



COURRIER

News from Chez Doris

A safe haven for women in difficulty

Newsletter | Winter 2023

EMILY'S PORTRAIT

NEW BEGINNINGS

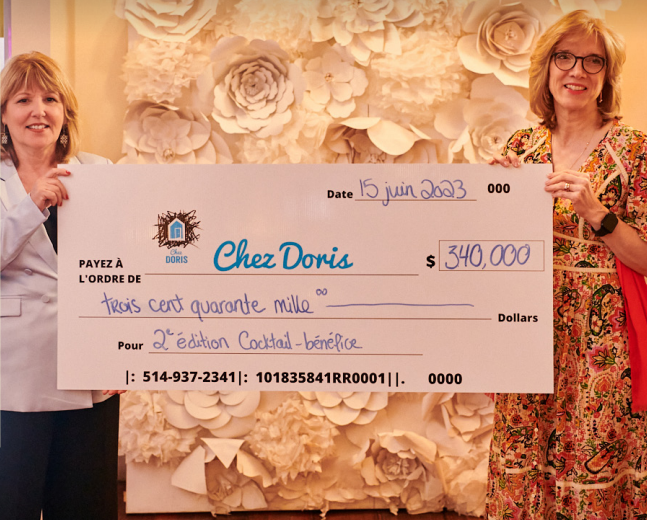
My name is Emily*. I am 62 years old and was raised alongside my brothers and sisters in an upper middle-class family on Holton Street in Westmount. Following the birth of my son, his father and I lived at the Gleneagles Complex on Côte-des-Neiges. We led a privileged life.

I began to seek support from Chez Doris 30 years ago when I had sole custody of my son, who is now 41 and works in construction outside of the city. Due to my inability to work, I live on a fixed income and in a state of extreme poverty. I have experienced homelessness intermittently over the years. For the past three years, Chez Doris has become my primary refuge, first by using the hotel service, and then the overnight shelter. Since August, I have had my own room at the Bash Shetty Residence on St. André Street. At last, I can fully rest my tired body in a bed that belongs to me and relax in my own bathroom. Although my health has declined, I can finally find dignity in my remaining years of life. Maintaining my independence is important to me. Chez Doris provides me with essential items such as incontinence briefs, nutritional shakes, and winter clothing. A caseworker ensures that I have sufficient money each month and has even assisted me with renewing my bank card. I now even have my first ever cell phone! From time to time, I receive assistance with cleaning, preparing meals and laundry. Additionally, I also make certain to take my prescription pills regularly.

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2ND ANNUAL "GIMME SHELTER day and night" EVENT



On June 15th, Chez Doris organized its 2nd annual fundraising event at the Salon Richmond in Montreal, an event marked by commitment and generosity. Co-chaired by Elizabeth Wirth, Chair of Wirth Rail, and Jacques Maurice, Senior Wealth Advisor at the Jacques Maurice Group, Scotia Wealth Management. The evening brought together many individuals. Sonali Karnick, a well-known host of CBC Radio & TV, eloquently hosted the evening, adding a touch of charisma to the event. The evening featured a tribute to Bash Shetty, a man of South Indian origin who had a remarkable career in maritime law and marine insurance. His generosity played a central role in leveraging additional funds to establish a permanent residence dedicated to social housing for homeless women, which now bears his name. The event had an Indian theme, beautifully showcased with a musical performance by Lavanya Narasiah, a family doctor and former volunteer at Chez Doris. The guests also had the opportunity to enjoy traditional dances from Montreal's Param Nrithyalaya Bharatanatyam Dance School. The event raised an impressive \$340,000, which will support Chez Doris's mission in favor of homeless women.

Stay tuned for the announcement of our next event.
We also hope to reintroduce our annual tea in 2024.

NEW BEGINNINGS

I deeply miss and love my son. I would like for him to come live with me, just like one of my brothers. I would also like to see the dedicated workers from the day and night shelters again. I miss their comforting support immensely. To relieve the loneliness, I really enjoy visits from a Chez Doris volunteer over tea, as well as that of a social recreational animator. Despite my challenges, I want to emphasize that I am resilient, confident, strong and patient, all due to the help I receive from Chez Doris. I truly am grateful.

**Emily is a fabricated name used to safeguard the identity of the individual and the interview is a condensed summary of an hour-long conversation over tea with the Executive Director.*

Chez Doris proudly announces the opening of our two new residences



MARCELLE ET JEAN COUTU RESIDENCE

Located near Hôpital Notre-Dame, this collaboration between Chez Doris and the Société d'habitation et de développement de Montréal offers 26 furnished studios. Each space is equipped with a kitchen, a bathroom and living area, catering to independent women at risk of or experiencing homelessness. The building provides shared amenities, including a community room, computer area, laundry facilities, bike storage and an outdoor terrace.



BASH SHETTY RESIDENCE

Located near the Berri-UQAM metro station, on a residential street, our first residence began welcoming residents last July. It is a transformed inn providing round-the-clock support to vulnerable women. This residence features 20 private furnished rooms, each with its own bathroom, as well as common areas and outdoor terraces tailored for women in need.

Message from the President and the Executive Director

Emily, a vulnerable soul, reminds us that homelessness can affect anyone, regardless of their circumstances. Transitioning from homelessness to housing is challenging, often marked by profound loneliness without friends. Stories like Emily's emphasize the crucial role of compassion and community support in our work, enabling us to create a safe and inclusive environment for women seeking help.

Chez Doris operates in five locations: a day shelter, a night shelter, a health social service center at 1445 Lambert Closse and residences at both 1555-69 rue Saint-André and 2233 De Champlain. We manage 86 subsidies for apartment rentals in the private market, with residents contributing up to 25% of their income, and twenty of them are still available. These subsidies provide safe homes for women, including those with children. Many of the women we assist carry the burden of violence, trauma and mental challenges but they approach the future with gratitude and optimism, finding a space to rebuild their broken lives.

Thank you for your ongoing support. Together we can continue making a meaningful difference in the lives of these resilient women.



Marina Boulos-Winton
Executive Director

Carole Croteau
President

APPOINTMENT OF DIANE PILOTE AS SENIOR DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS



We are delighted to announce the arrival of Diane Pilote as our new Senior Director of Operations. Our latest real estate acquisitions have allowed our organization to expand to an unprecedented level. In this context, it was essential for us to find a key individual to facilitate Chez Doris's transformation into a significant player in housing and support services for vulnerable women in Montreal.

Throughout her career, Diane has held several high-level positions within banking institutions. Her experience in business restructuring, organizational planning, as well as the development and implementation of strategic plans, will enable us to support our short and medium-term growth initiatives.

A more robust structure will contribute to improving the management of our shelters, our day center and our supervised housing, as well as attracting and retaining the services of highly talented staff.



COMING SOON: AN ADDITIONAL MEDICAL CLINIC

Thanks to a generous grant of \$82,685 awarded by the Pharmaprix Foundation for Women's Health, we are in the process of establishing a second medical clinic to meet the growing demand of vulnerable and homeless women. Our homeless clientele has increased from 20% to 60%, highlighting the need to provide adequate medical access for these women. On-site services are essential as many face barriers due to past negative experiences, language issues, lack of identification, transportation, funds, insufficient health information and mental health challenges. Among the 200 organizations that applied for funding across Canada, 24 charitable organizations were selected including Chez Doris. The funds will be dedicated to the acquisition of medical equipment, the provision of dental care, the supply of prescription eyeglasses, improving nutrition for the elderly and increasing foot care services, all in order to bring some comfort to lives marked by distress.

A LEGACY OF COMPASSION

My friend Diane Gagnon dedicated almost her entire career to the banking sector, working in administrative and human resources management. She passed away last April and chose to make a significant gesture towards social organizations, including Chez Doris.

Through a testamentary bequest of \$100,000 to Chez Doris, Diane instills hope in women who need a helping hand from society to get back on their feet and aspire to a new life. This donation will be dedicated to the Day Shelter's activities, which have constantly growing needs. With her generosity, Diane aimed to encourage others to make a planned gift, especially through a testamentary bequest, which is also advantageous from a tax perspective for the estate. Please discuss it with your loved ones, your notary, your financial planner; a planned gift costs little but yields so much!

– Gil Desautels



SABRINA, A CLSC MÉTRO-GUY NURSE WITH A BIG HEART

As part of our activities, we have the privilege of being in contact with exceptional women every day. This includes Sabrina, a community nurse from CLSC Métro who is dedicated to women's health. She travels to community organizations in the Ville-Marie neighborhood, including Chez Doris every week. Her goal is to provide mass screening services for sexually transmitted infections to vulnerable individuals, especially women who use our shelters through our clinic. Thanks to this essential flexible and accessible service, women can visit without an appointment or ID in a safe environment, receive sexual health care through blood and oral sampling, among other services. For Sabrina, this service offering has significant positive impacts as she manages to treat the vast majority of women who visit Chez Doris. Without this assistance these women would struggle to access necessary medical care due to various issues related to mental health, substance abuse and certain biases.

DIVERSITY THROUGH ART



MU, a charitable organization that transforms Montreal's public spaces with community-integrated murals, Chez Doris, the Peter-McGill Eco-district and Tourisme Montréal unveiled a new community artwork on August 9th on the wall of Chez Doris' day shelter. Located in the alley near 1430 Chomedey, and titled «NEHIROWISIW – BALANCE», this mural designed by artists Meky Ottawa and Manon Bédard pays tribute to the natural richness of our territories and the fragility of our resources. The traditional Atikamekw canoe symbolizes the balance to be preserved, while the twinkling lights on the water represent the children, awacic. Chosen for its symbolism, this masterpiece reflects our commitment to providing an inclusive space for women, offering essential services and support for their well-being. As one-quarter of our clients are Indigenous, this mural aligns perfectly with our mission, embodying our dedication to diversity and community unity.

Photo credit: Olivier Bousquet

Meet our new coordinator of volunteers!



Rhetta Parnas has joined our team as the new Volunteer Coordinator. She is taking over from Leah Peck, who after five years of dedication, is embarking on a new chapter in her life. Rhetta comes to us from Saint Georges School, where she worked as a substitute teacher and in the student support center since 2011. In addition to her teaching role, she has also led volunteer initiatives focused on the environment. Rhetta is driven by her enthusiasm to apply her pedagogical skills to develop new strategies for recruiting, training and mobilizing volunteers at our five locations. She also aspires to create volunteer opportunities that promote learning and skill development for our volunteers.

Feel free to contact her at: rhetta.parnas@chezdoris.org

THE MITTENS ARE BACK

These mittens make wonderful holiday gifts that you can purchase in our online store at <https://boutique.chezdoris.org/en/> or in person at the Sunlife Building lobby on Thursday, December 7th from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. These mittens are crafted throughout the year using donated wool sweaters. Each sweater is carefully sorted, washed, dried, ironed, and the wool pieces are color-coded to allow our clients to assemble them into mittens. Crafting each pair takes two hours of meticulous work. Subsequently the funds raised through these sales are devoted to our activities for women.

For more information, please contact Gabrielle Cariou at: gabrielle.cariou@chezdoris.org



WE ARE PRESENTLY SEEKING THE FOLLOWING VOLUNTEERS

health professionals, including a family doctor (10% or more of our clients do not have RAMQ cards), psychiatrist, nutritionist, occupational therapist, individuals to conduct life skills workshops, hairstylists, manicurists and volunteers to assist with donation pickups using our truck.

donate

CHEZ DORIS

46th ANNUAL FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGN

2023

chezdoris.org

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Chez Doris is a charitable organization that provides a wide range of services to any woman in need. Every day, we welcome up to 100 women in a welcoming and safe environment. Our services and programs include: a day shelter, access to showers and hygiene products, respite beds, overnight shelter with 24 beds, phone information and referrals, a financial management program, Indigenous cultural programs, a housing search, placement and support service, physical and mental health services, legal services, tax preparation service, educational and socio-recreational programs, as well as two social housing residences.

Registration number 101835841RR0001

MISSION: To support and empower all women in precarious situations so that they can reach their full potential.

VISION: Anyone who identifies as a woman and is vulnerable or homeless in our city feels safe, is treated with dignity, and has opportunities to thrive.

VALUES: Inclusion • Equity • Dignity • Compassion