

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 SUPPLES

500

MENTAL HEALTH
CHECK UP



CHECK UPS

340 AND COUNTING

In collaboration with



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



metro
PLUS

maxi
& Cie

Liftow



LA CAYE DE L'ONDT
RÉSILIENCE MONTRÉAL



Repaire jeunesse Dawson
Dawson Boys & Girls Club