



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Solidarity Gardens: A new West Island initiative to help with food insecurity

Bringing together 11 community organizations to support 750 West Island families

Pointe-Claire, May 27, 2020: The current COVID situation has had a tremendous impact on West Islanders. All three local foodbanks (West Island Mission, On Rock Community Services and West Island Assistance Fund) have seen an increase between 20% and 50% in the number of families requesting food baskets. Families who were, until now, barely making ends meet, are now in an extremely precarious situation and all are facing food insecurity. Many of the families served are either newcomers to Canada, single-parent families, or “*working poors*”.

The Solidarity Gardens initiative wants to encourage West Islanders to help our local foodbanks and other community organizations address food insecurity and receive fresh produce throughout the growing season.

The Solidarity Gardens initiative is powered by the Solidarity Fund of West Island Community Shares. Although the project is being led by West Island Mission and Corbeille de pain, 11 community groups will collaborate and benefit from this new initiative, including West Island Citizen Advocacy and Community Resource Centre. This year’s harvest will be donated to: West Island Mission, On Rock Community Services, West Island Assistance Fund, Corbeille de pain, Marché Solidaire A-Ma-Baie, and L’Équipe Entreprise.

QUOTES

“We strongly believe that this initiative has all the key elements to support a real systemic change in the West Island. This may be the first growing season in what could become a new normal post-COVID. We are proud to support the Solidarity Gardens initiative which involves a multitude of amazing community organizations to provide basic necessities to West Islanders in need.”

Sophie McCann, Executive Director, West Island Community Shares

“Not only are we grateful to be able to count on the support once again of our corporate partners, Cummins & Medtronic, but we’re also excited that our Fresh initiative is now part of a much bigger project which will benefit so many families in need. All three foodbanks are working hard to offer a healthy food basket to our families and this project will help us achieve this goal.”

Suzanne Scarrow, Executive Director, West Island Mission

“As we say, we are all in the same storm, but not all in the same boat, and COVID has created a new reality for many low-income families, who until now, managed as best as they could. Some of them may not need to turn to a foodbank, but would appreciate a little help. Now more than ever, we are committed to offering affordable produce at our weekly Marché Solidaire A-Ma-Baie. Produce received from the Solidarity Gardens will be available via “Pay what you can” offer.”

Lyse Beaudette, Executive Director, Corbeille de pain

“The Borough of Pierrefonds Roxboro is proud to contribute to this amazing initiative as a historic partner. The Borough council is happy to be donating a parcel of land on Gouin blvd to help support the food insecurity on the West Island. An important number of our citizens will benefit from these services and from the fresh produce, which is an essential part of a healthy diet, especially during these difficult times.”

Dimitrios Beis, Pierrefonds-Roxboro Borough Mayor

HIGHLIGHTS

The Solidarity Gardens initiative is asking all West Islanders to grow a vegetable garden this summer and give back some of their harvest to a local foodbank.

The Solidarity Gardens initiative will support 750+ West Island families who are experiencing food insecurity by helping our foodbanks and other community organizations provide a healthy food basket to those in need.

The Solidarity Gardens will also pair seniors and youths who will plant a vegetable garden in the senior’s backyard. While respecting all social distancing guidelines, the youth will tend to the garden during their weekly visit and the pair will spend time together and break seniors’ isolation.

Join us on Saturday, May 30th at the YMCA, Pointe-Claire, 230 Brunswick Blvd from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. where you will be able to receive seedlings and seeds to get you started.

Anyone who would like to participate in the Solidarity Gardens initiative, please visit www.wimmoi.org or the Facebook page: [Facebook.com/westislandmission/](https://www.facebook.com/westislandmission/)

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About West Island Community Shares

West Island Community Shares is a unique charitable organization dedicated to building a strong, inclusive, peaceful and healthy community. We do this by raising crucial funds for 41 local community groups which focus on developing strong and resilient children, creating bridges to support vulnerable populations, empowering women to reach their full potential for themselves and their families, and providing basic necessities to West Islanders in need. For more information: CommunityShares.ca.

About West Island Mission

West Island Mission is a non-profit organization that provides well-balanced, high-quality food assistance

and other related aid to the less fortunate living in the West Island of Montreal. Since 2005, WIM collects food donations and other basic supplies from the community and corporations in order to make a difference in the lives of West Islanders in need regardless of their personal history and background. For more information: www.wimmoi.org

About Corbeille de pain

Corbeille de pain is a non-profit organization whose mandate is to help improve food security for the more vulnerable population of the West Island. We do this through community kitchens, nutrition workshops, community garden support, food waste reduction initiatives and most recently a weekly Solidarity Garden in the A-Ma-Baie area. Corbeille de pain is recognised by the West-Island's vulnerable population, families and individuals as an organization that empowers them by promoting food security and food education. For more information: corbeilledepain.com

For more information:

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