

“We saw such a change in how people felt about themselves after experiencing this kind of a meal”



Primary Media A woman sits at a table eating soup, bread, and a salad against a brown wall. Rose enjoys a warm meal at Centre 507. Credit: Centre 507 Published On: September 20, 2021

Most of us appreciate a well-dressed table and can afford to go out for dinner from time to time. Many of us will be sitting down to elaborate Thanksgiving dinners. Our daily experience doesn't involve standing in line for every single meal with a tray in hand.

That's why special dinners like Café Cinq-Zéro-Sept that Ottawa-based Mission & Service partner Centre 507 hosts are so important. Several times a year, the adult drop-in centre sets up a small room for a special fine-dining meal with gourmet food, decorations, and candlelight. For just two dollars, participants have their choice of meal accompanied by full service and great company.

“We realized that people in our community struggling with poverty had to wait in line a long time for a meal. When they were served, they weren't given any choice and felt

pressured to leave so that the next person could be served. That's why we started Café Cinq-Zéro-Sept," says Richard LeBlanc, Centre 507's Executive Director. "We saw such a change in how people felt about themselves after experiencing this kind of a meal that our ultimate goal is that this dining experience becomes the norm rather than the exception."

While COVID-19 has been challenging, it has also helped the drop-in take an important step toward achieving their goal. "One of the great things that happened is that when COVID hit, we had to start a system where everyone sat down and was served," says LeBlanc.

Centre 507 now serves 25 people at sit-down meals and provides 150 people with meals to go each day. The café has incorporated a training program where participants learn to be servers, too. "We are taking the next step toward achieving our goal. We aren't going back to line-ups after the pandemic," vows LeBlanc.

Thank you for giving generously through Mission & Service. Your support helps create a world where everyone has enough food AND it's served with dignity.

Submitted by SC&O