



COURRIER

News from Chez Doris

A safe haven for women in difficulty

Newsletter | Winter 2021

PORTRAIT OF A CLIENT

BRINGING WARMTH TO WOMEN IN NEED

Annie* grew up in Québec's Côte-Nord with her parents. Her mother was a victim of conjugal violence at the hands of her father; as a result, her parents separated when she was very young. When she was 17, Annie left her mother's home to live with her father. However, he became violent with her; she had to leave in order to survive. By the age of 21, she had moved to Granby on her own. At 24 she gave birth to her eldest daughter, followed by a second daughter a few years later. By the time her youngest daughter was three years old, Annie's partner began beating her. For 18 years, she lived in a relationship fraught with domestic violence. "I almost died several times," she says. She also attempted to flee the home 11 times, but as she was caught in the cycle of domestic violence, she found herself returning to her abusive partner. After spending 28 years in Granby, she finally fled for good and came to Montréal in 2016 in a bid to survive. At the end of 2016, she was able to move into an affordable low income dwelling and was able to settle. However, Annie was very lonely and isolated. All these years of suffering led her to drug use. She began using drugs to forget the years of abuse.

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*pseudonym

Chez Doris' holiday plans

For women in precarious circumstances or who are experiencing homelessness, the holiday season can be a very difficult time, where social isolation and extreme temperatures create even more challenges. After nearly two years since the debut of the COVID-19 pandemic—and public health restrictions preventing us from being together—we are thrilled to be able to bring warmth and joy into the lives of women in need this holiday season.

This year, we will be open 24/7 throughout the holiday season for our clients experiencing homelessness to provide a safe and warm place to go. Our unhoused clients will also enjoy many in-house activities in December, including ornament making, baking holiday cookies, watching Christmas movies and holiday arts and crafts. We will be offering a magnitude of activities to our housed clients to bring holiday cheer and break isolation, including visits to Christmas markets in town, skating outdoors in Old Montréal, visiting the Luminaire light show, and more!

Following last year's pandemic-imposed hiatus, we are pleased to be able to bring back our annual Holiday Party for our clientele! This year

the party will take place on December 14 at Collège LaSalle, welcome 140 doubly vaccinated clients and follow health guidelines. Sheldon Kagan and his team will provide the entertainment, which included DJ Guy Trottier and singer Pierre Perpall known for his rendition of "The Twist". Clients will have the opportunity to enjoy the dance floor and games with masks on! Our housed clients will once again receive festive food baskets delivered to their apartments and children's gifts will also be distributed to households that have experienced homelessness. Our homeless clientele will be treated to Christmas fare on December 25 and a New Year's brunch on January 1.

Donations in support of our holiday meals and activities as well as for our year-long programs and services can be made online by visiting our website or by scanning the QR code to the right. Fifty percent of our annual donations are made at this time every year. We hope you will include Chez Doris once again among the organizations you support during this time of giving.



Volunteers looking to lend a hand for our holidays can contact Leah Peck at (514) 937-2341, ext. 238.

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PORTRAIT OF A CLIENT

BRINGING WARMTH TO WOMEN IN NEED

In 2018, Annie began frequenting Chez Doris after a shelter she was attending at the time referred her. She says she immediately fell in love with Chez Doris, which allowed her to regain her self-confidence and find new bearings after so many years of enduring abuse. "Chez Doris allowed me to come out of my shell and live a normal life. I was also able to form strong friendships," says Annie. She also says the caseworkers at Chez Doris were pillars for her to improve her life. Thanks to the help of her dedicated caseworker, she was able to stop using drugs and develop a healthy routine. "Chez Doris has helped me both emotionally and financially. I still use the clothing room, hygiene products, and of course I still have psychosocial follow-up with my caseworker," says Annie.

For the holidays this year, Annie plans to go to the casino with a friend, and her daughters are going to come and celebrate Christmas with her. She is also very excited to participate in Chez Doris' Christmas party. Moving forward, her greatest wish is to continue to have a normal life and to be happy. She hopes to continue to rebuild herself after all the years of violence. She is looking for balance and she hopes she can find a healthy romantic relationship. Annie wants to be able to maintain her stability and she says that for that she will always have to be followed by a caseworker: "It gives me balance." "I would be very lost without Chez Doris," said Annie.

“ Without them, I might still be using and living in the streets. ”

OVERNIGHT SERVICES AT A GLANCE

While Montréal's harsh winter temperatures can prove challenging for anyone, for homeless women, the extreme weather conditions can mean the difference between life and death. In December 2020, spurred by the pandemic and the approaching winter season, Chez Doris began offering emergency overnight services. Initially offered in our day shelter by setting up cots at night, the services were moved to a downtown hotel to accommodate more women and adhere to distancing protocols. Almost a year later, we continue to provide women experiencing homelessness in Montréal with a safe place to sleep at night. The temporary overnight services at the hotel are assured until March 31, 2022, when our new permanent emergency night shelter will open and take over these services.

From December 1, 2020 to November 30, 2021:

11,762	TOTAL OVERNIGHT STAYS
382	UNIQUE WOMEN ACCOMMODATED
73	NEW WOMEN
455	SHUTTLE TRIPS BETWEEN DAY SHELTER AND HOTEL
228	REQUESTS DECLINED DUE TO LACK OF SPACE

Message from the President & Executive Director

At Chez Doris, our caseworkers encounter a wide range of women and circumstances each day: most do not have a network to help them, several have been homeless for years and are struggling with mental illness, while others are fleeing violence and finding themselves homeless for the first time. Annie's journey shared in these pages is one of a woman whose will to survive ultimately led her to resources that helped her break free from the cycle of domestic violence and subsequent addiction. Now, she is on the road to self-actualization.

It is our goal to be able to meet the needs of all women who walk through our doors and help them reach their full potential. Our expansion and the opening of our new facilities in 2022 will certainly help towards this goal, but the variety and complexity of the needs of our clientele is immense. This is why, in tandem with our expansion, we are embarking on a strategic planning exercise in the new year, funded by an Innoveave grant from The McConnell Foundation. Our goal is that our growth be cohesive, innovative, and allow us to effectively meet the needs of the vulnerable and homeless women we serve.

While the needs before us are great, so is the level of community support—for this, we are extremely grateful. The support from our donors, volunteers, and complementary organizations with whom we collaborate help us work effectively to deliver services and facilitate access to affordable housing that homeless women plainly need.

But the homeless and the vulnerable among us also need a little joy in addition to a home, and so we are delighted that this year we will once again be able to hold our annual holiday party for our clients in person, albeit with a limited number of doubly vaccinated clients. There will also be gifts made available on Christmas Day to homeless women, as well as many who will be experiencing the holidays in their new homes.

Thank you for your generosity and kindness, and we wish you all a happy holiday season and New Year filled with joy and good health.

With gratitude,



Marina Boulos-Winton
Executive Director

Carole Croteau
President



MAJOR FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGN UPDATE

In the new year, Chez Doris will be operating a total of four locations: our day shelter, our new permanent overnight shelter, and our two new permanent residences. In the recent special-edition issue of our newsletter, we announced the public launch of our major fundraising campaign to raise \$15 million to fund this expansion. To date, thanks to our dedicated team of volunteer campaign cabinet members, led by campaign co-chairs **Elizabeth Wirth** and **François Carrier**, we are pleased to share with you that we have raised 95% of our goal! Beyond our annual appeal for donations towards our ongoing operations, contributions of any amount dedicated to help us reach the home stretch of our campaign objective to fund these essential new points of service are most welcome and can be made online by visiting our website or by scanning the QR code to the right.



VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Eduardo Chachamovich, MD, PhD

Dr. Chachamovich, Chez Doris' volunteer psychiatrist, offers invaluable mental health support for our clients. Based out of the Douglas Institute, Dr. Chachamovich completed his postdoctoral fellowship at McGill University's Faculty of Medicine, focusing on the study of suicide prevention and mental health promotion among the Inuit population in Nunavut.

"At Chez Doris, I see women who need psychiatric support," he says. "This includes evaluating their needs, helping to implement treatment (pharmacological and psychological), offering help to obtain access to different kinds of government support, as well as help to navigate the healthcare system for specific needs." Dr. Chachamovich notes that the exchange of experiences with the women he has the chance to meet at the shelter is deep and impactful. "The fact that we meet these women at Chez Doris—as opposed to a hospital or clinic—somehow inverts the power structure and makes them more comfortable, allowing them to share deeper and more meaningful experiences with less fear of being rejected, rushed out or disrespected," he notes.

“ Working with the women at Chez Doris is an opportunity to have a very rich and inspiring practice in a welcoming environment. ”

A CHALLENGE GRANT TO CHEZ DORIS FROM THE JEWISH COMMUNITY FOUNDATION OF MONTREAL

The Executors of the Carole and Andrew Harper Fund at the Jewish Community Foundation of Montréal (JCF) have made a \$2 million endowment pledge to Chez Doris, conditional upon other donors matching the pledge. To date, \$700,000 has been raised by Chez Doris and matched by JCF, bringing our total thus far to \$1.4 million. We are looking for \$1.3 million more in matching endowment gifts to fully access the Harper Fund's pledge and to arrive at a \$4 million endowment fund which will be critical to our future. For more information or to make a major matching gift, please contact Marina Boulos-Winton at 514-937-2341 ext. 225.



Welcoming new volunteers to the Building Committee

While funds raised are critical to the success of Chez Doris, so are our volunteers. Chez Doris is often guided by expert volunteers who sit on various Committees of the Board who provide advice for important decisions. Given our expansion plans, the Building Committee has been instrumental in advising the Board about major repairs and improvements, acquisitions, construction, and renovation projects; as well as planning for yearly capital expenditures on our current and future facilities. Presided by architect **Sylvie Girard**, the committee welcomed three new members: **Me Annie Gagnon-Larocque**, a partner in McCarthy Tetrault's Real Estate Property and Planning Group in Montréal; **Roger Plamondon**, President of the Real-Estate division of Broccolini, Inc.; and **Ryan Zamestrieux**, General Manager of BentallGreenOak.

EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHTS



Kayla H.

Kayla assists Chez Doris' caseworkers as a support worker and helps our clients meet their basic and immediate needs during their time at the shelter. "I show clients to the shower provide them with fresh and clean clothes and take time to see how clients are doing in a more informal way," she says. Clients' comfort and well-being are at the heart of Kayla's work, and she goes the extra mile to make them feel at home. "I try to make every shower as pleasant as possible, and I will often lay out their clothes and products to make it feel like the comfort of a hotel. It is a great way to treat someone who is in a bad spot to some simple pleasures," she remarks. "I love selecting the clothing for each client and truly try to meet their individual style to the best of my ability with the donations we receive." Kayla finds her work truly rewarding: "Being able to provide the caseworkers with the time they need for their psychosocial caseloads is

important as it enables them to address the medium to long term needs of the clients," she says. "It's a rewarding experience to help people find a better path in life."

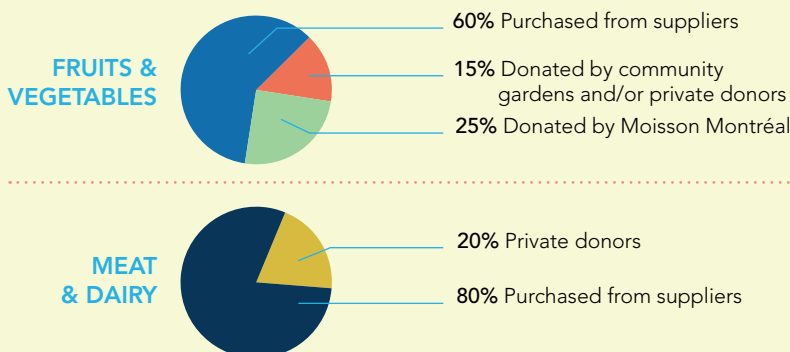


Chez Doris Kitchen Staff

In July 2020, Chez Doris added a third meal service to its repertoire, providing women without a fixed address with the opportunity to have a warm and nutritious dinner. With this third meal service, we also welcomed a new evening kitchen team to our staff!

"The primary objective of the kitchen team is to cook nutritious homemade meals from quality, healthy ingredients. Our team listens to the comments and requests made by the women. Each evening, the smell of a delicious dinner permeates the entire house and creates a homey environment for the women, which is currently their only home", notes Vadim, head evening chef.

Where does Chez Doris' food come from?



SPECIAL THANKS

Collège CDI



Thank you to Collège CDI. In addition to donating, they will fund a pilot project offering scholarships to two women, Hanadi and Jamie, who use our services.

Hanadi will be begin her studies this winter to become a Medical Office Assistant. She recently completed her prerequisites and is very excited to have this opportunity. Jamie, for her part, is looking forward to beginning her studies in Early Childhood Education in March.

Frank and Michael Sinclair

Thank you to also to brothers Frank and Michael Sinclair, who generously created a fund for work and school-related expenses for formerly homeless women and their children. The Sinclair brothers' fund will directly support women like Hanadi and Jamie attain educational goals and help others gain, or re-gain entry into the workforce. Considering that many formerly homeless clients are now housed, some are ready to take on additional life goals. They have enrolled in school, have joined—or will join—the workforce, while many who also have children face daunting school-related costs for their kids that this fund will help alleviate by paying for items such as school supplies and school clothing, computers, bus passes, after-school fees to give these women a helping hand.



Carlo DeAngelis

Chez Doris would like to extend a huge thank you to SPVM officer Carlo DeAngelis upon his retirement. Officer DeAngelis—a liaison officer with Montréal's Indigenous and Inuit communities—has also

been a shining light for Chez Doris, providing support and guidance in emergency situations and playing an active role in our own community, such as attending our holiday party and bringing cheer to our clients. Thank you for your incredible work, Officer DeAngelis, and congratulations on your retirement!

donate

CHEZ DORIS

ANNUAL FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGN

2021

chezdoris.org

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OPENING HOURS

7 days a week: 8:30 am – 10:00 pm
Overnight services: 9:00 pm – 8:30 am



We accept online donations. See "Make a Donation" tab on our web site's home page. To learn more about how you can leave a lasting impact on Chez Doris through your Will, visit: willpower.ca/charities/chez-doris

Founded in 1977, Chez Doris is a day shelter that offers a range of services and programs to meet the most basic and immediate needs of vulnerable women and homeless women. The only women's day shelter in Montreal offering 24/7 service, Chez Doris welcomed 1,465 unique women and served 29,528 meals in 2020-21. By providing personal hygiene products, health and mental services, housing placement, and more, the organization meets their needs in an inclusive and non-judgmental environment.

Registration number: 101835841RR0001