



COURRIER

News from Chez Doris

A safe haven for women in difficulty

Newsletter | Spring-Summer 2021

PORTRAIT OF A CLIENT

CHANGE IS POSSIBLE: LAURA'S STORY

The COVID-19 pandemic has been a period of immense change and uncertainty for many—for Laura, it was the first time she had ever experienced homelessness.

A born-and-raised Montrealer, Laura grew up in Pointe-Saint-Charles. Afflicted with physical ailments, including arthritis and sciatica, Laura also suffers from manic depression. The combination of her physical and mental health issues makes it difficult for her to work full-time. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Laura and her partner of nearly five years were living in Verdun, where Laura received welfare assistance and her partner worked as a butcher in a local market.

However, COVID-19 completely uprooted their lives: a few weeks into the pandemic, Laura's partner lost his job, and the couple were no longer able to afford the rent for their apartment. Although Laura and her partner were able to stay with friends for a few months, they soon realized this was only a short-term solution. With nowhere else to turn, Laura and her partner decided a shelter was their only option. Laura's partner went to a men's shelter, whereas Laura came to Chez Doris for help.

> Page 2

Photo: Elaine Graham



> Continued from page 1

PORTRAIT OF A CLIENT

CHANGE IS POSSIBLE: LAURA'S STORY



"Chez Doris has been a godsend," Laura says. While at the shelter, Laura has taken full advantage of the shelter's health services: she has accessed a psychologist, a foot care nurse, and doctor who was able to prescribe her medication for her sciatica. She also participates in the shelter's many socio-recreational activities, including salsa dancing lessons. Laura has also joined Chez Doris' women's committee, where she has been a strong advocate on behalf of her fellow clients, sharing their needs and providing suggestions to the shelter's services when necessary.

Laura has also accessed Chez Doris' overnight services—in place since December 1, 2020—allowing her to have a safe place to sleep at night. "Having access to the overnight shelter at the hotel is such an amazing service," she says. "It allows me to work on myself and look for a new apartment without the worry of not knowing where I will be sleeping at night." Laura is taking concrete steps to get back on her feet: she is actively working with an intake worker in Chez Doris' housing program to search for an apartment for her and her partner. "Chez Doris' caseworkers can really change your life if you let them," Laura says.

“If you use the resources they offer you, change is possible.”

COVID-19, ONE YEAR LATER: CHEZ DORIS' SERVICES

All statistics are from April 1, 2020 to March 31, 2021.

We provided assistance and frontline services to:

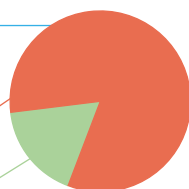
875 DIFFERENT HOMELESS WOMEN

584 PRECARIOUSLY HOUSED WOMEN

22,946 total combined visits from all clients

19,053 VISITS FROM HOMELESS WOMEN

3,893 VISITS FROM PRECARIOUSLY HOUSED WOMEN



We provided:

27,324 MEALS



6,539 EMERGENCY CLOTHING KITS



5,354 HYGIENE KITS



3,306 SHOWERS



1,248 DELIVERIES TO HOUSED CLIENTS



Message from the President & Executive Director

Over a year ago, it was difficult for us to imagine the full extent of the challenges that lay ahead due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We are so thankful for the outpouring of support from the community which has enabled all of us to rise to the challenge to meet the needs of vulnerable women like Laura.

The pandemic has exposed how hidden and pervasive female homelessness is in Montreal. While Chez Doris typically serves more than 1,500 different women each year—350 to 450 of whom are homeless—this past year we saw double the number of homeless women seeking our help.

In the last issue of our newsletter, we reported that Chez Doris became a 24-hour service in response to the drop in temperature, the lack of permanent shelter space, and the increasing number of homeless women being assaulted at night. However, since December 24, when a staff member and a client tested positive for COVID-19, we transferred our overnight accommodations to a downtown hotel, where 40 individual rooms are reserved for our clientele. This arrangement was deemed the best way to minimize the opportunity for the virus to spread. Since opening our overnight services, we have offered more than 183 different homeless women a safe place to sleep. We hope to secure funding to continue offering this service beyond June 30, 2021, during the subsequent summer and fall months, until Chez Doris will operate its own night shelter, set to open in December 2021. Overall, given our stringent cleaning measures and safety precautions, which include changing everyone's surgical masks every four hours and wearing protective eyewear, we have been largely spared the spread of the virus. In addition, 90 clients, employees as well as others from partner organizations have received their vaccination at Chez Doris.

Not only have we restructured our outreach and drop-in services to allow for physical distancing, but we have also introduced deliveries and increased services to help find and secure housing. Since the fall of 2020, we have successfully found housing for more than 80 homeless women.

Despite many obstacles, we continue to develop our expansion plans to become a proactive resource offering solutions and support on a 24/7 basis. We look forward to unveiling the progress on the launch of our very own emergency overnight shelter and permanent residence in our Fall-Winter Newsletter.

Many, many thanks to all of you for your kindness and help. The work we do is all thanks to your generosity and we are filled with gratitude.



Marina Boulos-Winton
Executive Director

Carole Croteau
President



NALOXONE TRAINING

Naloxone, a drug that can rapidly reverse the effects of an opioid overdose, is an important recent addition to our first-aid kits. Thanks to CACTUS Montreal, a community organization for the prevention of blood borne and sexually transmitted infections, 80% of Chez Doris' team has received naloxone training and has access to a naloxone kit. As part of Chez Doris' working partnership with CACTUS, CACTUS outreach workers also keep their naloxone kits at our shelter, providing a convenient storage place for when their team does outreach at Cabot Square. To further educate and protect our community, we are working on offering naloxone trainings to our clients.

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Deliveries

Thanks to a team of 68 volunteer drivers and delivery assistants, Chez Doris has gone mobile! From April 2020 to March 2021, our volunteers made 1,248 deliveries of grocery gift cards, holiday gifts, and essential financial documents to our vulnerable housed clients. The newly implemented home delivery system is an important way for Chez Doris to stay connected to its clients—no matter where they are in the city—especially during a time where isolation and loneliness are more present than ever. As one volunteer remarked, "It is truly heartwarming to see how appreciative the women are to receive the deliveries."

Shaar Hashomayim



Each Wednesday from December 23, 2020 to March 31, 2021, our homeless clients were able to count on receiving a delicious lunch made and delivered on behalf of the Congregation Shaar Hashomayim. Their generosity enabled us to provide nutritious meals, lightened the workload of our kitchen staff, and alleviated the increase in food costs we've experienced since adding our daily dinner service last July.

HARM REDUCTION WORKSHOPS

Chez Doris has recently introduced Harm Reduction workshops to its repertoire of client services, led by volunteers Benni MacDonald, Mélody Talbot, and Anastasia Dudley. The workshops, which complement the naloxone training our staff members received, help to foster a sense of community, reduce the stigma of consumption, and provide a space for clients to share their experiences in a non-judgmental space. The workshop dialogue is largely guided by clients, where discussion topics include the impact of overdoses on the community, consumption methods that encourage proactive methods of reducing risk, and alternatives to abstinence.

DONOR SPOTLIGHT

Carole Epstein Foundation

The generosity of the Carole Epstein Foundation has allowed us to launch a new laundry program and enhance our birthday program:



Laundry Program

Through our new laundry program, we offer laundry services twice a week to our homeless clients at a nearby laundromat.



Birthday Program

Our Birthday Program allows us to host monthly birthday celebrations for our clients. During their birthday month, each client receives a \$20 gift card of choice on behalf of the Carole Epstein Foundation and a birthday card designed by volunteer Torill Kove. A group of

volunteers, known as The Birthday Bakers, bake a delicious birthday cake each month for the celebration.

Isabelle Michaud

Isabelle Michaud donated nearly 300 gift cards to Chez Doris! Thanks to her generous donation, our housed clients have received a gift card in their monthly home deliveries, and our homeless clients have enjoyed them as bingo prizes at the shelter.

HOUSING PROGRAM

Our Housing Program, which provides key assistance for our homeless clientele in search of a home, has recently grown and expanded—in large part due to the pandemic. We now have a team of seven members dedicated to our three housing programs:

Indigenous Housing Program

This program's objective is to find housing for chronically homeless Indigenous women, all while offering furniture, a grocery budget, and the psychosocial support of a caseworker;

Programme de soutien au logement (PSL)

In collaboration with the Office Municipal d'Habitation de Montréal (OMHM), this program provides a rent subsidy (to a maximum of 30 women) housed in private apartments, and through additional funding from the CIUSSS-Centre-Sud, psychosocial support from Chez Doris caseworkers is offered to the low-income women in this program. Thanks to the subsidy, the women pay a monthly rent fixed at 25% of their overall income; and

Rapid Rehousing Program

Funded by the City of Montreal, Housing First, the Foundation of Greater Montreal, the Trottier Family Foundation and a grant from CN, this program provides a furniture and grocery budget for up to 25 newly housed women who experienced homelessness. Two caseworkers also help with any psychosocial needs and provides follow-up support. One-time funding for this program was received in the context of the pandemic and now requires new funding for it to be maintained.

IT'S A DATE! Virtual Annual General Meeting

Monday, June 21, 2021 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. To be able to vote, one must be a member. To participate during the virtual AGM, one must have access to a computer with an internet connection. For the agenda, please visit: chezdoris.org/2021annualmeeting.

RSVP: Natalie Coté at 514-937-2341, ext. 227 or natalie.cote@chezdoris.org

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY AT CHEZ DORIS



In honour of International Women's Day on March 8, our homeless clients were treated to a day of pampering, including manicures, massages, haircuts, flowers, goodie bags, and more. Rio Tinto employees brought their smiles to the shelter on this day to help serve a delicious lunchtime meal. Donations from RBC Wealth Management, Rio Tinto, Manuvie and Westmount Florist helped make this special day possible.



On March 26, Rebecca and Mandy Wolfe of Mandy's salades gourmandes and their team prepared and served their mouth-watering salads, soups, and cookies to our ladies, alongside Mayor Valérie Plante and Elizabeth Wirth, Co-Chair of Chez Doris' major fundraising campaign.

In addition to serving clients at our shelter, Mandy's provided meals that were delivered to 130 of our housed clients thanks to volunteers from Manuvie and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Thanks to a generous donation from Manuvie, our housed clients also received gift cards as part of their delivery.



EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT: MAUDE G.

Maude is Chez Doris' Evening & Overnight Team Leader. She joined Chez Doris over two years ago, beginning as a Weekend Team Leader. As the Evening & Overnight Team Leader, Maude oversees the shelter's full evening and overnight team and manages the relationships with many of our key partners, including the hotel, shuttle services, and security personnel. Maude's can-do attitude and proactivity are evident in all that she does: in less than a month, Maude onboarded a team of nine employees, even creating a series of training videos for her team. "What I love most about my job is seeing how all of my team members have the same dedication to supporting the women we serve," she says. We are so proud to count Maude as a member of the Chez Doris team!

ANNUAL TEA TIME FUNDRAISER

Due to ongoing social distancing restrictions, Chez Doris' Annual Tea Time Fundraiser will likely take place again this year in a semi-virtual format! We are exploring ways in which to creatively share a virtual cup of tea with all of you. As soon as we have established a date—likely in October—we will communicate the details by email and online on our website and through social media.

To ensure that we have your current email address on file to receive these and other updates, please contact Suse Gomes at 514-937-2341, ext. 228 or suse.gomes@chezdoris.org

Tea
Time

donate

CHEZ DORIS

44TH ANNUAL FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGN

2021

chezdoris.org

CHEZ DORIS

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

facebook.com/ChezDorisRefuge
twitter.com/ChezDoris
linkedin.com/company/chez-doris
instagram.com/chez.doris

OPENING HOURS

7 days a week | 8:30 am – 8:00 pm

We accept online donations. See the "Make a Donation" tab on our website's home page. We also accept third party gifts, publicly traded stocks, and estate gifts including insurance policies. For more information, contact Danièle Lavoie, Director of Philanthropic Development, at 514 937-2341, ext. 250 or daniele.lavoie@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 and lunch; access to showers, hygiene products, and a clothing room; respite beds; information and referral assistance; a financial management program; an Inuit assistance program; a housing program; physical and mental health services; tax filing and legal services; as well as educational and socio-recreational programs.

Registration number: 101835841RR0001