

OUTREACH WORK MEANS BEING THERE IN UNEXPECTED PLACES

Everyone in Saint-Michel knows Brenda. She's a street outreach worker who's always there for young people in both good times and bad. ♦

"I grew up in a family that firmly believes in support and generosity. I also came from an underprivileged neighbourhood but didn't know it—that was simply how we lived! When I left to go to CEGEP, I understood the reality of where I came from and then felt a desire to help others.

Basically, my work is to create relationships of trust, be there for people, get involved in the neighbourhood, and make myself available. People say, "I see you morning, noon and night on the bus, at the park, at school: you're everywhere!"

The connections I create aren't working relationships; they're interpersonal ones. This trust helps me address the different social problems facing youth and to informally help them directly where they are. I'm out on the streets 35 hours a week to be there whenever young people need me—and even when they don't.

The kids I meet are like you and me when we were young. They have the same problems that all kids go through on their journey to becoming teens and adults. They are looking for work, have family conflicts, or have no clue what to do with their lives. They wonder about sex, their first relationships, or contraception. Their concerns go from "I have nothing to eat this morning" to "I'm getting bullied" or even "I lost my health insurance card." There is such a broad range! However, some kids are more vulnerable than others. We have to be there for them.

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Through my work, I've met hundreds of new people who have given me many different perspectives about all aspects of life." - Brenda

