



Mission Possible Newsletter



Fall Edition

The Downtown Mission

2020

2 Different Health Crises, 2 Different Responses



COVID-19 has challenged everyone in the Mission family - our staff, our volunteers and of course the people who seek comfort at the Downtown Mission. Some of the challenges have resulted in unjustifiable adversity, while also providing a source of normalcy through this pandemic. The good news is, programs and services were maintained, people were getting the help they needed, and the Mission team rose to the challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the current landscape has shifted, bringing increasing challenges. "Individuals using substances are turning to more toxic drugs, mainly opioids-not realizing their potent effects" explained Danielle Barron, Case Manager. With the Border closure, the drug supply chain has been disrupted resulting in a reduced availability of methamphetamine, which leaves individuals with the substances that is most readily available, such as Fentanyl. Fentanyl is fifty to 100 times more potent than morphine, and an amount equivalent to a few grains of salt is enough to cause death.

Stress, anxiety and isolation experienced during the Pandemic can have a negative impact on those who use substances, including relapse, increasing use and the risk of overdose. "One of our biggest challenges has been an increase in overdoses," said Paula Monteleone, Director of Programs and Services. The pandemic is intensifying the Opioid Crisis. Unlike the Coronavirus, there's nothing novel about the Opioid Crisis. The numbers are very telling. In 2019, Downtown Mission staff reversed 37 overdoses. As of mid-September,

Mission staff have already revived 59 guests experiencing an overdose this year. Reversing an opioid overdose is now requiring more intervention. Often several doses of Naloxone-the drug that can temporarily reverse the effects of an opioid overdose, coupled with CPR and use of an AED. "All of our staff are trained by the Windsor-Essex County Health Unit on how to reverse an overdose" said Paula, "Opioid drugs are very powerful- more intervention is needed to keep the guest alive, before our first responders arrive on scene." With one health crisis exacerbated by another, our team has been highly supportive of one another. Paula mentions, "Responding to a multitude of overdoses can take an emotional toll on you. We need to debrief and support each other. Bringing someone back to life is mentally and physically draining."

Throughout the past 6 months, people coming to the Mission continued to receive food, shelter, emotional support and spiritual guidance. Danielle shared, "Our guests have been very resilient throughout the Pandemic and have adapted to our service modifications. Our guests see staff in a different light now, there is more comradery between us, probably because throughout this ordeal we have been a constant in their lives and provide them with a sense of normalcy."

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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Contributors:

Jim Douglas, Racquele Smith, Rev. Ron
Dunn, Rukshini Ponniah Goulin, Ruth Dunn

Downtown Mission Volunteers - Everyday Heroes with Heart!

Where would the Downtown Mission be without its 1,000+ Active Volunteers? It's a question many Staff, Volunteers, Guests and even community members have often discussed and every time it comes up, it amazes us how wonderful our Volunteers are and how blessed we are to have this beloved family, helping us provide the essential services so many in our community depend on the Mission for each day. While we try to have a culture of appreciation throughout the Mission, our Volunteer Appreciation Event typically held each Spring, allowed us to bring our team together annually, to recognize the unique contributions our volunteers provide. We are inspired and grateful for all of our volunteers, but in-light of not being able to have our Volunteer Appreciation Event this year where we would normally hand out our Annual Volunteer Awards, we would like to take this opportunity to recognize the outstanding volunteers who have gone over and above what was expected of them and have been selected as the Downtown Mission Volunteer Award Recipients for 2020.



The Bill and Sue Snider Award is given to the Volunteer who has made a significant contribution to the Mission, through the Sharing of their time and talents. This year's recipient is Nancy Lessard who has clocked a whopping 1,250 hours of volunteer service at the Downtown Mission's Food Bank in just over 6 years. With a background in Public Health, Nancy understands the importance of 'helping.' "When I'm

helping in the Food Bank I know that I have to be a listening ear to clients and offer them comfort, compassion, and encouragement." She recommends those thinking about volunteering, "Start small, but definitely do it. The personal rewards are great, but also, the Mission needs you." The number of volunteer hours that Nancy has contributed to the Mission: 1,250+; the compassion, professionalism and sheer dedication she leverages in the fight to end food insecurity: priceless!



The Long-Standing Board Member Award is given to a Board Director who has devoted 4 or more years of Board Governance to the Downtown Mission. This year's recipient is Michele McGregor (presently Board Chair), who has sat on the Mission's board for over 6 years and during that time has added tremendous insight and oversight to our program development and vision for the future. Michele has served in many roles on our Board and has watched the Mission grow into a relevant resource in this community for people experiencing a myriad of complex social and structural issues. Michele shared many fond memories of volunteering at the Downtown Mission, but speaks most proudly of the opening of our 875 Ouellette Sanctuary, "I was so grateful to know that our guests would no longer sleep on floor mats, but would enjoy a safe night's sleep in a bed." When asked why the DTM's mission is so important to her, she said, "The Mission is open to

all who are hungry and I believe hunger is a source of so many issues. I have faith we will always have enough food to serve the last person in line."



Our Heart of the Mission Award is given to the Volunteer who has demonstrated a strong sense of leadership through volunteerism. This year's recipient is Mary-Lou Hogan (affectionately known as 'Mama' to DTM Staff, clients and volunteers). Mary-Lou has volunteered in the Mission's kitchen for over 10 years and commitment to serving food to our clients is only outmatched by her sense of civic duty in serving this community. When asked why she volunteers she said, "I decided to volunteer when I once heard a quote on TV, "Volunteering is the rent you pay for living on this earth." Since that time, volunteering has been God's greatest gift to me." Mary-Lou was recently overjoyed to be permitted to return to her volunteer duties after consulting with her Doctor once COVID stay-at-home safety precautions were lifted. "For an older woman like me, the Mission is my family. The workers have never judged me. Even with my limitations, they have always made me feel appreciated. I just love it here." Mary-Lou is considered a matriarch to the Downtown Mission and like every great Mother, she provides us with unconditional love, and never wavers in strength and dedication.





The Light of the Mission Award is presented annually to the Volunteer Group whose combined efforts have assisted the Mission in meeting the needs of our clients. This year's Award was presented to Christian Apostolic Church which has volunteered in the Downtown Mission's Kitchen for over 30 years. Not with standing the thousands of hours the Faith Community has contributed over the years, but Team Organizer Svetlana Palanacki (shown

in the picture) has also assisted in creating a 'homemade meal program' through which church members make delicious meals and desserts at home and then deliver them to the Mission for distribution at the meal windows. Svetlana shared that a 'special money pot' of separate donations is kept for the meal initiative, with members contributing to it when they can. The generosity of this group only grew through the Pandemic. Despite being unable to hold 'in-person' services, this church decided that their charitable giving practices needed to grow, not stop, during these troubling times. Svetlana says that they used the additional time at home to involve their whole families in the meal preparation efforts, often mobilizing youth and spouses so that the amount and frequency of the meal donations could increase. She adds "Doing this work for

the Mission only brought our fellowship closer together, perhaps not in person, but spiritually. We know we are a small, but important part of the Mission's Big Picture."

It's never too late to join our Mission Family. If you've been thinking about it, we need you now. Please reach out to Racquele Smith, Manager of Volunteerism and Education to see what positions are available and best-suited for you. Or sign up online to join us at www.downtownmission.com/getinvolved/volunteer. Or consider recruiting a Team of Family, Friends, Neighbours or Coworkers to host a Group Fundraiser or Donation Drive for the Mission. Our needs are greater than they've ever been before. We'd love to welcome you to our Mission Family!

Summer 2020 Events

Thank you to all who attended and supported our Annual Summer Fundraising Events! With your help and adherence to the new safety protocols required, we managed to have a great time at both the Mission's 8th Annual Golf Tournament brought to us by Lead Sponsor LFX Group and the 12th Annual On a Mission for the Mission Motorcycle Ride brought to us by Event Organizers Sober Sons. With the help of these very generous Lead Sponsors/Organizers as well as several others and the participation of all our Golfers and Motorcyclists, to date approximately \$35,000 has been raised to help the Mission provide its essential services to those who need them the most. Thank YOU for all you've done and continue to do for those we serve!



Join Us this Fall



Oct. 3rd - Ride for Refuge 2020 will be done virtually and according to your preferences!

Fall Online Auction - Find many treasures to help you with gifts this Holiday Season.

24-Hour Sleep-Out with Rev. Ron Dunn - Sign up to join Ron in his quest to help those we serve or stop by to learn more or support this worthy cause.

Chari-Tees Open House - Stop by Chari-Tees to see all they can offer you for unique and personal Holiday gift-giving ideas and for promotional items for corporate or organizational needs.

Visit www.downtownmission.com or Windsor - Downtown Mission on Facebook for more information and updates on all upcoming Events.

A Message from Executive Director, Reverend Ron Dunn



Dear Friend,

As I take a few moments to reflect back on the past few months here at the Mission, to try to pinpoint what I would like to share with you at this time, what I need to share with you at this time, I'm actually quite overwhelmed with the many faces, stories and cries for help that are racing through my mind! I'm amazed at all that we've seen and done, I'm worried about the increased needs and complexities of life situations we're seeing and hearing about every day and I'm left wondering what's to come.

Recently I celebrated 9 years working for the Downtown Mission which also made me pause to think back on all I personally have seen and to reflect on what we have accomplished and done in those years. Today's Mission is definitely a different place to what it was just 9 years ago and the stories you've seen here from our Staff and

Volunteers speak to that. Today's needs of those we serve far outnumber and are much more complex and ever-changing than what was our norm when I first started here at the Mission. We continue to have to evolve and improve their service delivery in attempts to meet the changing and increasing needs who come to us every day.

I was also recently able to visit with many who have in the past or still continue to use services of the Mission today who are living in one of the many encampments in Downtown Windsor where several are living outdoors in tents. In visiting with many in their "homes", I learned more about the various reasons why some choose to live in this manner rather than find shelter inside a local shelter like the Mission. Some of these reasons I understand a little better, some I don't, but I do continue to want only the best for these individuals who were so grateful for the opportunity to share their stories with me. These visits have reminded me of the many truths and realities those who are homeless or living in poverty experience in our world today. I was reminded of why so many still come to the Mission, to receive the basic necessities of life, but also to receive a smile or a word of encouragement when they are not doing well, something they don't often get when they are not within the safer walls of the Mission. These visits have also left me with a deeper desire to do better for these friends of ours, hurting individuals who in most

cases ended up here due to not their actions but unfortunate life circumstances or a combination of circumstances.

Above all else, as I reflect on the past few months, I'm left with a feeling of gratitude, which is more than appropriate especially at this time of the year. I'm so grateful for all of you who have stepped up to help us do the work we do, to meet the needs of so many hurting neighbours - men, women, young people and families. I'm so grateful for all God has done, in His wisdom and power, to bring these individuals, hurting, often scared and without hope, to the Mission to get the help and comfort they need.

Please continue to pray for the Downtown Mission, we need your prayers more than ever right now! And if at all possible, I ask you to please consider making a one-time financial donation at this time to help us get past the additional expenses we've had to incur over the past 6 months due to COVID-19. Or even better, please join our Circle of Giving and become a Monthly Donor to help us continue to offer all the services we currently offer and do better for more people who will be coming to us in the upcoming colder months. Please help us continue to offer food, shelter and comfort this Holiday Season and in the year ahead, we need your support!

Thank you, God bless and I wish you and yours a happy Thanksgiving Season!!!

Ron

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

- \$18.66 to help 6 people
- \$40.43 to help 13 people
- \$62.20 to help 20 people
- \$83.97 to help 27 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.

THE UNITED CHURCH DOWNTOWN MISSION OF WINDSOR INC.

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