

NEWS RELEASE



CÉGEP
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Toonie Tuesday at Vanier College raises more than \$3100 to help students in need

“Most hunger, most poverty is invisible,” says Jim Atkinson, Socio-Economic Officer at Vanier College and organizer of this year’s Toonie Tuesday fund-raising event. “It could be anyone you pass in a corridor. You wouldn’t be able to tell who hadn’t eaten or who had been beaten.” There are no outward signs of distress, and yet the need is often heart-rending and urgent. So on November 20 Vanier faculty, staff and students pitched in together to donate to a fund for helping students in need.

A tape was laid on the floor down the C-corridor leading out of the Student Mall, and passers-by dug into their pockets to stick a Toonie on the line. Donation boxes and bottles were also set up at various spots on campus where people gave cheques, five and ten dollar bills, and extra loose change. Several administrative departments also made collections and brought their haul to the boxes, and the college contributed all revenues from parking on campus that day to the fund. “\$3100 and still counting! We more than tripled what we did last year,” beamed Jim Atkinson at the end of the day.

According to Director General, Gilbert Héroux, “Last semester, the Vanier College Foundation gave close to \$6000 in emergency funds to support students in need and has already given out close to \$5000 this semester. Over one thousand of our students receive loans and bursaries during the school year.” Help comes from all sides, and the Vanier College Student Association has also contributed close to \$6000 this semester to rescue students in dire straits, while the Vanier Teachers Association also has a fund for students.

Jim Atkinson knows how great the need is among Vanier students. “Consistently, I see two students a week who are forced out of their home and are in crisis, struggling to find shelter, food, and money for transportation. Some are trying to escape abuse,” he indicates. For a variety of reasons, many students suddenly find themselves out on the street: no home, no shelter, and no food. For the most urgent cases, funds can often be made available within twenty-four hours. Help is given in the form of food vouchers, and loans to buy books or bus passes.

“Every year we have situations of women forced to go to shelters due to violence,” adds Jim. “A few years ago we had a student whose husband was a violent alcoholic. I met with both him and his wife and referred him for anger management and addiction treatment, but he stopped going after a few meetings.” Eventually the student graduated from Vanier and was able to make a life for herself. But every story is different, Jim indicates. “We have students who are sometimes supporting families in their country of origin while they hardly have enough to survive themselves. They are stretched ultra thin and the smallest thing can send them into a crisis.” That’s when emergency funds are needed, and this year’s Toonie Tuesday success will certainly be a welcome helping hand.

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