



# COURRIER

News from Chez Doris

A safe haven for women in difficulty

Newsletter | Summer 2020

## PORTRAIT OF A CLIENT

# SEEKING SHELTER DURING COVID-19

In 1978, at the age of 23, Valerie came to Chez Doris for the first-time seeking help for her diverse needs. Since then she has been occasionally homeless throughout the years, during which she has always relied on Chez Doris.

As Covid-19 brought changes to the way the world works, Valerie has witnessed first-hand how this has impacted Chez Doris and how the pandemic has forced her to adjust her routines.

"One of the biggest changes is that I no longer see my friends" says Valerie. She used to start her mornings at the local McDonald's before making her way over to Chez Doris to catch up with familiar faces. "Now everything is closed" she says, "well McDonald's has reopened, but they won't let us sit there." She relies on the people she does see, at Chez Doris and Cabot Square, to keep her up to date on her friends' wellbeing. Spending her evenings in the same bus shelter, Valerie says at least friends know where to find her should they need to.

> Page 2



> Continued from page 1

## PORTRAIT OF A CLIENT

### SEEKING SHELTER DURING COVID-19



Now aged 65, and with limited mobility, Valerie is unable to travel the distance from night shelters to Chez Doris, opting instead to spend most nights in a nearby bus shelter. She relies on her shopping cart, which contains her possessions, for stability; Valerie explains that “my shopping cart keeps me upright”.

Just prior to the outbreak of Covid-19, and advancing in age, Valerie had started looking for an apartment, something affordable on a ground floor or accessible by elevator. “I just need a studio, a 1 ½ but there is little to be found with my meagre resources,” Valerie says. She hopes, when she starts receiving Old Age Security at the end of the month, that she can modestly increase her budget, and find a place to call home.

Valerie’s resilience is admirable, though she acknowledges she has needed Chez Doris to survive this pandemic. She comes daily for meals, a hot drink and to relax in a safe space. With her parents long dead, and her only sibling having moved to Alberta, Valerie sees Chez Doris as her family. “You guys are all I have left, but you’re always the best part of my day”.

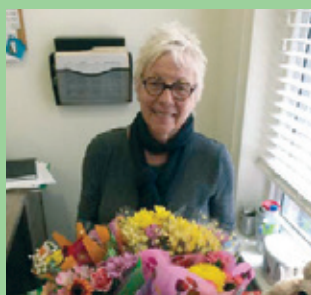
## In Memoriam

### Andrew Harper: 1922-2020

Andrew Harper passed away peacefully at his home on January 3, 2020 at the age of 97. Mr. Harper made a transformational gift of \$1 million to Chez Doris in 2018, which served to purchase a building which will be converted into an emergency overnight shelter for women. Prior to his passing, he provided other substantial gifts to a variety of local charities; his actions were truly inspiring and will hopefully encourage other philanthropists to do the same during their lifetime.



### Kate Seiler: 1950-2020



Kate Seiler, a vibrant and devoted volunteer who was well established with the Chez Doris community, sadly left us on April 15, 2020. Kate dedicated her time to serving lunch three times a week. The women loved her, and she loved them back. She was down to earth, caring, and thoughtful and she is greatly missed.

## Message from the President & Executive Director

During “normal circumstances” Chez Doris welcomes on average 100 women per day, but since the pandemic, in order to ensure social distancing and ensure the safety of our clientele, staff and volunteers, we had to limit the number of women inside to 40 and consequently focus on the most vulnerable: homeless women, such as Valerie.

Our services became temporarily restricted to breakfast and lunch, take-out dinners, 9 respite beds, emergency clothing, showers, hygiene products, access to caseworkers and services from our Cheque Administration Program, a monthly grocery delivery service to 186 vulnerable women, and delivery of social assistance funds to 18 women who are elderly and/or in poor health.

The pandemic unveiled to what extent female homelessness is hidden. From March 17 to June 30, we helped 319 different homeless women; 25% of whom never used our services before and are newly homeless. Half of the women sleep outside and many of those who sleep without a roof over their heads are Indigenous.

At this point, many of the women we currently see suffer from severe psychiatric and addiction issues, while others simply do not have the capacity to search for affordable or supportive housing, of which there is a very limited supply. With the lifting of restrictions, and thanks to COVID-19 funds raised, we have launched housing search services accessible to all homeless women and have a modest furniture budget to help set up apartments. As well, as of July 2, we have extended our operating hours from 8:30 AM to 3:00 PM to 8:30 AM to 8:00 PM, including statutory holidays, and we now offer a permanent dinner service.

Since July 1, following the easing of confinement directives, we now offer services for our housed clients in the afternoons, by appointment, along with a take-out food service, since the grocery delivery service has been discontinued due in large part to costs.

In closing, we would like to thank all of you who responded to our email and Facebook updates concerning the pandemic. We are always grateful for the generosity of donors and volunteers alike who provide funds, in-kind support, and services to assist all vulnerable women who walk through our doors.

Should you wish to be on our email list, please send your name and email address to: [suse.gomes@chezdoris.org](mailto:suse.gomes@chezdoris.org).

We would be happy to have you among us during our virtual Annual General Meeting on August 19, where we will review the past year, elect a new Board member, and share what’s ahead for the future. For details see page 3!



Marina Boulos-Winton  
Executive Director

Carole Croteau  
President



From left to right: Robert Beaudry, City councillor for the borough of Ville-Marie (District of Saint-Jacques) (and also responsible for housing and real estate strategies), Mayor Valérie Plante, Marie-Ève L. Bordeleau, Commissioner of Indigenous Relations, Serge Lareault, Commissioner for People Experiencing Homelessness, Carole Croteau and Marina Boulos-Winton.

## Permit approved!

The City of Montreal granted Chez Doris a building permit to convert a 3-storey townhouse into a women's emergency overnight shelter and will also provide \$1,548,686 towards the needed construction and renovations costs. The building needs to be brought to code and will have an extension and an elevator added (for our clientele with reduced mobility) and will be converted to offer night shelter for 22 homeless women at a time.

Atelier Habitation Montréal, a not-for-profit group which specializes in overseeing the construction of affordable housing, is guiding us in the process, and a general contractor will be selected by September.



From left to right: Jill Hanley (McGill/SHERPA), Marina Boulos-Winton, Tania Filippone (Chez Doris), Maude Giguère (Chez Doris), Shawn-Renée Hordyk (UQAM), Natalie Côté (Chez Doris), Audrey Fontaine (CIRM), Charlotte Garneau-Bertrand (McGill/SHERPA).

## A new collaboration

Chez Doris is collaborating with The Centre for Interdisciplinary Research on Montreal (CIRM) to launch our permanent residence, initially set to open in the fall, but given the interruption to construction, it is now set to open in 2021. The CIRM brings together university researchers to collaborate on various applied research projects. McGill University professor Jill Hanley, from the Faculty of Social Work, and her Master's student, Charlotte Garneau-Bertrand, and Professor Shawn-Renée Hordyk, from the Faculty of Social Work at UQAM are collaborating to create tenant eligibility requirements and selection criteria, occupancy policies, and provide tools to measure the effectiveness of our new service. Moreover, McGill professors Julia Freeman, from the School of Environment, and Nik Luka, from the School of Urban Planning and Architecture will have their students design and landscape the residence's garden.



## Annual Tea Time Fundraiser

2020 EDITION

Due to the global pandemic, this year's Annual Tea Time Fundraiser, set to take place on April 26, 2020 had to be cancelled. Many of you had already purchased your tickets or signed on as sponsors; we are very grateful to all of you who generously offered to convert your contributions into donations. The event was set to take place at Fairmont The Queen Elizabeth, and given the circumstances, the hotel kindly offered to host a virtual event and auction that was held on April 16. All contributions combined raised \$75,114.00 for Chez Doris. We thank you all very much for the outpouring of support and look forward to welcoming you at the next edition of our Annual Tea Time Fundraiser, once conditions allow!

Special thanks to this year's dedicated co-chairs: Marie-Christine Tremblay and Colleen Wicha, and to Haivision, Ivanhoé Cambridge, The Azrieli Foundation, Ernst & Young LLP, Sharon Azrieli, The WCPD Foundation, The Jonathan & Susan Wener Foundation and The Claude E. Jodoin & Karen Kear Family Foundation who converted their sponsorships into donations.

## It's a date

**Virtual Annual General Meeting**  
**Wednesday, August 19, 2020**  
**5:30 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.**

In accordance with Chez Doris' by-laws, a minimum annual donation was established for an individual to be a member of Chez Doris; the minimum annual donation is \$100 in the prior fiscal year (April 1 – March 31) contributed either in cash or cash equivalent, or by volunteering a minimum of ten hours.

In order to be able to vote, one must be a member, and in order to participate during the virtual AGM, one must have access to a computer with an internet connection. For the agenda, go to:  
**[chezdoris.org/2020annualmeeting](https://chezdoris.org/2020annualmeeting).**

**RSVP: Natalie Côté** at 514 937-2341 ext. 227  
or [natalie.cote@chezdoris.org](mailto:natalie.cote@chezdoris.org)



## CELEBRATIONS

### Birthdays

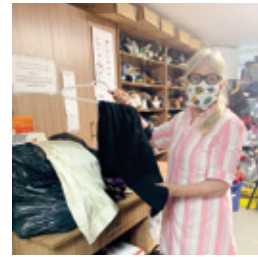
Every month we celebrate our clients' birthdays with a meal, cake and gifts, making each woman feel special and valued. As we begin to gradually offer more services, we will ensure that those whose birthdays were missed during the peak of the pandemic will receive a joyful celebration. Sincere thanks to our volunteer, **Carole Christie Olsen**, who bakes a monthly birthday cake, enough for 130 women, with her friends.



Delicious cake baked by volunteer Carole Christie Olsen.

"Through the International Women's Forum, I had the opportunity to visit Chez Doris and learn about the shelter and the status of homelessness in Montreal. I was impressed with what I saw - a well-run day shelter but also completely dismayed by the fate these women face daily. I was overcome by this feeling that I had to do my small part to help. Baking birthday cakes for these deserving women just seemed like an easy, joy filled place to start. I reached out to my baker friends who enthusiastically got on board and here was born The Birthday Bakers."

## THANK YOU TO OUR COVID-19 VOLUNTEERS



Three of many volunteers (from left to right): Stéphanie Brown, Mary Dupuis, Cynthia Louissaint.

The arrival of COVID-19 created unprecedented challenges for Chez Doris. With the implementation of physical distancing requirements our volunteer program had to adapt overnight. Thankfully, our essential services were superbly supported by an ad-hoc team of volunteers who eagerly jumped in to help serve meals, deliver care packages to our women with housing, prepare hygiene kits, and organize clothing donations. Furthermore, to limit the amount of people who entered the shelter and had contact with our clients, some volunteers agreed to multiple shifts per week. We are so fortunate and immensely grateful to have had dependable volunteers during uncertain times.

## FOOD DELIVERY SERVICE

For most of our clients who benefit from free daily meals at Chez Doris, this enables them to afford necessities such as rent, utility bills, and transportation. Given that most of our housed clients could no longer come to Chez Doris at the height of the pandemic, we created a new temporary delivery service which began on April 14, 2020; since its implementation, 316 grocery bags and care packages (which included hygiene products, cleaning products and recreational supplies such as puzzles and sudoku books to help pass the time) were delivered to 186 different women. Delivering groceries to women's apartments gave us a glimpse into how some women sadly live in insalubrious conditions, are exceedingly isolated, and struggling with ways to pass the time during confinement.



## NEW VOLUNTEER AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH COORDINATOR

In September of 2019, **Leah Peck** joined our team as Volunteer and Community Outreach Coordinator. A graduate of Concordia's School of Community and Public Affairs, Leah's experience in the health and social justice sectors prepared her well for her role at Chez Doris. Leah is impressed by the spirit and generosity of volunteers, particularly during the challenging pandemic times. As things gradually return to normal and considering our operating hours are extended, we welcome you to contact Leah if you would like to volunteer or donate in-kind: she may be reached at [leah.peck@chezdoris.org](mailto:leah.peck@chezdoris.org) or at 514-937-2341 ext. 238.

# donate

## CHEZ DORIS

43<sup>RD</sup> ANNUAL FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGN

# 2020

[chezdoris.org](http://chezdoris.org)

### CHEZ DORIS

1430 Chomedey  
Montreal, Quebec H3H 2A7  
T: 514 937-2341 | F: 514 937-2417  
[info@chezdoris.org](mailto:info@chezdoris.org)

[facebook.com/ChezDorisRefuge](https://www.facebook.com/ChezDorisRefuge)  
[twitter.com/ChezDoris](https://twitter.com/ChezDoris)  
[linkedin.com/company/chez-doris](https://www.linkedin.com/company/chez-doris)

### OPENING HOURS

7 days a week | 8:30 am – 8:00 pm

We accept on-line donations. See "Make a Donation" tab on our web site's home page. We also accept third party gifts, publicly traded stocks, and estate gifts including insurance policies. For more information contact Marina Boulos, Executive Director, at 514 937-2341, ext. 225 or [marina.boulos@chezdoris.org](mailto:marina.boulos@chezdoris.org)

Chez Doris is a registered charity offering daytime shelter 7 days a week for all women in difficulty. The drop-in program serves up to 100 women per day. Services include: breakfast, lunch and dinner; access to showers, hygiene products, and a clothing room; 6 respite beds; information and referral assistance; a financial management program; an Inuit assistance program; housing placement services; physical and mental health services; tax filing and legal services; as well as educational and socio-recreational programs.

Registration number: 101835841RR0001