



Making an Impact in Canadian Society

Growing

L'ARCHE is about being faithful over many years to the women and men with a disability who have already found a home within L'ARCHE. We are also committed to opening new programs and expanding others so that more people can find a home and community within L'ARCHE. This Bulletin highlights how L'ARCHE is growing.

- Nathan Ball, Executive Director

In Brief...

L'ARCHE EXTENDS ITS IMPACT

through a new website that addresses key issues for people who are aging with intellectual disabilities and those who support them. For several years now, L'Arche Canada has given special attention to this matter. The new website will provide the general public, caregivers, families and health practitioners with wisdom, best practices and practical tools, developed in L'ARCHE. It will also bring together other available resources on the subjects of healthy aging, changing needs, complex and palliative care, ending life well, and grieving. To be launched in May of this year, the "Aging" website can be accessed from www.larche.ca.

L'ARCHE Opens New Homes

A Second Home For L'Arche Joliette

Joliette is a lovely city a century and a half old, located 50 km northeast of Montreal, on the Rivière l'Assumption. Among its notable features are an art museum housing a large collection from the French Middle Ages—and a L'ARCHE community! L'Arche Joliette has now opened a second home and welcomed three new people with intellectual disabilities.

Opening the home has been an act of faith as the Community does not yet have all the needed operating funds, but it has stepped out willing to work hard and trusting that this need will be met.

Asked how she feels about her move to L'Arche Joliette, Patricia Grondin, one of the new core members, responded, "I am well. I love my new friends. We have many different activities, and I am very happy." At the beginning of any new L'ARCHE home, establishing the tone and spirit of L'ARCHE



Members of Joliette's new home relax together: front: Marc-Paul Desrosiers and Sarah Laurin, back l-r: David Henry-Richard, Lucie, Julien Herter Courbon, and Patricia

among members who have not lived in L'ARCHE previously is important. At La Barque (the boat)—the community's name for its new home—this is happening more quickly because Lucie Bellerose, a founding core member of Joliette's first home, volunteered to move to the new home and help with its founding.

Lucie comments, "This is my family, which I love. I want us to grow together!"

L'Arche Halifax Opens with Two Homes

Eight people and two teams of assistants have now moved in to L'Arche Halifax's two new homes—a large new duplex well-located in the city's vibrant north end with its shops and cafes. The location, a 10-minute bus ride from the centre of the city (city buses are wheel-chair accessible) permits all members to enjoy the downtown area with its many events and gives opportunity for L'ARCHE members and the wider public to meet.

Building, rather than renovating, allowed the Community to incorporate features that ensure accessibility. Windows are lower, so that the three people who use wheelchairs can see out. Shawn Moulton especially appreciates the lower counters, sink, and cupboards in the kitchen. These allow him to participate in daily



L'Arche Halifax's large new duplex

L'ARCHE activities of meal preparation and washing up.

"The opening is the culmination of the hard work of many people, especially the Board of Directors, some of whom have been involved for over a decade," says John O'Donnell, L'Arche Atlantic Region coordinator. It could not have come too soon for those waiting to move in. There is a human story behind every person welcomed. The families of some of the new members were facing quite challenging situations.



Shawn in the wheelchair-accessible kitchen

The founding team of assistants includes new and seasoned assistants from each of the four other L'ARCHE communities in the Atlantic region. "What a gift to have this richness of experience and history at our beginning!" comments Cathy MacMillan, founding community leader of L'Arche Halifax.

In Brief...

HAITI FUNDRAISING EFFORTS:

L'ARCHE has two communities in Haiti, the oldest founded in 1971. Although no one with a disability in L'Arche Haiti died in the January earthquake, we are sad to report that two members of the L'ARCHE Board of Directors were killed. And, because the L'ARCHE buildings have been declared unsafe, everyone continues to live outside. L'Arche Canada quickly mounted a fund-raising campaign which has so far raised \$80,000 for relief and the rebuilding of L'ARCHE in Port au Prince. We thank all who contributed.

THOUSANDS OF ALBERTA HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

will be introduced to Jean Vanier and L'ARCHE through a new Alberta Ministry of Education online high school social studies resource on Jean Vanier, hosted on its Learn Alberta.ca website. The resource includes teaching materials prepared by L'Arche Canada, clips from Jean Vanier's CBC Massey Lectures, the *Belonging: The Search for Acceptance* film, and a specially videotaped interview. Visit it at: <http://www.learnalberta.ca/content/ssjv/index.html>

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Sol Express is expanding

New programs are permitting more young people with disabilities to join *Sol Express*, L'Arche Toronto's arts program. *Sol Express* is innovative in how it combines skills training for dramatic performance with a focus on personal growth through reflection and self-expression. Members of *Sol Express* may become part of its theatre company which has successfully performed for sold out audiences. Others choose to explore their creativity through visual arts, theatre games, and character and story development. For participants who have difficulty communicating, *Sol Express* can open the door to the profound satisfaction of being able to tell their own life story to others, partly through making a personal DVD. *Sol Express* witnesses to the creative capacity of people with an intellectual disability; the program shows us that all people, given the right



Sol Express gives opportunity for fun and creativity.

opportunity, can develop and share their creativity with others. It's exciting that L'Arche Toronto is making this opportunity available to more people.

Ian Brown recounts his visits to L'ARCHE

In a book that has captured major Canadian awards for literary non-fiction, *The Boy in the Moon*:



A Father's Search for his Disabled Son, Ian Brown tells the moving story of his quest for a meaning to his son's life. In the course of this journey he encounters L'ARCHE, first in Montreal and then in France. In the following excerpt, Brown has just finished his first meal in the L'Arche

home in Cuise-La-Motte, where he spent three days:

After lunch, the residents who worked in L'Arche's workshops making trinkets and jewellery returned to their labours; the others went for a walk. It was a community for the disabled, there was no question of that, but because the disabled were considered, and considered themselves, equals, none of it felt like a "special" arrangement. This was their world, not ours; these were their standards, not ours. The pace of life

was slower, life itself was simpler; there were delays and problems, but no one took them seriously. It was a pleasant place to be, and conveyed no sense that life ought to be otherwise.

Excerpted from *The Boy in the Moon* by Ian Brown Copyright © 2009 by Ian Brown, p. 200. Excerpted by permission of Random House Canada, a division of Random House of Canada Limited. All rights reserved. No part of this excerpt may be reproduced or reprinted without permission in writing from the publisher.

Local L'ARCHE Fundraiser hits the mark

L'Arche Calgary's annual "Cake Walk," is an ideal L'ARCHE fundraiser. A collaboration with the city's best pastry chefs, this innovative public event gives hundreds of Calgarians an opportunity to interact with the L'ARCHE community members and experience L'Arche's spirit of friendliness and fun. At the same time it showcases the stunning edible masterpieces of top chefs and advanced culinary students. The event offers various activities—children's

games, cupcake decorating—and everyone receives a delectable, professionally baked slice of cake and a cup of coffee. The Lindt Chocolate competition is a bi-annual event presented by the Pastry Chef Guild of Alberta. This year, L'Arche Calgary and the Guild teamed up to jointly present both events. This partnership highlighted each other's missions and celebrated what can happen when groups work together!



One of the edible masterpieces