

The Team of the Auberge Madeleine; the Definition of Resilience

A year ago, the government announced we would be forced into taking a break, an inward facing social retreat so we could overcome this planetary crisis. With this break came many challenges for many people. For front-line workers, the challenge was to maintain a certain quality of service all while integrating and applying new restrictions.

Before the beginning of the pandemic, our needs were already substantial, as waiting lists kept getting longer. The Auberge Madeleine was fully booked 365 days a year. The employees at the Auberge were already doing colossal work in supporting women in precarious situations. Right at the beginning of the crisis, measures were taken to ensure the security of the residents and workers. Hand-washing stations were added at the entrance and in the dining room, sanitary measures were put in place and stays were extended. Thanks to these measures, the Auberge Madeleine is one of the only resources in homelessness that hasn't had to pause its services. We also haven't had any outbreaks. Knock on wood!

Of course, the employees have had a bigger workload since these measures have been put in place. They have to take care of women who are even more vulnerable than they usually are, whose anxieties are multiplied by the situation. The workers have been admirably brave and managed to overcome the challenge with empathy and involvement. Even though they have

received bonuses for the additional tasks, we know that it's their heart that keeps them at work everyday.

Obviously, behind each team, there is that tiny spark, that source of inspiration. As Antoine de Saint-Exupery said *"If you want to build a ship, don't drum up the men to gather wood, divide the work and give orders. Instead, teach them to yearn for the vast and endless sea."* Melanie Walsh is that tranquil force that will guide her team with passion and devotion to the cause. She is resilience incarnate, and she inspired her team to never give up.

The members of the board of directors wanted to salute the exemplary work that each and every worker of the Auberge has done. They have worked hard to ensure an essential service in a time of crisis. You truly are this past year's heroes, and you deserve the honours we bestow on you today.

You have our complete admiration,



Karine Lemieux et Judith Lussier
Members of the board of directors



The announcement made in January that there would be a Government mandated curfew raised many questions for the team working at the Auberge. What effect would this constraint have on our residents? How would we help each of them get used to this new reality? How could we help ease the feeling of being locked up and isolated that some residents had? Part of the solution was to find a way to connect the women residing here to one another. By emphasizing creativity and the engagement of its workers, the Auberge put a series of activities in place to lighten the evenings and to make this curfew slightly more festive and relaxed. Since January residents have had the occasion to participate in an evening activity, ranging from movie nights, to making greeting cards, to physically distanced physical activities and self-massage workshops. The residents made the best of the occasion and helped in creating a space dedicated to creativity and play. This has had many positive effects on the residents and on the team working at the Auberge. Everyone agrees that the moments we have spent together have been precious ones, and they have helped us adapt to being confined.

Corinne
Counsellor





We are very happy to introduce you to Brigitte, our new assistant cook! Since March, Brigitte has been helping our cook full time. Both of them keep the ongoing tradition of making oven baked miracles, while allowing the workers to be more present with the residents.

Welcome Brigitte!

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In fall of 2020 I had the opportunity to complete a college internship in social work at the Auberge. As a part of the social services and health network, the Auberge Madeleine was a unique space that helped me renew my interest for social work. What I discovered was a welcoming place that was inclusive and particularly invested in the fight against homelessness. The few months I spent at the Auberge helped me understand the importance of issues surrounding women’s homelessness, issues which are sadly often hidden away. The Auberge is militant, and they are attempting to deconstruct the preconceptions behind the idea that homelessness is solely lived in the streets.

It is long past the time where the system should have thought of the specific issues concerning women living in situations of vulnerability and homelessness. Still today, women are overrepresented as far as poverty and other forms of oppression are concerned.

Their voices must be heard. Through its militancy and its engagement to provide a safe, secure and inclusive space, the Auberge acts as a megaphone for these exceptional women.

The Auberge Madeleine will always have a place in my heart and soul.

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Jodie Bélanger Sanscartier
Social worker

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I had to leave my dwelling due to unsafe conditions. I found myself at the Auberge Madeleine. I was well received (with respect). Very quickly, they offered me their ear. They were attentive and kept things confidential. They said they could help me. That was extremely comforting. It was a strange coincidence that my stay at the Auberge happened during the holidays, and during a pandemic. They were very welcoming.

I want to thank the Auberge, because after my time there I found a decent place to stay.

I would like to add that the Auberge Madeleine is an organization build on valiant, strong women, who break their backs every day to bring comfort, help and solutions to a large number of women facing hardship.

Bianca
Former resident

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