



Mission Possible Newsletter



Spring Edition

The Downtown Mission

2021

Changes at the Downtown Mission – Our New Normal

After a year of uncertainty, fear and change during the last 9 months of 2020, the first 3 months of 2021 has brought even more changes and uncertainty, our faith and character have been tested time and time again, but the Downtown Mission stands strong with your help, support and prayers! For all that we have been blessed with, we are truly grateful!!!

Since mid-March 2020, the Mission's Non-Essential Services were put on pause or taken to a virtual format where possible and our Staff and Volunteers were trained to provide all Essential Services safely and in new ways as required. All this was done with much consultation and support from the City of Windsor and the Windsor-Essex Community Health Unit.

However, due to the recent COVID Outbreak at the Downtown Mission in February 2021, where several Guests, Staff and Volunteers tested positive, our Dining Hall at 664 Victoria Ave and our Shelter at 875 Ouellette Ave (sites of the Outbreak) were temporarily closed on Monday, Feb. 15th until a safe plan to reopen them was determined. During that time, the Mission worked out an agreement with the owner of 850 Ouellette to shelter and feed Guests who weren't COVID Positive while we worked on our plan to reopen our other 2 locations. Other Programs not affected by the Outbreak continued and our Service Staff were sent to 850 Ouellette to provide our Essential Services there.

Shortly thereafter, the City of Windsor and Community Partners, decided to open a Temporary Emergency Shelter at the Aquatic Centre (TESAC), to keep those individuals needing shelter/food safe. Anyone who tested positive at the Temporary Shelter would be taken to the City's Isolation and Recovery Centre (IRC), as they had been doing for anyone testing positive with no place to isolate in.

However, this Temporary Shelter did cause a gap in service for individuals seeking shelter and food, after it was opened (March 5th). As was documented by Staff at the TESAC on March 6th and 7th, several individuals who came to the TESAC that 1st weekend (16 on March 6th and 35 on March 7th), were turned away as there was no room there or at the IRC. When this was reported to our Executive Director and Board over that first weekend, with no response or resolution from our Community Partners as of yet, our Executive and Board decided to reopen the 850 Ouellette location that Sunday evening, while a solution was found to allow everyone a place to go when

they reported to the TESAC for shelter.

This caused quite a bit of an uproar unfortunately with our Mayor's Office as was reported in several Media Outlets, so once we ensured EVERYONE who came to the TESAC would be sheltered (Tuesday, March 9th), we shut down operations at 850 Ouellette.

The Mission continues to work with the Health Unit and the City of Windsor to come up with a plan to safely reopen our 664 Victoria and 875 Ouellette locations to shelter and feed those who come to us. Our plan and hope, is to have our Essential Services back up and running fully with additional safety precautions in place by the end of March.



Thank you to our Board of Directors

Michele McGregor, Chair;
Sandor Kapasi, Vice Chair;
Dolph Barsanti, Treasurer;
Rev. Dr. Catherine Collins-Barker,
Secretary; Anna St. Antoine,
David Tell; Jeff Slopen;
Kristine McInnis; Melissa Pearce.

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Volunteering at the Mission During a Pandemic

As has always been the case, Volunteers are the lifeblood of the Downtown Mission. Staff and Guests have missed seeing so many of our regular Volunteers over the past year, but we continue to see many of them as they help in different and we look forward to seeing more of them once we can have more Volunteers back with us safely. At this time, we want to highlight a few of our amazing Volunteers, who have been and continue to be a vital part of our Family!

First we have DJ Vandongen who's been a valued member of the Mission's Development Team for the past 2 years. After moving back to Windsor and being semi-retired, DJ was happy to find a Volunteer Opportunity with the Downtown Mission. She has enjoyed helping out at Reception and taking pictures at the Mission's Annual Mission Ride. During the Pandemic, DJ has been keeping updated on Mission life via Social Media and keeping in contact with Mission Staff. DJ "hopes to get back soon to fully support the DTM in person but is sending well wishes as work continues to offer the services and supports for those who come to the Mission daily."

Next meet Matthew Isherwood, who's volunteered in the Mission Kitchen since April 2016. Pre-COVID, he would often be found amidst our Kitchen Staff and Volunteers, cheerfully helping prep and serve food and cleaning dishes. During the Pandemic, Matthew's been staying in touch with Staff and following the Mission on Social Media. Once things clear up, Matthew hopes to return to the Mission's Kitchen where he looks forward to working alongside amazing Staff and Volunteers who help feed those who are hungry every day. Though it's been a challenging year, Matthew wants to remind us all that we should "stay positive and that this too shall pass!"

He hopes the Mission will be able to continue serving those in need, through the Pandemic and beyond.

Kate Fairbairn volunteered with the Mission for 6 months pre-Covid, helping serve dinner to our Guests. During the past year, Kate has remained connected with the Mission and her Volunteering by coming in and helping with a deep clean of the kitchen when needed. She's also very graciously dropped off coffees to the Kitchen Staff to show her support and to stay in touch with her Mission Family. Kate hopes to return soon. She states, "The Staff and Guests of the Mission have made me feel so welcomed. The Mission is a Family and I feel like I'm a party of that Family!" Kate hopes that during the remainder of 2021, that all Volunteers will be able to safely get back to helping those who come to the Mission and that the Mission will continue to take care of our region's most vulnerable individuals and families.

Another Volunteer who has been a staple at the Mission since she started with us in 2015 is Julienne Rousseau. Julie started volunteering in the Mission's Kitchen when she was looking for a way to learn about the effects of poverty on her community. During the Pandemic, Julie has volunteered when needed, to ensure that the Mission could continue to serve 3 meals a day to the hundreds of hurting individuals coming in for meals. When she's off, she stays connected with Staff and Volunteers to be a support in any way possible as she's noticed a heightened level of stress amidst Staff, Volunteers and Guests due to the Pandemic. She has also held a few Virtual Fundraisers with her Avon Business, to help raise much-needed funds to support the operations of the Mission. Julie shares, "My hope is that the City of Windsor and all residents who can afford to help,

will make donations or come down to the front lines and join us as Volunteers."

Lastly, we'd like to introduce CityThrive, a Project of Enactus Windsor from the University of Windsor. CityThrive's students have been volunteering with the Mission for the past two years and works with the Mission's Enterprise Program, to teach and develop skills which will help Enterprise Trainees return to the workforce. These Students have helped many of our Enterprise Trainees with Resume and Cover Letter writing, Interview Prep and Job Searches as well. Jordyn Tocco shares, "The skills and values learned through the Enterprise program will stick with you for life. The opportunity to work with such inspiring and hardworking people is one I'll be forever grateful for. Incredibly, people on both sides of the program can grow together." During the past year, CityThrive changed the delivery of their work to a virtual format to work within safety protocols and continued to be a vital part of our Mission Team. They look forward to continuing to work virtually with the Mission in the coming year as we try to work back to the way things were pre-Covid.

Regardless of whether Volunteers who are part of the Mission Family continue to volunteer in person, help serve our Guests virtually, check in with our Staff and Volunteers or help advocate and raise funds to help the Mission continue operating through these difficult times, they are all cherished and appreciated! The Mission wouldn't be able to make the serve those who need us most each year and create the impact we do on our community, without our Volunteers. So if you haven't heard it in a while, "Thank You, we love you and we can't wait to see you again soon!"



Making Lemonade on the Coldest Night of the Year!



When the world hands you lemons, what do we do here in Windsor-Essex? We make lemonade of course! And plenty of it, to help MANY more thirsty individuals than we had hoped to with lemons!

This is a very simple analogy to help show what we as Windsor-Essex, came together to do for this year's Coldest Night of the Year Walk on Feb. 20th. The Coldest Night of the Year Walk is a National Fundraiser to help provide food, shelter and hope to those who need it the most in communities across Canada. Here in Windsor-Essex, the Downtown Mission has been hosting this Event locally for the past 9 years and it's the Mission's biggest Annual Fundraising Event.

This year was no different, as we'd started planning for CNOY 2021 last year, we'd hoped to have more Teams and Walkers join us to help us raise even more funds to provide the Mission's services to those who are hungry, homeless and hurting as we've seen more and more individuals come to the Mission each year for help. However, approximately a month before Event Day, the Province of Ontario went into Lockdown due to Covid numbers and in trying to do our part, we reluctantly decided to switch

our Event to a 100% Virtual Event, to keep everyone safe and give people the opportunity to participate in any way they felt comfortable to do so. We weren't sure how this would work out for the Mission as this was our first fully Virtual Event, but were we in for a pleasant surprise!

Although we had less Teams and Walkers signed up, our amazing community rallied together to surpass every financial goal we had set, amended and amended again! As of Feb. 20th when we had approximately 50 Walkers join us for a Virtual Opening Ceremony through Zoom as they began their walks or were finishing their walks, we had 201 Walkers Signed up with 31 Teams and we'd raised \$84,412. Our goal for this Event was \$70,000, so we were SOOO pleased to see this not only reached but surpassed, on a very difficult year for all of us! And guess what, a month after the Event, our numbers keep growing as the official cut-off is March 31st. We are currently at 208 Walkers with \$94,347 raised!!!

As was reported on Feb. 20th, thank you to our Top 3 Team Fundraisers - #1 #TDWindsorEssexCares, #2 HUCSTERS and #3 Windsor Salt. Thank you as well to our Top 3 Individual

Fundraisers - #1 Mandy Furtado (#TDWindsorEssexCares), #2 Leslie Huffman (HUCSTERS) and #3 Kristie McInnis (Mission Possible). Thank YOU to all who walked, fundraised or simply cheered us on! We couldn't have done it without you and we're so thankful to all of you for helping provide the essential services those who come to the Mission seek every day. We hope to see YOU next year for CNOY 2022 on Saturday, Feb. 26th when we will walk once again in support of those who are hungry, homeless and hurting right here in Windsor-Essex!

Save-the-Date

Wednesday, May 26th
Virtual AGM

Friday, Aug. 20th
Golf Tournament

Sunday, Aug. 29th
Mission Ride

A Message from Executive Director Rev. Ron Dunn



Dear Friend,

Let me start off by saying I hope you and your loved ones are keeping well! I know it's been an extremely challenging year for all of us, thank you for always being there for us at the Mission with your prayers, counsel and support!!! I do want to urge you to keep turning to our Lord God for guidance and hope to help get us all through these very trying and unparalleled times.

Following a very difficult 2020, the past couple of months have brought on a whole new level of uncertainties and difficulties for myself, the Mission Team and our Board to navigate through. Amidst all the challenges and variables we are faced with, we remain steadfast in our commitment to serve those who come to the Mission for food, shelter and comfort during their most difficult times and we continue to be amazed by the support and encouragement we receive from you, our Volunteers, Donors and Friends! Without you, we wouldn't be the Mission; those who are hungry, homeless or hurting would have no place to go for the basics in life we all

deserve or for a place to be where all are welcome and shown compassion. Thank YOU for continuing to stand with us to show God's love and compassion for all those who come to the Mission. Matthew 11:38 says "Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." YOU are providing this space for all to come to, to experience God's comfort and solace, thank YOU!

It's been a very challenging time for so many of us here at the Mission, I personally have never experienced such a difficult time in my career as my limits, my strength and all I am have been challenged and stretched. My Team of exemplary Staff and Volunteers have never been asked to be better, to learn more and to do more with less. Those who come to the Mission have never had more uncertainties or unknowns as they try to navigate services amidst a Global Pandemic where so much of what they've been used to, just isn't available.

At the same time though, I have also never experienced so much joy at seeing what my Team can do in a crunch, what our Community can do together to make a difference for those we care about so much and to see those same people receive the help they need today and hope for tomorrow in what seems like a hopeless situation. I personally, and we as a Mission, have also been truly blessed to have so many friends reaching out to support us in so many ways, both near and far, it truly is incredible.

As always, please know that in all we do, we keep those we serve top of mind, and we try

to show God's love to those who need it most with your blessing and support. If you ever want to reach out to me to ask clarification or to learn more about anything you've seen or heard, please feel free to do so at ron@downtownmission.com. Or if you prefer, you can reach out to Mr. Sandor Kapasi, Board Spokesperson for the Mission at DTMBoard@downtownmission.com.

Thank YOU as again for your support, kindness, mercy and friendship! I am reminded of God always being merciful to us as Psalm 56:3-4 states, "When I am afraid, I put my trust in You. In God, whose word I praise – in God I trust. I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?"

I recently said to my Staff as we think about the challenges we've had to overcome as we get set to reopen fully, "We helped change the narrative on homelessness in our community. We have moved the needle forward!" As we get ready for a reset of sorts in the coming days, please keep us in your prayers and have faith, we will continue to represent you, show God's love and be there for those who need us most!!!

God bless you and keep you safe this Easter Season and always!

Ron



I want to help provide meals and other vital services to the Windsor and Essex County area's homeless.

- \$19.92 to help 6 people
- \$39.84 to help 12 people
- \$59.76 to help 18 people
- \$79.68 to help 24 people

\$..... to feed and care for as many people as possible

Please charge my gift on my credit card (SEE RIGHT)

Please make cheques payable to:

Windsor Downtown Mission

YES

I want to help a hungry, homeless or hurting neighbour today

I would like to make a donation of \$ _____ One time donation Monthly donation

Please charge my gift on my credit card: Card # _____ - _____ - _____ - _____

Expiry Date: _____ / _____ CVV: _____

I support the work of the Windsor Downtown Mission and enclose my donation of \$ _____

Name: _____

Street: _____ Apt#: _____

City: _____ Prov: _____ Postal Code: _____

Telephone: _____ Email: _____

Visit www.downtownmission.com for more information or to make a secure online donation (Registered Charity #119260420RR0001)

The Downtown Mission issues charitable donation receipts for all monetary donations.

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