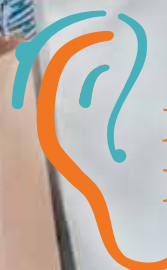


HEARHEAR

M A G A Z I N E

- ***COVID Community Food Program: What We Have Achieved Together***
- ***Accessibility during COVID-19 Safe and Clear Campaign***

**FALL
2020**



Entendre Québec
Hear Québec

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A Word From the Executive Director

To be honest, I was at a little bit of a loss as to what to say for this issue of our magazine. How could I be inspiring to you all or write something that would be of interest to the readers in the midst of our current situation? Should I talk about the pandemic or should I just focus on what we are doing to help our members and community get through it?

As leaders we have a responsibility to create an environment with open communication and creative thinking—one that is oriented towards trust, and bound by a cohesive team effort. No doubt, we must also provide the team we lead with a vision of the project objectives and we must motivate that vision through inspiration. But most importantly, we lead and inspire others best by setting a good example, by making our behavior consistent with our words.

On April 2nd, I received a phone call from the President of Board, wanting to discuss something. I expressed that this was not a good time; I was volunteering in a local grocery store, and preparing orders for members of the community that were unable, for health reasons, to go out and do their food orders safely. She laughed and said: “Of course you are!” “Yup that is me,” I thought to myself, helping any way that I knew how. This is how I lead our team.

This inspired the team and me to work with the community and partners to offer the COVID Community Food Program (CCFP). It is about what our community needs and how we can all work together to help because we are stronger together. See more on our special program on page 15.

We started 2020 with all these hopes and dreams of how we were going to be innovative and grow with our strategic plan. Although this is still going to happen, for now, we have pivoted. *For me 2020 is all about appreciating the things that matter the most: our health, family, friends, and most of all, how we have come together to support and help each other during this time of crisis. All of this has been so motivating for us as a team.*



Heidi Wager

Leadership, to me, is about inspiring others. And I have been truly inspired by you all: namely, our members, the Board of Directors, the volunteers, all the donors, partners, and really the whole community. Thank you for your ongoing support and for giving me the opportunity to be a part of this journey with you all. I am truly blessed.

We have been working hard to develop some new programs and activities for you this coming fall. Take a look at the program pages; tell us what you think. With this issue of the magazine, we are sharing stories that we hope will inspire you—and those around you—to help and give back to our communities. We would like to hear from you. If you have an inspiring story or simply want to share your thoughts about a specific issue or concern, please contact me at heidywager@hearhear.org

**Stay safe and healthy.
“We are HEAR for you!”**



My Experience with Masks



Katrina C. Tarondo (@ktsnapshots) has congenital moderately severe to mild mixed hearing loss in both ears (she wears two behind-the-ear hearing aids), which is a component of her Rieger Syndrome. She currently works at an immigration law firm. Katrina is a Board Director at Hear Quebec. Hear Québec has been a great place for Katrina to reconnect with the Hard-of-Hearing network. Katrina wants to pay it forward as she knows first-hand how important organizations like Hear Québec are to individuals with hearing loss and their loved ones.

Despite being born with a hearing loss, my hearing journey started later than one would expect. At age 6, I was in a mainstream school, finishing up grade one and not doing well, when the school decided to check my hearing. They noticed a problem and brought it to the attention of my parents. I was then tested in a hospital and was told that I had a congenital hearing loss. I have 30 percent loss in my right ear and 40 percent in the left. For my parents, this outcome was welcomed. Prior to my correct diagnosis, doctors attributed my delayed speech development to slow development and never thought it could be attributed to a hearing loss. To me, my life really started at 7 years old. I was later diagnosed with a rare facial syndrome called Rieger's Syndrome. This includes hearing loss, missing muscles in the eyes and an underbite. I obtained two behind the ear hearing aids and never looked back. I had a long road ahead of me with a lot of catching up to do. But with lots of support, and through hard work and determination, I was able to catch up academically, and by high school I surpassed many of my mainstream peers. There, I learned to self-advocate for accommodations and this became second-nature once I enrolled in CEGEP and later in university. My parents made sure I had all the resources I needed and they never treated me differently to my siblings. I was encouraged to strive

for whatever I wanted in life. The Montreal Oral School for the Deaf (MOSD) taught me the importance of working hard, made me aware of my strengths, and helped me work on my areas of growth. My hearing loss journey is very much a part of who I am, and with it comes different challenges as the world changes. The one change that made hearing more difficult during recent months has been the use of cloth masks during the pandemic. I knew cloth masks would be an obstacle to communication, but I did not know how much it would affect me and others with hearing loss until I had my first experience with them.





Normally, I do not have any issues when I am at the pharmacy. But about a month and a half into the lockdown, I finally had to get a prescription. I was confronted with the same social distancing barriers we are all experiencing. There was a table in front of the prescription counter; a pharmacist stood on the other side, behind a computer, wearing a face mask and a face guard. I had a hard time hearing her questions about my prescription which made me anxious. The pharmacist's speech was muffled due to the the mask and the distance. I rely on the hearing I have left with the help of hearing aids, but this situation was difficult. Also, I felt I had no privacy because there was a personal barrier that made me stay far away. The customer behind me was able to hear everything that was being said as the pharmacist had to speak up. Furthermore, no vibrating beepers were given out to customers, so I did not receive a signal when my prescription was ready. Unlike others, I had to stay close and listen intently for my name, which caused me further anxiety.

After sharing my experience, my family and friends also told me that they had similar difficulties hearing people with the masks. Masks muffle speech and also hide facial expressions which provide important visual cues when we communicate. This experience was important for me to share as it sheds light on other alternatives such as clear masks and visors, which are more effective in protection, breathing and talking. Seeing someone's face makes a huge difference in communication. I did not appreciate this as much until I experienced talking with masked people. Communication is not smooth and clear with cloth masks. They have become fashionable and

popular because they offer different designs, and so are more used than face shields. Fortunately, this is changing as experts (epidemiologists) highlight the fact that face shields provide more protection as they protect your whole face. A recent article by CBC News journalist Dianne Buckner discusses the new demand for face shields. Designers are now aware of the efficacy of face shields. For instance, Joe Doucet, a New York City based multidisciplinary designer has made face shields that mimic the look of sunglasses. Not only does his design protect you from the sun, but it also keeps you cooler in the summer compared to cloth masks. Many Canadian companies are following suit, making face shields more fashionable and comfortable so they feel more natural. Initially they produced face shields for essential workers, but now they are able to open the market to the general public. This will make face shields available to people who work with the public. Face shields have other advantages too. For example, for people who wear glasses, their breath is able to escape from the bottom of the shield, rather than from the top as with cloth masks. Face shields are also better for teaching in classroom settings.

For all these reasons, I urge you all to consider using face shields as an alternative to cloth masks when needed. The benefits are both for the user and their communication partner as shields ensure that communication is clearer, more understandable and therefore more accessible to all.

Hear Québec's Safe and Clear Campaign continues to grow and our message is being heard. We have also urged the mayor of Montreal to encourage the use of face shields so all citizens can enjoy communication accessibility.



Membership & Registration

Return all forms by mail, email, or in person* to the Hear Québec office with payment. You can also download these forms on our website www.hearhear.org.

COVID-19: Given that COVID-19 is still an ongoing concern, many of our upcoming programming events will be held virtually. We know that this poses a challenge for some of our members, so we are tentatively scheduling some in-person events that will all be confirmed before we start. Please be assured that we will do everything in our power to make these events and activities accessible and safe for all involved. We will have specific safety measures in place for more information please contact abbystonehouse@hearhear.org or call her at 514-488-5552 ext 4504

Annual Membership is valid between April 1 and March 31 of each year and must be renewed annually. Hear Québec members have the right to vote at our Annual General Meeting, receive our printed bi-annual **HEARHEAR** Magazine, and are eligible to participate in our programs and services. Membership is extended to people affected by hearing loss, hearing health professionals, or anyone who supports our mission. If you are a veteran, actively serving, or a student aged 16-18, your membership is free!

Registration is mandatory for all programs, events, and services. Please register prior to your activity and not on the starting day. For specific registration instructions please see the description under each activity.

Payment Methods: You can pay online or in person.* Payments can be done by cash, cheque, credit card, or debit card. Please make cheques payable to **Hear Québec**. You may also make secure payments or donations online at: <https://hearhearnationbuilder.com/donate>

Accessibility: All programs, events, and activities will be accessible for those with hearing loss. This can include sound amplification, FM systems, or Live Transcribe. If this is a virtual event, Hear Québec will be using accessible platforms such as Google Meet, which allows live closed captioning. If you feel you need further accommodations please let us know and we will do our best to accommodate your needs.

*For COVID safety purposes, please call and make an appointment before stopping by the office.

If there is a concern due to financial hardship, please email the Executive Director at heidywager@hearhear.org or call 514-488-5552 ext 4500.

Annual General Meeting

We invited you to attend Hear Québec's **first ever digital Annual General Meeting (AGM)**. This year's AGM will take place through a digital platform. We will have live closed captioning throughout for your accessibility. Tech assistance will be available throughout in order to help with your login and participation. You must renew your 2020-2021 membership by September 15th in order to vote at this AGM.

Date: September 29th, 2020

Time: 5:00 pm - 6:30 pm

Registration: Indicate your interest on the registration form. You will be emailed the details about the event and the login information. **Deadline to register: September 22nd, 2020**



Important Dates

September

- September 1st 2020 - Registration opens
- September 7th 2020 - Labour Day/Office Closed
- September 16th 2020 - Google Meet Tutorials
- September 22nd 2020 - **Digital** Presentation: CHHA Online Speechreading
- September 25th 2020 - Google Meet Tutorials
- September 29th 2020 - **Digital** Annual General Meeting

October

OCTOBER: NATIONAL AUDIOLOGY AWARENESS MONTH

- October 6th 2020 - Weekly support calls begin
- October 7th 2020 - In-person Speechreading Classes begin*
- October 8th 2020 - **Digital HEARTalk**: Ask an Audiologist
- October 12th 2020 - Thanksgiving/Office Closed
- October 20th 2020 - Google Meet Tutorials
- October 27th 2020 - **Digital HEARTalk**: Taking Care of Your Physical Health

November

- November 12th 2020 - Google Meet Tutorials
- November 17th 2020 - **Digital HEARTalk**: Living with Hearing Loss During COVID-19
- November 24th 2020 - Weekly support calls end
- November 26th 2020 - In-person Speechreading Classes end

December

- Home for the Holidays Event*
 - December 1st 2020 - GivingTuesday Campaign
- *TBC - To be confirmed**

Office Closed - December 21st, 2020 to January 3rd, 2021

Noise-Induced Hearing Loss Program

This program aims to promote awareness about NIHL for ages 8-12. We will be offering digital resources and interactive activities to educators this fall. NIHL is an ongoing problem among the younger generation, with 1.1 billion young people at risk of hearing loss due to unsafe listening practices.

To learn more: Call the office at 514-488-5552 ext. 4500 or email the program coordinator at abbystonehouse@hearhear.org

Hear Québec Fall Programs

Speechreading Program

New

Online Speechreading Classes Introductory Presentation

Join us for an introductory presentation about Read our Lips - an online speechreading course developed by CHHA (Canadian Hard of Hearing Association). This presentation will give an overview of the course, how to register, and information about a **Hear Québec's amazing discount**. You will also learn about our **exciting weekly support calls**. Only members who attend this presentation will be eligible for these special offers.



Date: September 22nd, 2020

Time: 1 pm - 1:45 pm

Place: Google Meet

Deadline to register: September 15th, 2020

Registration: Indicate your interest on the registration form for this presentation. You will be emailed the details about the event and the login information. If you need further information on how to use Google Meet, register for a one on one tutorial.

In-person Fall Speechreading Classes

We are preemptively scheduling in-person speechreading classes for this fall. Starting in October we are tentatively offering two 8-week speechreading classes. Please register in advance as space is limited. COVID safety measures will be in place for all those participating, with clear masks and a limit to the number of students in each class. Register early to secure your place!

Registration: Indicate your interest on the registration form and complete payment. **Only members who complete the registration form and payment will have their seat reserved.**

*NDG

Lethbridge-Layton-Mackay Rehabilitation Centre
7010 Sherbrooke St. West, Montreal
Session Fees: \$25

Speechreading Beginners (Room C234)
Tuesdays, 1 pm - 3 pm
October 8 - November 26

*DORVAL

Sarto Desnoyers Community Centre
1335 Lakeshore Dr, Dorval
Session Fees: \$25

Speechreading PLUS (Salon A)
Wednesdays, 1 pm - 3 pm
October 7 - November 25

***Please note that in person activities are subject to change due to the ongoing risk of COVID-19. Dorval residents will be given priority at Sarto Desnoyers Community Centre.**

Outreach Program

More than 35% of older adults live with hearing loss. We see the challenges that many of our members face everyday when they are in the general public, due to the lack of knowledge about the need of the hearing loss population.

Our tailored presentations will provide tips on communication strategies and a greater understanding of hearing loss in general. Book your ***free*** in person or digital presentation today.

How to book a presentation: Call the office at 514-488-5552 ext. 4500 or email the Program Coordinator at abbystonehouse@hearhear.org

*Presentations are free with annual membership

Google Meet Tutorials

Google Meet is a great way to stay connected with family and friends. This video conference platform has free live closed captioning for your accessibility. We will be giving one on one tutorial sessions for people interested in learning how to use it.

Registration: One-on-one tutorials are by appointment only. To get your appointment time, complete the registration form and you will be contacted to reserve a time slot. These tutorials will help you participate in upcoming digital activities.

Tutorial session:

September 16th, 2020

September 25th, 2020

October 20th, 2020

November 12th, 2020



Google Meet



HEARTalk Digital Wellness Series

This series is designed to empower members to take control of all aspects of their well-being. This series was initially scheduled for the spring of 2020. It was postponed due to the pandemic but it is too important to not have so will be hosting it digitally through Google Meet.

Registration: Indicate your interest in the **HEARTalk** section of the registration form. You will be emailed the details about the event and the login information. If you need further information on how to use Google Meet, register for a one-on-one tutorial (information above).

Ask an Audiologist with Dana Manolache

Would you like to know more about hearing loss and how to properly manage it? In honor of National Audiology Awareness Month, we invite you to speak to audiologist Dana Manolache. Dana Manolache will be highlighting what to expect at your hearing test, how often you should get tested and will tell you what questions you should ask your audiologist. There will also be a Q&A portion.

Date: October 8th, 2020

Time: 6 pm - 7 pm

Deadline to register: October 1st, 2020



Taking Care of Your Physical Health with Alicia Wright

Alicia Wright, a representative from the Concordia University PERFORM Centre, will present the benefits of exercising to general well-being.

Date: October 27th, 2020

Time: 1 pm - 2 pm

Deadline to register: October 20th, 2020



Living with Hearing Loss During the Pandemic with Debra Fisher

Debra Fisher, a retired speechreading instructor, will share her experience of living with hearing loss during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Date: November 17th, 2020

Time: 1 pm - 2 pm

Deadline to register: November 10th, 2020



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 Agglomeration 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 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.

Katrina Tarondo



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 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.

Lesley Cotton



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!

FYI Inspiring Change

The Hard Reality for People with Disabilities



Abby Stonehouse has been Hear Québec's Program Coordinator since 2018. She is a graduate of Concordia University, with a Bachelor's degree in Psychology. She lives with moderate hearing loss. As such, the work she does for Hear Québec is very near and dear to her heart. She is also a stand-up comedian, who made her OFFJFL debut at the Just for Laughs 2018 festival. In May 2019, she co-produced and performed Montreal's first fully accessible comedy show: Comedy for a Cause: Accessibility for All.

It is hard to think of a time when I did not have a disability. However, I was fortunate to live for 22 years of life without one. I have to admit that I was extremely naive about the lifestyle and challenges associated with disabilities. It was a big reality check when I was temporarily in a wheelchair: not being able to leave my house with ease, not having access to certain establishments, and having to think five steps ahead as to whether an activity was even feasible presented new challenges. I was extremely lucky to have a support network and the ability to focus on healing and adjusting to a new way of life. Many (millions) are not so lucky. I went through the same journey when I was told that I had moderate hearing loss at the age of 25.

The reality is that many are not confronted with a disability—either directly or indirectly—in their daily activities. This makes it easy to ignore the challenges that disabled persons face day-in and day-out. For disabled persons, everyday activities that many of us take for granted—like going to school, working, or simply going to a café for a latte—are rarely easy. I can remember, for example, approaching a Tim Hortons in my wheelchair and being devastated that the establishment had installed planters between the wheelchair ramp and the entrance. Perhaps “devastated” is an understatement—I was livid since this made it impossible for me to enter.

Now think of that on a larger scale. Imagine someone who is eager to learn and hone their skills in the workforce; if they have severe hearing loss the job search narrows. Even after applying to jobs that they are suitable for, they find out that many employers cannot add the additional technology required for them to fully participate in the workplace. This narrows their possibilities even further and they are now left working a job with insufficient hours and inadequate pay. This is, in many respects, an idealized scenario. The reality is that many cannot find a job at all. *In Canada, 80% of working-age adults without disabilities have jobs, whereas only 59% with disabilities do. The wage gap is also significant among those with disabilities; It has been estimated that the median annual income for someone with disabilities is \$19,200, compared to \$39,000 for a working age adult.*

***“Alone we can do so little;
together we can do so much.”***
– Helen Keller

In addition to this, living with a disability often comes with burdensome expenses. Everything from equipment and technology to medication presents extra costs for disabled persons to bear. Hundreds—and sometimes thousands—of dollars are not covered by Medicare or other insurance. On June 1st, Prime Minister Trudeau announced a one time tax-free payment of \$600 for all those who are signed up for the disability tax credit (due to COVID-19). Despite the obvious need, this only occurred after months of Canadians affected by disabilities lobbying for help. Although this is a step forward, this fund excludes more than half of the Canadians living with disabilities. According to Statistics Canada, there are 6.2 million people in Canada who have disabilities; and of those, only 1.2 million are registered for the disability tax credit. Therefore, this COVID financial aid excludes 5 million Canadians living with disabilities. How could such a glaring inequality go unnoticed?

A large part of society is neither sensitized to any of this information nor aware of the basic needs of those affected by disabilities. As a result, when the COVID-19 pandemic erupted, lifesaving information was being shared without any accessibility measures attached for those with hearing loss. Moreover, live press conferences were not captioned and did not have sign language interpreters. This changed with time, but it's disheartening that people with disabilities had to fight to be thought of and included. And yet, we are seeing this neglect once more with



the lack of acknowledgment about the impact that cloth masks makes on the hearing loss/Deaf community. As someone who reads lips to compensate for their hearing loss, I am faced with confusion and anxiety every time I am in public space. How much longer will we, (disabled persons), have to raise awareness of the most basic needs of those with disabilities?

The time is ripe for change. In May 2019, the Accessible Canada Act for a barrier free Canada passed at the senate. This act will allow Accessibility Standards Canada to develop and revise the standard for accessibility in federal private sector organizations and Government of Canada departments and agencies. Closer to home, a Montreal committee for universal accessibility has set a goal to make 36 metro stations wheelchair accessible by 2022. Even though these changes will take time, it is a huge win for those with disabilities.

I can see the possibilities for an even bigger change right at our fingertips. The change starts when we educate ourselves—and others—about the needs and rights of those with disabilities. In our collective effort to make lasting change, it is important to remember that we, (those with disabilities), are not fighting alone.



I saw this positive impact first-hand not long ago when one of our volunteers, John Ferguson, generously donated 150 clear face shields during National AccessAbility Week. This donation was significant in launching our Safe and Clear Campaign to raise accessibility awareness money for clear face masks and shields.

All 150 shields were distributed within 48 hours! John's generosity and the popularity of the shields prompted us to continue our campaign to purchase more clear face masks and shields. In June we raised \$1783 allowing us to distribute more than 300 items during July! We have received such positive feedback from people finally being able to communicate with their friends and families, who were finally able to use a mask that did not hamper their hearing device. The immense support for the community affected by hearing loss was overwhelming.



"We are so grateful for the face shields! Our son is hard-of-hearing and we don't realize how much he actually looks at our mouths and reads our lips while talking to him. Cloth face masks muffle our words and make it difficult to hear. Not only will the face shields provide protection, but they will allow for better sound transmission and he can still read our lips! Thank you!!!"

- Clear Face Mask Recipient, Rina Hampartsoumian

The support our Safe and Clear Campaign has received throughout this difficult time has been extremely heartening and, if anything, has signaled the overlooked accessibility needs of our community. By the first week of August we were able to raise over \$3000 for the purchase of face masks and shields, and received over 500 orders in just two days! Our members were not the only ones in need

of the masks. We received requests from teachers, school boards, senior/community service centers, childcare centers, churches, clinics, other non-profits, and even airlines! We've spoken about our campaign with CBC, CJAD, and the Suburban. The intense demand for the masks clearly demonstrates the great need throughout the city. In an effort to bring further awareness, we've reached out to Valérie Plante, Mayor of Montréal; François Legault, Premier of Québec; and Dr. Horacio Arruda, Québec's Director of National Public Health. We have sent them their very own clear masks and face shields with the hope they will choose to serve as an inspiration for us all and lead by example by wearing the masks. No contribution is too small in this case; simply doing a small act of kindness such as wearing a clear mask, donating a few dollars, or sharing a Facebook post with accessibility information can make a huge difference. Together, we all have the potential to make a huge impact.



COVID Community Food Program

By: Rohini Mohanlal



Rohini Mohanlal recently completed her studies at McGill University in International Development, with a particular interest in food security. As the COVID Community Food Program Coordinator, she is Hear Québec's newest employee. In her free time, she can be found hiking and writing poetry.



Over the last few months the world has been turned upside down. At Hear Québec, our regular services and activities were interrupted. Some of us found ways to keep ourselves busy and healthy at home, but for many, this new reality came with new complications. We noticed that vulnerable populations were in dire need of a helping hand—especially single-parent families, seniors, immunocompromised persons, and people with accessibility needs. At the same time, we also noticed something else which was heartwarming: an upsurge in neighbours, friends, and even strangers wanting to support others in their community.

When our office closed, our staff quickly redirected their time to serve those most affected by the pandemic. In March, we partnered with other organizations, such as the West-Island Network, to set up the COVID Community Food Program (CCFP). Our objective was to provide immediate emergency services to maintain food security, mental health, and accessibility during this uncertain and unprecedented time.

With the help of Metro Beaconsfield and Maxi & Cie Pointe-Claire, we were able to shop and deliver groceries to over 150 customers. We set up an accessible system, allowing customers to submit an order online or by phone for volunteer grocery delivery. During the peak of the pandemic, we were in the store 4 times a week and preparing the other 3 days. Since then, more than 600 orders have been made! Customers continue to share their heartfelt appreciation for the program. Some, like Judy and Robert Rafuse, have been making orders with the CCFP since April.



"My wife and I are seniors and we have used the service every week to get our groceries. It has enabled us to stay safely isolated from high-risk areas like grocery stores. The service is excellent, from the easy-to-use website for ordering, to the friendly, polite, and efficient volunteers. They shop for groceries as if it was for their own use – exactly what was ordered and, when selecting produce, they only pick top quality."

We've had over 150 amazing volunteers of all ages and backgrounds coming together to help those in quarantine. Grocery shoppers continue to help out during early morning shifts, just in time for volunteer drivers to deliver them around. Our Hear Québec member and volunteer, Annette Perry, has been part of the program since the beginning. She comments:



"It was nice to do my little part in helping people survive this pandemic without having to worry about shopping for food. I enjoyed the experience and it made me feel good during a stressful time."

As the pandemic evolved, we recognized the need for adapting and diversifying our services. As part of the CCFP, we organized a donation drive, wherein we collected funds to purchase two fridges. These were given to the Dawson Boys and Girls club, a non-profit recreational and educational organization, and Resilience Montréal, a homeless shelter. Through our fundraising we supplied Resilience with pre-made meals and hygiene products for over 500 people which they were able to store safely in their new fridge!



Besides food security challenges, we also noticed increasing mental health concerns. Within the hard of hearing community, the mandatory face masks drastically hamper communication, so much so that we launched various campaigns to distribute clear face shields and masks (see page 12 for details).

Along with that, our team made personal phone calls, and surveys were sent to over 170 seniors to listen to and alleviate some of their worries. Since then, this initiative has blossomed into another project. In August, we began front porch visits to bridge services and resources to over 500 people. In this way, we are hoping to mitigate social isolation and encourage face-to-face interactions – at a safe distance of course!

Without all the wonderful volunteers and donations we would not have been able to serve over 1000 people within the community! Through these kind contributions and amazing initiatives, each person is inspiring others to return the world to a better normal! Thank you all for doing your share!



WHAT WE HAVE ACHIEVED TOGETHER

FOOD STATS



GROCERY ORDERS

656 AND COUNTING



PEOPLE SERVED

125 AND COUNTING

VOLUNTEERS



VOLUNTEER HOURS

1000 AND COUNTING



VOLUNTERS

100 AND COUNTING

SAFE & CLEAR CAMPAIGN



CLEAR MASKS

500 AND COUNTING



FACE SHIELDS

350 AND COUNTING

OUTREACH



2 FRIDGE DELIVERIES



ESSENTIAL SUPPLIES

500

MENTAL HEALTH CHECK UP



CHECK UPS

340 AND COUNTING

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West Island Network
Réseau de l'Ouest de l'Île



Repaire jeunesse Dawson
Dawson Boys & Girls Club

Google Meet with Closed Captioning

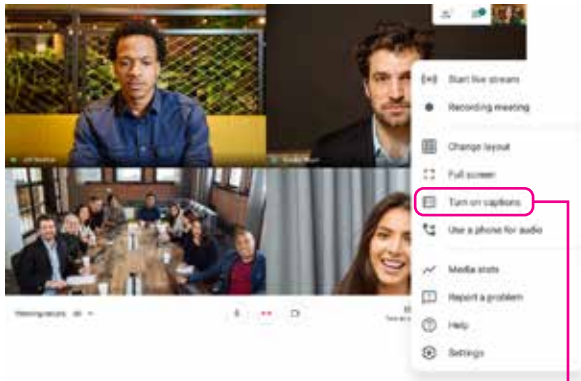
By: Omer Othman



Google Meet

With the rise of the worldwide pandemic (COVID-19), many activities have been transferred to online platforms. Some people have transitioned to working and studying from home, but where does this leave those facing accessibility issues?

There are several platforms that include accessibility for video calls and conferences, such as [Google Meet](#). This program offers many advantages for those with hearing loss because of its distinguishing ability to have live captioning without the need of installing additional software! Google Meet has a simple user interface that makes it easy for anyone use the program.



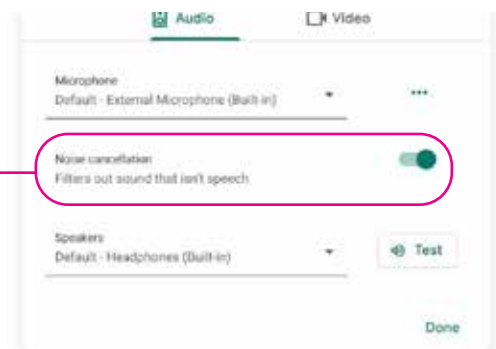
Turn on captions

As seen on the left, when you join a meeting on a desktop computer, at the bottom of the Meet window, click 'Turn on captions' with the 'CC' button. The 'CC' button is found on the top of the Meet window on Android and iPhone devices.

Sometimes live captioning can be hit-or-miss because the transcriber can display words that are not accurate to what the speaker is saying. However, when using Google Meet you will find that the live captioning is reliable and it also identifies who is speaking! So if you are in a bigger group setting, you can easily follow a transcript without having to look back and forth.

To further ease communication during the meeting, there is a noise cancellation feature implemented directly in the audio settings of the program. This allows you to hear and communicate easily with any background noise level.

Noise cancellation



This program can be used with a personal or school/work account. With a personal Google, you are able to set up a meeting through <https://meet.google.com/>, and then share the link to those who you'd like to join your meeting. For those with a school/work account, using G-suite, once the admin has enabled the Google Meet program for the organization, it follows the same steps as the personal account. Since Google connects all their products and tools, you will find Google Meet is easily integrated to other programs such as [Google Drive](#), [Google Calendar](#), etc. Google Meet integrates with your calendar for quick and easy access so that those who have work meetings can easily add a link for a Google Meet which all staff will see instantaneously.

Google has also supported many non-profit organizations. Hear Québec uses the G-suite for its everyday tasks, such as placing events on the calendar or working on documents collaboratively. For this reason, and for the benefits of accessibility, we used Google Meet when the global pandemic hit. Google Meet integrated well with our work programs and allowed for everyone to easily follow with the captioning feature, especially those with hearing loss. Annalise Kluender, the Office and Communications Manager at Hear Québec says:



Annalise Kluender

“Some people lack the proper resources or knowledge about accessibility to integrate these captioning services beforehand which negatively impacts those who rely on captioning as an inherent aspect of their communication. The captioning provided by Google Meet allows each user to turn it on and off as they wish, and actually identifies which meeting attendee is speaking! It's super convenient and in an office of people with hearing loss, myself included, it's a necessary tool which allows us to fully comprehend the content of the meeting.”

Google Meet always secures your information to ensure your privacy during a meeting. All meetings are encrypted and the safety measures are always updated for security so there is no need to worry about the level of confidentiality of the topics in your meetings. So if you are looking for an alternative program to host video calls that allows for accessibility free of charge, Google Meet is worth considering!



Omer is a third year communications student at Concordia University. He is a cochlear implant user since 2001. He worked at Hear Québec as a graphic designer and remains as a volunteer. He is passionate about technology and accessibility, especially for those with hearing loss.





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