



FONDATION
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building a **compassionate** society

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Making an Impact in Canadian Society

Inspiring

In this issue we introduce you to several of the over 300 people who serve as members of a L'Arche Board of Directors. Each of these people gives time, energy, and wisdom to support the growth and development of L'Arche in Canada. We give thanks for each one!

- Nathan Ball, Executive Director

In Brief...

A NEW LOOK...A NEW WEBSITE

With this issue of our bulletin we are introducing a new design. Also, we are delighted to announce the launch of our new website. It provides information about the Foundation, projects we support, and current campaigns, and it features a new online donation system. Explore it at www.larchefoundation.ca.

NEW VANIER BOOKS

Three new Vanier books will be out by September 2008:

1. *Jean Vanier – The Essential Writings*, edited by Carolyn Whitney-Brown (Novalis, in USA: Orbis)
2. 10th Anniversary Edition of Jean Vanier's #1 National Bestseller *Becoming Human*, with a new

...continued

Sources of Inspiration

When we made the big move from Toronto to Vancouver in 1996, my husband and I were wanting to change our somewhat "workaholic" lifestyles. Someone told me that the L'Arche Greater Vancouver Board was looking for a new treasurer. I had never heard of L'Arche and was a little hesitant that it might not be the right fit for me. However, I was convinced to give the Board a try for a few months...

It's hard to believe that it is now twelve years later and I have served my maximum terms as treasurer on both the L'Arche Greater Vancouver and L'Arche Canada Boards.

What inspired me to stay past those first few months (and many years longer)?

Quite simply - the people of L'Arche.

The core members - who welcome me so willingly into their homes and hearts with a hug and a smile.

The assistants - who believe in the mission of L'Arche so deeply and demonstrate that commitment in the daily lives that they lead.



Donna Diskos (right) with fellow L'Arche Canada Board Member Mary Ann Gerhart

My fellow board members - who always honour the vision of L'Arche above all else.

Whenever I step into a L'Arche Board meeting, event, or home, I'm always welcomed as a valued member of the community that all of these wonderful people together create.

Donna Diskos is a Chartered Accountant and a Principal with Grant Thornton.

A Call



I first joined L'Arche Winnipeg as an assistant back in 1974 after reading Jean Vanier's book "*In Weakness, Strength*" and hearing him speak in Toronto. I see clearly now that I was being called by God to live at L'Arche so that I, like so many other assistants and core members could be transformed. L'Arche is a place of healing and growth. In

gratitude for what L'Arche has done for me, and because I still feel strongly connected to the community and its members I have been involved on the Board of Directors for the last 14 years and am currently the Board president.

Jim Lapp is a teacher in Winnipeg.

A Life Interwoven with L'Arche

As a student I worked in a summer camp that welcomed people with intellectual disabilities. These summers of discovery and intense relationship paved my path towards L'Arche.

When L'Arche opened in Beloeil in 1983, a friend of ours

joined the new community, and my partner and I gradually developed a connection with the community ourselves. With joy, I discovered some of the people I had known at the summer camp were there! Some years later I became a member of the board of L'Arche Beloeil. The board and community members had regular encounters and this enabled me to fulfill my board duties while having good contact with the life of the community. Through serving on various regional committees—for the recruitment of assistants, and for board training, for instance—I met members of other L'Arche boards in Quebec and thus came to better understand all the richness that accrued to ...continued

In Brief...

Introduction by Jean. (House of Anansi, June 2008)
 3. *Jean Vanier*, by Terry Barber. (Grass Roots Press Basic Literacy Book, Activist Series, September 2008)

INSPIRATION IN WESTERN CANADA

L'Arche Communities in Western Canada held a regional gathering at St. Mary's University on the University of Alberta campus in Calgary in June. Jean Vanier spoke to the gathering and also to L'Arche-sponsored events for youth and others, including a business breakfast at the Petroleum Club. Jean encouraged listeners to trust and to dream about the kind of world they want, and to enter into relationships with those who are different and be blessed and shaped by these relationships.

A FRUITFUL COLLABORATION

"We will continue to nurture our relationships not only with St. Francis Xavier but with the whole Antigonish community," Nancy Marenick, board president, pledged at a celebration of L'Arche Antigonish's newly renovated day activities space in one of the university-owned buildings. Many St. FX students, faculty and staff have volunteered there over the years.

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Marie Fréchette (right) with a L'Arche friend

L'Arche Beloeil as a member community of the large family of L'Arche.

When the Quebec Region of L'Arche took on its present form, I was invited to become a member of the board of the Association of L'Arche

communities in Quebec, the AAQ. I accepted happily. I saw it as an appealing challenge to create unity and to find harmony among those of various political persuasions in the Region. In 2005, after 18 years, I left the board of L'Arche Beloeil. Today, I continue to serve on the board of the AAQ and on the community council of L'Arche Beloeil. (The community council is an elected internal body that advises the community leader.)

L'Arche Beloeil welcomes me as a member, always respecting that my first commitment is to my family. While my journey in L'Arche can be traced by my participation on different committees and boards, I am aware that it is thanks to the interwoven connections with the members of my community and of the larger family of L'Arche that my membership derives its meaning.

Marie Fréchette is a mother and grandmother and works in management in a medical clinic.

A Gift of Clarity and Wisdom

I remember clearly the night I was asked to join the L'Arche Antigonish board. My only two questions were: is there much fundraising (it's not my strength), and what's so special about L'Arche. The board member's answer to the first question was no; to this day I chide him about that reply. However, the answer to the second question sold me: no other organization gave him the fulfillment L'Arche did. Very quickly I realized how true his statement was.

Jean Vanier once said, "Life is a succession of crises and moments when we have to rediscover who we are and what

we really want." More and more the truth of his wisdom guides me. The crises along our journey, no matter how daunting, help us grow as individuals and as community; furthermore, through them we re-discover our true gifts. Life in L'Arche is not always easy but it is simple, loving, and fun. The core members and the assistants, who share community with them, are my inspiration. When I am having a "bad" day, I think about Dorothy or Tom or Margie. They accept what life has given them and make the best of it. That's what I try to do. They give me the clarity I need and, I hope, the



Tom and Nancy at the opening of the newly renovated day program building wisdom to make good decisions with and for the community. I am so blessed to be a member of this board.

Nancy Marenick is the Director of the Writing Centre at St. Francis Xavier University.

A Journey of Learning



Phil Vandewalle with Theresa Mahoney, both former board presidents

When I agreed to join the board of L'Arche London in 1997, I knew almost nothing of boards

or of L'Arche. As a doctor, I had patients with developmental disabilities. I had even been recognized by Homeshare, a local organization, for my "...personal and professional commitment." But over the years, from welcoming the first core member to eventually opening a second and a third home, I learned much. One important personal moment came early on when I had to defend our community life to a government

agent. Mostly, though, I have grown to understand and love the stories shared by assistants of what they learn in their relationships with core members. In serving on the board I am helping myself, because the core members have so much to teach if we are willing to listen and watch.

Phil Vandewalle is president emeritus of the L'Arche London Board of Directors.