



## Celebrating Our Volunteers

## Finding Meaning in peeling a potato

*Fontbonne Ministries' Mustard Seed program supports adults struggling economically by providing essential services and welcoming safe spaces. The daily drop-in provides nourishment to guests who face barriers to accessing healthy, hearty food.*

*The following is an interview with two seminary students assigned to volunteer at Fontbonne Ministries as part of their graduate theological education. Marcel is a seminarian from the Archdiocese of Toronto, and Brian from the Diocese of St. Catherines.*

**FM:** Briefly describe your interests and how you transitioned into theological education.

**Marcel:** I like all kinds of music, especially classical music. I have



Brian (left) and Marcel (right)  
in the kitchen at Mustard Seed

played piano since I was six years old. I love reading and being around people.

I did a degree in medicine, but during my residency I realized it was not my calling, so I started working with special needs children instead. Over the next five years, I became more involved with the church and

several parish ministries. Gradually, I deepened my prayer life and faith. I felt my calling through the ministry work and decided to apply to the seminary last year.

**Brian:** I love travelling, scuba diving, and trains—the sound and mechanics behind them. I'm also a real people person.

In 2012, I converted to Catholicism, moved to the Niagara region, and began my studies to become a paramedic. In 2018, I sustained a workplace injury and spent almost a year convalescing. I spent a lot of time reflecting on who I was now that my identity as a paramedic was gone. I started going to daily mass to get me out of the house and be around people.

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**Brian (cont'd):** I began seminary studies at St. Philip's in Toronto, graduating in May 2022 with a bachelor's degree in Thomistic Thought. Now I'm in my first year at St. Augustine Seminary.

**FM:** How do your seminary experiences prepare you for your work at the Mustard Seed drop-in?

**Marcel:** The seminary is a microcosm for the larger community. We are surrounded by people with different personality types, capacities and capabilities, and we're asked to work together to achieve a goal. At the seminary, the goal is to become a priest; here, it is to serve the larger community.

**Brian:** The style at Fontbonne Ministries is not to preach to people, but rather a quiet love of

the people who come here—in their various states of fragility. That is what the seminary prepares us for. It's about connecting with people, despite how they may be acting or how they look or smell, and loving them as though you are loving Christ Himself.

**FM:** Today is your last day with us; what do you think you will take away from your experience here?

**Marcel:** For me, the biggest lesson has been finding meaning, even in a small, monotonous task like peeling a potato. It's about knowing that the food I am preparing will nourish someone and that while I might not see the fruits of my labour, the tasks I am completing will impact somebody. And when the work is done, it is done in a prayerful way. That's spiritual fatherhood.

**Brian:** St. Frances of Rome has a saying: Sometimes you have to leave Jesus Christ at the altar and go find him in the pots and pans. When I'm in the kitchen peeling 100 potatoes, I think, How can this become prayer? How can it bring me closer to Christ? And when we're involved in meal distribution, that's where we encounter Christ in the people we serve. Those concepts are taught in the seminary, and experienced here. That will be the big takeaway from my time at Mustard Seed.

*Thank you, Marcel and Brian, for sharing your many gifts through your volunteerism at our Mustard Seed location.*

## You Can Help Fontbonne Ministries Win \$20,000

Who doesn't enjoy a good contest, especially if it supports your favourite charity? The Great Canadian Giving Challenge has returned. Every \$1 you donate to Fontbonne Ministries through CanadaHelps.org enters us for a chance to win \$20,000!

Our work to meet the needs of many individuals facing food insecurity would not be possible without the support of generous and compassionate people like you.

As you can imagine, there has been a significant increase in the number of people accessing our lunch service.

As food costs escalate, more seniors and community members are struggling to make ends meet,

leading them to access our take away lunch program for the first time. Your donations will guarantee full stomachs, well-being, and caring connection with some of our community's most vulnerable individuals.

The contest runs from June 1 to June 30. Minimum \$3 donation is required. Help us win \$20,000 this year and donate today:



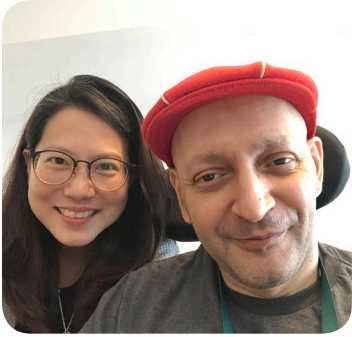
[www.fontbonneministries.ca/donate](http://www.fontbonneministries.ca/donate)





# Volunteerism Has Its Rewards

*In Good Company fosters unique one-to-one relationships by providing friendly home visits to isolated individuals in need of emotional, spiritual, and social support. Below we highlight two In Good Company volunteers, Aimee and Sister Mary. Fontbonne Ministries is grateful to our 23 volunteers who cultivate cherished connections through conversations, short outings, and phone calls.*



Aimee with her client Tom

**Aimee:** Tom has been my client for just over a year. He is in a wheelchair and cannot move his hands, so I spend some of our time together helping him with regular household chores like reading his mail and organizing stuff. We also like to watch TV and chat about what's going on in the news.

It's challenging to have relationships when you are mostly housebound. I think Tom enjoys the weekly routine of my visits and the connection to the outside world.

I know he is battling an illness, and I see his difficulties, but I also witness his strength and resilience. It's a beautiful thing that keeps me grounded, gives me hope and grows my faith.



Sister Mary, CSJ

**Sister Mary:** I have been an In Good Company volunteer for just over 20 years. Right now, I have two senior clients who I interact with frequently each month—over the phone and at their homes, or we go for walks and a cup of coffee. They have very different personalities and challenges, but their needs come down to the same thing: a friendly ear and someone to spend time with.

My role is to be a good listener, even if I disagree with what they are saying. That can be a challenge sometimes, but being a volunteer isn't about my needs; it's about being of service to someone else. The benefits to me come indirectly. When you know you have positively impacted someone, even brought a bit of joy into their life, it is all the reward you need.



## Volunteer With Us

Help us meet the changing needs of our neighbours

Volunteers at Fontbonne Ministries are at the heart of our work: supporting our meal program, visiting people isolated in their homes, helping with our Clothing Boutique, and more. We couldn't do what we do without the dedication and enthusiasm of our volunteers!

Contact Leanne for information  
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# Creative Corner

*Participating in the arts can help people manage a wide range of physical, mental, and social stressors. Whether it is through exploring creativity through clay at Studio on the Hill, or participating in one of our artistic workshops at Mustard Seed, Fontbonne Ministries fosters a welcoming, inclusive community that is judgement-free.*

"Our creative classes not only allow our participants to pursue their artistic vision, but also provide respite from challenges they may be experiencing in their lives. We offer a safe space and a great community where our volunteers engage with them, listen, and offer support and encouragement."

- Shaun P. Kelly  
Program Manager &  
Instructor



## Celebrating the Legacy of Sister Conrad Lauber, CSJ: 1931 – 2023

Sister Conrad began an esteemed 50-year teaching profession that included the roles of teacher, principal, and vice-principal. Her teaching career was followed with a ten-year tenure as administrator for St. Joseph's College Residence at the University of St. Michael's College.

Village Mosaic opened in 2009 (at the time, a new programme under Fontbonne Ministries) with Sister Conrad as one of the founders. In 2019, she took the role of ministry counsellor for the Village Mosaic staff.

Thank you to the many friends and supporters of Fontbonne Ministries for your special tribute gifts in memory of Sister Conrad.



Memorial and tribute giving is a meaningful way to honour and celebrate people who are making a difference in our community.

Sister Conrad loved her many years in education but had always envisioned

a gathering place for seniors who were isolated or living alone.

To work alongside other Sisters and staff at Fontbonne Ministries, and see that dream come to fruition, brought her great joy.

Creating a sense of community was a priority in her life, which she did throughout her many years of service.

She was often known for her role as 'cheer leader' and because of this, she was loved and admired by her students, participants at Village Mosaic, volunteers, and staff.

She will be greatly missed.



Fontbonne Ministries

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