

Biography - Mrs. Sophie Desmarais

Mrs. Sophie Desmarais has been a reference in philanthropy for several years now. Personally, involved in several non-profit organizations, she perpetuates, through her actions and personal involvement, to improve the lives of people experiencing difficulties in the community is tangible.

Support for women

Mrs. Sophie Desmarais is committed to organizations that work with vulnerable women. A good example of that commitment is her devotion to La rue des Femmes. After finding out that many women would return to the streets because of a lack of financial support, Mrs. Sophie Desmarais asked to meet promptly Léonie Couture, founder of La rue des Femmes, and surprised her by informing her that she would fill the gap in financial support necessary to provide a roof over the head of homeless women year-round. It is Mrs. Desmarais' strong belief that no women should have to sleep on the street. This organization is very close to her heart and she remains an active and involved partner, allowing the foundation to continue to offer much-needed respite and support to women.

Mrs. Sophie Desmarais also supports the Lise Watier Foundation, founded by Mrs. Lise Watier, a woman for whom she has great admiration. The Foundation's goal is to help women take charge of their lives to build a future that is worthy of their talents and aspirations and to regain their financial autonomy and self-confidence.

Health and Research

Mrs. Sophie Desmarais has been committed to The Lighthouse Children and Families for over 8 years. When she talks about the Lighthouse, her eyes light up: she has the utmost tenderness and gentleness for the sick children, who, even through very hard times, know how to cherish every moment. For her, the Lighthouse must live on because it makes a real difference in the daily life of sick children and their families and offers them what is most valuable for them. From one year to the next, she renews her support for the Lighthouse and invites the community to do the same.

In 2014, Mrs. Sophie Desmarais committed to lifelong support of the Montreal Heart Institute Foundation and its research center, which bears her father's name. As a major donor, she supports the research so that everyone can benefit from the center's advances, whose objective is to improve the daily lives of patients and healthcare professionals.

After suffering from a brain tumor in 2001, Mrs. Sophie Desmarais met Dr. Fred Hochberg, a leading neurologist, and neuro-oncologist at the Massachusetts General Hospital. For the past two years, she has been financially supporting his research, with the goal to develop a treatment based on exosomes to treat liver cancer and other currently incurable cancers. The funds allowed him to devote his time to this research. The first treatments on humans will start in 2021 at the Jewish General Hospital, a first in Canada.

Mrs. Sophie Desmarais is a patient and long-time friend of Dr. Nagi Khouri, Associate Professor in the Department of Radiology at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine and Director of Breast Imaging at the Avon Breast Center at Johns Hopkins in Baltimore. Dr. Nagi Khouri's Breast Lectureship Fund has been established thanks to the generous contribution of Mrs. Sophie Desmarais. Her involvement in this important educational program aims to support the next generation of breast cancer specialists.

Music

It is impossible to talk about Mrs. Desmarais' various implications without citing her love of music.

First with the Orchestre Métropolitain, which she proudly and generously supports, for its sense of freedom and diversity. She feels a lot of pride and shivers every time she attends concerts of the Orchestre Métropolitain conducted by a man whom she holds in very high esteem and admiration, Maestro Yannick Nézet-Séguin. Beginning in 2021, Mrs. Sophie Desmarais and her sister Mrs. Louise Desmarais will work together to ensure the continuity of Maestro Yannick Nézet-Séguin's career with the Orchestre Métropolitain.

Also, the *Fonds Sophie Desmarais pour le Big Band*, to which she has devoted time and energy for the past 10 years, is dedicated to the awarding of scholarships for jazz interpretation, composition, and arrangement. The unfailing support of Mrs. Sophie Desmarais has made it possible to create, in 2012, the *Prix de l'Ambassadrice du Big Band*, whose ultimate mission is to

award scholarships to students who stand out through their exceptional talent within the Big Band and to allow them to pursue their quest for excellence.

La Fondation Jasmin Roy Sophie Desmarais

Since 2013, Mrs. Sophie Desmarais has been involved with the Jasmin Roy Sophie Desmarais Foundation to support the fight against bullying and violence in schools and its effects on mental health. Having faced bullying herself in the past, it is Mrs. Sophie Desmarais' wish to offer a great deal of her time and resources to this cause to ensure its sustainability. As proof, the Jasmin Roy Sophie Desmarais Foundation is now recognized by the United Nations (UN).

When asked to conduct a project, her enthusiasm never fails and she never hesitates to let her creativity run wild. Whether it's through a book or a puppet, for Mrs. Sophie Desmarais, any mean is good to help the youth break the stigma around mental health.

Through her desire to support homeless women rebuild their lives, to further health research, to support the next generation of young musicians, or to fight for victims of bullying and violence in schools, Mrs. Sophie Desmarais' remains committed to have a positive influence on society and to take action for what she believes in.