

We are family and we make a difference.

Members of the Mile End Community Mission are a truly wonderful, unique, and interesting group of people with varied experiences and backgrounds. What the majority of our members have in common, however, is the daily struggle with chronic poverty and social exclusion most often linked to other life-challenging conditions and situations including:

- depression
- other mental/emotional health issues
- physical health problems
- situations involving violence and/or abuse
- challenges with literacy, education and life-skills
- trouble with the law, addiction
- homelessness, or a combination of the above.

With well over 500 members, the Mission serves approximately 300 individuals per week through our various programs and services.

Over the past 6 years, our homeless population has grown from a couple of individuals to over 25 individuals, often requiring intense care and follow-up. According to City of Montreal statistics, these 25 homeless Mission members represent half of the total homeless population in the Plateau-Mile-End area. In addition to special food and self-care packages that we offer our homeless Mission members, we also recently installed a shower so that they can care for themselves in our community-friendly environment.

While the majority of our members have shelter in rooming houses or very small, sub-standard apartments, their struggle to survive well below the poverty line involves many additional challenges far beyond a lack of adequate nutrition and housing. Their inability to deal with various government structures, systems and requirements due to fear of authority, social anxiety, illiteracy, and mental health problems, etc. often leaves them at great risk of falling through the cracks, losing their welfare, being incapable of applying for and receiving their pensions, or getting the health and social service care they need. The many situations we help our members with in this regard involve helping them:

- replace lost or stolen identification cards and papers
- deal with difficult landlords, housing authority representatives, welfare agents
- piece together years of unfiled income tax returns
- coordinate and monitor health and social services, medical follow-up-particularly for our growing number of seniors

These types of challenges represent for many insurmountable 'road blocks', leaving them extremely vulnerable and terrified of losing what little they have, becoming homeless for the first time, or in some cases, returning to the streets a perpetual cycle of 'living on the edge'. In addition to the numerous members who come to get help at the Mission on a daily basis from the Mile End and surrounding community, we also closely follow 8 Mission members living in a rooming house in the neighborhood in order to help prevent them from falling into homelessness because of problems related to their mental illness, constant problems with bedbugs or other bug infestations, difficulties with other rooming house members, issues requiring ambulance care as a result of attempts to self-medicate with alcohol, drugs and prescribed medication.

The understanding, advocacy and fellowship provided by the mission, enables our members to feel cared for, supported and part of a safe and engaged community of 'people helping people'... truly a people's mission. We fully embrace and highlight the preventative role that the mission's community, programs and services play in helping our members improve their quality of life, and in doing so, step further away from the edge.

When individuals first come to the Mission, they often feel ashamed, outcast, marginalized, and not part of any community. They usually sit by themselves and don't talk much to others. Through shared circumstances, over shared meals, or while waiting for the weekly food-bank distribution, mission members gradually begin to step out from the shadows of their silence and loneliness, develop relationships with others in similar situations as theirs, start gaining trust, and slowly open up about their lives, their frustrations, their hopes and sometimes their dreams...

How do people end up living on the edge?

Poverty is not a choice

Abuse is not a choice

Mental illness is not a choice

Addiction is seldom a choice, and is often linked with mental illness

Homelessness is not a choice

Living in sub-standard housing is not a choice ...

AT MILE END MISSION WE CHOOSE:

** Not to blame people for living on society's margins*

** To celebrate, encourage, support, and work with those "living on the edge"*



Community art is life-giving



Preparing for Christmas dinner for 300 people



Beach outing summer 2018