

# The Yellow Door

## 2019-2020 Annual Report



# A message from the Executive Director

This report reflects work carried out from April 1, 2019 through March 31, 2020. While only a fraction of that time was shadowed by the COVID-19 pandemic, it is hard to write this message without acknowledging where we are today. In support of government isolation measures, we closed our office and adjusted our programs to run services remotely. While we focused our efforts to assist self-isolating seniors, the most vulnerable members of our community during the pandemic, we also moved to increase our volunteer capacity, providing meaningful roles to youth during this uncertain time of canceled final exams and job loss.

The sustained isolation measures highlighted many of the social and health issues the Yellow Door has worked to alleviate for decades. For 50 years the Yellow Door's programming has addressed common needs of university-aged youth and seniors in downtown Montreal. Our four varied programs aim to foster interpersonal relationships among generations that normally may not interact, to help seniors maintain their independence, and to provide accessible spaces for creative projects and resource referrals. We work to combat social isolation and promote a holistic well-being across generations.

Through our programs we bring youth, usually 18 to 25 years old, and older seniors, usually over age 65, together so that they may learn from their shared experiences. While seniors in need of services are the likely beneficiaries, we find that youth too indicate many benefits from these interpersonal relationships. For many, the Yellow Door becomes a network they can rely on outside of their usual circles.

The impact we have in our community is only possible because of these dedicated young adults who support our work and help us achieve our mission. They lead inclusive groups that foster a sense of belonging, provide much needed services to seniors, dedicate their time to keeping alternative community spaces open, assist with countless administrative tasks, and support creative projects throughout the year. I am continuously in awe of their talent and dedication- they are at the heart of our programs and our community is stronger because of them.

Thank you to everyone who has helped shape this unique organization.



**Kaitlin Fahey**  
Executive Director

## Staff 2019-2020

Mariel Edwards-Carreau, Administrative Coordinator  
Évelyne Dussault, Fundraising Officer  
Rocio Barreno, Activities Coordinator  
Melissa Dalva, Generations Coordinator

Version française disponible

"The Yellow Door staff is [...] supportive and the members have such inspirational, fascinating, and at times pretty wild, stories to tell. We have so much to learn and gain from making meaningful connections with our elders."

- YD Youth Volunteer



Photo by J. Schneider

# Our Mission

To empower seniors and young adults to initiate and engage in community and creative projects that promote social inclusion, combat urban isolation across generations, and spark positive societal change.



# A message from the President

This past year has been a busy one for the Yellow Door.

Following a lengthy and complex procedure to reconstitute our 100+ year old organization under the Quebec Companies Act, we set about applying similar updates at every level of our operations. In order to accomplish this ambitious goal, we sought guidance and support through the Innoweave strategic planning program, sponsored by the McConnell Foundation. Consequently, throughout this past year, a dedicated committee of board members and staff have worked hard to refine our mission, carefully examine our programs and services, and build an infrastructure for gathering feedback from members to help us better serve our community.

We are now emerging from this process with greater clarity concerning the vulnerable youth and senior populations we serve, the social and health outcomes we wish to affect, and the tools needed to evaluate our programs and services in light of these goals. This has culminated in our recent development of a survey system for sampling changes in mental and physical health, loneliness and social support, as well as well-being and quality of life among all our members. We also aim to gather feedback from volunteers to gain insight into their motivations and experiences so that we can better support them in helping us fulfill our mission. Finally, with the launch of our equity, diversity, and inclusion committee, we also wish to examine our member demographics to ensure that everyone in our area has equal access to our services.

While there is still plenty of work ahead, especially as we adapt to the new realities of COVID-19, we are proud of the progress we've made towards greater efficiency, effectiveness, and alignment with our mission to alleviate social isolation now, more than ever.



**Derek Albert**  
President, Board of Directors

## Board of Directors 2019-2020

- Derek Albert, President  
Marc Nerenberg, Vice-President  
Lauren Laframboise, Secretary  
Tianning Lao, Treasurer  
Members: Xavier Lessard, Kevin Bradley, Susan Biggs, Maureen Micks, Susan Campbell, Amritha Sanmugam, Julie Mugwaneza, Katherine Moore, Woojin Albert Park, Marion Pynn, & Anne Favory



“Thank you for [my new volunteer]. She is sensitive, down-to-earth, a great listener, reassuring- and a wonderful companion. She understands very well the anxiety that my medical appointments cause me and her presence, from start to finish, has enormously helped me psychologically.”

- Generations Member since 2010

Photo by J. Schneider

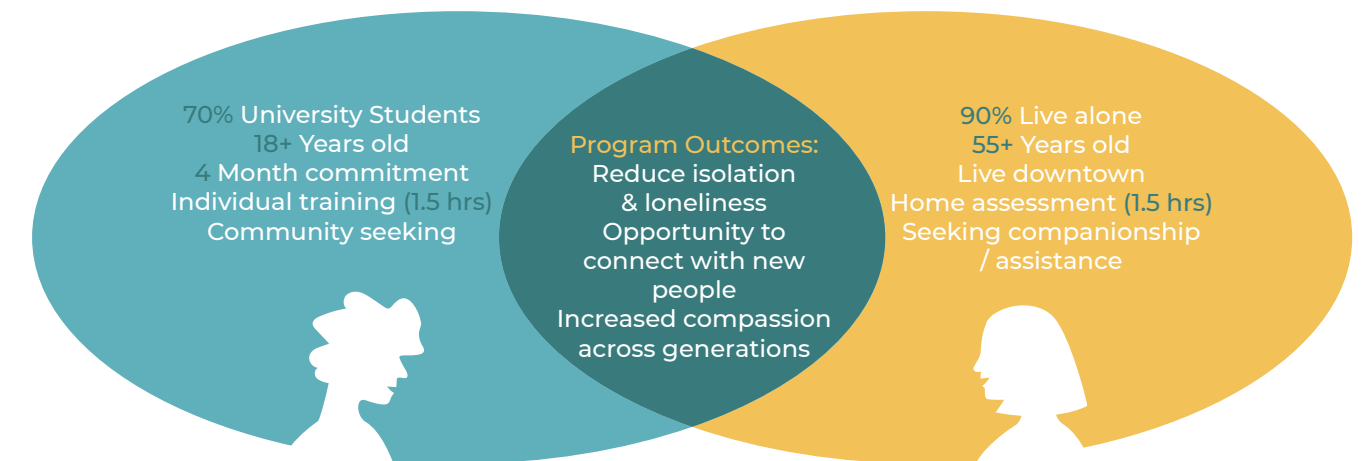
# Generations Program

In 1972, the Yellow Door Generations program was created “to assist the elderly in the vicinity of 3625 Aylmer to live with dignity and greater freedom, keeping them out of hospital or full-time institutional care.”\* Two coordinators ran the entire program, going door-to-door offering their assistance as needed. In order to meet the growing demand for services, student volunteers were recruited and matched with seniors, and the youth-senior pair were encouraged to learn from one another.

Forty-eight years later the Generations Program continues to bring university-aged youth and older adults together to combat social isolation and the associated negative health effects, in both generations. Today, our coordinator thoughtfully matches youth volunteers with senior members to encourage meaningful and lasting interpersonal relationships. Our five varied services aim to increase social inclusion and decrease the risk of premature institutionalization of older adults in our community.

It is important to note that the volunteer-member relationship is not one-way. Our program aims to decrease isolation of both seniors and youth volunteers- to promote a shared experience, to offer a change in perspective, and to demystify stereotypes associated with both generations. As evidence of the special bonds established through our program, we currently have 12 volunteer-senior matches who have maintained relationships for four or more years. From a volunteer who has been meeting with the same senior for seven years, “When we first met, Ms. C. had already showed symptoms of Alzheimers. Since her husband and I were both caretakers, in my case with my grandmom, we supported each other through the difficult times [...]. They were always happy to see me, and even though Ms. C. would forget who I was [...], we enjoyed every moment of our visits. Now that Mr. C. is alone, we continue to meet. We have been friends though his loss, my university experience, and now the start of my career.”

*\*Information gathered from Tom Livingston (February 2020), one of the founding coordinators of the “Old Age Program”, known today as the Generations Program.*



Active Volunteers:  
**200**  
(74 new in 2019-2020)

Active Members:  
**272**  
(20 new in 2019-2020)

# The 5 Program Services

## 1. Friendly Visits

A “match” (volunteer & member) are paired for friendly visits at the senior’s home up to **2 hours** per week, every week, year round  
average **76 visits** per week

## 3. Accompaniments

On-call volunteers offer not only physical support getting to & from medical appointments, but also emotional support by waiting with the senior; non-medical outings also accepted  
**4 hours** each trip  
average **42 trips** per week

## 5. Friendly Calls

\*Thanks to a generous grant from Bell Let’s Talk Community Fund, we were able to add a 5th service in the fall of 2019, with the goal of reaching isolated and/or home-bound seniors, who are not comfortable meeting face-to-face. The weekly calls not only provide an opportunity for the two generations to socialize, but allowed volunteers to monitor and recognize changes in behavior that may signify a greater issue and/or a decline in their well-being. In one instance we were able to intervene and help in a case of possible elder abuse.  
average of **30 calls** per week

## 2. Internet & Technological Help

Volunteers offer training & troubleshooting with email, online banking & connecting with family  
**2 hours** each weekly session  
average **30 sessions** per week

## 4. Friendly Errands

Volunteers offer critical delivery service for homebound seniors, or shop with those who require assistance (due to limited mobility, injury, anxiety, extreme weather conditions)  
**2.5+ hours** each trip  
average **41 trips** per week



Photo by YD Staff

Total volunteer service hours  
from April 2019 to March 2020:

**28,942**

## Member referred from (in order of significance)

**CLSC Métro | Another YD member | Self-referred (via YD poster/flyer) | Friend/Family**  
CLSC Saint-Catherine | Action Centre Vile | Groupe Harmonie | Milton Parc Recreation | Santropol Roulant | CLSC Parc Extension | CLSC Saint-Louis-du-Parc | Contactivity Centre | Entraide Bénévole Montréal | Montréal General Hospital

## Wellness Groups

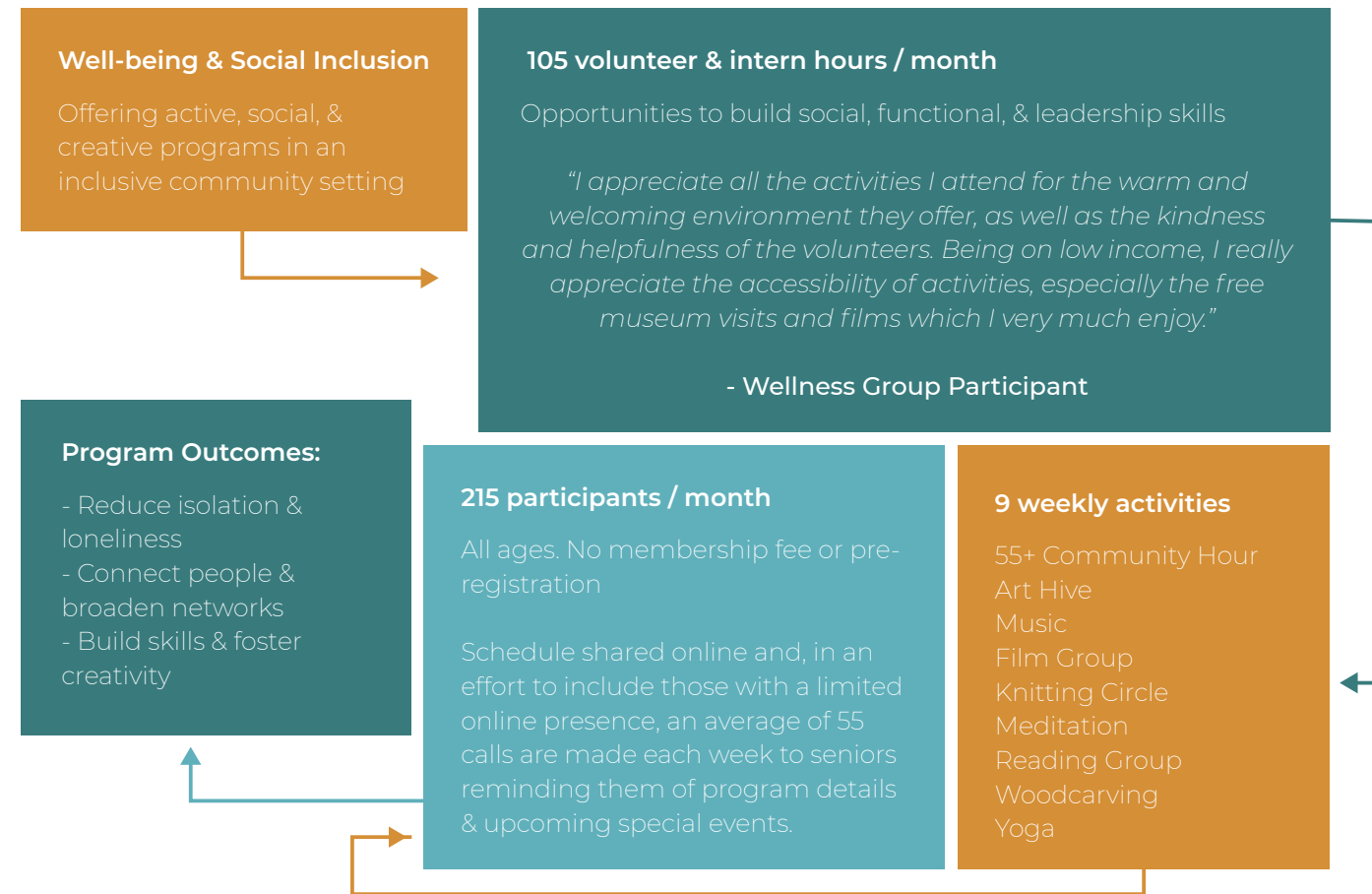
Recognizing that many people feel socially isolated in the city, we aim to promote social inclusion among older and younger adults through a variety of groups designed to encourage mental and physical well-being. Additionally, space in downtown Montreal is increasingly exclusive and social or wellness activities can be expensive. We provide accessible community spaces, creative social projects, and free activities, outings and events that are open to all, no matter one’s age or income level.

We enroll volunteers as group facilitators in an attempt to build community and provide meaningful learning opportunities for these young adults. We support this work by offering individual and group volunteer trainings. Over the past year we evaluated our programming, making changes in how groups are facilitated- emphasizing the work of group leaders beyond running of activities. Through our volunteer-run groups we aim to promote a sense of inclusion, to connect people and broaden their social networks in the short-term. In the long-term, our intended outcomes relate to improved general health, increased resourcefulness and resilience, and greater awareness and social responsibility of all participants. This work is not easy, but we are taking steps, such as strategic training and program evaluation at the board level, to better assess and evaluate our program outcomes and organizational impact, now and in the future.

## 2018-2019 Wellness Groups

The wellness group program started in 2013 with one group, 55+ Community Hour, aimed at encouraging seniors to socialize with their peers. While that group continues today with a focus on topics specific to seniors, we have diversified our programming to offering groups to meet a variety of ages, mobility, and interests.

**Total annual participants: 2,369**



## Presentations & Workshops

Chinese New Year Celebration with CISIIP | Climate Change Presentation by Extinction Rebellion | Concordia's Art Hive Collaboration | Digital Literacy Workshop Series by Atwater Library | Food for Thought Series on Nutrition | Food Sharing Potluck | Japanese Student Exchange & Origami Workshop | Knitting Donations for MOMtrealt and True North Aid | Last Will & Testament Presentation | Legal Information Clinic | Live Music | Mindfulness Painting | Pumpkin Contest by Montreal Botanical Gardens | Travel Presentation Series

## Outings & Events

Botanical Gardens Guided Tour | Camp Kinkora Senior's Day Trip | December Holiday Gathering | Film Group Trip to Cinema | Guided Tours: McCord Museum; Montreal Museum of Fine Arts; Musée des Hospitalières; Museum of Jewish Montreal | Italian Week & Exhibition at Marche Jean-Talon | Mont-Royal Walk & Picnic | Painting & Knitting at St-Louis Square | Reading Group Lunch | Summer Social Tea | Tour of Saint Joseph's Oratory of Mount Royal | Visit to Jazz Festival at Place des Arts | Yoga at Jardin Gamelin

"My time at the YD has really shown me that no matter your age, it's the little things that connect us [...] when we do find those connections, whether you're the one sharing or listening, it allows us to realize that we're not so different or alone after all [...]. I came to Montréal not knowing a single person, and I left feeling like I have an entire family that I can always find my way back to."

- YD Intern, Summer 2019



Photo by YD Staff

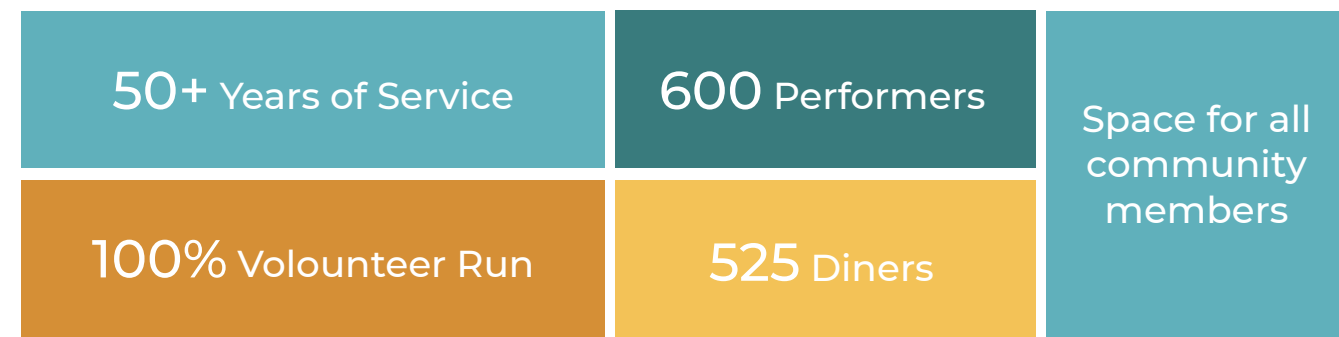
## Learning and working opportunities for 20 interns (1,264 hours) from:

Cégep André-Laurendeau (Language) | Concordia (John Molson School of Business) | Concordia (Psychology) | Dawson College (Social Work) | McGill University (Medicine; Psychology; Social Work) | Stetson University (World Languages & Cultures) | Université du Québec à Montréal (Social Gerontology)

# The Coffeehouse

Run by a dedicated team of senior and youth volunteers, and populated by a diverse group of musicians and spoken word performers, the Yellow Door Coffeehouse is the organization's longest running intergenerational project. Started in the mid 1960s, its survival to the present day also makes it Canada's longest running folk music venue.

Volunteers open the space each week, 48 weeks per year, and work hard to ensure that the program includes a strong emphasis on participation, collaboration and active listening. In a downtown setting where spaces are increasing exclusive, the Coffeehouse serves as a free and welcoming space for community members of all ages, an incubator for emerging local talent, and a stage for diverse performers from Canada and beyond.



# Rabbit Hole Café

Providing healthy and affordable food to those in need has been a part of the Yellow Door for over 50 years. In the early days, the "Daily Lunch Counter" served "all you can eat for \$0.35" to low-income members of the community. Today, the 100% volunteer run Rabbit Hole Café serves a healthy lunch for \$3 the community two Fridays per month. The vegan menu includes a bowl of soup and a slice of cake- a simple format, yet every session this past year sold out! The café is a space for community members, of all ages and income levels, to come together sharing in a meal and conversation. In the Fall of 2019, we welcomed a registered dietician as the co-coordinator, improving upon the recipes and ensuring all meals offered a variety of nutritional benefits.

We believe that learning how to cook is a valuable skill for leading a healthy lifestyle- so this cafe serves as inspiration for others to try cooking at home. We are often asked about ingredients and recipes- we are always eager to share! Personal health, including healthy food choices and social inclusion, are our priorities, and we aim to provide a welcoming activity to address these.

– Rabbit Hole Coordinator

# Our Covid-19 Response

Like many community organizations, we had to quickly adapt our programming when the isolation measures went into effect in March 2020. In many ways, the Yellow Door is well-equipped to assist seniors and youth during the pandemic, as we were working to reduce isolation and promote community pre-COVID. The pandemic intensified the demand for our services and increased the need for collaboration with other groups. As it is uncertain when life will return to "normal", especially for seniors in dense urban centres and university-aged youth not returning to class, there is an urgent need to support these groups. We are grateful for the outpouring of support from our community including the dedication of our current volunteers, new volunteers looking to sign on, emergency funding opportunities, and collaborations with other charitable groups.

We are working hard to adapt to the constantly evolving situation, diligently monitoring beneficiaries' feedback so that we can better meet their needs, involving youth in meaningful volunteer roles, and working with other groups to best share resources. While our services and programs look a little different under COVID, we are continuing to take the time to match youth volunteers with seniors whenever possible, so that the person calling or delivery groceries each week is the same- a familiar voice and/or friendly smile, even at an appropriate social distance, is comforting during this uncertain time. These interpersonal connections continue to make our services special and unique.

## YD COVID-19 services starting on March 13, 2020:



# Thank You to our Supporters

Photo by J. Schneider

## Institutional & Corporate Donors

\$50,000 +



\$5,000 +



\$500 +

The Gustav Levinschi Foundation | The Hay Foundation | Japanese Student Association of McGill

\$250 +

Midnight Kitchen | QPIRG McGill | Sexual Assault Centre of the McGill Students' Society

## Individual Donors

\$100+

Charles Baker | Averill Craig | Tim Merett | Carolyn Pepler | Joana Prigl | Penny Baylis | Sally Cooper | Marguerite R. Godin | Rafael Gomez-Velasquez | Wendy & Marty Laframboise | Nasr Madi

< \$99

Karina Altan | Tony Antakly | Julie Becker | Marie Beyrouiti | Sharon Braverman | Dorothy Bray | Andrea Brown | Katelyn Campbell | Mathieu Constance | Lincoln Cromwell | Eliane Dussault | Evelyne Dussaut | Claude Duval | CRED Consulting Inc | Cynthia Dyer | Ruth Gray | Kayla Hamelin | Miranda Hickman | Lauren Laframboise | Marc Lanttoni | Monique LeBlanc | Anne Mackay | Emmanuelle Mignacca | Judith Mowat | Julia Mugwaneza | Camelia Muldermans | Cassie Noble | Frances Notts | Indrek Romet | Campbell Stewart | Kuna Tuburtius | Alexandra Valerianos

## In-Kind Donors

Chef On Call | de sucre & de miel | Jardin des Rose | Jon Evans | Lola Rosa | MajesThé | Montreal Botanical Gardens | McCord Museum | Montreal Museum of Fine Art | Pointe-à-Callière Museum



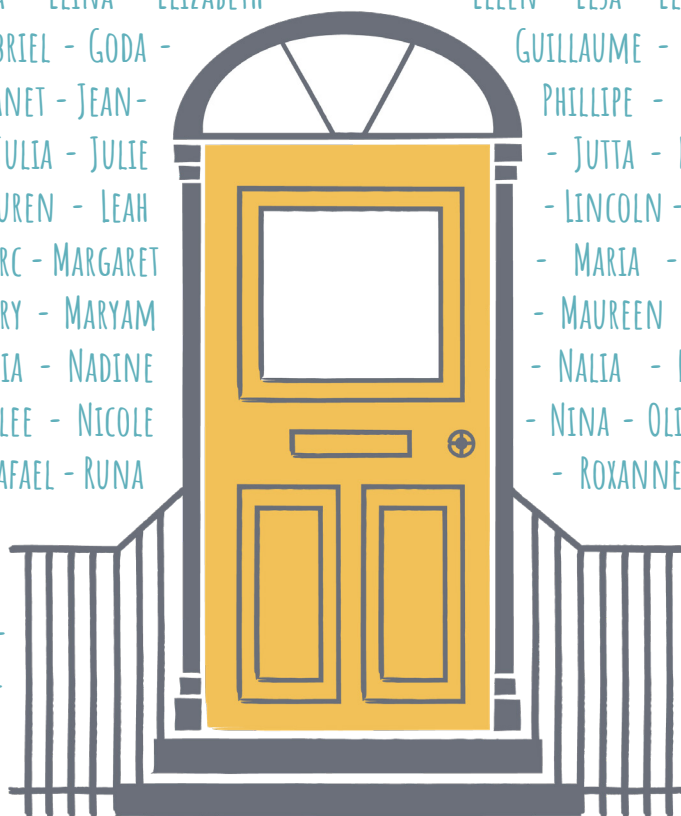
## 2019-2020 Community Partners

Action Centre-Ville | Almage Centre 50+ | Atwater Library | La Coalition pour le maintien dans la communauté | The Centre for Community Organizations | Concordia University Art Hive Network | Groupe Harmonie | HLM Habitations Durocher | Milton-Parc Recreation Association | One Voice Coalition | Peter-McGill Food Security Committee | Peter-McGill Senior's Committee | Seniors Action Quebec | Service de police de la Ville de Montréal | Sexual Assault Center of the McGill Students' Society | Volunteer bureau of Montréal | YMCA of Québec, Centre-ville



# Thank you to our volunteers!

- ADAM - ADELA - ADRIANA - AGATHE - AIDEN - ALEXIE - ALFONSO - ALISON - ALLISON - ALMANTO - AMEEN - AMELIA - AMRITHA - ANASTIASIA - ANNA - ANN - ANNE - ANNE-SOPHIE - ARCHITA - AUDREY - AURORE - AUSTEJA - AXEL - BLAIR - CAMILLE - CARLA - CARMELINA - CAROLINE - CEDRIC - CEREN - CHARLES - CHELSEA - CHESLINE - CINDY - CLAIRE - CLARA - CLÉMENCE - CLEMENT - CORINNE - DAIANA - DAKOTA - DANIEL - DAWN - DENISE - DENYSE - DEREK - DINA - ELINA - ELIZABETH - ELLEN - ELSA - ELSIE - EMMA - ERICA - ERIN - ESFIR - FRÉDÉRIQUE - GABRIEL - GODA - GUILLAUME - HANNAH - HECTOR - HELEN - HENRY - ENAS - JANA - JANET - JEAN - PHILLIPE - JEN - JENNIFER - JENNY - JOCELYN - JONATHAN - JULIA - JULIE - JUTTA - KAREN - KARL - KATHERINE - KAYLEIGH - KEVIN - LAUREN - LEAH - LINCOLN - LINDA - LOLA - LUC - LUCY - LUISA - MAELA - MAIKE - MARC - MARGARET - MARIA - MARIE-PIERRE - MARINA - MARION - MARTIN - MARY - MARYAM - MAUREEN - MCEAN - MELANIE - MIA - MICAH - MONICA - NADIA - NADINE - NALIA - NASR - NATALIA - NATASHA - NEGAR - NESHMA - NESLEE - NICOLE - NINA - OLIVIA - PAMELA - PATRICIA - PAVITHA - PETER - STELLA - RAFAEL - RUNA - ROXANNE - LULU - SABRINA - SAM - SARAH-MADELEINE - SAMUEL - SANDRA - SARA - SOPHIE - STEPHANIE SASCHA - SIMONE - SONIA - TARA - THARUVI - TIANNING - SUSAN - TANIA - TANYA - VANESSA - XAVIER - XIN - TOMO - TRACY - VANESIA - YALDA - YANNICK - YANQI - YAN-RU - ZHONGQI - ZOE



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## A Note About This Document

A special thank you to all the volunteers who instrumental in completing this report: Roxanne (design & illustrations), Denise (new logo & brand design), Elina (cover illustration), Jutta (photography), & Guillaume (translation).