

DANS LA RUE

NEWSLETTER
SPRING 2021



THE DAY CENTRE ART ROOM: WE'RE BACK!

We were delighted to reopen the newly reconfigured art room in the Day Centre in early March.

The program had been on hold since the onset of the pandemic because of the challenges in meeting the physical distancing and disinfection guidelines established by public health authorities.

The art room is a place where youth can boost their energy, engage in art projects and create something they are proud of. It was therefore a priority for **Dans la rue** to get the space up and

running again as quickly as possible. Plexiglass barriers have been installed and the art supplies have been divided up into individual sets to make the required cleaning process easier. The number of stations has also been reduced to maintain sufficient space between participants.

Art helps homeless youth channel their emotions and alleviate the

anxiety that has built up during the pandemic. These activities also help them discover and express themselves in a respectful and judgment-free environment. The art room counsellor is there to provide support, to listen and to establish the foundations for further psychosocial care. Participants also benefit from developing their skills and sharing their interests.

UNWAVERING SUPPORT FROM DANS LA RUE'S TEAMS

Throughout the past year, the staff and volunteers at **Dans la rue** have been working tirelessly to overcome the public health challenges arising from the pandemic and ensure that essential services are available to homeless youth.

Our counsellors have continued to provide personalized follow-up despite multiple service closures and the shortage of available resources.

Our depot, kitchen, maintenance, development and administrative teams have all found creative ways to pitch in. This has included approaching corporate donors for foodstuffs and other key supplies.

These outstanding efforts across the organization have kept **Dans la rue** open and reaching out to homeless and at-risk youth. Here's to all of you for keeping us moving forward!



Dans la rue makes 17 housing units available to 15 youth and two families, for periods of up to five years.

DANS LA RUE HOUSING

A WELCOME SOURCE OF STABILITY FOR HOMELESS YOUTH

This stability is an opportunity to work with them to create an action plan to transition away from life on the street and toward self-sufficiency. On-site counsellors provide personalized support in line with each young tenant's individual needs.

Dans la rue Housing provides stability to youth as they set new life objectives for themselves. For some tenants, this may be their first stable living environment. Counsellors are available and attentive to their needs as soon as they move in and on an ongoing basis, as it is not uncommon for certain fears to resurface after a prolonged period in "survival mode."

Tenants need to learn how to socialize and fit into a community setting. With the counsellors' help, they seek out solutions to change the behaviours they

have acquired while living on the street. They are encouraged to express their fears and anxieties, as well as voice their hopes and dreams.

Kris, one of the Housing counsellors, has reported a fresh, vibrant dynamic with the recent arrival of six new tenants. He has been pleased to see several youth gaining confidence, even in the midst of pandemic, because they have a permanent place to call home.

"ONE OF THE RESIDENTS SET HERSELF A CHALLENGE: SHE DECIDED TO LEARN CIRCUS ARTS MANOEUVRES TO KEEP HERSELF BUSY DURING LOCKDOWN. SHE'S BEEN PRACTISING AND SHOWED US THE RESULTS THIS WEEKEND. SEEING HOW PROUD SHE WAS TO JUGGLE SEVERAL BALLS AT ONCE WAS FANTASTIC."

— Kris McNulty, Housing counsellor at Dans la rue.

LIFE AT THE BUNKER

EMERGENCY SHELTER

The team of counsellors at the Bunker were forced to scramble to adapt their services at the start of the pandemic.

They had to reduce their capacity from 17 youth to nine, adjust the intake process to include questions about COVID-19 symptoms, introduce mask and handwashing protocols, and more. Youth have been cooperative and are complying with the public health measures in all our services. In many cases, **Dans la rue** is the only place they have to go.

The Bunker counsellors take the time to listen to them, without ever passing judgment, and to refer them to the Day Centre where they can find support for

finding housing or employment, filling out applications for government ID cards or obtaining mental health services.

The staff have observed an increased psychological toll on youth since the pandemic began and have been particularly attentive to those who have run away from home or who express suicidal thoughts.

The Bunker remains a place for youth to get a good night's sleep, which is often key to starting the next day calmer and focused on solutions.





FAMILY SERVICES

EMPOWERING YOUNG PARENTS

Family Services helps young parents in high-risk situations be more responsive to the needs of their children.

The counsellors work with them on building parenting skills, strengthening parent-child bonds and developing tools such as setting up a routine. They also make sure families have access to a suitable place to live, in partnership with the Office municipal d'habitation de Montréal or Dans la rue Housing.

They cover families with young children, from birth through to the start of kindergarten. The relationship they establish helps build a sense of trust. Counsellors are also available to accompany young parents to meetings

with child protection services or court appearances and make sure they understand what is expected of them. They also work with parents to help them identify their limits, explore potential solutions and come up with ideas for activities to do with their little ones.

Becoming a parent can be a catalyst for change. The Family Services counsellors are proud of the courage and perseverance shown by the youth they support as they strive to overcome obstacles and meet their children's needs.

YOUTH OUTREACH TEAM

COUNSELLORS ON THE FRONT LINES

Given the public health measures currently in place, a number of emergency shelters have been forced to reduce their capacity.

The Bunker is no exception. To help mitigate this unfortunate outcome of the pandemic for homeless and high-risk youth, Dans la rue has joined forces with a number of partners to set up a new Youth Outreach Team — Emergency Shelter.

The initiative is aimed at youth who go to shelters meant for homeless adults in order to offer them services geared to their particular needs, if they are open to the idea.

The Youth Outreach Team counsellors confirm that the youth they work with are often ineligible for housing support programs, which leaves them "living" at various shelters on a rotating basis. The 25–30 age group is particularly hard hit by the lack of youth-specific resources. What's more, keeping a job and taking steps to become more self-sufficient is decidedly more difficult in "survival mode." That is why outreach counsellors are there to listen to them, connect with them and make sure they keep well despite the challenging circumstances.



The Youth Outreach Team — Emergency Shelter is an initiative of the Table de concertation itinérance / jeunesse du centre-ville de Montréal and is supported by the following partners: CARE Montréal, Dans la rue, En Marge 12-17, Passages, Groupe d'intervention alternative par les pairs (GIAP), Refuge des Jeunes de Montréal and RÉZO.

HOOKED ON SCHOOL DAYS

FEBRUARY 15-18, 2021

Emmett Johns School students and **Dans la rue** scholarship fund recipients were recently surprised at the cafeteria with a video containing a series of messages of encouragement.

For the occasion, students were treated to a delicious meal cooked by Chef Dany Bolduc and the team from Marché La Pantry and Le H4C to congratulate them on for keeping up their studies in the midst of the pandemic. Well done, all of you!

May you all continue your academic efforts and continue to pursue your dreams.

Thank you to all those who contributed to the video (available on our Facebook page), namely Émile Bilodeau, Fred Zouvi,

Marie Chantal Perron, Dany Bolduc, Françoise David, Sylvie Legault, the Lise Watier Foundation, Guillaume Bordel, The Home Depot Foundation, the Centre de ressources éducatives et pédagogiques, Mark Pathy and Cécile Arbaud.

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

THE PANDEMIC AND BEYOND: MEETING THE NEEDS OF HOMELESS YOUTH

I would like to thank all our amazing **Dans la rue** staff for their commitment and resilience while the pandemic has raged on.

They have shown diligence, determination and creativity in keeping our services running and adapting them wherever possible to best accommodate the needs of homeless and at-risk youth.

As a team, and in conjunction with our partners, we have also taken the time to consider the outcomes of the pandemic on these youth. It is more important than ever to work toward preventing homelessness and provide positive, lasting solutions to get and keep them off the street. In early 2021, **Dans la rue** actively contributed to two briefs for the provincial government, entitled *Recommandations pour le Plan d'action interministériel en itinérance en termes de prévention de l'itinérance jeunesse* (by **Coalition Jeunes+**) and *Effets de la pandémie sur la santé*

mentale des jeunes en situation de grande précarité ou d'itinérance et recommandations pour le plan d'action en santé mentale 2021-2026 (by the Réseau d'intervention de proximité auprès des jeunes de la rue).

How do we go about ensuring fewer youth end up on the street? For those who do become homeless, how do we reach out to them as quickly as possible? How can we strengthen our approach when it comes to mental health care? What can we offer to youth to make housing solutions more accessible and attractive over the short and longer term? How can we guide youth toward a better, more rewarding path in life? These are some of the questions we ask ourselves every day.

We need to take many different situations into consideration. We wouldn't adopt the same approach to a young man who has split from his family and shows up at the Bunker out of the blue as, say, we would with a young woman who spent several years in the youth protection system and has had experienced repeat

episodes of life on the street or in unstable living situations.

No matter their current circumstances or their background, we focus on their strengths, respect their rights and empower them to take positive action.

We will always be there to support homeless and at-risk youth. And we are so grateful for the invaluable assistance of our staff, partners and volunteers, as well as the community support and the incredible generosity of our 22,000 donors.

— Cécile Arbaud

