

# LE PORTE-VOIX

*At the heart of relational health*



## ♥ AN IDEA THAT CHANGES US AND SAVES LIVES

La rue des Femmes is proud to announce (you heard it here first!) that it is launching a major project this year thanks to a significant grant. This project will lead to public recognition of our relational health-based intervention approach. Our innovative and promising practice will be recognized as exemplary and our relational health centre will be held up as a model for others.

I should point out that, driven by the force of an idea – that of relational health – one by one, all of the planets gradually aligned in our favour. At the same time, all the necessary pieces of the puzzle were falling into place, starting with kindness and perseverance. It goes to show you just how much La rue des Femmes believes in our idea! We were prepared to devote all our energy, patience and heart to this idea, no matter how long it took. In the end, it took 25 years, but we’ve demonstrated beyond a shadow of a doubt that our idea can change us and save lives...

25 years to learn how to treat the state of homelessness, how to care for traumatized women – women just like you and me – and make them feel safe again, how to change the way we decode behaviour that scares us – a cry of distress, a call for help, a refusal to die, the desire to live – and, finally, how to find hope where there was once despair.

25 years to learn that behaviour – whether strange or appropriate – is not a question of education, but rather of relational care and attention, safety and love, or the absence of these things.



25 years of striving to find a meaning for the despair of so many people, people like those many of us have known, who have collapsed under the weight of terrible ordeals that often remain hidden and unspeakable.

25 years of working for an idea – relational health – and devoting ourselves to it day after day, rallying together and changing ourselves – our workers, the members of both our Boards, our donors, you and me.

This idea that elevates and unites us is rooted in the heart, the soul and the spirit. It changes us by making us part of a better world where doing good goes without saying. It heals us. After all, as one of our participants told us, in a burst of laughter, “healing is happiness.”

**Léonie Couture, C.M., C.Q.**  
**Founder and Executive Director**

## ♥ 2019: A MEMORABLE YEAR!

On September 19, La rue des Femmes will celebrate its 25th anniversary. Several special events to mark the occasion are planned throughout the year. We’ll be announcing them on our website and social media, so check in regularly for updates!

The 10th edition of our Relational Health Gala, La rue des Femmes’ annual benefit event, will take place on November 13, in the majestic Marché Bonsecours.

You can reserve your spot at this memorable event on our website. [www.laruedesfemmes.org](http://www.laruedesfemmes.org)

## ♥ A DONATION OF STOCK? WHY NOT!

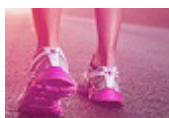
Giving a donation of stock allows you to make a significant contribution without dipping into your assets and entitles you to a tax receipt. It is especially advantageous if the value of your stock has appreciated considerably since you bought it.

It’s more profitable for you to transfer your securities directly to La rue des Femmes rather than donating the proceeds of their sale.

You can get all the information you need by contacting our Fundraising Assistant, Mélissa Pilon, at (514) 284-9665 or [mpilon@laruedesfemmes.org](mailto:mpilon@laruedesfemmes.org). Then go for it!

## ♥ THE SCOTIABANK CHARITY CHALLENGE

**Make a donation to support our runners!**



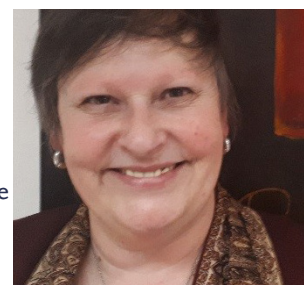
Dozens of people will be at the starting line on April 27 and 28, ready to run 5, 10 or 21 K in support of La rue des Femmes!

Make a donation at [www.canadarunning-series.com](http://www.canadarunning-series.com).

## ♥ SPOTTED, AT OLGA HOUSE

I’ve been a social worker at Olga House for 18 years. I’ve seen a lot of touching scenes over the years, but there’s one that I’ll always remember. It took place at the day centre one spring afternoon. Five or six former residents were sitting in the middle of the room. On the table was a birthday cake that they had bought or that La rue des Femmes had baked for one of them, its candles sparkling: they had come back to celebrate one of their birthdays. These former homeless women: they had come so far... from the street, from fear of themselves and others, from total isolation! And so much work! Years of work... on themselves, and with us.

**Emmanuelle Poitevin-Chaignon**  
**Housing coordinator**



## ♥ WE NEED YOU!

Nearly two years ago, I had the immense privilege of meeting Léonie Couture through my employer, the Caisse de dépôt et placement du Québec. The Caisse is not only interested in making a financial contribution to the organizations it supports; it also seeks to maximize the impact of that support by putting its network and its expertise to work for these organizations. As someone who was already involved in women's causes, I was profoundly inspired by the innovative relational health approach championed by Léonie and La rue des Femmes.

I truly believe that an approach based on relational health is not only key to helping women get off the streets and out of the hell they face day after day, but that it is also a way for them to restore their capacity to love themselves, to connect with themselves and with others and, eventually, to function in society.

I have had several opportunities to visit Maison Jacqueline, where some of the most vulnerable of these women find refuge. Hearing some of their shocking stories made me realize just how important La rue des Femmes is for them.

I have seen first-hand the warm welcome and unconditional love they receive from the relational health workers there. By getting involved as treasurer, my aim is to make a difference, in my own small way, and to help advance this important cause. I hope that the contribution of my expertise can help La rue des Femmes provide relational health care to all the women who need it. It's a big challenge, because the needs are many.

I urge you to contribute and to help us support the cause of women. We need you!

**Stéphanie Renaud, CPA, CMA**  
Operational Partner, Private Equity, Caisse des dépôts et placements du Québec



## ♥ MONTREAL NIGHTS AT LA RUE DES FEMMES

I'm a psychosocial support worker at La rue des Femmes's Olga House, a surprising and transformative house of healing where I've spent nearly 13 years. Time sure does fly! How do you describe this monumental journey that La rue des Femmes offers to both its staff and its participants?

Try to imagine a building in the heart of downtown, open 24 hours a day, whose walls conceal and shelter so many secrets – the worst cuts and fractures and the vilest assaults any woman can tolerate. A place where miracles happen all the time and where the staff are eager to arrive every day so they can roll up their sleeves and get to work.

For us here at LrdF, all of those hidden things that wound, fracture, wrench and even sometimes kill are not just stories we read in the newspaper. We are the ones who clean the wounds and treat the infections. And, as when treating any serious infection, it requires a delicate touch and sensitivity. I don't need to tell you that you can't just pour a bottle of disinfectant onto a deep wound and tell the patient to lower their tone immediately! You have to approach gently and wait for the person who's wounded to hold out her injured limb. You have to wait for her eyes to meet yours, so that she can see in them what she'd forgotten existed. Hope. The hope that the person in front of her, holding out her hand, doesn't want to take from her, but instead knows her suffering and knows the road to healing.

It's through my eyes that I offer my heart the first time we meet. Did you know that the most unbearable suffering – the type of suffering that can kill – is often silent or masked. It's that kind of suffering that often moves me to tears. That icy moment when she should tell... oh! this secret, this horrible event, this shame, this stain that she sees everywhere and on everything, even on you. Or this memory that she's erased, but that makes her scream terrible things at the most inappropriate moments. But she sits there, silent, suddenly trembling, her listless eyes half closed, fixed somewhere in the past... She no longer believes in it, she hasn't for such a long time. Love. The real kind of love. The kind of love that reaches out a hand without asking for anything in return, not today and not tomorrow.

Those are the wounds that have allowed me to move beyond my own hardness, my own assumptions... Then there comes that moment of grace when, after a long and hard road, with relentless determination and patience, against all the odds, after numerous foot baths to heal the wounds, after big-sisterly laughs, after encouraging words of support – she opens her mouth and lets out a hint of a dream, a tomorrow, a maybe, a tear, as she finally looks deep into your eyes. Finally, contact has been made. Work can begin...

**Diane Bertolami**



## IMMEDIATE NEEDS FOR PARTICIPANTS

- Cotton and wool socks
- Backpacks and sports bag
- Running shoes

## VOLUNTEERS WANTED to transport items.

## ♥ NEW DIRECTORS have joined our Boards of Directors! LrdF

Board: Stéphanie Archambault, General Manager, Legal Aid of Montreal, Laval; Mylène Dupéré, Vice-President, Public Affairs and Corporate Communications, Réseau Sélection; Geneviève Marchand, Director, Legal Affairs, Technologies Orbite inc.

LrdF Foundation Board: Sarah-Émilie Bouchard, Senior Director, Strategic Communication, Caisse de dépôt et placement du Québec; Florence Delaby, Director, PPP Bids, Engie; Annette Dupré, Head of Organizational Performance and Performance Management.

We are extremely proud to welcome our new directors, whose valuable contribution helps promote the visibility of La rue des Femmes.



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