



Making an Impact in Canadian Society

"How will my child find her way in the world? Who will love and care for my son after I am gone?" These are the spoken and unspoken questions of all families who have a child or a sibling with an intellectual disability. L'Arche impacts the lives of thousands of family members across Canada who have someone in L'Arche. In turn, L'Arche celebrates the many ways families help to make L'Arche the best it can be.

- Nathan Ball, Executive Director

In Brief...

A MAJOR CITIZENSHIP AWARD

was presented to Bobby Mitchell, senior citizen and long-time core member of L'Arche Ottawa, at the city of Ottawa's 10th Annual *Celebration of People Awards* in December. Bobby was cited for his over 50 years of volunteer work.

THE READER'S DIGEST

January 2011 issue included a story about dinner at the Greenwood Street house in L'Arche Toronto. The story, written by assistant Mark Mann, concludes by describing their prayer after dinner when house members recite together the 23rd Psalm: "...Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life..."

THE IMPACT OF L'ARCHE ON FAMILIES

A Letter from new L'Arche parents

Dear Ingrid and Sarah,*

A week ago Thursday I called Emmaus House and spoke with Florian [one of the L'Arche assistants]. We had a good conversation. Florian told me all about Cameron's activities and how he and Cameron would be going to New Brunswick on an exchange visit. Cameron was out at the meeting with you Ingrid, and Florian said he would get Cameron to call when he came home.

A short while later the phone rang and it was Cameron. I had a very nice talk with him. Usually he does not say much and you have to ask all the questions and receive one word answers. I found him to be quite articulate, showing that his speech has improved, and he asked me about his brothers and his dad and the horses. He also said, "What about you, Mum?" I have to admit to a few tears when I hung up the phone, but not sad tears. We are so proud of him, and so pleased at the progress he is making with all of you.

Last night I called the house and Cameron was



Cameron at a family celebration

out—again!—but Jennifer [another assistant] told me all about their day and how well Cameron is opening up. I just wanted you to know how much Ian and I appreciate all you are doing for him.

We miss him so much but we are so happy for him.

Thank you all.

Isabel Cook



Florian and Cameron out for a beer

*The Community Leader and Cameron's House Leader at L'Arche Homefires, Wolfville, Nova Scotia

Mel—Continuing to Grow

Mel's mom died of cancer shortly after Mel moved to L'Arche in Richmond Hill 40 years ago. Later he moved to Toronto where he helped found L'Arche Toronto.

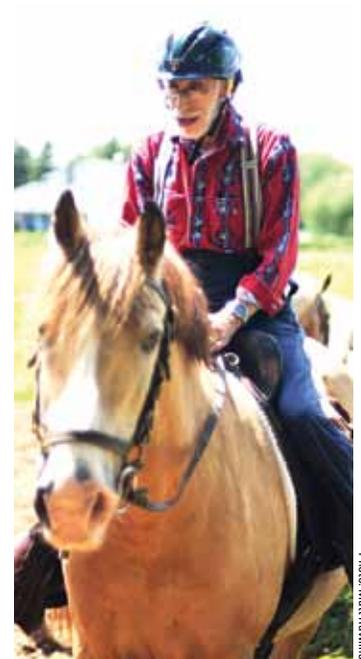
Mel came into my life in the mid 80's. His cousin and I rode together. My mother, Shirley, and Mel's dad, Ben, were widowers and we decided to introduce them. Ben and my mom were together until both passed away in 1999.

Mel has a heart for poor people. He worked at the Daily Bread Food Bank for many years. Through the support of L'Arche, Mel celebrated his Bar Mitzvah at age 54. This was a great source of pride for Mel and for his dad. The next year, Mel traveled to Israel, France and Poland with L'Arche friends.

I am grateful to be part of L'Arche through Mel. I enjoy connecting with Mel's friends at the Passover Seder he hosts each spring. The Seder is a tradition that our children have grown up with. Mel in turn celebrates Christmas with us.

Mel began horseback riding with me soon after I met him and has a great repertoire of stories of his adventures with my horses. Since retiring, Mel continues to grow as a person and he continues to ride. He helps out at the barn every Thursday. Horses keep him fit. Mel rides both English and Western trained horses. He has competed in basic dressage shows. On vacation, he often goes on trail rides.

- Jennifer Day Slemmon



Mel on a trail ride at Sparrow Lake

In Brief...

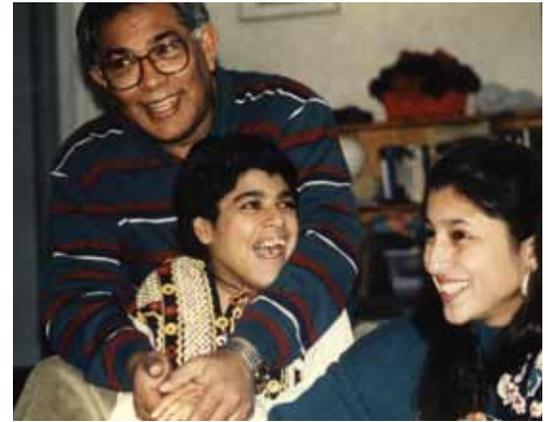
HAITI: Excellent progress is being made in the L'Arche community of Carrefour in Port au Prince. In January, Evelyne Bazin Verdier, long-time Board Member wrote, "Outside, around us, the city and the Haitian people live under the ashes, inundated by humanitarian aid, waiting for the fulfillment of promises yet to be realized. But L'Arche is well on its way in the reconstruction efforts." Priority was given to its school, which serves both L'Arche people and local families. In mid-February, Evelyne wrote that with much joy and gratitude the community had moved into their new home: "To be sure, there is still work to do, but it is so good to know that we are in a safe building and can look to the future with hope." L'Arche Canada, through its many supporters, is giving financial and on-the-ground assistance.



Ismaël, L'Arche Carrefour

Alia—Much Loved

My beloved daughter Alia had progressive multiple disabilities that meant it was impossible to care for her at home after her mother passed away. I am deeply grateful that she was able to live out her teen and adult life at L'Arche Daybreak, amid people who loved her and, in many sensitive and creative ways, made her life rich. Alia loved music and motion, such as twirling in her wheelchair, and she became an important member of the Spirit Movers dance troupe. The Community sought to learn about Alia's Muslim faith traditions and to support her in this way. When I brought Alia home for family or religious occasions, the assistants ensured Alia was beautifully dressed. As Alia's health declined over her last years, the Community members gave unstinting care and sensitive support. With myself and my family they grieved her loss deeply and continue to treasure her memory.



Alia with her father and sister at an interfaith gathering at Daybreak

As for myself, I have continued my relationship with L'Arche Daybreak visiting sometimes and helping on a committee as I am able.

- *Yahya Qureshi*

Brad—An Important Life

Brad left home when he turned eighteen. This was what we had hoped for and it so happened that there was a place for him in the second home that L'Arche Lethbridge opened. For Brad to be able to go to a L'Arche community, and in our city no less, was a very positive "stepping out."

Brad has been with L'Arche for twelve years now, and he has a mission. It is obvious he has a big role to play in his home and in the L'Arche community. When he answers the phone,

he says the name of his house and his name in the same sentence in an upbeat tone of voice that communicates pride and belonging. He has travelled to other communities and to gatherings as a representative of his community. He knows, at some level, that he is important.

We are deeply grateful to L'Arche for this gift of purposeful living that Brad has. He will always have a place to call home.

- *Don Flaig and Adele Caron, Brad's Mom and Dad*



Brad with his mom

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L'ARCHE CANADA FOUNDATION

10271 Yonge Street, Suite 300
Richmond Hill, ON L4C 3B5

Tel: 1.800.571.0212 or 1.905.770.7696

Fax: 905.884.4819

Email: foundation@larche.ca

Charitable Number: 889909719RR0001

www.larchefoundation.ca

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Marie—22 years of joy, peace, trust, friendship

Last January, our daughter Marie celebrated 22 years at L'Arche L'Etoile in Quebec. What a beautiful party she had, a supper with her "gang," as she so affectionately calls those she lives with in her house!

"Mom, I didn't call today because I didn't have time." I can assure you that, for us when Marie says this, we are not offended or saddened. Rather we are happy since it confirms to us that Marie likes the life and activities at L'Arche so much that

she is able to let go of us.

Twenty-two years of joy, peace, trust, smiles, friendship—what more can one ask for! We thank L'Arche, this community milieu where each person is important and receives respect and is listened to. And more specifically, we thank each one who has accompanied our daughter over all these years and has taken responsibility for this beautiful person of whom we are so proud.

- *Gaston and Nicole Perreault*



Marie with her parents and her nephew Quentin

Photo: Edouard Casaubon