



Making an Impact in Canadian Society

I hope you enjoy this issue of the Impact Bulletin. In it, we highlight stories of “core members” (as L’Arche designates its members with intellectual disabilities) and assistants from L’Arche communities in the four regions of Canada. You will learn a little about these individuals and some special aspect of their L’Arche community. The sidebars include L’Arche news from beyond Canada.

- Kathy Adamo, Executive Director

In Brief...

SOME INTERNATIONAL NEWS

L'ARCHE MEMBER AWARDED LEGION OF HONOUR



French President François Hollande gave Pierrot the award

On December 8th, 2014, Jean-Pierre Crépieux was the first person with an intellectual disability to receive the Legion of Honour, France’s highest honour. “Pierrot,” as he is affectionately known in L’Arche, was one of the first people to come to L’Arche Trosly in France in 1964. He is known for his exceptional kindness and welcome of others. ...Continued

MAKING AN IMPACT ON OUR SOCIETY

Stéphane Bastarache travels to Ottawa

As Stéphane excitedly joined up with fellow travellers at the Halifax airport, his carefully packed suitcase held a suit, tie, bow tie, new shoes – and pictures that Stéphane was carrying to share with the Princess Royal (Princess Anne) in Ottawa, to help her understand an emerging passion of the L’Arche Saint John community, our “Some Kind of Creative Club”. This place of connection with local artists, volunteers, and friends regularly takes us by surprise as we discover new and dramatic ways of sharing hidden gifts and perspectives.

Of meeting the Princess, Stéphane recalls, “She was asking questions... I was happy.” He adds, “The photos were important because they were about the community; they showed what we’re doing... We do painting, and drawing, and clay, and encaustic art.”

Stéphane helped to narrate the mime that unfolded in the Centre Block of Parliament: “We did a story, about L’Arche. Jean was talking to Raphael and said, Come, live with me. And Raphael said Yes.”

Stéphane remembers his own arrival in L’Arche Saint John, in response to an invitation by founding Community Leader Dan Kirkegaard. “I felt happy to come. I enjoy having people over, bowling, cooking supper, going for drives...even shoveling snow!”



Stéphane Bastarache, Princess Anne, and John O'Donnell (of L'Arche)



Stéphane at L'Arche Saint John's Creative Club

L'Arche Edmonton's Discovery Day Program

Le Tu Young is proud to serve meals at the Hope Mission homeless shelter. She is one of 5 core members of L’Arche Edmonton’s Discovery Day Program who help out on Thursdays. Le Tu says, “I like the people, I share my smile, laughter, I receive a smile back too. I have gifts to offer.”

Le Tu is active in other aspects of the Community’s outreach. On Fridays they prepare a hot meal and invite friends, local business people and students. Their goal is to break down barriers. Alice Ngendakumana, Coordinator of the day program, explains, “For many months



L'Arche Edmonton reflects the ethnic diversity of the city. Le Tu, displaying a dish she made in an art class, has Vietnamese heritage. Alice came to Canada from Burundi. After her studies and another job, she was looking for a place to “belong” and, 10 years ago, found L'Arche.



now we have been putting more emphasis on outreach. We recognize that, both as core members and assistants, we have an obligation to contribute to our society wherever possible. Recently, we visited a school. The students were very interested

and had lots of questions. We want them to know that people with disabilities are like the rest of us; we all have different strengths and personalities, and we have much to learn from each other. We want the students to feel comfortable with us.”

The award recognized “his contribution to L’Arche and the social development of men and women with an intellectual disability.” In an early letter, Jean Vanier described Pierrot as “our nightingale.” He loved to sing and would encourage the others in this.

JEAN VANIER spoke in January to a packed meeting at the House of Lords in London, England, that included parliamentarians, heads of charities and welfare organizations, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster. Jean’s theme was “Why do the strong need the weak?” Describing Jean as a “heroic figure,” an article in the Guardian summarized his message: “all our busy organising and succeeding can easily block our appreciation of what it is to be a human person.” The meeting was organized by Together for the Common Good, an initiative of Christian leaders.

A MESSAGE FROM JEAN VANIER’S LATEST LETTER: “I would like to begin this letter with a very big Thank You! So many of you wrote me for my birthday, and also to wish me great joy on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of L’Arche. We are all full of joy above all for these 50 years of L’Arche. . . With a new year, one always hopes for something new. It’s a deep hope, not only that things will get better in the world and in our societies, that we will have more support, more communities, better health. . . May this new year be like a new birth where we discover a new love and a new energy.” Read the entire letter at www.larche.ca.

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L’Arche Le Printemps—A Valued Part of the Village of St. Malachie

Last year, L’Arche Le Printemps, the oldest L’Arche in Quebec, celebrated its 40th anniversary. Today, L’Arche Le Printemps, consists of three homes, a workshop and a day program for seniors. Jonathan Boulet-Groulx, a friend of L’Arche and a gifted writer and photographer, visited during its anniversary. Below is a translated and adapted extract from Jonathan’s blog.

Saint-Malachie is a village of 1528 souls. As was the custom when it was settled, the village is built around the school and the church. The life of the parish continues to be important to the villagers. . . When the villagers were choosing three symbols to denote the parish’s roots and development, they named first the Irish and then the French, who together built this charming village, and then they named L’Arche.

A person can walk along the village’s main street and through its back corners without any problem. L’Arche Le Printemps reflects the village lifestyle. Take François, for instance, a core member of L’Arche: During my visit, François participated in a village baseball tournament. He



François in green with other baseball players at the tournament



Celebrating Joanie’s birthday in a L’Arche Le Printemps home



The main road in St. Malachie. L’Arche member Alain enjoys walking safely in the village.

moved from one team to the other because everyone wanted to have him on their team. François is a sociable fellow and appreciates the friendship of others. At the end of the tournament he was given the Star Player trophy. The participants in the tournament had already had his name written on the trophy as they knew even

before the tournament that this year it was François who deserved to receive the trophy and be lifted up and hear the cry, ‘Bravo!’ If Le Printemps has embraced the conviviality of the village, the village itself has perhaps chosen to resemble a L’Arche community in its qualities of welcome and inclusion.

The Monday Morning Music Club

Jim McGeough and Laurel Martin were among the L’Arche representatives who travelled to Ottawa in November for the national celebrations of L’Arche’s 50th anniversary. They are long term members of the L’Arche London Community. Laurel is the facilitator of Monday Morning Music Club—a weekly gathering of people who come together from across the city of London, to sing, dance and enjoy music together. Jim assists Laurel in leading the Music Club by sharing his talent as a guitarist and vocalist. Other volunteers play the harmonica, piano, and double bass, among other instruments. Up to 120



Jim and Laurel at the Monday Morning Music Club (above), and in the Centre Block, in front of one of the panels telling the story of L’Arche (right).



people come. Monday Morning Music Club is a free program of L’Arche London. It is open and welcoming to all.