



GOOD NEWS TIMES TWO!

Visitors are now welcome in the seniors' high-rise buildings, and the common rooms are open again. For more details, see page 4.

Strength in numbers!

We want to take a moment to thank you, on our own behalf and on behalf of employees of the Office municipal d'habitation de Montréal, for keeping up a united, active front in your housing communities despite this pandemic. You give the word unity a whole new meaning. Rest assured that we worked day in and day out to see to it that every single tenant was safe. This unforeseeable turn of events taught us to manage a crisis like we had never come up against before.

As soon as Premier Legault gave his first press briefing, we formed an emergency committee to coordinate all of our teams, whether they were working remotely or in the field. We took our responsibility very seriously. We had to cope with government instructions that changed every day. None of us knew on any given morning what kind of mountain we would have to climb that day. Planning for the unpredictable was wearing out our teams.

But together, we rose to the challenge, as impossible as it seemed. Every emergency gives us a reason to stop and think, and to second-guess ourselves. Every emergency can leave a group broken, or make it stronger. We were thrilled,

and proud, to see the tenants, associations and common room supervisors all pull together.

Have you any idea what precious allies you were during the lockdown! You came together and made a true outreach team. Our giant chain of unity held fast. Every link was strong. You know your neighbours better than anyone else and you supported the most vulnerable among them. You had the heart and sense of urgency to act.

You came up with creative solutions to keep people connected, and that's what community is all about! You found ways to support people who were isolated, sometimes literally cut off from the world, with little or no means.

Finally, we applaud the Comité consultatif des résidents (CCR, i.e. Advisory Committee of Tenants), whose members continued to work with the OMHM in the tenants' interests. Committee members met remotely and spared no effort to protect seniors in the high-rise buildings.

Congratulations and thank you! You are our best allies!

Enjoy your summer, and stay united!



Danielle Cécile,
Executive Director
of the OMHM

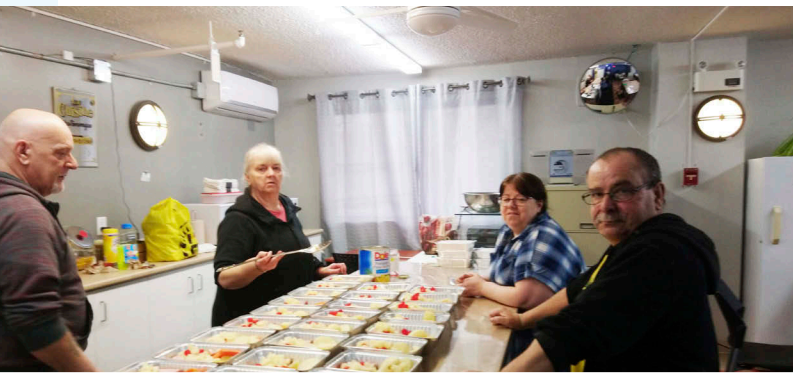


Nathalie Fortin,
Director of Community
Relations Management

Food had to come first

In emergencies, the brave step forward to protect the vulnerable. And in the OMHM's buildings, there has been no shortage of bravery! Let us spotlight a few of the people who looked out for their neighbours. We thank everyone who managed in one way or another to make sure that everybody had enough to eat.

Gilles Brière and his committee at Habitations de l'Érablière regularly provide breakfast to about fifteen people a day. They knew that food insecurity would not disappear with the lockdown. For three months, they have been cooking every day, each in their own kitchen, and then put on gloves and masks to deliver meals to residents. They also handed out more than \$2,300 in gift cards donated by local grocery stores and sold 500 masks made by Suzanne Payant at a small cost.



At Habitations de l'Érablière, Gilles Brière, his sister Johanne Brière, Suzanne Payant and André Stuart join forces—while keeping a good distance apart—as they assemble meals for tenants.

In March, when everyone had to self-isolate, Carole Guilbault immediately asked MP Hélène David for a \$4,000 grant. Half of the funds went to the Centre du Vieux Moulin to provide residents of the **Seigneurie des Rapides** with meals from Meals on Wheels for a month. The other half was used to purchase items to provide food hampers to tenants in need. Mrs. Guilbault continues to help everyone, whether it's to install an air conditioner or go to the hospital.

United in the fight against hunger

In Hochelaga-Maisonneuve, a number of tenants heading up committees sounded the alarm with their community organizers when the order came to enter lockdown. Michel Miron, from Habitations **Pie-IX**, Monique Bélisle, from **Adélar-Langevin**, and Micheline Sparrow, from **Nicolet**, were referred to the Centre des jeunes Boyce-Viau, a nearby youth centre. On Fridays, they pick up food for neighbours

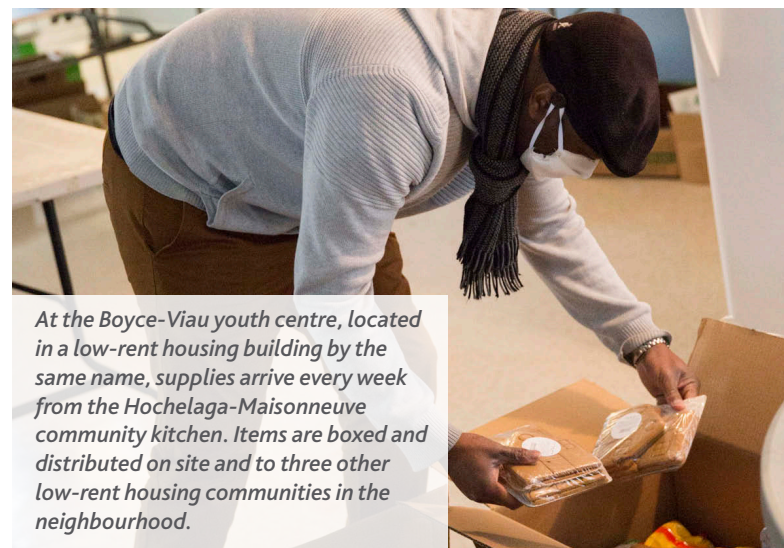


Mrs. Sparrow never lets her fibromyalgia slow her down when she and her spouse are busy feeding residents at Habitations Nicolet.

who don't have enough to eat. Mrs. Sparrow is also in touch with SOS Itinérance, which gives her its daily surplus, when there is one.

Then begins the race to put everything in bags and distribute it all. People who are able to pick up their weekly supplies come one by one, when they are called. Door-to-door delivery is provided to residents with reduced mobility. All remaining items are kept on hand for anyone who needs them during the week.

Monique Bélisle also gave away two free masks to everyone in her building! We should mention that a volunteer made them without being asked, as a way to thank Mrs. Bélisle for past favours. That's what "paying it forward" is all about!



At the Boyce-Viau youth centre, located in a low-rent housing building by the same name, supplies arrive every week from the Hochelaga-Maisonneuve community kitchen. Items are boxed and distributed on site and to three other low-rent housing communities in the neighbourhood.

With a little fun too!

Living shut in, completely isolated, is no life! Low-rent housing tenants came up with ways to get around the effects of confinement and raise the spirits of residents in their buildings.

Suddenly, rainbows started popping up in windows as a way of encouraging each other. A few outdoor activities were held. For example, Lise Sévigny, from Habitations **Curé-Vianney-Savaria**, asked Luzio Altobelli, an accordion player, to play a few lovely tunes for tenants. The instrument resonated loud and clear, even outside and without electricity. The musician moved about easily, giving recitals to people on their balconies in the front, and then heading on to the back of the building for more.

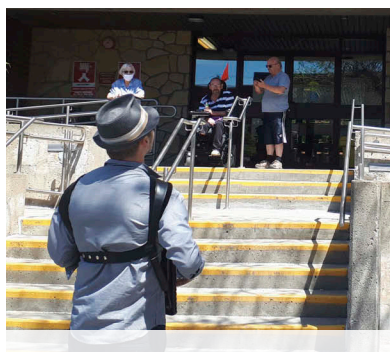


Tenants of Habitations Aimé-Léonard hung a balloon on their balcony to celebrate Mother's Day and greet the musician who brightened up their day.

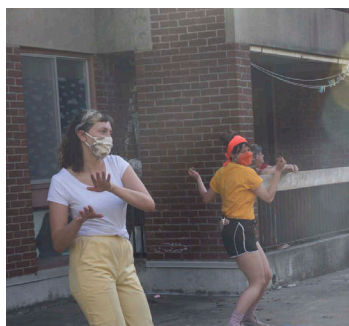
At Habitations **Aimé-Léonard**, Diane Tardif treated residents to a Mother's Day concert. She is also organizing a balcony Zumba session to celebrate Saint-Jean-Baptiste Day. But she wanted to do more, and more often. She contacted the local police to find out whether she could hold her weekly bingo outdoors. She got the green light, as long as no more than 10 people spaced 2 metres apart play at one time. And she's been doing it ever since.

Not to forget the young folks

To give younger residents a chance to blow off a little steam, a dancing event runs outside Habitations **Boyce-Viau** every Thursday at 6 p.m. Keeping 2 metres apart, they shake and shimmy thanks to a citizen's initiative launched on Facebook and made possible by the Boyce-Viau youth centre.



With his accordion, Luzio Altobelli sweetened the lives of residents at Habitations Curé-Vianney-Savaria with a concert.



On Thursday evenings, young people enjoy themselves to the music at Habitations Boyce-Viau.

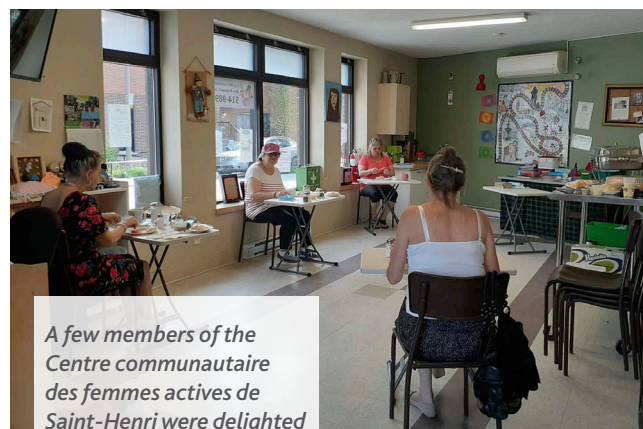
An inspiring example

At the Centre communautaire des femmes actives de Saint-Henri, an active women's community centre, a tenant of Habitations **Lenoir** watches over members living in various low-rent housing communities, namely **Saint-Antoine, Rose-de-Lima, Charlebois, Richmond, de l'Érablière**, and others.

From the first week of confinement, Alice Robertson and her team called their members to see if they needed anything. Here are some examples of the deliveries they made to keep up their spirits:

- To those interested, everything needed to knit slippers for the Maison des jeunes;
- An authentic sugar shack meal, with candy, taffy and maple syrup;
- On Mother's Day, breakfast complete with a flower, a pair of gloves, and a mask;
- A Mason jar filled with all the ingredients needed to bake chocolate chip cookies.

Even with the lockdown gradually easing up, Alice Robertson continues to call a dozen people every week to make sure they are doing well.



A few members of the Centre communautaire des femmes actives de Saint-Henri were delighted to participate in the first end-of-lockdown breakfast, each at her own table, in accordance with the new health rules.



All the ingredients needed to bake good old chocolate chip cookies. Even the liquid ingredients were provided!

Common Room Supervisors

Our very own guardian angels

When awareness-building agents had to be posted at the entrances, the common room supervisors were given a very special assignment.

Every morning at 8 a.m., these volunteers would greet the agent assigned to their building. They would stock up the agent with masks, gloves and disinfectant for the table at the entrance, disinfectant gel that people passing by would use to clean their hands, and a sheet to keep track of the comings and goings. They also opened the common room so that the agent could use the restroom. Finally, late at night, between 11 p.m. and midnight, the volunteers would gather up all the equipment and store it until the next morning.

Malherbe Minault, of Habitations Étienne-Desmarteau, took on this task from the start. Although the agents performed their duties well, he sometimes had to explain to the newcomers what they had to do and how to speak with people who disobeyed the health rules.

Materials also had to be ordered weekly to avoid running out. Once, Malvina Lagacé of Habitations Bellechasse brought some supplies to a "colleague" who had run out of gloves and masks in another building. Even in these emergencies, Mrs. Lagacé stayed positive and never gave up!

For this dedication and support, the building's tenant committee, or the tenant in charge where no committee was operating, received \$20 a day. In Habitations Bellechasse, the committee used this money to provide meals to tenants on Mother's Day and Father's Day, without forgetting the social distancing rules, of course!

To all the volunteers who willingly got up early, went to bed late and lent a helping hand when it was needed, thank you from the bottom of our hearts!



Devoted Mrs. Duclos of Habitations Montmorency dutifully handed out equipment to the agent at 8 a.m. every morning, and picked it up again at about 11 p.m.

Good news times two!

Finally! The common rooms are ready for some post-lockdown enjoyment and are permitted to stay open every day. Among other things, tenants can use them to stay cool during heat waves. This way, common room supervisors will continue caring for the health of residents. We are very grateful to them. Awareness-building agents will remain at the entrance for a few more days to help smooth the transition and give out reminders about the health rules in the common room.

And if we needed proof that good things come to those who wait, visitors are welcome in the seniors' high-rise buildings again. Visitors will have to make sure they take precautions, given that seniors are more vulnerable to the coronavirus. Hand-washing, 2 metres of physical distancing and respiratory hygiene are still necessary. But no matter—how wonderful it will be to see each other again!



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