



The essence of our House is the aspect of community, which is reinforced by the basic elements of ; respect, acceptance and caring.

Life At Labre House

Newsletter of The Benedict Labre House

July/August 2008,

www.benedictlabre.org

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

My summer message is normally filled with visions of sunshine, watching the garden bloom and the sense of fulfilment, peace and happiness that it brings; this summer's message is no different, however I find myself understanding all this in a whole new way this year. I am expecting my first child the beginning of December of this year, and I could not be any happier. I do feel that it comes at a great time in my life, especially with how strong the House and our community are now. We have a wonderful, reliable, and committed team. I am confident that the House will be in good hands during my maternity leave starting in November.

I know that I will miss the House while I'm gone, though I am very excited to take on this new adventure in my life. It's funny, because in many ways I feel as though the House has helped prepare me for this journey I am to embark on. Not only because on many days I feel as if I am a mother to 500 people, but mostly because the House has helped, and continues to help teach me and strengthen the attributes that I hope to install in my children; Love, caring, compassion, human dignity and the importance of acceptance for who we are. All in all, I am not only proud to be a member of The Benedict Labre House, but I am proud to be bringing in another member to this community.

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Kat Gray

Re-Insertion Centre Coordinator

Santiago Garcia Rejon

The Benedict
Labre House

308 Young Street,
Montreal, Quebec,
H3C 2G2
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In the last six months we have witnessed a severe decrease in food donations received. The bi-weekly food pick ups from Moisson Montreal account for on average 90% of the total food donations. Unfortunately, the actual amount of food received has decreased drastically, and we have been receiving little or no basic food items (i.e.: meat, milk, eggs, canned foods). Needless to say our pantries have become very bare. We have been and will have to continue to purchase large amounts of food items such as meat, eggs, milk, sugar, coffee and other necessary produce to continue to provide nutritious meals for our Basic Meal Program.

We are not sure why we are seeing this decrease in food donations. We do however know that this is a serious issue for us and our Basic Meal program. We ask if anyone has any contacts at food suppliers or is willing to organize a Meal Team, can food drive, Supper Bowl or a fundraiser on our behalf, please contact us at the House. Any additional support will be GREATLY appreciated during these summer months.

I wish you all a very HAPPY AND SAFE SUMMER!! Thank you for all of your support

Sincerely,

Kat Gray

MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD

Dear Friends,

It is with great pride and greater humility that I write what is for me my first message in the Life at Labre House. At our most recent annual meeting the board was kind enough to elect me President and I thank the members of both the Corporation and the Board for their show of confidence.

I cannot go any further without acknowledging and paying tribute to my predecessor, Mark Burke. For five years he has dedicated both his spare and not so spare time to steering the Labre House ship through troubled waters, financial crises that threatened our very existence, and the everyday problems of providing as many as 300 meals a day to our guests along with the accompanying indi-

vidualized services and programs. Mark, you have set a standard for us that cannot be met but rather used as a target for those that follow you. Good luck and God Bless to you and your family as you move on to the next challenges of your life; you will always be in our thoughts and prayers.

As you can all imagine we have no shortage of challenges, not the least of which is the ongoing supply of food. A combination of factors far beyond our control, including basic commodity costs, fuel prices and generally uncertain economic conditions, have combined to all but dry up our traditional sources of food.

The board and management have recognized this, and developing a supply chain that is as bullet proof as possible is a priority. This however cannot be done overnight but our guests

must continue to be fed in the meantime so I implore any of our stakeholders who can help in this regard to please step forward. Prayer is an essential ingredient to any solution but as a reality check, I am reminded of the Russian proverb "Pray to God but keep rowing to the shore".

Our day-to-day leader, Kat Gray, is starting a family and she has been obliged to stop physically coming to the House for health reasons. For the meantime, she will continue her duties from home and will be in constant communications with the House. It goes without saying that we wish her and those dear to her every health and good fortune and eagerly await her return.

As so often happens, we have been blessed with a young man named Santiago Garcia-Rejon, a Concordia University graduate student who has already been heavily involved in house activities and operations. Santiago has graciously agreed to fill in as interim Executive Director when Kat goes on leave and in that regard is a true life-saver, particularly for a newly elected President. Thank you Santiago.

Most of you are familiar with the history of Benedict Labre House, established in 1952 as a day center for the homeless. While we may seem to have evolved into much more than that, we must not lose sight of our fundamental mission, to be a home, albeit a day home. I ask for the help of all of you in being true to that mission for the well being of our guests, volunteers, and larger community.

*Regards,
Stan Vincelli
President of the Board*

Our 2008 Supper Bowl Series has already begun. It is a simple approach- we offer a simple meal using bowls decorated by our guests which the participants keep as a reminder of the event. We will animate a discussion in hopes to allow people to reflect on the issues of need and their individual involvement in their community. For information or to book a Supper Bowl you can contact Kat or Santiago.

Our Homelike Haven



One of the most colourful and fulfilling time of the year is when our Garden is planted and has begun blooming. A lot of thought, work and love went into our garden this year, and I must say... it looks better then ever!!!! Again this year the ACSA has donated vegetable plants for our garden. As well as time, Delphine and a part-

ner helped us in starting our seedling project, where some of the guests and I planted tomato and sunflower seeds inside in March and cared for them until they were planted in the garden in May.



Also, through Delphine we were put in contact with a division of the City who donated 4 trees (2 apple, 2 plumb), 2 grapevines, rhubarb plant, raspberry, blueberry, and strawberry bushes. The additions have made it through the winter and are growing well. The apple trees have already begun to bare fruit. We are grateful, as these new additions really add to the charm of the back yard, and help create our homelike haven.

- *****
Summer Wish List
 * We are in need of second-hand or New items. They are:
 * • Meat
 * • Milk
 * • Eggs
 * • Pasta
 * • Non perishable food
 * • Socks
 * • Underwear
 * • Razors
 * • Men's Pants
 * • Back Sacks
 * • Shoes or Boots
 * • Blankets

URGENT
MEAL TEAMS
NEEDED

With the summer months here, we are having difficulty filling up our weekend Meal Team spaces. In fact we only have a total of 3 Teams booked for the months of July and August 2008.

Meal Teams are a wonderful and fulfilling way to contribute and are essential to our House.

Every year during this time, we notice a major decrease in Meal Teams, however it is the time where we serve the most guests and have the least amount of food.

We have 15 dates to fill and I am asking for your help in filling them. Easy recipes are available, and we can provide all the information needed to put together a Team. It is a simple and very rewarding way to give to our community. For any information you can contact us by phone (514) 937-5973 or by email kgray@benedictlabre.org.

Hello everyone, here's the latest update on what's been transpiring in our Re-insertion center since November 2007.

Activities/Programs

Lorna has recently started giving English lessons at the House, she has a small group of about 3 people who've registered for her course. We would also like to offer French courses and will be looking for volunteers to offer their time to teach. As for summer activities I have plenty of summer activities planned this year. In the month of July I plan on having a cribbage tournament, a horseshoe tournament, a tie die t-shirt making activity and a carpentry workshop (frame making for the photography project). All the activities will take place in our lovely garden which by the way is starting to bloom. In addition to the preceding activities, I'm trying to add a painting workshop which will be taught by art therapy students who belong to one of our supporting church groups. Lastly, the photography workshop which worked so well last year is back and we hope to hold the exhibit some time in September. The cameras for this year's project were donated by Mr. Roscoe and Mr. Nieuwendyk of the non-profit organization Dreams take flight which takes children who are physically, mentally or socially challenged to Disney World. Their generous donation of 20 35mm cameras will help in improving the quality of the pictures taken this year.

Showers

The showers have proven to be even more popular in the spring and summer months. Since their inception in November 2007, we've had a total of 407 well needed showers.

Nurse

Our nurse Colombe from Medecins du Monde has fallen ill and therefore has not been coming to the house lately. We keep her in our prayers and hope for a fast recovery. I know that before she fell ill she was seeing an average of about 8 people per visit in the comfort of our conference room. Her services to the house have proven to be extremely beneficial to the health of our guests.

Apartments

The number of people looking for apartments has drastically decreased due to the summer weather. During the winter months we helped numerous people find places by posting lists of apartments and rooms that were within their price range.

Employment

I've been working with the downtown YMCA in order to see how we can collaborate. The downtown YMCA offers an employability program (actually geared towards people with a criminal record) which I've had the opportunity to sit in on and think that it would greatly benefit our guests in terms of getting them ready to re-join the workforce. They touch upon topics like, CV writing, communication skills, interview skills, networking and job searching. Their program is very well run and the community workers are excellent. I'm hoping to have the YMCA workers come down once every couple of months in order to give an abbreviated employability seminar, actually more like an informal information session about their program, so that guys who are interested in signing up can take advantage of this excellent program.

I would also like to mention that Emploi Quebec has granted us another three spots on our Interagir employment program. I will be submitting a description of the three openings available to the downtown YMCA. This will allow us to obtain the services of candidates that have graduated from the YMCA employability program and who are ready to work.

We have made many steps forward in establishing the foundations of the Re-insertion center and we hope to continue to work and expand on the current success of the third floor.

Cheers,
Santiago

THANK
YOU

TOP SECRET OF THE WISDOM OF THE POET

By Motion, featured in our Making a difference section on page 4

Look to Observe and Venture to Engage

Whenever you look, is to love and only enjoy your eye
sight for what you see
When you observe is to overcome your fears so that you
cannot be afraid
How can you be afraid of what you thought you feared
when you observe?

To venture is to know and investigate the future before
your engagement
For when you engage into anything the only reason should
be to enjoy and love
For to love is like war. The war to choose what is right and
the war to choose what is wrong.

So to be alright is to Look Observe Venture Engage

MAKING A DIFFERENCE



My name is Motion and I've been on the streets ever since I arrived as a refugee from Liberia in 1996. In Liberia I owned my own business and was involved heavily in the community. I had a girl friend and family who I loved and cared for dearly. Then the war broke out and I was forced to leave my home. In the twelve years I've lived in Canada, I've never collected welfare and have always managed to fend for myself. I first started coming to the house about ten months ago.

The House is a place where I can come to eat, shower and get new clothes. I want to be an example for other homeless people. I want to show them that they can be in the street and still take care of themselves. Living on the streets is tough and I felt lost for the longest time but in 2000 I found my true love, Poetry. I've been writing non stop since then. It was Santiago who discovered my talent and encouraged me to put one of my poems up on the bulletin board. Many people liked the poem and my confidence started to grow. I soon built up the courage to ask Santiago if we could work together to type up my poems. We sat together on numerous occasions to write my poems. I asked him if he could print out copies so that I could share my poems with others. I started distributing my poems all over Montreal. People's reactions to my poems have been very positive and they encourage me to keep on writing.

I believe that writing is the expression of the inner emotions that touch the heart of another person. Poetry means the world to me. I want to use my poetry to break down people's preconceptions of the poor. I'm not in this for the money instead I want to help people through my poetry. I hope one day to win the Nobel peace prize for my poetry and I'm excited to be given the chance to be published in your newsletter. It is thanks to the help of the Benedict Labre House and its staff that I have been able to come this far. I want to thank them for all their help. Enjoy.

Thank you, Motion

Inside Scoop

An interview with "Chef" Yvon



How long have you been involved with the House?

I've been working at the Benedict Labre House for the past 5 years. Actually Tony and I started at about the same time.

How did you first hear about the House?

I was walking by one day and I saw all these people hanging about outside the house so I walked in to check it out. I

spoke with Tony and shortly after I started volunteering at the House. I volunteered for about six months before I was offered the Chef position at the House.

Do you have any formal culinary training?

I've worked in restaurants all my life, so taking on the role of Chef at the House was not something new for me.

Do you have any dietary restrictions that you need to be concerned with when you're preparing meals for people that come to the house?

Many of our guests have health issues, so I do not put any added salt and steer clear from spicy foods. If a guest has a particular dietary need, I am always happy to prepare a suitable dish for them. I don't send anyone away hungry.

About how many people do you serve per day?

Well it all depends. I find that the summers are busier than the winters, but on average I would have to say that we serve about 80-90 for breakfast, another 90-100 for lunch and around 90-100 people for supper. It is all depending on the day as well as the time of year.

What are your signature dishes?

Everyone seems to like my soups, which I serve with every lunch, because they're more like a stew than a soup. Our guests also really like my spaghetti Bolognese, and crepes are always a favourite, which I prepare every Tuesday and Thursday morning.

How has the House helped you?

The House has helped me become a better chef. Our kitchen has never had every thing that we need to make "gourmet meals", so I have always had to be clever in creating healthy menus. However, for the last 6 months to a year we have been receiving less food from Moisson Montreal, so I have really had to be creative in order to make sure that I can serve well balanced meals. For example last week I had no lettuce, tomatoes or cucumbers so I grated some carrots and made a carrot salad.

Please send donations to:
Benedict Labre House,
308 Young St.,
Montreal QC, H3C 2G2
(514) 937-5973

Name: _____
Address: _____

Amount: \$20 () \$50 ()
\$100 () Other (\$) ()

A tax receipt will be sent to you. A Heartfelt THANK