

Straight ahead, one foot in front of the other



Mélanie Walsh, Director

Our mission at Auberge Madeleine is to take care of women. In the context of a pandemic, we went into sprint mode on that famous black Friday, March the 13th. What we didn't know was that we were in for a marathon instead.

Summer will have given us a short respite, time to catch our breath. Here we are again bracing for another winter. We expect it to look a little longer this year...Lately, we have noticed a deterioration of the conditions in which women reach us: the assaults they are the victims of are more violent, their mental health is more fragile and their support network, already weak, is crumbling.

The holidays are a difficult time for many women. For those who have experienced the break-up of their families. For the ones who are pregnant and worried. For the mothers who are looking to regain custody of their children. For those who think of their elderly or deceased parents. For the ones who find themselves isolated or feel lonely. This year, the transition to a new year will be like no other. Our team will redouble their efforts to ensure that all the women housed in our home have a good time despite everything.

As essential workers, we cannot afford the slowdown that others are experiencing. The festivities announced from December 23rd to the 27th will not be enjoyed by all. The recommendation of voluntary isolation recommended by our elected officials will not be possible for workers in our industry. Those with school age children with extended holidays will have to compose with atypical holiday schedule, without the respite that school provides.

Personally, I will not watch the *Bye-Bye* as prescribed. Rather than attend a retrospective of the year, I prefer to look straight ahead and keep moving forward. One foot in front of the other. One day at a time.

Thank you, dear allies, and faithful donors. Each and every one of your contributions is valuable.

Thank you to the whole team! Thanks to Lynda, Lisette, Marcia, Cécile, Valérie, Anne, Daphnée, Annie, Justine, Fatou, Vanessa, Maritza, Nataliia, Mikaela, Corina, Émilie, Florence, Laurence, Marion, Charlotte, Marie-Pier, Brigitte, May-Lee, Lydia, Jodie, Anamée!



Photo: Alisa Anton, Unsplash

Testimonials from our residents

We are women, and our value goes unrecognized.

“As women, we would like to see a decrease in the cost of consumer goods. We would like to see bus passes at a reduced price, based on one's income. We want women to make as much as men do. Because a fairer system would allow each to pay based on what they can afford.”

Many of us found ourselves in the street out of excessive goodness, or because we underestimated our worth. It's hard to do otherwise when society still doesn't recognize our value. Without even speaking of pay equity, how can we explain that a doctor's salary is so disproportionately large when compared to what a nurse makes? The worth of our products though, that worth is one that we know well. Bread now costs \$4 and milk costs \$2.85. The cost of life is going up and our income is not following suit.

We are women, and we endure violence.

We are in the street, and we must hide not to be beaten. If we don't manage to find a friend's place for the night, maybe an acquaintance, a Tim Horton's or a McDonald's, we have to find shelter in back alleys, in back yards or wooded areas. We do what is necessary to get a bit of sleep. Women living in a situation of homelessness are less visible; therefore their government does nothing for them.

“As women, we wish to stop being abused, that women on the streets are given more respect than dogs. We wish that there would be more loving men, and we wish that it would be recognized that violence is also perpetrated by roommates, by landlords.”

We are women, and the system is making us sick.

“As women, we hope to see a revision of healthcare budgets and an increase of existing mental health services. A society betters itself through healthcare and education.”

Since the state has divested itself, many people have found themselves without the resources they need, and over time those people join the ranks of others living in situations of homelessness. When mental illness doesn't lead to homelessness, homelessness often leads to mental illness. The daily injustices we endure lead to illness. And illness is too much of luxury when it takes six months to see a psychiatrist. If you want to commit suicide, chances are you won't wait for six months.

We are women, and we deserve respect.

“As women, we want homes like the ones you have. We want a just society whose values are in the right place.”

Everyone has a right to decent housing. It shouldn't be normal that we have to live in unclean spaces just because we have less income than others. We sometimes receive expired food; the contempt can be felt even through donations. We live in an epicurean and superficial society, and have lost sight of what is essential. We prioritize things over beings without adequately sharing our resources, and that is not a long-term solution.

These statements were taken from collective writing workshops done with the women of the Auberge Madeleine, in collaboration with Exeko.



May-Lee, counsellor



Vanessa and Corina, counsellors



Photo: Markus Spiske, Unsplash

Hello to all. Since September, I have been active as a worker with ex-residents. Each year we shelter a large number of women. Among them, several leave the Auberge to find their own apartment. My job is to intervene and to offer them support in this new step, which can be more complicated than you think.

For many women who have experienced homelessness, having their own home is the ultimate objective, the Holy Grail!!! Sadly, keeping that home can sometimes be a challenge. The women we shelter at the Auberge are often isolated, with few resources, and they often live with addiction and mental health issues...all these things make access to an autonomous lifestyle much more difficult. My role is to offer some support, allowing them to stay in their home and to leave the path of homelessness that they once led.

The accompaniments I propose are varied and are adapted to each woman's situation. For some of them, that consists of phone calls once in a while to see if everything is going well, to have a chat and to



Marion, counsellor for ex-residents

help them feel like they aren't alone. For others, the accompaniments are more involved (accompanying them to medical or other types of appointments, helping them connect in different relationships, helping them with administrative work, managing their budget, maintaining their apartment, etc.). I also take care of food assistance to help certain women when they go through the rougher months.

The accompaniments I propose are not exclusively reserved to women who live on their own. I can also give support to certain past residents who find themselves in complicated situations.

My day to day is therefore very varied. I meet with various women, all very different from one another but who all have one thing in common; their attachment to the Auberge Madeleine, a place where they felt welcome, where they felt supported and encouraged. A place they do not hesitate to call if they feel like they need a hand.

—Marion

The current situation of an ongoing pandemic commits us to receive as few visitors as possible, and it is our wish, at this moment in time, to ask all our donors to give preference to a cash donation rather than a donation in kind to support us in this difficult time.

Thank you to all!

Photo: Alex Jackman, Unsplash

Credits

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We encourage you to keep supporting us through donations, [via CanaDon](#) or by cheque, at our mailing address: **Auberge Madeleine, P.O. Box 60118 BP St-Denis, Mtl, H2J 4E1**



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