

# Crisis fund established to meet pandemic needs

**CJN STAFF**  
MONTREAL

Montreal's Federation CJA and the Jewish Community Foundation of Montreal have set up a community crisis response fund to raise money to support agencies and other organizations dealing with the effects of the pandemic, especially on those most at risk.

"In addition to those who were already elderly, sick or living below the poverty line, the pandemic has made thousands newly vulnerable," the federation stated. "The limited resources of our agencies and community partners are already strained, and the needs are anticipated to grow exponentially as the mid- to long-term effects of the crisis set in over the coming weeks."

CEO Yair Szlak appealed to those who are able to give generously.

The fund is intended to underwrite immediate relief, including food vouchers, kosher meals, food for Passover and basic household items for those in need, as well as delivery of medications to seniors who can't get out.

Through to April 7, all donations to this

emergency fund are being matched dollar for dollar.

Visit [federationcja.org/responsefund](http://federationcja.org/responsefund).

The Cummings Jewish Centre for Seniors, closed since March 16, continues to deliver food to clients. By the end of March, executive director Pauline Grunberg said it is expected 1,360 kosher meals will be delivered, plus 120 containers of soup.

In addition, Cummings staff are shopping for groceries and other essentials for clients who do not have family or other support to rely on.

Beth Fineberg, director of social services, said homecare services are also being maintained and "the plan is to continue these services for as long as possible."

Staff are also working remotely with clients in need of psychosocial support or financial assistance. The day services program staff have been in regular contact with their clients, mostly people living with dementia, and their caregivers. In-home stimulation kits are available and an online support group through Zoom was being created.

Cummings is providing the community at large free access to its Virtual Library,

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*The pandemic has made thousands newly vulnerable*

**Federation CJA**

which has over 150 videos of past Cummings lectures, classes and other events. [Cummingscentre.org/virtual-learning/](http://Cummingscentre.org/virtual-learning/)

A help line has been established by Cummings, the federation, and Agence Ometz at 514-734-1411. Or emails can be sent to [Ometz-Cummings-helpline@ometz.ca](mailto:Ometz-Cummings-helpline@ometz.ca).

Leading philanthropist Sophie Desmarais has donated \$500,000 to the Jewish General Hospital Foundation for COVID-19 research and urged others in a position to do so to follow her lead.

Of that sum, \$150,000 will go to Dr. Brent Richards's project to build a bank of biological samples that it is hoped will help predict the optimal treatment for individual COVID-19 patients.

Another \$150,000 is earmarked for using artificial intelligence to forecast where the coronavirus will hit, research being led by Dr. Justin Cross.

The remaining \$200,000 is to be divided equally between drug development and finding a quicker diagnostic tool.

In advance of Passover, the inter-denominational Montreal Board of Rabbis reiterated the Quebec government's ban on holding indoor gatherings with outsiders.

"So only those living under the same roof can participate in the seder. We must not invite any guests, and we ourselves may not visit family or friends. As difficult as it may be, we must follow the directives of public health experts in order to prevent putting ourselves and others at serious risk," it said in a statement.

The board stressed the necessity to reach out by other means to those who will be alone for the holiday.

"There are many practical guides available that describe how to make a 'minimalist' Passover, as well as how to celebrate a seder on one's own. As for the question of the use of technology to mitigate isolation, please rely on your own rabbi's guidance." ■



**CROSS CANADA  
COMMEMORATION  
OF THE HOLOCAUST**  
MON, APRIL 20, 2020  
7:00 PM EST  
WHERE? ONLINE

Learn more: [holocaustcentre.com/yom-hashoah](http://holocaustcentre.com/yom-hashoah)

The National Holocaust Remembrance Day Ceremony, scheduled for Tuesday, April 21 is cancelled. Due to the COVID-19 virus, we truly regret that we cannot gather together for the annual National Holocaust Remembrance Day Ceremony and the Ambassadors of Change program in our nation's capital. Thank you to all our organizational partners, presenters, speakers, sponsors, and vendors and as well as those who registered to attend for your ongoing support. Next year, we look forward to convening in Ottawa with our nation's leaders for this important annual event.

Canadian Society for Yad Vashem is pleased to announce that in partnership with the Azrieli Foundation, March of the Living Canada, the Sarah and Chaim Neuberger Holocaust Education Centre and Jewish communities and organizations across Canada, we will be co-presenting a cross-Canada digital Holocaust commemoration program. Be sure to tune into this historic event.

Wishing everyone a Happy Passover,

**Fran Sonshine**  
National Chair

**Jonathan Allen**  
National Executive Director

Canadian  
Society  
for  
YAD  
VASHEM  
Holocaust Education  
and Commemoration



UJA FEDERATION  
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