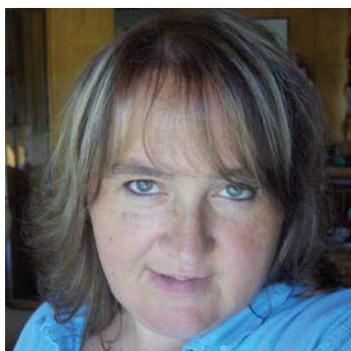


Senior's Christmas lunch in Potton spreads holiday cheer



THE SCOOP

MABLE HASTINGS

On Wednesday, Dec. 13, the Missisquoi North Volunteer Centre (CABMN) Senior Services program held its Annual Christmas lunch for seniors at the basement of the Mansonville Catholic Church (now a space managed by the Municipality of Potton). The ambiance in the room was perfect with the tables decorated and a festive fire burning on the big projection screen.

Thanks to funding obtained from the CIUSSSE-CHUS "Réseau des Éclaireurs" funds that aim to support communities in offering activities to improve psychological health and

create resilience, caring and supportive communities, the CABMN was able to get a subsidy that contributed to the costs of the event making it more than affordable for most seniors who wished to participate and attend.

Since the beginning of 2021, the Ministère de la santé et des services sociaux du Québec has mandated the CIUSSS de l'Estrie-CHUS to deploy the « Éclaireurs en santé psychologique » network in its territory. Since 2022, several projects have been funded to support organizations in activities aimed at the well-being, resilience and psychosocial recovery of individuals and communities throughout the Estrie region. The CABMN received support for the Senior Christmas lunch as well as a subsidy to aid the CABMN youth centre home economics program at the youth centre. This program allows the animators to do a weekly cooking group with the youth ages 5-12 and the kids get to take home some of their weekly culinary creations to share with their families.

At the Dec. 13 senior Christmas Party close to 120 attendees enjoyed a traditional Christmas dinner with turkey, meatballs, tortiere, potatoes, vegetables, rolls, salads and delicious



desserts prepared and served by La Falaise d'Orford. Each attendee found a homemade cookie from Melange Maison d'Austin at his or her place setting to take home to enjoy. Wine was served and the Chouette Chorale performed a few Christmas Carols for all to enjoy. After lunch, volunteer Lucie Maurer provided ambient music and some people even got up to dance.

"It is clear that the goal of the Réseau des Éclaireurs funding is needed," said Angelle Laplume who has worked with seniors at the CABMN for over 30 years. "Never have we seen so many people sign up for this type of event that doubled in attendance from all previous years," she added.

With the holidays now in full swing, the CABMN extends warm wishes for



COURTESY

the rest of the season to all. Happy New Year as we look toward 2024 with hope and promise of good health and many joyous projects together.

Partage/Share food bank

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Non-perishable food donations. TANDO and the Gosselin Family again this year provided an immense amount of food items in support of the effort. Jacques Ducharme and the Richelieu grocery store also contribute to this annual event in a multitude of ways. From those who donate food, make donations in support to those who give of their time in preparing the boxes, food and items for distribution, this is most definitely a community effort. The Potton Fire Department and First Responders are always a vital part of the work and especially the delivery day as they bring the food to each family near and far.

The local Baptist Church, businesses in the area and the local schools are all quick to lend a hand and contribute to the show of support in a variety of ways. Amanda Patch and the Yamaska Literacy Council provided books for children to be placed in the baskets of those with little ones at home.

It was the first year organizing the initiative for Julia Eldridge the new chairperson of the CABMN Partage/Share committee. Julia took over the task this year after long-time chairperson and volunteer, June Peacock decided to take a break and retire from the helm of the committee. Julia and the Partage/Share committee worked alongside the many volunteers and the result was nothing less that efficient, joyful and moving.

"I am so proud of the team and all of those who contributed to the food collected for the baskets," said Eldridge. "It is extremely emotional for me as I have been a volunteer with the CABMN for many years and this is something I am committed to and passionate about. The people power and the heart behind all aspects of this effort is profound," she added.

Some 40 families and individuals received baskets on Tuesday and calls of gratitude started coming in to the CABMN in the afternoon. Jennifer



JENNIFER MCGEEAN

McGeean who provides the staff support for the Christmas Basket Distribution each year does a lot of the behind the scenes work in preparing for the boxing and delivery of food.

"Working with Julia and the committee was a real pleasure," she said. "The basement of the Catholic Church was lively with many volunteers working together and there was lots of joy and laughter.

That is what doing this is all about and I feel that it brought the holiday spirit to all involved," she said.

All involved with this annual activity extend an immense amount of gratitude to the many who were implicated in a variety of ways. Happy holidays to all and as Eldridge and McGeean are quick to remind us, "we will see everyone next year and do it all over again!"

Public sector negotiations

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front, including unions representing teachers, school support staff and health-care system employees.

Those deals only cover working conditions, however, and negotiations pertaining to compensation and benefits are still underway

at the common front's central bargaining table.

The alliance has carried out several multi-day strikes in the last two months and is threatening an unlimited walkout in the new year unless it reaches an agreement with the government.

It has not said when such a strike would begin.

Separate unions representing around 66,000 teachers and 80,000 health-care workers were not among the groups that reached a deal with the government before Christmas. The Federation autonome de l'enseignement and Federation interprofessionnelle de la sante du Quebec are negotiating independently with the government.

The teachers union has been on an unlimited strike since Nov. 23, closing about 800 schools for four weeks before the holiday break, including at the province's largest school board in Montreal.

The union said last week it was prepared to enter a more intense phase of negotiations in hopes of reaching an agreement.