HOPE & COPE
L'ESPOIR C'EST LA VIE





IMPACT REPORT 23–24

Volunteer-driven
Research-backed
Professionally led

Fondation Hôpital Général Juif | Jewish General Hospital Foundation

McGill

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HOPE & COPE
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Report from the Board President

Sheila and I were an integral part of each other's lives for 27 years. Professionally, I've been her Executive Director at Hope & Cope and Chair of the Board. Personally, she called me her "very dear friend," and it's in both these capacities that I write this message.

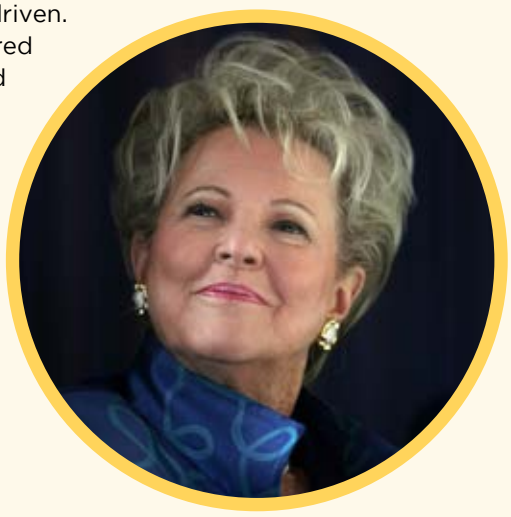
Over the last few years, we spent countless hours planning Hope & Cope's Legacy Campaign and 40th anniversary and putting in place a strategy that would ensure Hope & Cope's vitality after she was gone. This is truly Sheila's legacy.

Sheila has been rightly recognized nationally and internationally for her contributions to cancer care. But she wanted to be remembered most, not for her many public achievements, but for the principles underlying Hope & Cope's mission and future. She believed that while one person might not change the world, each of us can change the world for one person, even for a short time.

Hope & Cope is the vehicle through which that vision continues to become a reality.

When cancer patients and their loved ones feel overwhelmed or alone, Sheila believed we have the power—and the duty—to ease those burdens. No-one ranked higher in Sheila's estimation than those who are willing to give of themselves to others and her love and respect knew no limits for the staff, volunteers, healthcare workers, and donors who believed in her vision and helped her every step of the way. "It is not about me. It is about Hope & Cope. It is about the work," she would say.

Sheila was wise, funny, charismatic, intuitive, strong, and deeply driven. She lived her life with incredible passion and purpose and has inspired us all to do the same. Her superpowers were empathy, kindness, and an amazing ability to make people feel special and important. She dedicated her life to easing the suffering of others and to raising the funds to secure Hope & Cope's future so that the work would continue long after she was gone. Her final message was very clear: Hope & Cope's future is about the work and that work must continue until cancer is no more.



Our hearts are filled with sadness at the passing of our beloved Founder but also with respect, love, and gratitude for the lessons she taught us and for the confidence and trust in us to continue the work she started.

May she forever be an inspiration, and may she rest in peace.

SUZANNE O'BRIEN



Report from the Executive Director (Interim)

Hope & Cope's core mission is to provide peer-based psychosocial support to people with cancer and their families. We do this in a research-informed and professionally managed framework, and in partnership with the Jewish General Hospital's Segal Cancer Centre.

Inspired by our extraordinary founder, the late Sheila Kussner, this is the vision that has guided Hope & Cope for over four decades.

But while Hope & Cope's vision and mission are unchanged, the context in which we operate has evolved dramatically.

Some changes are wholly positive. While fundraising remains essential, thanks to our generous donors a significant endowment means we no longer rely exclusively on our fundraising year-to-year.

Other changes are more complex. We must thoughtfully manage the consequences of health care reform and the long-term social impact of the pandemic; leverage new technology; and most sadly, adapt to the loss of our beloved Sheila.

Some of our responses are visible, like the re-launch of our website or our renewed approach to engaging and supporting volunteers. Others—like streamlining our operational infrastructure—should be barely noticeable to most of our stakeholders.

But all have a direct impact on our ability to deliver on Hope & Cope's core mission—and Sheila's vision—over the coming decades.

Hope & Cope's remarkable staff team and I affirm our shared determination to ensure that this organization goes from strength to strength. We offer our heartfelt thanks for your continued support.

SARA SABER-FREEDMAN

A few donor highlights

The Sheila Kussner Legacy Campaign Endowment Fund 2020 reached its 4th year, a testament to the enduring support of our donors. Donors were invited to a memorable gala at Jardins Royalmount in June 2023. The campaign raised over **7.5 million dollars**, ensuring the sustainability of Hope & Cope for years to come.



The Trichas and Dimopoulos families raised over **70,000 dollars** in the 16th edition of the Walk-a-thon, sponsored by the Group Dorval-Sources-St-Henri team. This event has contributed more than **1,000,000 dollars** over 16 years in support of Hope & Cope's exercise and rehabilitation program.

Wellness Centre Report

STAFF: Marcelle Kecman, Olga Szyncel, France Brat Sznajer

Hope & Cope is a community where diverse groups are interdependent and sustainable only as a whole. Our Cancer Wellness Centre offers individualized wellness plans with evidence-based activities, provided by volunteers who have experienced cancer personally or through loved ones.

Our Centre is filled with stories of survivorship. We collaborate with JGH staff for lectures on cancer-related topics, such as, sexuality and cancer, fatigue and brain fog, nutrition during and after treatment, to help users navigate complexities of their treatment. Our partnerships extend beyond hospital healthcare providers to include University students doing their internships at our Centre:

- **McGill's Ingram School of Nursing:** Fourth-year students undertake final internships to gain practical experience in cancer care and wellness, and create new activities to better serve our population's unmet needs.
- **Community Health Alliance Project (CHAP):** Second-year medical students attend our wellness activities, to help them better understand the psychosocial impact of a cancer diagnosis.
- **Research Information Outreach Team (RIOT):** Students provide lectures and webinars on critical topics such as clinical trials and genetics. Their participation enhances the educational and research resources available to our users.
- **Rehab and exercise:** Undergraduate students from Concordia, McGill, and Université de Montréal gain hands-on experience in cancer rehabilitation, enriching their education while contributing to our exercise programs.

The synergy created through these partnerships allows Hope & Cope to fulfill its mission effectively, providing a holistic approach to empower those facing cancer challenges.

500

Each month, the Wellness Centre welcomes over 500 people and offers nearly 60 classes.

The third annual online bridge tournament, co-chaired by Marlene King, Sandy Schreter, Ruth Ickman, and Marla's friends, raised **36,000 dollars** toward Hope & Cope's Compassionate Fund.

Looking back on this last year, we see our donors and talented partners behind every moment of impact and reason to celebrate. Your contributions have been instrumental in our achievements, and we are deeply grateful to everyone who made, and continues to make, our mission possible. None of what we have achieved would be possible without your generous support.





Words from our Wellness Centre users

Laurie



When I was first diagnosed, the thought of Hope & Cope terrified me. I had these preconceived notions that terrified me. All I wanted was to get out of that hospital as fast as I could. But now, 21 years later, here I am, sitting in a place where everyone who walks through the door has cancer of some sort. These people understand you much more than anyone else could, probably even more than your oncologist who doesn't live with cancer. They're all living with it at different ages, different stages of their lives.

I've lived with my cancer for 21 years, which doctors never expected. I think God had a different purpose for me. Maybe it's to tell you that being diagnosed with cancer is not a death sentence. I'm proof of that, and Hope & Cope has helped me along the way.

Marc



When I went to take blood samples on the 7th floor, I saw a booth for Hope & Cope. I went to see the volunteers, talked to them, took some brochures, looked at the website and thought I might be interested in some of the activities.

After the first meeting, I felt at home. I met Ms. Marcelle, who runs the Wellness Centre. She's such an attentive listener that we tell her things. And sometimes there are tears, not hers, but ours. They are tears of gratitude.

The first time I returned to the Centre after COVID, I had tears in my eyes. After the workouts, we could talk to each other. It was something that really struck me. Those were special moments once again, like seeing friends again.

Viviana



Before, I was what I consider a healthy woman. One day, I left the office for a doctor's appointment and I never came back. A diagnosis changed my life.

My oncologist, Dr. Gottlieb, referred me to Hope & Cope as a place where I could receive psychosocial services to help me get back to a more normal life. I was in a lot of distress because a cancer journey isn't something anybody is prepared for. Arriving at Hope & Cope, being in a setting that's like home, not a stressful hospital environment, was really revealing to me. Finding faces, people, and services to help me was great.

When the pandemic hit, the best thing that happened to me was getting help from Hope & Cope at that time. For over three months, I didn't see anybody. But the wonderful opportunity to have Zoom sessions, follow-ups, and services created for me was meaningful and essential to my journey.

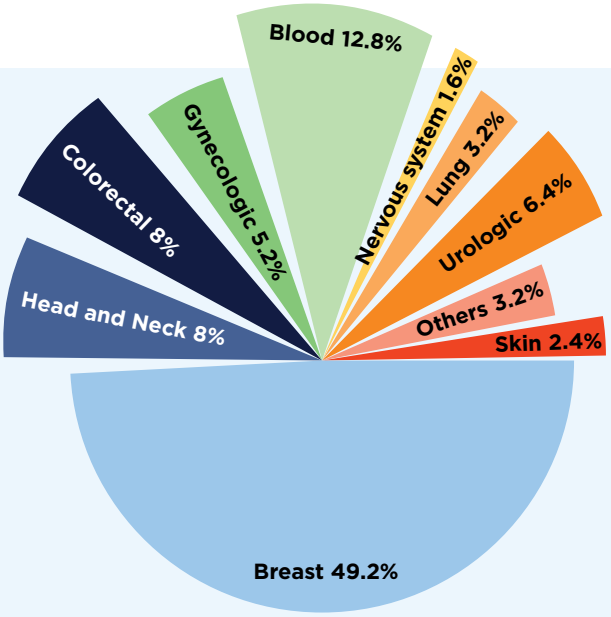
This is a place where I've had a lot of inspiration from others. I'm happier, physically healthier, and here to inspire others.

Rehabilitation and Exercise Program

STAFF: Anh Thy Le Quang, Nadia Smirnow

Over the past year, we have helped over 250 new patients in the rehabilitation and exercise program. It has been busy and rewarding. Our team gave each patient the care that fit their needs based on their cancer type, age, and personal goals. With a bustling gym, daily group classes, and virtual follow-ups, our staff and volunteers have been working hard.

Our core mission has always been to help patients use exercise and movement to feel better and grow. Whether it's helping them do squats better, making their arms stronger after surgery, or helping them manage cancer-related fatigue, we ensure every patient leaves our Wellness Centre feeling proud and sure of themselves.



CANCER DIAGNOSIS DISTRIBUTION OF 250 INTAKES

New programs: Prehabilitation and Breast Cancer

Our kinesiologist, Anh Thy, has been working with the JGH colorectal team to help patients get physically ready for surgery. Anh Thy holds an M. Sc. in prehabilitation and has 5 years of experience in the field. Prehabilitation consists of exercises and lifestyle changes that help patients be in better shape for surgery. Our program offers in-person workout sessions and is based on research that shows it can help patients recover faster. We've already started these sessions, helping just under ten patients so far.

Nadia, our physiotherapist, has been working with the JGH on education sessions for breast cancer patients. Her 13 years of experience have helped teach patients what to expect from their upcoming surgery. By giving clear and kind guidance, Nadia helps patients feel less worried and more in control throughout their treatment.

Hope & Cope welcomed me with open arms after I left the hospital. I have brain cancer that left me disabled: I could no longer walk! I am very pleased and happy that there is a fitness center reserved for cancer patients like me: a clean and safe facility with very friendly, understanding staff. The Centre gives me back confidence in my abilities and joy in life. A thousand thanks... thank you very much.

—A.A.B, brain cancer survivor

I cannot say enough about Hope & Cope's excellent workout program. Under the direction of Anh Thy Le Quang and her fantastic team, I was able to focus on the exercise program instead of my condition, effectively building strength and energy with every gym session. Recovering from an operation, chemotherapy, radiotherapy and immunotherapy seemed daunting. But thanks to Anh Thy's expertise and buoyant personality, I have recovered stronger and healthier.

—C.V, breast cancer survivor

Oncology program

STAFF: Judy Bridgwater-François, Hinda Goodman, Jayamali Ahangama

Peer Mentorship

Several organizations now use the peer mentorship program pioneered by Hope & Cope as a model. Hope & Cope has been an active participant in helping those programs leverage our experience and best practices to the benefit of their own clientele.

The Mackay Centre has implemented the model by pairing children who have a spinal cord injury (SCI) with other children who have been living with a SCI. The JGH pairs new mothers in the NICU with other mothers who were previously in the NICU. In both cases, the desire to implement peer mentoring came from people who had been involved or knew people who were involved with the work at Hope & Cope.

Patient intake and resources

We are distributing a new patient onboarding package to all those starting treatment. The package contains a video that guides patients through the clinics, onboarding documents, information on the Belong connectivity app, and detailed information on Hope & Cope. It now includes a new aid on shared decision-making.

This new aid recognizes that everyone has their own values and life circumstances that should be taken into account by their medical team when making decisions. An open discussion and direct patient participation in treatment planning is central to the success of their cancer trajectory. By informing patients of their rights and the medical team's desire for greater patient involvement, we are promoting better health outcomes across the board.

Radiation oncology and En famille

STAFF: Sandy Lipkus

The Hope & Cope radiation oncology program entails many responsibilities and challenges:

- **Providing services to patients and their families**
- **Training volunteers**
- **Supervising university students**

Hope & Cope is a vital part of the medical team, working closely with the doctors, nurses, dietitians, technologists, and administrative staff to provide the best possible care for our patients. Volunteers are also an essential part of the team. 30% of our volunteers are students anxious to help and learn about Hope & Cope.

At the end of numerous radiotherapy treatments, volunteers present the patients with the gift of a rose. This always puts a smile on their face. The rose is a symbol of their journey and represents the hope for good health and recovery.

En famille program

The En famille program, is an essential initiative that provides services and resources for patients and their dependent children, making their journey more manageable and less stressful. They receive books on talking to children about cancer, advanced cancer and end of life, and the death of a loved one.

Since January 2023, we have distributed 225 books to patients, social service staff, nurses, volunteers, palliative care units, funeral homes, and school boards. We have distributed these books throughout Quebec, Canada, the USA, Brazil, and the UK.

Patients also may receive meals which volunteers lovingly prepare. Last year, some 575 meals were given out at the hospital or delivered directly to patients' homes.

Testimonials

FROM A PATIENT RECEIVING MEALS

“I just wanted to thank you for the two delicious meals our family was able to enjoy thanks to you! I caught a virus from my children at around that time and was too exhausted to cook, so the meals were a big lifesaver! It was really the perfect time and a huge help.”

FROM A PALLIATIVE CARE DOCTOR IN OTTAWA

“I wanted to reach out and express my gratitude for the invaluable resources that your organization has provided. Last week, I gave away our last copy of “Talking to Children About Advanced Cancer and End of Life”. The patient had 2 young children, and was so grateful for this as a guide in exploring such a hard topic.”

FROM A PATIENT WHO RECEIVED THE BOOK ON *TALKING TO CHILDREN ABOUT CANCER*

“I just wanted to thank you for all your help with my coping with cancer as a mom. I received the books by mail today, along with the two notebooks. I have already started looking over the tips and so far they seem very practical and useful. Thanks also for your help with arranging for the meal tomorrow! It will make a huge difference and really helps the things to do this week seem less of a mountain.”

FROM A STUDENT VOLUNTEER

“I also want to thank you for this [volunteering] opportunity and for all the support and help you have given me thus far. I really appreciate it. It has helped me grow into the person I am now. Thank you so much.”

225

“En famille” books distributed to patients, social service staff, nurses, volunteers, palliative care units, funeral homes, and school boards

30%

of our volunteers are students trained in what Hope & Cope offers

73

head coverings distributed in 2024

575

meals have been given out at the hospital or delivered directly to patients’ homes







Palliative Care and Grief Support Programs

STAFF: Rifka Hanfling

Grief support

Hope & Cope has expanded our offering of grief support services and is committed to providing compassionate and effective grief support, helping individuals find solace and connection during their most challenging times.

LIVING WITH LOSS: A new program introduced since 2021, this support group meets for eight weeks. Led by the Grief Support Coordinator and a trained volunteer, the group focuses on the grief process, emotions, coping skills, and self-care, fostering a secure platform for sharing personal experiences.

MOURNING CAFÉ: Available prior to the pandemic in an in-person format, these sessions transitioned to a virtual format and are held bi-weekly on Zoom. Led by two trained volunteers, the open format allows participants to join as they wish.

MOURNING WALK: Offers the person grieving the death of a loved one a chance to walk outside and share with others who understand what they're going through. Trained volunteers are present on all walks to listen and offer support for those who want it.

INDIVIDUAL SESSIONS: Participants have the opportunity to take part in three half-hour sessions with the Grief Support Coordinator. During one-on-one sessions, participants gain insight into the grief process, learn to normalize their emotions, and are encouraged to express their thoughts in a supportive atmosphere.

Palliative care

In 2020, we launched a pioneering pilot project in Palliative Care using Virtual Reality (VR) as an innovative therapeutic tool. Since its inception, we have expanded the use of VR to enhance the quality of life for our patients and it has truly been a rewarding journey.

As Dr. Bernard Lapointe noted, "With virtual reality, you are transported from a bed to the top of a mountain or the streets of Rome or Jerusalem." This transformative experience has been made possible through the compassionate support of trained volunteers, who help facilitate these immersive journeys.

All VR content is tailored to patient and family requests, ensuring personalized experiences. Our commitment to this initiative continues as we seek to further improve the emotional and psychological well-being of those in our care through innovative technology.



Testimonials from participants highlight the profound impact of our services:

"I want to thank you for the wonderful job you did with the bereavement group. I felt a sense of comfort with you."

"I would like to send a heartfelt Thank You to you and your team of volunteers at the Mourning Café. The Zoom calls helped me connect with others and gave me hope as I begin to build a new life for myself."

Volunteers

This year, many new volunteers have come forward. We've made updates to our website that make it easier to apply online and we conducted outreach at Montreal universities. These combined efforts have helped increase our volunteer numbers. Several past patients have also volunteered to offer their services, motivated by a desire to help others as they themselves received help.

300+
Active volunteers who offer services to patients and their families, help with fundraising efforts, or governance

9
Average number of years volunteers remain with Hope & Cope

56%
Volunteers with over five years of experience at Hope & Cope

30
Different languages volunteers speak.

52%
Volunteers who have had cancer, or had a family member with cancer

Brigitte



I decided to volunteer in radio-therapy, because I had been a patient there and I wanted to give to others what I had received. On my first day, I met Sophie and Jeannette, two volunteers who were preparing bouquets of flowers for the patients. In this simple activity, I could already feel a kind of goodness, a kindness. I then spoke with Jeannette, who gave me my first lesson. She said to me, "You know, Brigitte, the people you're going to meet here are alive and they have living needs. It's no more difficult than that." In fact, I had to replace the idea of death with that of life.

Florence



Volunteering has taught me (and continues to teach me) how to really listen to people and how to be completely present when I listen to them. The result is that it improves my communication skills. It helps me understand when to speak during a conversation and when to respect silence, for example. It also greatly improved my sense of community because when volunteering, you realize we are truly all connected: I believe that ultimately, we all want to be happy. So when you make someone happy, or you just lighten their burden a bit, it is very rewarding!

Linda



Hope & Cope's mission is to reinvent hope. That's what attracted me. These words made me want to be part of this organization. My work is a work of the heart, the head, and the soul. I have the opportunity to be present at one of the worst moments in someone's life. It's not complicated. I can be the smile. I can be a good listener. I can be a moment of happiness. I can inform. I can be compassionate. I can talk. I can listen. I can say "How are you?" and wait for the answer. But above all, I can welcome them to our team. What a great mission.

Research and Innovation

STAFF: Carmen Loiselle, Saima Ahmed

Under Dr. Carmen Loiselle's scientific direction, Hope & Cope continues to advance cancer research and innovative projects.

- In 2024, our Quality Improvement Survey revealed key preferences among cancer patients and caregivers. Respondents were equally split between in-person and hybrid formats for activities, with a preference for morning and afternoon sessions. The survey highlighted high interest in meditation, active listening, and art therapy programs. Importantly, participants expressed a strong desire for support in developing coping skills, managing mental health challenges like depression and anxiety, and addressing specific concerns such as breast cancer and bone health.

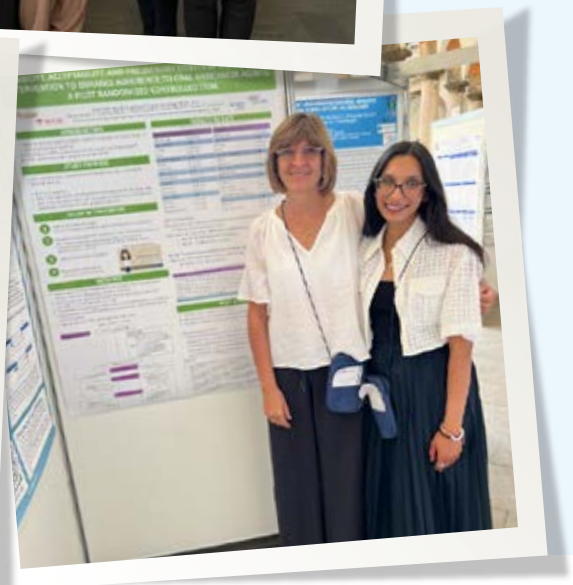
- An evaluation study by Yoojung Kim and Carmen Loiselle explores participants' perceptions of Hope & Cope's support programs to better understand their needs and preferences. With feedback from program users, we can identify areas that best support people affected by cancer as well as strengths and challenges. These insights can contribute to optimizing Hope & Cope programs to better support users' needs. As of date, several programs have been assessed including *Living with Loss*, *Mourning Walk* and *Peer Mentorship*.

The studies, presented at the 39th Annual Conference of the Canadian Association of Psychosocial Oncology, demonstrate our commitment to evidence-based, user-centered support programs.

Additionally, Hope & Cope has partnered with the Segal Cancer Centre on the Belong – Beating Cancer Together mobile app. The app launched in February 2022 and hosts a thriving online community, now serving over 560 users including patients, caregivers, and healthcare providers. Future projects, including an AI chatbot (like ChatGPT) for oncology-specific questions, aim to further expand our reach and effectiveness in supporting those affected by cancer.







Statistics

STAFF: Rita Galluccio

300
active volunteers, half of whom have more than 5 years experience with Hope & Cope

5000
OVER 5000 VISITS TO THE WELLNESS CENTRE IN 2023

15
CONFERENCES AND LECTURES

300
CONDOLENCE CALLS TO BEREAVED FAMILY MEMBERS

ONGOING PROFESSIONAL AND VOLUNTEER TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

OUR WELLNESS CENTRE – THE FIRST HOSPITAL-AFFILIATED CANCER WELLNESS CENTRE ESTABLISHED IN QUEBEC – IS A PLACE OF LEARNING, DISCOVERY AND HOPE

OVER **350**
bras/prostheses, and wigs distributed

+25 million
DOLLARS IN ENDOWMENT FUNDS

1.35 million
ANNUAL SPENDING OF 1.35 MILLION DOLLARS, INCLUDING OVER 30 THOUSAND DOLLARS IN DIRECT FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR URGENT PATIENT NEEDS THROUGH COMPASSIONATE FUND

MORE THAN **40 years ago**
Sheila Kussner founded Hope & Cope to help people cope with the physical, emotional, spiritual and financial impact of cancer

100%
HOPE & COPE IS 100% FUNDED BY AND ACCOUNTABLE TO THE COMMUNITY WE SERVE

4
FULL-TIME STAFF

13
TOTAL STAFF

5
LOCATIONS WHERE STAFF SERVE ONCOLOGY PATIENTS
(Wellness Centre; Oncology; Pav K; Radiation oncology; Palliative Care)

Along with generous donors Christine and Herschel Victor, Hope & Cope established and supported Quebec's first Chair in Psychosocial Oncology at McGill University, and is proud to be a leader in peer-based psychosocial care, contributing knowledge and research to this evolving field

Photo gallery



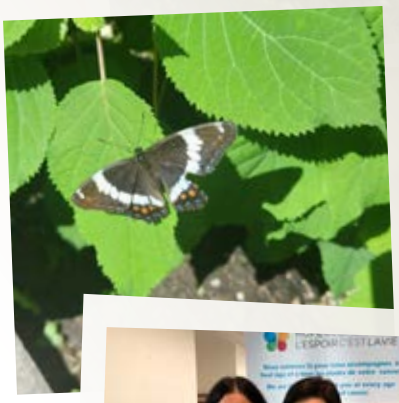




















Galerie de photos





