

# The Heart of Fontbonne Ministries is Community Care



At Fontbonne Ministries, we're all about nurturing community, dignity, and spirit—a vision inspired by the legacy of the Sisters of St. Joseph. Their approach was simple yet powerful: meet everyone with respect, value their worth, and create a space of mutual support and care. Over time, we've learned so much about the needs of the most vulnerable in our community, and these insights have shaped our mission. With the help of our community partners, we're excited to build on this legacy by offering welcoming, inclusive programs that connect and uplift those who need it most.

# Meeting People Where They Are At

Before I stepped inside Fontbonne, it was just a building I passed on my walks through the neighbourhood. Today, I work full-time at our Queen Street East location. Every day, I witness firsthand the strength and beauty of this community, and I am deeply honoured to be part of it.

As one of two drop-in coordinators, a critical component of my role is to support and engage with all participants from the time we open for our breakfast program until we close the doors in the afternoon. I know that every interaction can impact someone's day, so I consciously try to remember people's coffee orders and their names. It helps spark a relationship that starts their day off on a positive note, even if things hadn't been going well before they arrived.

One of my responsibilities is managing the clothing boutique, where our participants can browse for clothing and hygiene products like soap and toothpaste. The boutique allows people to choose what best suits them, preserving their dignity and boosting their self-esteem.

But my role extends beyond breakfast and clothing; I'm a resource for participants who need help connecting to other services. I help navigate forms for programs like the Canadian dental benefits, guide them through housing applications, and try to connect them to other organizations with services that complement our offerings. And, very occasionally, I need to assist someone who has been hurt or who needs harm reduction services.

Every day, I witness the challenges our participants face. Many are affected by the rising cost of living, food insecurity, and housing instability. Some are on disability insurance or living with mental health challenges. Despite their struggles, our participants create a network of care and generosity. They are always willing to share regardless of what little they might have. It's an inspiring web of community support that turns Fontbonne from just a drop-in space to a true family.



**Ariella Pierre, front line drop-in coordinator, preserves the legacy of the Sisters of St. Joseph in her everyday work.**

“There are many people who stand out to me, like Shane and Melissa (and their dog, Teddy!). They have contributed immensely to the strong sense of family here—they know everyone, and their presence helps create a sense of unity and warmth that fills this space.”

*Working here has given me a profound appreciation for the trust people place in me. And while not every day is easy, each day renews my commitment to do better, serve with empathy, and support a community with so much heart.*

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Meeting people where they are at is not just a phrase at Fontbonne—it's the foundation of what we do. We're building relationships that remind every participant they matter, belong, and are loved. ■



## Meet Shane and Melissa

Shane and Melissa have been part of the Fontbonne community for over a year, and their presence has become a cherished part of our drop-in space. They live in the community with their 3-year-old daughter, Melina Grase, and their dog, Teddy.

“We were told it was a place we could go to get meals and clothes, but we quickly discovered it was much more than that,” Shane shares. “The staff and volunteers are helpful and don’t judge or turn away anybody who comes through the doors.”

Melissa echoes Shane’s sentiment: “Everyone always has a smile. It is such a welcoming environment; no other place in the city compares. The staff connect us to other resources, and we can even get haircuts from professional stylists here.”

Both Shane and Melissa live with disabilities that add layers of challenge to their daily lives.

“I have scoliosis and fibromyalgia, so I need wheelchair-accessible housing,” Melissa says. “Rent has gone up while our benefits from ODSP (Ontario Disability Support Program) have gone

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down.” Shane adds, “We struggle the last two weeks of the month. We are surviving day to day, and with the cost of living rising so much, it can be very stressful to worry about every meal.”

Despite these struggles, Shane and Melissa remain hopeful. Shane wants to return to construction or manual labour when he can, and Melissa looks forward to giving back. “At Fontbonne, you witness how much people care, and it gives me hope that when we come together, it really does make a difference,” Melissa says. “When my daughter starts school, I want to start volunteering and giving back to my community.” ■

# THANK YOU!

Thank you for your unwavering support, dedication, and commitment to Fontbonne Ministries. Your support helps us continue fostering connection, dignity, and a sense of community. No one who walks through our doors leaves hungry or without the essentials, including hygiene products, clothing, and other basic needs. As we approach the end of the year, please consider donating to Fontbonne. Together, we can ensure that everyone feels seen, supported, and valued.

## There are 3 easy, secure ways to make your special gift today:

1 Mail the enclosed reply card

2 Go to [fontbonneministries.ca/donate/](https://fontbonneministries.ca/donate/)

3 Scan the QR code



## You Empower Individuals by Supporting Their Basic Needs

### Last year, we



Welcomed  
**12,024**  
drop-in visits



Served  
**16,533**  
meals



Distributed  
**17,382**  
clothing and  
hygiene items



Provided  
**132**  
Haircuts



Fontbonne Ministries

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