

NEWSLETTER SUMMER 2021



Marianne Martin



Émerique Normandin



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How did you discover la Maison de l'amitié?

(*Marianne*) In a vintage kind of way: word of mouth. Last summer, I realised that teaching French to adults was something that I really wanted to try.

A friend who teaches English classes at la Maison de l'amitié, told me about the organisation. I signed up as a volunteer teacher and it was "love at first sight".

(*Émerique*) I was looking for a volunteer experience and when searching online, I came across a community centre – la Maison de l'amitié. The opportunity to teach French to learners for whom it is a second language had me hooked. Without further ado, I applied to be a volunteer.

How has your volunteer experience been?

(*M*) I had already had a few rather modest experiences (such as teaching at the college level in the last year of my Master's program) but I had never been fully responsible for a course. Working as a volunteer seemed the ideal way to test the waters and to see if this desire to teach could be transformed into a vocation. And that has been the case! Learning and evolving with the students ignited my passion. I have a tendency to doubt myself but thanks to this volunteer experience and the positive feedback of the students, I have gained self-confidence and that is extremely precious.

(*E*) I began my experience as an assistant volunteer, not being convinced that I had the necessary skills for a volunteer teaching position. Right from the first classes, I realised how enjoyable it was to head to avenue Duluth to help the students learn French. After a few months as a teaching assistant, several students expressed their gratitude for my help during classes. It was the recognition I needed to give me the confidence to become a volunteer teacher. In the end, it is because of this volunteer experience that I discovered my passion for teaching. Today I am back at university to complete my teaching certificate in teaching a second language.... something I never could have imagined before setting foot in la Maison de l'Amitié.

How was your experience as an employee?

(*M*) The confidence I gained thanks to la Maison de l'Amitié and the students I met during my volunteer classes gave me the necessary boost to transition to a remunerated position. This stint at la Maison de l'amitié confirmed even more that being a French teacher is what I want to commit to for the coming years. Discovering the inner workings of a community centre, especially during a time as

complex as the one we are currently in, has been extremely enriching. A very beautiful experience!

(*E*) In fall 2020, I applied for a teaching position at la Maison de l'amitié and to my great delight, I was granted the position. Working there allowed me to teach more French classes and thus greatly improve my pedagogical skills and knowledge. Furthermore, during each class, I was able to develop a nice chemistry with each group of learners, which almost made me forget that I was working when teaching. Simply put, working at la Maison de l'amitié is sheer joy! The staff is very professional but more importantly, warm and committed.

In what ways has the pandemic influenced your journey at la Maison de l'amitié?

(*M*) For many years, I wanted to volunteer but I could never find the time or properly organise my schedule. When the pandemic began last year, having completed my studies and enjoying a lot of free time, I figured I did not have any more excuses. Also, while we seek to protect our community, we find ourselves isolated from each other. Teaching on-line has proven to be an excellent meeting place, even if it remains virtual. During the classes, I have gotten to know dozens of amazing people, motivated learners who shared their stories, their humour and their kindness.

(*E*) First of all, it is during the pandemic that the employment opportunity came up. Furthermore, the pandemic weighed in the balance regarding my return to university. For me, it is clear that being able to work in my field of study made my decision even more obvious and concrete.

What are your plans for the future?

(*M*) Becoming a teacher is a project that I really want to bring to fruition. I would also very much like to continue involvement in community work, because it is a stimulating environment, with many challenges and beauty. I also plan to write and to learn Spanish!

(*E*) I want to continue to teach and develop my skills in this area. I also plan to continue volunteering as long as my schedule permits it because it is a true pleasure!

ANNUAL REPORT 2020

2020 ACTIVITY HIGHLIGHTS (for all the details visit en.maisondelamitie.ca in the about us section at the bottom of the page)

IN THE COMMUNITY

- 71 days of Farmer's Market
- 260 local residents, 11 dedicated green alleyways and 1 cooperative received flowers and compost.
- Leadership participation in 6 local organisations (Camp Cosmos, RIVO-Resilience, Racine croisée, Association des commerçants de l'avenue Duluth, and the local school council at the au pied de la Montagne neighborhood school).
- 1,400 volunteer hours done in the neighborhood by our student residence participants.
- Peace day event on September 21st. www.paix-21septembre.org
- Excellent work.



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IN THE BUILDING AND ONLINE

Language program:

- 1,742 registrations
- 13,722 volunteer hours
- 326 volunteers

Partners:

- Racine croisée foodbank distributed 9,500 food baskets.
- Partage et Solidarité distributed 2,500 food baskets from unsold products of businesses in the borough.



NEWS BITS

Duluth avenue will be a pedestrian street for 8 weekends this summer. A lot of hard work was done by the board of the street association and its coordinator as well as all the borough staff to make this happen. A special thank you to the city and the borough for funding this project



After 3 years with us as assistant coordinator to the language program **Romina** is leaving us. She was instrumental in our quick turn around to giving online classes. Thanks Romina for all you have meant to us.



A wonderful fairwel picnis at Jeanne Mance park for **Romina**



- We welcome **Marianne Martin** as our new assistant coordinator and pedagogical support person for our volunteer teachers.
- Welcome to our new FT temporary staff : **Lucia Diaz, Leni** who are assisting with events and our summer student staff **Emerique** and who are teaching French classes.
- Our 3 farmers markets are back in action this summer.



THREE STARS



Aliza Eliner (English)

Aliza joined our team in the summer of 2019. Since then, she has become a foundational member of the English program. Always ready to try something new, she has taught all four of our levels and bravely faced the online transition with the arrival of COVID. Aliza's dependability and attention to detail make her an exceptional member of the team.



Bérengère Baldini (French)

Bérengère first started volunteering with us in May of 2015. She has taught all four levels with dedication and dynamism. She adapted (apparently effortlessly) to the online environment. She is an incredible team-player. Her presence is a gift to her students and to all the colleagues who have the luck to work with her.



Pablo Izquierdo Velasco (Spanish)

Although Pablo started as a conversation monitor in French when he joined our team in 2019, he has since branched out, teaching English conversation and Spanish grammar classes, both in person and online. As well as being trilingual, Pablo is dynamic, flexible, and an inspiration to us all!

CULTIVONS LE PLATEAU 2021

The urban agricultural fair (Cultivons le Plateau) was again diminished in its scope this spring and was limited to closing one street block between De Bullion and Coloniale. Like the previous year we had free distribution of flowers, compost and ground cover given to the local residents. These products were offered by the local Borough. It was a gorgeous and fun day for volunteers and residents alike.

