



CHEZ DORIS NEWS

COURRIER

For Our Donors and Partners

WINTER 2026 EDITION

LORRAINE: WRITING TO STAY ALIVE

The truth — even the uncomfortable truth — is essential to understanding the journeys of women survivors of homelessness, violence, and exploitation.

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OF COMMITMENT
AT CHEZ DORIS: THE
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AFTER TWO YEARS OF COMMITMENT AT CHEZ DORIS: THE URGENCY REMAINS AS STRONG AS EVER, AND SO DOES MY DETERMINATION

This March, I will celebrate a very special anniversary: two years as Executive Director of Chez Doris. Two years that have connected me profoundly to the women we welcome – to their stories, often heartbreaking.

For many of these women, just acknowledging that they need help is a major step. This is why, more than ever, I hope we can all encourage women around us who are in precarious situations to reach out, and break the isolation of their distress.

We are now supporting more women than ever during my time at Chez Doris. This surge in our numbers reflects an urgent need, but also a concrete opportunity: adapting access to housing to the realities and needs of women experiencing vulnerability. With the rising cost of living and groceries, it is more essential than ever to strengthen pathways to stability and rebuilding.

These societal pressures heighten precarity and diminish a woman's chances of regaining stability. They also create very real additional dangers: increased aggression, amplified by winter and survival instincts, as well as the arrival of new drugs. These realities remind us just how necessary our mission is.



Diane Pilote

“At Chez Doris, we offer far more than a refuge. We provide a roof, warmth, and meals – but above all, we offer a full range of resources and support to help women regain control over their lives.”

To meet the ever-growing needs, we are moving forward with determination. Our next step is the imminent opening of the Saint Hubert Residence, which will soon offer safe temporary housing for women. And in 2028, the Fulford Project will extend this continuum by bringing housing spaces and our frontline services together under one roof. Together, these projects reflect our clear intention to expand our capacity so that every woman can find a place to stabilize, rebuild, and regain control over her own life. But let's be clear: this is only the beginning. We will need much more to meet needs of this magnitude.

In two years at the helm of Chez Doris, I've had the privilege of meeting extraordinary women, each remarkably resilient. They have taught me that even when challenges seem insurmountable, every gesture has the potential to transform a life.

In this edition, I invite you to discover Lorraine's story. She is a woman of exceptional courage. With the right support, when she was ready, she began a decisive recovery. Her journey shows just how transformative compassionate support can be. Help us support more women like her. Her journey is a powerful testament to the transformative impact of compassion and support.

We must act together – for their dignity, their safety, and their future. Your support, in all its forms, remains our greatest strength.

Diane Pilote
Executive Director



Diane and Brigitte, a woman who found accommodation thanks to Chez Doris.

LORRAINE: WRITING TO STAY ALIVE

Lorraine's story is difficult — at times devastating. The details she shares are raw, not to provoke, but because she chose to tell her life story authentically — exactly as she lived it.

For her the truth — even when it's uncomfortable — is essential to understanding the journeys of women who are survivors of homelessness, violence, and exploitation. Throughout her years of hardship, one thing stayed with her: her gift for writing. Even on the street, in the cold or in fear, she found refuge in words. Poetry was her escape — her way to breathe for a moment, in spite of everything.

Lorraine was born into a large family where love was a scare. Home life was marked by alcohol, violence, and fear. At thirteen, after her father punched her in the face, she fled. Alone and vulnerable, she entered a world where her only refuge was on the street.


For years, she faced cold, hunger, and humiliation. She tells her story with disarming honesty — how she walked through entire nights in shoes so worn down at the heels that nails pierced the sole.

Exploited by predators who took advantage of her vulnerability, she was driven, into a life in bars, then in the world of strip clubs, and eventually to prostitution. Lorraine does not soft-pedal this reality: she talks about assaults, violence, and humiliations that broke her little by little. She was forced to service men in order to survive. Thinking back to that time, she later wrote:

*“In the darkest place of the night,
alone on a sidewalk
There was no glory
in such despair.”*

Over the years, she endured profoundly traumatic experiences. One of them still haunts her: often forced to live in soiled clothes, no longer in control of her own body, weakened by drugs and suffering.

One day, something broke — or perhaps reignited. She calls it her rock bottom. She phoned a detox centre. She entered, she stayed and little by little, something shifted within her. She slowly rediscovered an inner strength she thought she had lost. She would later write:



Lorraine is living proof that, with the right support and guidance, a vulnerable woman can be reborn and rebuild herself.

*“I gathered my courage and persevered
Like a phoenix, I transformed.”*

Her poems created a space for healing and became a tool for awareness. For more than 15 years, she was involved in an organization fighting sexual exploitation. She shared her story to help other women break free. She even contributed to the creation of transitional housing, signing a symbolic cheque for \$13.5 million to support this essential project.

Today, Lorraine lives in safe, stable housing thanks to Chez Doris. Every night, she buries her face in her pillow, filled with gratitude — gratitude for warmth, for safety, for peace. Gratitude for no longer being outside at -30°C .

In one of her poems, she captures this new chapter with moving simplicity:

*“God protects and rewards the afflicted
That is why He blessed me with
a beautiful home.”*

She now dreams of finishing her autobiography, convinced that her truth — even the hardest parts — can save lives. Lorraine has never told her story to shock, but to shed light, to warn, and to inspire others.

Today, she moves forward with dignity, stability, and deep compassion for those living what she once experienced. She is living proof that, with the right support, vulnerable women can rise again and rebuild.



Emily Vaillancourt
Community Health
Development
and Recruitment
Coordinator



CHEZ DORIS CLINIC URGENT CALL FOR HEALTHCARE VOLUNTEERS

Chez Doris offers free, coordinated, and accessible essential healthcare services – services that are often difficult to access elsewhere.

This service exists thanks to the invaluable commitment of professional volunteers who offer their time and expertise. With the support of the Trottier Family Foundation, our dedicated coordinator, Emily Vaillancourt, is actively working to expand our range of specialized care and services.

Actively recruiting:

- 🏠 Dermatologist
- 🏠 Dietitian / Nutritionist
- 🏠 Gynecologist Clinical
- 🏠 Nurse
- 🏠 Foot care Nurse
- 🏠 General Practitioner
- 🏠 Physiotherapist
- 🏠 Mental health professionals (psychiatrist, social worker, psychologist, etc.)

To offer your support:
emily.vaillancourt@chezdoris.org

UPCOMING HIGHLIGHTS

BENEFIT COCKTAIL 2026

Thursday, May 28, 2026

Your spring gathering in support of women in need.

A warm and meaningful evening to come together in support of the Chez Doris mission. Join us in sustaining women experiencing homelessness or deep precarity and celebrate the solidarity of our community.

By participating in this event, you will be contributing directly to the autonomy, dignity, and resilience of the women we accompany every day.

chezdoris.org | don-donation@chezdoris.org
514 937-2341, ext. 261

INVITATION TO OUR ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING



The Annual General Meeting (AGM) of Chez Doris members will take place on Tuesday, June 16, 2026, at Saint Andrew and Saint Paul Church (3415 Redpath Street, Montréal).

Anyone who has completed 10+ volunteer hours or made a minimum donation of \$100 during the last fiscal year has the right to vote at our AGM.

We hope to see many of you there. Register online at chezdoris.org or by email at administration@chezdoris.org