



Making an Impact in Canadian Society

L'Arche Canada works with partners to transform the Canadian social fabric through its educational programs, practicums, and curriculum resources. These encourage the building of a society where everyone can belong and contribute their particular gifts. As well, many L'Arche communities, besides providing welcoming and highly regarded homes, day programs and creative workshops, reach out with resources and programs for others with intellectual disabilities in their towns and cities. This Bulletin gives a glimpse of the impact of some of this work.

- Murray McCarthy, Executive Director

In Brief...

JEAN VANIER HONOURED

In July, Jean Vanier received the Pacem in Terris Award which honours individuals for their achievements in bringing peace and justice to the world. In presenting the award, Bishop Martin Amos said, "We believe that Jean Vanier is building a foundation for peace through his half-century commitment to fostering communities of love, understanding and growth that lead to human flourishing." Previous recipients include President John F. Kennedy, Dorothy Day, Martin Luther King Jr., Dom Helder Camara, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, and Lech Walesa.

L'ARCHE LETHBRIDGE opened its third home in September—a large fully renovated house that is now home to 5 people with an intellectual ...Continued

THE TRANSFORMATIVE IMPACT OF L'ARCHE INITIATIVES

In Secondary Schools and Beyond

"The greatness of a human being is to move from Me to We," Jean Vanier told We Day's 20,000 students and educators who filled the Air Canada Centre in Toronto on Sept. 20th, 2013. This is the second year that L'Arche Canada has prepared a Vanier video clip for organizers Marc and Craig Kielburger.

Secondary students in some provinces learn about L'Arche and Jean Vanier in their curriculum. For example, the new Ontario Grade 10 History and Civics courses ask students about the contribution of L'Arche to the lives of people who have disabilities in Canada and to Canadian society.

L'Arche communities are often invited to give talks in local schools and colleges and sometimes to teacher candidates. Some communities also offer student visits. Each year, L'Arche Daybreak provides one-day retreats to 55 groups of Grade 12 students. These are presented by a long-term assistant and a core member. Their goals: (1) For students to encounter L'Arche through interacting with a core member. They do this through a storytelling exercise in which students ask the core member about their life. (2) Through interactive games, for students to think about identity—how they identify themselves and others and how they feel when others stereotype them. Students learn



Jean Vanier's video greeting opened the 2013 We Day



John Smeltzer and Chris Jarvis, co-animators, with students

that it is possible to really know someone who has a disability, and that coming to know others who seem different is a work of justice.

Field Education and Practicums



Heather assists Kristina in a bowling activity.

L'Arche communities across Canada welcome students from college and university faculties for practicums in fields as diverse as social work, kinesiology, nursing,

and theology. Heather Barrieau did her Human Services practicum at L'Arche Saint John. She writes, "The most important thing I learned at L'Arche was patience. I am a busy, task-oriented person. Some days at L'Arche, my job was to sit with Kristina, a core member who does not speak. I discovered that being still can bring great peace and is just as important as being busy. Cooking was a different challenge. It is not my specialty. I once made biscuits but put too much baking

powder in them. By the time I tried one and realized that they tasted awful, the house members had finished them up. They even told me they were good! This kind of generous response is typical of L'Arche people."

Today, Heather works as an Educational Assistant encouraging her students in the values of independence and cooperation. She continues as a volunteer at L'Arche which she describes as "like home."

disability and 5 live-in assistants. The name of the new house, “Amani” (“Peace,” in Swahili), recognizes the Kenyan and Tanzanian identity of 2 of the assistants. Each comes with experience, having lived in L’Arche in England before coming to Canada.

L’ARCHE’S 50TH IS COMING

“WITH” ads are raising awareness about L’Arche and its messages as we begin to mark our 50th Anniversary. It was in 1964 that Jean Vanier welcomed two men from an institution to share a home with him. Today there are 140 L’Arche communities around the world, in 40 countries and on six continents. Readers of *Canadian Family* magazine, *Toronto Life*, and *Ottawa Magazine* may notice full-page L’Arche Canada ads in some issues this fall and winter. The focal point of each ad is an attractive photo of two people engaged together in an activity, with the message that life is better when people of differing abilities spend time being and doing things together. We are grateful to the publisher of these magazines for making these ads possible.



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St. FX Diploma Program in Intellectual Disability Studies

St. Francis Xavier University Continuing and Distance Education Department offers an award-winning diploma program that was developed at the request of L’Arche Canada. Former L’Arche assistants who had become academics and professionals in various fields, wrote the diploma’s five courses. To date, 61 of the 116 participants are L’Arche assistants, and 14 of these have already graduated. The program emphasizes community-building and reciprocity in relationships between people with and without intellectual disabilities. People in the social services, parents, and others in Canada and abroad have pursued the diploma or taken individual courses. Program Coordinator Mary MacInnis comments, “Parents who already know the ‘Foundations’ content,



Tom Gilfoy and Natalie Cameron, Members of L’Arche Antigonish

for example, have taken the ‘Relationships, Advocacy and Vision’ course.”

Natalie Cameron, who came to L’Arche from high school, writes, “The diploma allowed me to deepen my understanding of working with people with disabilities and at the same time gain a qualification that recognizes

my knowledge and experience. I continue to draw from my learnings in reflecting with others and welcoming core members into discussions so that we can create a better world together.” Natalie has been in L’Arche for nine years and, today, carries the important role of Homes Coordinator in her community.

Supporting people with disabilities beyond L’Arche: L’Arche Amos

L’Arche Amos is a small, dynamic community 6 ½ hours north of Montreal. It has three homes and 2 apartments and 15 members who have an intellectual disability. However, its reach extends far beyond these numbers. For several years now, L’Arche Amos has run a much appreciated initiative that welcomes 70 local people with disabilities into day programs. These provide a variety

of recreational opportunities (aerobics, billiards, bowling boxing, and time in a pool and a multi-sensory “Snoezlen” room) and also, for those who are more mobile, placement in teams that develop work skills in three areas— meal preparation for a homeless shelter, a mosaic atelier, and maintenance (lawn care, snow removal and moving tasks).



Jean-Louis Laprise, Gilles Gignac and Pierrot Frénette, members of the meal preparation team

L’Arche’s Grief Support Resource made available to Other Organizations

There is very little material to help people with intellectual disabilities who lose a loved one. Responding to this need, L’Arche Canada has edited and put online a free kit for conducting an 8-week Grief Support Group. The kit was written by Jane Powell of L’Arche Toronto, who explains, “I wanted to start a support group because I became conscious of how much

loss people with disabilities in our community were experiencing. I got some training and during a first group, we honed the process and I put together a Manual, a Backgrounder, and a pictorial Journal. These constitute the kit.” Greg Lannan, who is part of an on-going group, comments, “I like the group—it helps me get the garbage out!”



Greg and Jane reminisce using a photo of a loved one.

To access the resource visit: www.aging-and-disability.org/en/grieving