



Connecting with **Compassion**

2022 - 2023
ANNUAL REPORT



Fontbonne Ministries

Mission

We are a welcoming community where you are not alone, and everyone belongs. As an inclusive social service organization, our programs foster personal well-being and creativity and respond to food and housing insecurity, social isolation and loneliness. Wherever you are in your life, the spirit of our founders—the Sisters of St. Joseph of Toronto—inspires us to join you in nourishing mind, body and heart.

Values

Respect: We value each person as a distinct expression of God’s love and invite each other to discover and celebrate our unique gifts.

Advocacy: We respond to society’s evolving needs and mobilize positive change through transformational leadership.

Community: We work together with neighbours and partners to build strong relationships that are mutually supportive and collaborative.

Compassion: We give our full attention to each person and show understanding, empathy and sensitivity to their needs.

Accountability: We use the resources entrusted to us with care and make sustainable choices that will benefit future generations.

Land Acknowledgment

The work of Fontbonne Ministries takes place on the traditional territory of many nations, including the Haudenosaunee, the Wendake-Nionwentsio, the Anishinabewaki, the Mississauga, the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, and is home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples.

Our recognition of this land is an expression of our gratitude to those whose territory we share. We affirm our desire for right relations with all Indigenous Peoples built on respect and reciprocity.

We are committed to work to redress the harms that have occurred in the history of this country.

Message from the Board Chair and Executive Director

Dear Fontbonne Community,

Fontbonne Ministries continues to be a beacon of hope and support for individuals experiencing adversity. The impact stories we share in this report are a testament to the resilience, compassion and strength that define our community.

Since the beginning in the 1600s, the Sisters of St. Joseph and its member congregations have embraced an all-inclusive love that is reflected in their response to the evolving needs of the time—a value that Fontbonne wholeheartedly embraces. As the needs of the clients who rely on our programs and services change, so do we.

The story of Jesse and Harry, a couple with complex social and mental health challenges, underscores the transformative power of a welcoming, safe drop-in space and the impact of wrap-around programs that extend beyond providing a hearty meal. It is a reminder that, in our diverse community, we find strength, understanding and shared humanity.

Our collaboration with the Downtown Toronto East Footcare Clinic has yielded profound results, as demonstrated in Dwayne's story. The dedication of Dr. Minh Nguyen, and the collective efforts of our partners, have made a tangible difference in the well-being of individuals like Dwayne, emphasizing the impact of accessible footcare on overall health and wellbeing.

As we remember Amanda Bankier, a long-time resident of Fontbonne Place, we recognize the importance of stable, supportive housing as a sanctuary that values individuals beyond financial considerations. Amanda's spirit lives on in the memories of those she touched.

The Friendly Visiting Program embodies the essence of connection, addressing the fundamental human need for companionship. Joy and Nina's heartwarming relationship demonstrates the life-changing potential of dedicated volunteers.

As we navigate the challenges of the present and look toward the future, these impact stories inspire us to continue our mission with renewed vigour. Together, we are not just providing services, we are connecting with compassion to individuals within our community.

Thank you for your unwavering support, dedication and commitment to Fontbonne Ministries.



Sister Georgette

Sister Georgette Gregory, CSJ
Board Chair and President



Hailee Morrison

Hailee Morrison
Executive Director



Sharing Food with the Community

Jesse and Harry with Antonio at the Fontbonne Ministry drop-in.

Jesse and Harry Find Warmth and Community at Fontbonne

Since Fontbonne started 23 years ago, food has always been shared to show hospitality and caring. We offer a welcoming, safe drop-in space with various wrap-around programs to nourish the minds, bodies and hearts of those we serve. Many individuals accessing our lunch program live on low-to-no income and face barriers to accessing healthy, hearty food. The following is an interview with two of our regular drop-in guests.

- **FM:** Harry and Jesse, can you tell us a little about yourselves?

Harry: I'm 27 years old. I was born in England, moved to Kitchener when I was 12, then moved to Chilliwack, BC when I was 13. Two of my sisters still live in England and two are back in Chilliwack. Before Jesse and I came out here, I studied business at UBC and worked as a chef or server at restaurants. Growing up, Harry Potter was my favourite book and movie.

Jesse: I'm 37, originally from Belgium, but I moved to Canada as a child. I joined the Armed Forces right out of grade 12

in 2004 and remained in the military until 2009. During COVID I lost my job and I developed a substance abuse problem that I am trying to overcome. I'm also coping with some serious mental health issues. I hear and see things that are questionable. Sometimes it's hard for me to discern what is real and what is not.

- **FM:** You have very different backgrounds; how did the two of you meet?

Jesse: We met online over three years ago. After months of conversation, I knew I really liked

According to the Who's Hungry report*, Toronto is in an unprecedented crisis:



There were 2.53 million food bank visits in 2023, almost 1 million more than previous years.



1 out of 4 food bank clients spend 100% of their income on housing.

*Source: Daily Food Bank and North York Harvest annual report: Who's Hungry: profile of hunger and food insecurity in Toronto.

Harry so I took a bus to Chilliwack to meet him in person. We spent time camping around the province and talked about driving across Canada together. I wanted to share some of the places I have been.

Harry: Our plan to drive across the country got cut short when our car broke down in Ontario. It was too expensive to fix, so we just ended up staying here, but we have grown to like Toronto. We're camping at the beach right now. The nights are getting colder so we are doing our best to insulate our tent.

● **FM: How do you manage day-to-day life living in a tent?**

Jesse: We use a nearby community centre for showers. Someone told us about the lunch program at Fontbonne Ministries—he really talked it up and he wasn't exaggerating. The food is delicious. We've been regulars at the drop-in since the Fall, receiving take-home lunches and information from staff about other community resources.

Harry: Being a vegetarian, I appreciate the variety of the menu and home-cooked meals. We also use The Clothing Boutique at Fontbonne for clothes and hygiene supplies. We just got some fantastic winter coats and fancy backpacks. The boutique is so well organized, and everyone is polite and respectful. I'm very shy, so being in a welcoming community like this makes a significant difference.

● **FM: There are a lot of negative perceptions about people living on the street. What is one thing you would like to change about how people perceive you?**

Jesse: I would like to raise awareness about mental health. I sometimes have these angry outbursts, but I am not a bad person. The negative voices in my head can get overwhelming. Harry is my rock. I don't speak to any of my family and it's Harry who gets me through everything that I am dealing with. It's important to me that people see us as humans and not demonize us. It helps to come to a place like Fontbonne where the people are friendly and go the extra mile to help you. I love this community.

● **FM: What are your hopes for the future?**

Harry: In the short term, our priority is finding a safe, warm place to live. We have a couple of promising options; I'm cautiously optimistic.

Jesse: I would like to start working again and just be happy—with Harry, of course.



Last year, Fontbonne

- Served 16,304 meals
- Clothing Boutique visits totalled 4,036; 16,328 clothing and hygiene items were distributed
- Welcomed 719 visits to the Good Food Market

Making Footcare Accessible



Dwayne at his footcare appointment with Dr. Minh.

Stepping into Wellness: Dwayne's Journey to Optimal Foot Health

In 2021, Fontbonne Ministries, the Metropolitan United Church and St. James Cathedral Centre (collectively called Downtown Toronto East Footcare Clinic) collaboratively worked together to create welcoming and suitable spaces to meet clients where they are at, hire a chiropodist to be shared between the clinics, and purchase footcare equipment and supplies. Currently Dr. Minh Nguyen, Chiropodist, provides services four days a week—two of those days at Fontbonne Ministries' Mustard Seed site.

Poor footcare can result in arthritis, loss of muscle mass, circulatory disorders, severe back pain and a higher risk of heart disease and diabetes. Regular access to a licensed chiropodist can make a significant difference in the overall health and well-being of individuals.

"This is especially true for the clients we serve at Fontbonne Ministries," says Dr. Minh Nguyen. "Many of the clients we see are homeless or marginally housed and spend a lot of time exposed to the elements in ill-fitting footwear.

"When the free clinic I used to visit closed, I stopped getting care for my feet because I couldn't afford to go somewhere that charges a lot of money. The pain from the calluses made it hard to walk and compensating for that eventually caused problems in my other foot as well. It was a counsellor I was seeing who told me about Dr. Minh at Fontbonne."

We also serve seniors or people with disabilities who may not have the mobility to care for their own feet. It is important to identify and treat problems before they become urgent concerns requiring hospitalization, surgery and lengthy rehabilitation.”

Dwayne is a 50-year-old man who relies on Wheel-Trans for transportation to the foot clinic.

“When the free clinic I used to visit closed, I stopped getting care for my feet because I couldn’t afford to go somewhere that charges a lot of money. The pain from the calluses made it hard to walk and compensating for that eventually caused problems in my other foot as well. It was a counsellor I was seeing who told me about Dr. Minh at Fontbonne.”

When Dwayne first came to see Dr. Minh two years ago, he didn’t realize his problem was a foot ulcer because it is in a very tricky location.

“His diabetes impedes his healing—further complicating the issue,” explains Dr. Minh. “I created a pad to off-load the pressure of the ulcer to allow it to begin to heal. I took the time to help Dwayne grasp his diagnosis and treatment plan. He was empowered to take control and take an educated interest in his own footcare.”

“I used to get lots of infections and even had to get intravenous antibiotics,” Dwayne recalls. “Now everything is getting better, and I am not at risk of getting my foot amputated. I am so grateful to Dr. Minh for treating me. I used to be depressed about my foot, now I have a more positive outlook. He helps me concentrate on getting through my situation and forgetting about my troubles.”

Fontbonne and the other members of the Downtown Toronto East Footcare Clinic gratefully acknowledge the generous support of La Fondation Emmanuelle Gattuso.

Facts about our feet:



Uncontrolled diabetes can cause peripheral vascular disease, putting individuals at risk for developing ulcers or gangrene.



85% of all amputations are the result of a non-healing foot ulcer.



The footcare clinic at Fontbonne Ministries had 906 visits in 2023.



Providing Affordable Housing

Photo of Amanda Bankier courtesy of Samantha Beattie/ CBC Licensing

Remembering Amanda Bankier

Fontbonne Place, located on Queen Street East, is a low-rise, rent-geared-to-income apartment building for older women who otherwise would be homeless or inadequately housed. When it opened in March 2003, Amanda Bankier was one of the first tenants to move into the building. She remained a resident and dedicated activist in the community until she died in Spring 2023.

Amanda Bankier was a community volunteer who championed causes close to her heart, including becoming a strong voice for seniors, women and those grappling with

accessibility issues. Beyond her activism, Amanda was an accomplished musician, avid photographer, and enthusiastic gardener—often found joyfully toiling the landscape in front of Fontbonne Place.

“I first met Amanda almost 30 years ago when I was a volunteer in the early days of the Toronto Baroque music scene,” says long-time friend Rev’d Canon Andrea Budgey. “She was a brilliantly articulate woman with varied interests. She wrote and edited an early feminist science fiction zine back in the 80s; she helped to initiate

“Amanda was a regular community volunteer who could be counted on to help with the issues she cared about. Despite health and accessibility challenges, she would always show up, eager and ready to fight for the many causes that she held close to her heart.”

a rape crisis center, unapologetically advocating for the rights of women; and she was trained as both a chemist and a mathematician. Sadly, health complications prevented Amanda from ever maintaining a full-time job in her field. Her commitment to community solidarity remained unwavering as she worked to defend her neighbourhood against the impending havoc of the Ontario Line.”

A testament to her keen interest in public affairs, Amanda’s accomplishments were echoed in a city hall memorial by Toronto City Councillor Paula Fletcher:

“Amanda was a regular community volunteer who could be counted on to help with the issues she cared about. Despite health and accessibility challenges, she would always show up, eager and ready to fight for the many causes that she held close to her heart.”

Agnostic in her personal beliefs, Amanda held the Sisters of St. Joseph in the highest regard for how they compassionately managed the operations at Fontbonne Place. Before moving into Fontbonne Place, Amanda was at risk of losing her rental apartment.

“It was one of our friends who originally saw the ad about the new rent-geared-to-income apartment building opening up on Queen Street East,” recalls Andrea. “Amanda applied and was one of the first residents of the building. She was relieved to find stable housing and not be at the whim of a landlord anymore. For Amanda, Fontbonne Place was not just a housing facility; it was a sanctuary that prioritized people over profit and where individuals were valued for more than just the monthly cheques.”

Amanda left an indelible mark on everyone who knew her. Andrea, a chaplain at Trinity College, and others in the community mourn the loss of a dear friend, and the residents and staff at Fontbonne Place remember Amanda as a cornerstone of their stable, supportive environment.

According to the Institute of Aging Strategic Plan* 2023-2028:



Today, more than 80% of centenarians (those aged 100 years and older) are women.



While older adults often face poverty, older women are particularly affected by it.

***Source: Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR)**



Fontbonne Place has 18 large 1-bedroom apartments. Seven of the original inhabitants still reside in the building.



**Encouraging
Connections
that Bring
People Together**

Joy and Nina during their weekly visit.

Joy and Nina Create Lasting Bonds

The feeling of deep connection— with other people, social groups and physical places— is a fundamental human need. Loneliness and isolation are profoundly threatening our health and well-being. To respond to this epidemic, Fontbonne’s Friendly Visiting Program recruits compassionate volunteers to visit with individuals in need of emotional, spiritual and social support.

Volunteers at Fontbonne are at the heart of our programs; we could not do the work we do without them.

Joy, an educator by profession, has volunteered with various Fontbonne programs since 2007. When Joy retired from teaching in 2017, she began visiting with seniors in the Friendly Visiting Program (formerly In Good Company). Joy and Nina were introduced last Fall.

Joy recalls those early days, “It started off as just conversation. Nina likes to talk about the news or share whatever happened to her during the day. She loves word searches, and we do that together. The staff here got her a journal

“Recently, Joy helped me practice using a can opener so I could make tomato sauce at home,” says Nina. “She gives me a lot of joy and a very good warm feeling. I am stronger than I was before we started meeting; I can feel it. I am not so sad anymore.”

that she writes in daily, and sometimes she shares that with me. We also practice some life skills to help her in her day-to-day.”

Nina is a familiar face at Fontbonne. Arriving several times per week using Wheel-Trans, Nina watches movies at the drop-in, attends crafting classes, gets her hair cut at the salon, and receives care at the footcare clinic. Recently, the staff at Fontbonne noticed Nina wasn’t doing very well emotionally and asked if she wanted to be matched with a volunteer in the Friendly Visiting Program.

“I was very depressed when my parents died,” Nina responds when asked why she was struggling. “I was looking for someone to connect with. Joy is happy and funny, and I look forward to seeing her every week.”

The dynamic duo laugh and tease each other. As each week passes, Nina gets more comfortable with Joy.

“Recently, Joy helped me practice using a can opener so I could make tomato sauce at home,” says Nina. “She gives me a lot of joy and a very good warm feeling. I am stronger than I was before we started meeting; I can feel it. I am not so sad anymore.”

The heartwarming relationship between Joy and Nina is an inspiring example of the transformative power of connection and the positive influence of dedicated volunteers within our communities.

“To me, we are there for each other,” says Joy. “We have made a connection. I love Nina and I receive that back from her.”

Nina smiles, “I’m her Nina of the North, and she’s my Joy to the world.”

According to a report* by the National Institute on Ageing:



**As many as 41% of Canadians
aged 50 years and older are
at risk of social isolation.**



**More and more health care
providers are using the familiar
and trusted process of writing
a prescription to refer patients
to local non-clinical services
that reflect their patient’s
interests, goals and strengths.**

***Source of comments: December
2023 report, Understanding the
Factors Driving the Epidemic of
Social Isolation and Loneliness
Among Older Canadians**



In 2023, our volunteers:

- **Contributed more than 6,950 hours to Fontbonne programs and services**
- **Committed to 3,717 1:1 social visits**
- **Dedicated 8,851 social connection hours (both 1:1 and groups)**

Toronto East Rotary Club's Commitment to Cultivating Community



Fontbonne Ministries relies on the generous support of community donors like the Toronto East Rotary Club (TERC), an organization with a rich history of service spanning nearly six decades.

From the start of our partnership, TERC has embraced Fontbonne's mission to create a nurturing environment for individuals facing challenging circumstances. The collaboration began with the Rotary Centennial Project.

"We wanted to transform the uninviting concrete space at the front of Fontbonne into a vibrant and peaceful garden,"

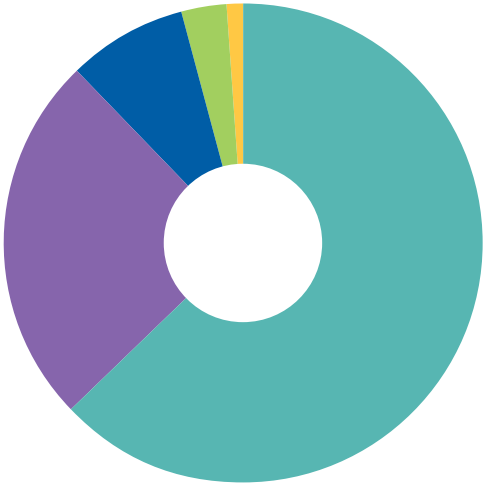
says Rotary member Karen Sommerville. "We hired a landscape architect, supported by professional services and additional funds from the Trillium Foundation. It worked wonders, turning a bleak area into a welcoming haven. Fontbonne organized a grand unveiling celebration with food, balloons and a plaque acknowledging TERC's transformative efforts. It was a joy to see the impact the garden would have on the whole community."

The club has consistently demonstrated a willingness to roll up its sleeves and

make a tangible impact at Fontbonne—from clothing drives to the construction and staining of decks to providing sandwiches for those in need during COVID. One of the most recent and substantial commitments from TERC was a \$4,000 contribution towards purchasing medical supplies for Fontbonne's footcare program. This underscores TERC's financial support and reflects their dedication to the overall well-being and health of the community they serve.

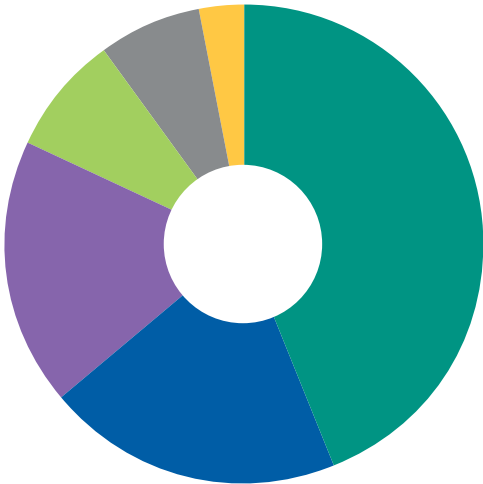
Fontbonne would like to thank the Toronto East Rotary Club. Their partnership exemplifies the profound change that can be achieved when organizations come together with a shared vision of creating a better, more compassionate world.

Where the Money Goes



Revenue and Other Funding \$2,404,069

- Donations 63%
- Transfer from Endowment Fund 25%
- Rental Income 8%
- Studio Income 3%
- Other Income 1%



Expenses \$2,141,738

- Program - Salaries/Benefits, Supplies and Support 44%
- Salaries and Benefits - Management/Administration/Fundraising 20%
- Property 18%
- Office/Other 8%
- Audit/Legal/Accounting 7%
- Amortization 3%

Fontbonne Ministries General Fund

(September 1, 2022 - August 31, 2023)

Revenue and Other Funding	2023	2022
Donations	\$1,518,888	\$2,202,839
Rental Income	192,548	162,261
Studio Income	67,383	7,125
Other Income	25,494	19,508
Transfer from Endowment Fund	599,756	-
Total All Funding Sources	\$2,404,069	\$2,391,733
Expenses		
Salaries and Benefits - Management/ Administration/Fundraising	\$429,108	\$403,011
Property	381,623	406,035
Program - Salaries/Benefits, Supplies and Support	950,772	1,036,314
Audit/Legal/Accounting	145,645	102,187
Office/ Other	181,523	231,059
Amortization	53,067	25,744
Total Expenses	\$2,141,738	\$2,204,350

To receive a full copy of the financial statements, please contact Fontbonne Ministries at:
791 Queen Street East, Toronto ON M4M 1H6
Telephone: 416.465.2889
Email: info@fontbonneministries.ca

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Fontbonne Ministries

Corporate Office: 791 Queen Street East, Toronto, ON M4M 1H6

www.fontbonneministries.ca

Connect With Us!

Tel: 416-465-2889 | **Fax:** 416-465-6744 | **Email:** info@fontbonneministries.ca



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