
Short history

Maison Plein Cœur is a non-profit-making organization founded January 1991 and set up in corporation on April 19, 1991.

This community-based organization is the realization of a dream that stimulated the imagination of Rourk E.C. Simon, to whom associated Louis Marie Gagnon, a colleague of work from that period. These pioneers met in the presence of Roger Poirier to evaluate the feasibility of such a dream. By listening them express themselves about this dream and all the objectives that they wanted to live, Roger not only reassured them on the feasibility, but he joined them immediately in a set-up team of what from now on was no to be called a dream anymore, but a project.

These are the men we call here « the first three founders of Maison Plein Cœur ». They are the ones who set in motion all the activities necessary to the correct operation of the project. Force is to recognize that each one had its particular charisms and resources. One of them, isolated from the others, would never have been able to carry out this project, whose incredible complexity required the specific contributions of each one. Would one of them failed and the project would have been found in a situation more than precarious.

Maison Plein Cœur's leitmotiv

The spirit of this initial group of work was spread at all those who somehow contributed to the edification of what will become Maison Plein Cœur. This construction continues because the

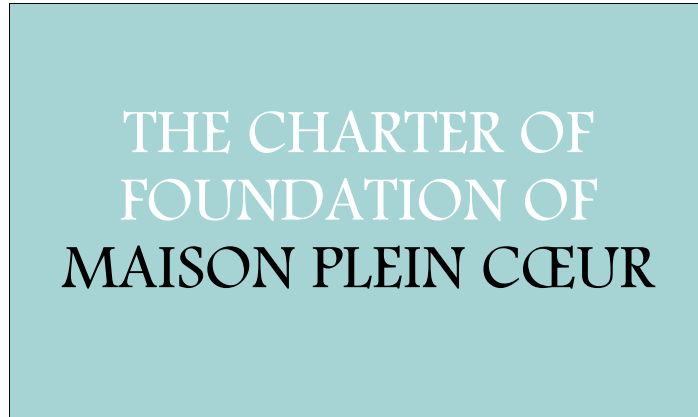
circumstances change and the ideals change according to their changes. The ideal, here, is neither utopian nor integrated within a precise service concept. It will always be adaptable to the new visions that a sustained attention to the adequate services to provide will generate in the heart of those who direct and animate the organization.

However, behind the many changes in the services to provide, always remain many objectives that actually are by themselves the leitmotiv and, to some extent, the charter of foundation of Maison Plein Cœur. These vital objectives are those that a Christian charity inspires and which all heart well disposed must assume if he is taking a part in the multiple

activities of this community. It is not necessary to be Christian, neither Jewish, neither Muslim, neither Buddhist, nor of any religious confession to support these life objectives and to apply them to daily work. There only need to be informed on their subject and to recognize oneself inside these objectives, within its deepest personal aspirations.

The magnanimity of the concept of service is the keystone of all these objectives that will be enumerated soon. This magnanimity opens the door to all those which, whatever their religion, faith, beliefs, degree of agnosticism, ethnical group, social or financial condition, age, sex, sexual orientation, need adequate services which can be given to them without risking the blames of various exclusive and professional recognized competences. Such a concept is so open that a community as Maison Plein Cœur goes far beyond its particular objectives, making it become an AIDS organization very appreciated by the majority of its users.

External factors will never destroy the value



of these objectives. These objectives are, consequently, the *raison d'être* of the organization. They all will be respected with certain flexibility with regard to those who will undermine them without ever however sacrificing them to their particular desires. Leniency is welcome, indifference and condescension must be taken into horror.

The mission of Maison Plein Cœur

The objectives of Maison Plein Cœur are summarized, as it has just been said before, with this heart openness that makes this community an institution that goes far beyond its current field of activity. From its present AIDS-organization status, it must, if the context requires it, be able to turn into a completely different form of community organization. While thus surviving the historical hazards of its vocation, it plunges its roots in the ground of the magnanimity to a depth such as nothing will be able to shake it anymore.

The objectives

If the mission of Maison Plein Cœur is universal in its basic objectives, it remains however completely singular in its achievements. Those are, indeed, selected according to the circumstances and of the degree of affinity of those who work there with the persons that receive the services. Born in the world of the gay and lesbian life, Maison Plein Cœur keeps on offering its admirable and many services to all people who are asking for and who meet criteria of its singular vocation. What is known about magnanimity verifies here on the level of the people living with the HIV-AIDS. This magnanimity does not cease being extensively applied inside these precise borders.

This is why all these objectives enumerated here are also applicable inside these borders and are as demanding as if they were applied to any other field of curative intervention and social animation. Here thus how we should realize them by assuming the various limits that time or human resources available can impose on the organization.

1 First of all, to drive out material poverty while providing for the physical needs of the users. There lies the necessary condition to any truly human progress. Nobody can be self-sufficient if he cannot breathe correctly, feed himself adequately and feel comfortable in his whole body. Better the health and financial condition are, better is the agreement between the people and with oneself. Here is the first objective, the one that respects our incarnation and our passage from an animal life to a frankly human life.

2 This passage once performed with the greatest possible care, it is necessary that the users feel at home inside the institution. This objective is one of the most difficult to carry out because the common life is not possible without a significant amount of authority and mechanisms of all kinds to solve the difficulties and complete any activity considered to be convenient with the greater comfort of the users. The death of a Community organization lies in the rejection of the proper authority or that of the consulting mechanisms of all kinds. Maison Plein Cœur should not endure this kind of mutilation of its being. Nothing nor nobody must denature the character of moderate democracy of its constitution.

3 But the users are not the only ones to enjoy the community life within Maison Plein Cœur. It is necessary also that all the employees, remunerated by any means, are treated according to elementary rules of social justice. These rules are based on the human dignity, the need for observing its corporal condition and for causing in it feelings of kindness and devotion to the cause for which the employee works. A right remuneration accompanied by a sufficient division of the working hours and leisure, by a righteous reprobation as well as by a righteous compliment, here what constitutes the very heart of human solidarity.

The condition of paid employee must in no manner being comparable by that which prevails in the companies with lucrative goal or extra community vocation. It implies, on the contrary, an immense effort of conjugation of the vital forces of each employee for the development of the organization and of his continual adjustment to the needs of the moment. Adequate information, an assumption of task responsibilities well framed by an entitled person in charge, discussion themes carried out efficiently and submitted to each one according to its skills or to the whole community according to the nature of the arrangements to be taken are as many measurements which, in a context of continuous training, ensure the stability and the competence of this staff.

Maison Plein Cœur cannot do without remunerated employees nor without the objectives that those require carrying out to them, in this context of community life, which characterizes the organization.

4 Maison Plein Cœur is a legal entity, with legal statute, which accepts in its center a certain number of volunteers, all placed under the responsibility of a remunerated employee. This situation is advantageous for them because they are thus trained according to the tasks to achieve. However, it is also an occasion where they are asked to demonstrate their effectiveness. Because work is a service here and the service must be rendered with an equal competence, whatever the status of the one who provides it.

Consequently, Maison Plein Cœur is also a crossroad of the free goodwill of those which come there for the pleasure of serving their similar and of the not less goodwilled contribution of those which work there as remunerated employees. The two kinds of staff make only one in the social activities of the organization. They do not judge one another because voluntary help, if it is not sufficient, is quite as necessary to the good working of the organization as the remunerated hiring of a certain number of people.

5 Maison Plein Cœur cannot live either without a good amount of grants from the public authorities and without the constant generosity of the private benefactors, institutions, and people. This attribute of « community organization », which characterizes it, also extends to financing. It is necessary that a constant attention be paid to the precise request and reception rules for grants and donations, so that each money donation is managed according to the objectives of the community. Here is one of the most difficult objectives to maintain regarding the requirements of governmental bureaucracy and the conditions of all kinds, which often carry with them the donations of private institutions.

Conclusion

As well in its internal life as in its external relationships, Maison Plein Cœur must live according to its own nature, as a community-based organization. It is by the respect of all these life objectives that its staff and its users will make of this organization what it must be. Without them and their express desire to live what it is necessary to make them as happy as possible there, this community would be a place where the abuses of all kinds would constitute the social framework and would cause a justified contempt on behalf of those who want to live these objectives with passion.

*Fernand Lafleur,
President of the Board of directors,
from 1996 to 2000*