



# COURRIER

News from Chez Doris

A safe haven for women in difficulty

Newsletter | Spring-Summer 2023

## PORTRAIT OF A CLIENT

# HANNA'S HISTORY

Hanna, 38, is a former patient care attendant who recently relocated to Montreal with her two cats. She had moved out of her apartment in Quebec City because of a difficult domestic situation. By early January, after a period of hidden homelessness, she found herself destitute and with nowhere else to go. Hanna spent three days reaching out to the handful of shelters in the city that allow animals. She went so far as to line up in the cold for a full day for a bed at one of them. Sadly, a strict one-pet-per-person rule proved to be an obstacle at every turn.

Hanna simply couldn't bear to abandon either one of her feline companions, and so she kept looking and was eventually referred to Chez Doris. She arrived at the Elspeth McConnell emergency shelter in the middle of the night, relieved that she and her cats would finally be able to get a good night's sleep in a safe, warm place.

The next day, she learned more about the various services available through our day centre. She started looking for a place to live, grateful for the three square meals a day she received in the meantime. She was also able to get both cats fixed and vaccinated free of charge, something she couldn't previously afford.

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## Gimme shelter

Day and Night!

## SAVE THE DATE!

We are delighted to invite you to join us for our second annual *Gimme Shelter – Day and Night!* benefit cocktail reception. Under the leadership of co-chairs Elizabeth Wirth and Jacques Maurice, the event will honour the generosity of our benefactor, Bash Shetty and celebrate the opening of a permanent housing development bearing his name. The proceeds from the event will go toward funding this service location and other programs offered through Chez Doris.

**When?** Thursday, June 15, 2023, 5:30 p.m.

**Where?** Le Salon Richmond 1861 | 550 Richmond Avenue

For more information about the event, go to [chezdoris.org/en/benefit\\_cocktail\\_2023](https://chezdoris.org/en/benefit_cocktail_2023) or contact Suse Gomes ([evenements@chezdoris.org](mailto:evenements@chezdoris.org) or 514-937-2341, ext. 228).



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## HANNA'S HISTORY

Hanna deeply appreciates all the help she received through Chez Doris. She is particularly grateful for all the caseworkers who made her feel comfortable and were so supportive of her efforts. She wants the public to know how important pet-friendly shelters are, so people experiencing homelessness don't have to choose between their love for their four-legged family and their personal safety.

Hanna is currently on a waiting list for a room in a permanent housing development where her cats are welcome. It is her fondest wish to be able to achieve the level of stability allowing her to re-enter the workforce and regain control over her life once again.

## Message from the President & Executive Director

Our pets – they bring us comfort and become such a part of our lives, it would be impossible to imagine a life without them. But for countless women experiencing homelessness, this is their reality – having to say goodbye to their cherished companions or stay on the streets. For Hanna, she could envision a better life for herself with her two cats only when she discovered Chez Doris.

Hanna isn't alone in having a tough time finding a place to live. High rents in Montreal make it exceedingly difficult for women who are out of work, are retired, earn low wages, or collect social assistance to be able to afford a place to live. Although we help our clients obtain financial housing assistance, affordably priced apartments are few and far between in today's market.

To reverse the trend of an increasing number of women confronted with homelessness, we are acting and developing our own housing solutions. Our next development will be unveiled at our second annual Gimme Shelter – Day and Night! Benefit cocktail reception on June 15 at Le Salon Richmond 1861, honouring Bash Shetty. His generosity, combined with that of others, will pave the way for opening a second residence complete with support services for homeless and at-risk women.

We hope you'll join us for this special night. Thank you all for your invaluable support. You are the reason the women we serve can hope for a better future.



Marina Boulos-Winton  
Executive Director

Carole Croteau  
President

## REPORT ON THE OVERNIGHT SHELTER'S FIRST FEW MONTHS OF OPERATION

The number of women using the Elspeth McConnell overnight shelter since its opening on September 19, 2022, has exceeded our initial projections. We anticipated serving a total of 300 women during the first year, but we had already reached this figure barely six months in. This alarming statistic speaks volumes about the need for this type of emergency resources and the magnitude of women experiencing homelessness in Montreal.

The women who come to us often experience multiple forms of discrimination based not

only on gender, but also on social class, ethnicity, and language. More than 25% of the clients who have stayed at the overnight shelter since September belong to a racialized group and 26% are Indigenous (21% Inuit, 5% First Nations or Métis), versus 16.1% and 2.5%, respectively, of the general population in Quebec.

### SHELTER OPENED: SEPTEMBER 19, 2022

### SEPTEMBER 19, 2022–FEBRUARY 28, 2023



Total number of overnight stays

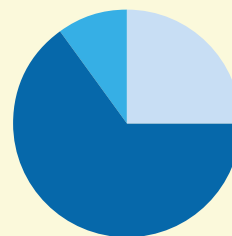
3,636



Total number of women served by the overnight shelter

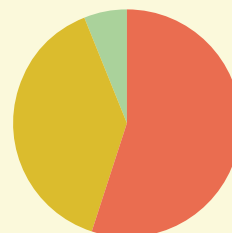
271

## PROFILE OF CLIENTS



By age group:

- 18 to 34 years: 25%
- 35 to 59 years: 65%
- 60+ years: 10%



By main language:

- English: 55%
- French: 39%
- Other: 6%





Thanks to a federal grant of \$2.6 million towards the acquisition of an existing building and a \$3.8 million renovation project (\$1.3 million of which has come from private donations), some 20 women experiencing or at risk of homelessness will have access to permanent subsidized housing, with rent capped at a maximum of 25% of their income. This new point of service, located in the Centre-Sud neighbourhood of the Ville-Marie borough, has been named in honour of our benefactor whose generosity was leveraged to acquire and subsequently renovate the building.

Tenants will be chosen through a selection process, the criteria for which will be established by a special committee. Committee members include caseworkers, team leaders, a professor in social work from McGill University and a former board member of Chez Doris. Given that most of the candidates will also need support services, there will be a team of caseworkers available on-site 24/7. Budgeting assistance and community activities will also be set up to foster a supportive, inclusive environment.

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**The first tenants will move in between June 15 and July 1, 2023.**

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At Chez Doris, inclusion, and kindness, regardless of ethnic background or skin colour, are two of the values that guide staff in their work with our clients.

In February, we celebrated Black History Month to honour the cultural and human diversity of our Black clients, who make up over 10% of the women in our shelters.

Among the featured activities offered, were hairstyling services specifically for Black women, a traditional Caribbean feast made by the Chez Doris kitchen crew and a talk by Stéphanie Bumba, a nurse clinician and science YouTuber specializing in challenges and issues of interest to the Black community. Clients were delighted to see their heritage honoured and promoted in so many ways throughout the month.

## NEW BUILDING ACQUIRED ON SAINT-HUBERT STREET

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On March 7, the eve of International Women's Day, representatives from various levels of government gathered for a press conference organized by the City of Montreal to announce the purchase of a new building.

Located on Saint-Hubert Street in the borough of Ville-Marie, the building will be converted into transitional housing for women experiencing or at risk of homelessness. After renovations, there will be 19 to 21 rooms for stays ranging from three months to two years. Residents will also receive much needed services to help them build positive life skills, become more autonomous, and enjoy an improved quality of life. At least two caseworkers will be on site 24/7. We hope that this new facility will ease some of the pressure on our overnight shelter and contribute to giving more women access to services developed to meet their specific needs.

The acquisition of the building — a 9,000 sq. ft. former hotel — was made possible through a grant from the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) as part of the Rapid Housing Initiative (RHI).

Preliminary studies are currently underway to determine the exact cost, over and above the amount of the grant, for the multiple renovations necessary to make this new point of service operational. The back of the building will have to be expanded to make room for a larger kitchen and a communal space. A stairway and an elevator will be incorporated into the layout to accommodate residents' mobility needs. Additional funding will also be required for operational purposes and resident support once the facility is up and running.




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**The new housing development is expected to open in 2025.**

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## INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

March 8 was a much-appreciated day of relaxation and well-being at our shelter, as clients were given the chance to get their hair, nails and makeup done and receive a massage. More often than not, these types of self-care are too pricey for the women we serve, but they do wonders in boosting their self-esteem, promoting overall wellness and recover a sense of normalcy. The day's lineup of activities was also an excellent opportunity to raise community awareness about women's homelessness and reduce the stigma and discrimination they experience every day.

The atmosphere in our makeshift day spas (i.e., our activity rooms) was lively and upbeat, and our clients very much enjoyed the pampering.

## 2023 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

As recommended by our auditors, from now on the Chez Doris AGM will be held within six months of the end of each fiscal year rather than the previous timeframe of three months. The AGM is an opportunity to share our financial statements with our community, report on the activities of the past year, look back at our latest achievements and outline our plans going forward.

We encourage all our members to attend the AGM and be part of the democratic process. As stipulated in our by-laws, anyone who donates \$100 or more, or volunteers for at least 10 hours during the previous fiscal year (April 1, 2022, to March 31, 2023) is considered to be a member.

Please note that this year's AGM will be held in person to make it easier for everyone to contribute and ensure the proceedings run smoothly.

**Where?** 1445 Lambert-Closse Street

**When?** September 26, 2023, 5 p.m.

All AGM-related enquiries and RSVPs can be addressed to Nathalie Simard at **514-937-2341, ext. 245** or by mail at **administration@chezdoris.org**

## A Heartfelt thanks to our Board of Directors

At Chez Doris, we are very fortunate to have 14 devoted and passionate individuals on our Board of Directors to help us continue to fulfil our mission. This year, we welcomed three new board members: Mary Larson, who now chairs our Human Resources Committee, and Dr. Guy Breton and Thierry Leroux-Demers, who will be officially instated at the next AGM.

Their impressive body of knowledge and expertise in fields as varied as finance, human resources, architecture, and communications will make them invaluable assets to our organization.

We have seen for ourselves at some of our events just how attuned our board members are to the work we do. Several generously rolled up their sleeves and joined our other volunteers to pitch in at our traditional New Year's brunch, calling out bingo numbers, helping in the kitchen and serving meals. Having them directly involved made the day's festivities extra special.



Talar Dikijian  
& Mary Larson

**"I FIRST BECAME INVOLVED AT CHEZ DORIS BACK IN 2007 WHEN I VOLUNTEERED TO GIVE MANICURES AND MAKEOVERS TO THE WOMEN. IT WAS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR THEM TO BOOST THEIR SELF-ESTEEM AND MORALE AND GAVE THEM A GROUP OF CARING AND COMPASSIONATE PEOPLE TO OPEN UP TO. IN 2010, I SUBMITTED A PROPOSAL FOR A FUNDRAISER TO THE CHEZ DORIS BOARD OF DIRECTORS AS PART OF THE PUBLIC RELATIONS PROGRAM I WAS ENROLLED IN AT MCGILL UNIVERSITY. THE CONTENTS OF THE PROPOSAL LAID THE GROUNDWORK FOR THE ORGANIZATION'S FIRST BENEFIT EVENT AND LED TO MY NOMINATION FOR BOARD MEMBERSHIP. I'M VERY PROUD AND TOUCHED TO GIVE BACK TO THIS ORGANIZATION THAT MEANS SO MUCH TO ME."**

*Talar Dikijian, who has played an active role on the Chez Doris Board of Directors for the past 13 years.*



## JOIN OUR TEAM AND MAKE A DIFFERENCE EVERY DAY

As part of our commitment to continuing to open new points of service and accommodate the needs of homeless and at-risk women as best we can, we are currently looking for fresh new talent to join our team. We have several front-line positions to fill at our various facilities to provide outreach services in a safe, judgment-free space and help with various housing and social integration initiatives.

This is an excellent opportunity to be directly involved in advancing innovative projects and forging meaningful bonds with clients in complex circumstances. Chez Doris is also recruiting for staff members to work in the kitchen and in an administrative capacity. Without our devoted and diverse team, we would not be able to achieve as much as we do in helping women overcome challenges and build a better life. Being part of the organization and having a direct impact on women's lives is a gratifying and rewarding experience. For more information, be sure to have a closer look at the Jobs and Internships section of our website.

# donate

### CHEZ DORIS

46<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGN

### 2023

chezdoris.org

#### CHEZ DORIS

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don-donation@chezdoris.org

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

#### DROP-IN HOURS

7 days a week | 8:30 am – 9:30 pm

We accept online donations. See "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 Marina Boulos, Executive Director, at 514 937-2341, ext. 225 or marina.boulos@chezdoris.org

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

Registration number: 101835841RR0001

To keep our printing and mailing costs to a minimum and reduce our carbon footprint, we will be switching to email as the default delivery mode for future newsletters. Please contact us at **514-937-2341, ext. 245**, or **administration@chezdoris.org** if you wish to continue to receive your newsletter by mail. Your cooperation is, as always, greatly appreciated.