping Seniors/Aide aux Aînés (www.helpingseniors.ca)

What she does: She finds accommodation in seniors' residences for elderly clients. Of the Montreal area's 500 residences, Giguère has visited 140. Mostly, seniors do not pay for the service but Giguère gets a commission from the residences. If she places a client in a residence that does not pay a commission, the client pays for her service. She meets clients to discuss needs and accompanies them to the residences after setting up appointments for them. She also helps clients

find moving services: real-estate agents, movers, estate sale organizers.

Some history: Educated as a recreologist, Giguère worked as director of activities in two seniors' residences but decided to launch her own business after giving birth to her first child. She has attended two YES entrepreneurship conferences.

In her own words: "Sometimes, I'm called because of a crisis. A person has fallen and broken a hip or there's been a loss of autonomy and the family is worried. I've been able to find a residence for someone in half a day and the person moved in the following day."

notes in Montreal is a strong contender but that's another story.

This story is about how in spring, a young woman's and young man's fancy turns to thoughts of ... setting up their own businesses.

It's about how entrepreneurs and wannabes have been congregating every March since 1998 at the YES entrepreneurship conference to network, attend workshops and hear success stories of how others have cut a swath in their own businesses.

"The conference has been sold out every year," said Louise Anne Côté, the entrepreneurship program director at YES. "This is the seventh annual conference. We started out at the St. James Club in 1998, where the capacity was 250 and moved it in April 2001 to the Delta Hotel, where there's room for 350. People come back to it year after year."

In fact, 60 per cent of last year's attendants were new participants.

This year's one-day conference is scheduled to take place Saturday, March 27, and, like its predecessors, will focus not just on startups but on what Côté calls "growth issues and other things that apply to existing businesses."

This year's keynote speaker will be Cora Tsouflidou, founder and president of Chez Cora, the

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Beg, borrow or steal – raising money for your business (a panel discussion)

To register:

The registration form for the conference is available online at www.yesmontreal.ca. Early bird registration costs \$70; after March 10, the cost will be \$90. The price for students is \$50. For information, call Youth Employment Services at (514) 878-9788.

Montreal chain of breakfast restaurants.

There will also be a motivational panel in the morning that will discuss how new entrepreneurs can overcome challenges.

And as in other years, YES will announce two winners of \$5,000 startup grants from contestants who have submitted business plans to the organization since September.

Côté says another attraction of the conference is the networking opportunities that include a cocktail at the end of the day.

"One of the networking activities will teach people how to create an elevator pitch, a quick message that explains what you do," she said.