

# Inspiring stories

*We wanted to take the time to recognize a few of the individuals who have served as an inspiration not just throughout the pandemic, but on a daily basis throughout the year. Whether or not they have hearing loss, their passion motivates those around them and their support of the community affected by hearing loss has life changing impacts.*

Nechma Surik



Nechma is a member that inspires us with her ongoing support to our organization and her commitment to the hearing loss community. She has devoted her professional career to developing the Nechma Surik Better Hearing Program. This program teaches nursing staff how to support seniors with managing their hearing loss, a sensitization and training that is often overlooked. She did this all while living with severe hearing loss herself. Her perseverance and dedication has impacted so many lives for the better. Many healthcare professionals are using her methods and implementations.

For years, Dr. William Steinberg, a double cochlear implant recipient and the mayor of Hampstead, led the campaign to bring the surgery to Montréal. Dr. Steinberg was fitted with Cochlear Implant CI in Québec, and was an integral part of approving the surgeries to come to Montréal in 2019. Currently, he is the President of CIRA (Cochlear Implant Recipients Association) and Vice-Chair of the Agglomération Permanent Commission on Public Security. He has also fostered relations with organizations, leaders, and members of government both in Hampstead and across Québec and Canada.

Dr. William Steinberg



Samir Badran



Over the past year and a half, Samir has become one of our most dedicated volunteers. An expert on communication, he has helped Hear Québec on nearly, if not all, major projects since he began volunteering with us. He has spent countless hours writing press releases, captioning our radio and TV interviews, and creating all of the wonderful videos we've put out in the past year. We truly could not have done it without him! Despite not personally being affected by hearing loss, Samir has continually shown his devotion to the community of those affected by hearing loss by selflessly volunteering his time on a weekly basis, even making himself available to help us throughout the pandemic. Samir's endless support of our community is truly inspirational.

John Ferguson is one of those gentlemen who just gets things done. During the pandemic John volunteered as a driver for both the CCFP and the homeless shelter. One week, the staff mentioned that they were in need of a freezer. An organization posted on Facebook that they also needed a freezer. Within a week John had organized and found two suppliers to pay for two brand new freezers. He also donated over 150 face shields to Hear Québec that snowballed into a huge and successful campaign on accessibility and awareness. He continues to inspire us as a community. Thank you for helping us just get it done!!!

John Ferguson



*Despina Kefalas*



Despina Kefalas, an RBC employee, has been a volunteer shopper for the COVID Community Food Program (CCFP) since May. During early morning shifts, she has always presented herself with enthusiasm and a sincere willingness to help the community, and brightens the days of those in more difficult circumstances. In sharing her positive volunteering experience with the bank, she inspired others to contribute as well; so much so, that RBC published her story and offered to make a donation as part of their "Random Acts of Canadian Program." It is people like Despina who give us hope and remind us of how even single acts of kindness can have such a ripple effect!

*Katrina Tarondo*



Katrina Tarondo has been the Young Adult Director on Hear Québec's Board of Directors for the past 4 years. Having a hearing loss herself, Katrina can easily relate to many of Hear Québec's members. Her passion and drive for change has led her to be a strong voice of activism for the community of people affected by hearing loss. Her tenacity to speak up for herself and others even when it is most difficult is extremely inspirational. Most recently, she wrote a letter to Mayor Plante requesting the Mayor wear clear face masks to acknowledge the hearing loss community during a time when masks and shields have been made mandatory throughout the city of Montréal.

*Maria Fernanda Benavides*



Maria has had ties to Hear Québec for many years. Due to having hearing loss her whole life, she has developed many relationships with staff, board members, and members. She has made waves with her advocacy for the hearing loss/Deaf community. Tired of being isolated, and with her devotion to her family, she is determined to stay involved with the community. In order for her to do so, she has educated many people in her community about the needs of the hearing loss community. In recent events, she has displayed outstanding determination in the promotion of clear masks. She has written various letters to government officials and schools so they know how important speechreading and accessibility is for the hearing loss/Deaf community.

*Lesley Cotton*



Lesley Cotton has been keeping herself actively informed and engaged in the challenges that this pandemic has brought to those in the hard of hearing community. On her own accord, Lesley contacted our office to inform us of clear face masks that she purchased for herself and her friends. Her kindness extended further, offering us samples and connecting us to the right company so we could order them ourselves. Through sincerity and advocacy, we are able to help many people communicate more clearly with those who lipread. Lesley mentioned that, above all, to be able to give someone your smile is the most beautiful thing.

*For all the volunteers for CCFP and members that are advocating for accessibility, and for all our partners that are helping us reach our mission, we thank you!*

