

More Than Inclusion

**Honouring the Contributions of
People with Developmental Disabilities**



L'ARCHE CANADA

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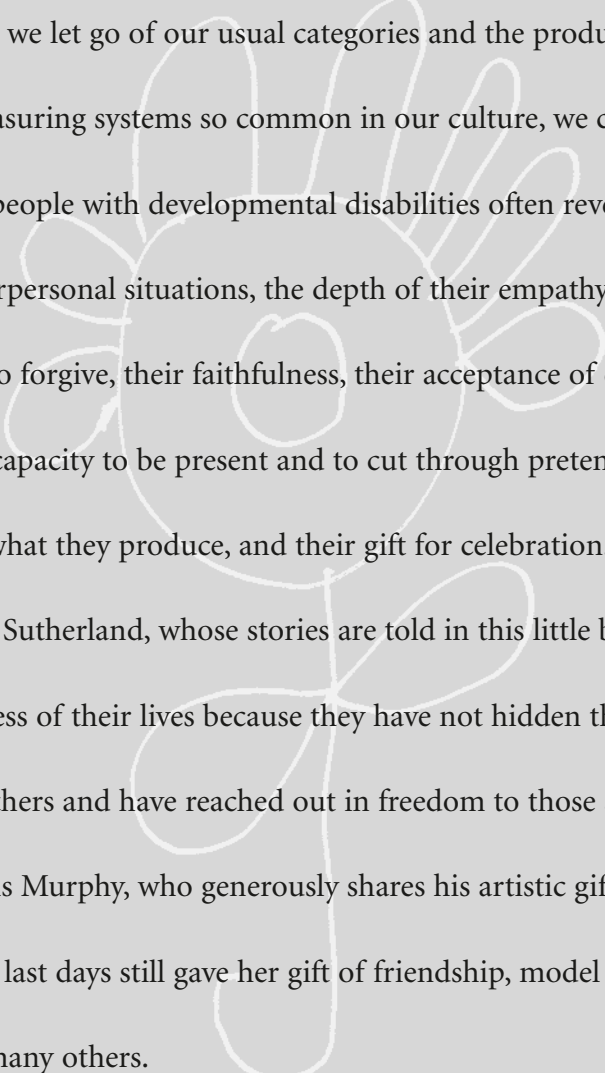
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When we let go of our usual categories and the productivity-oriented measuring systems so common in our culture, we can be surprised by the abilities that people with developmental disabilities often reveal – their keen sensitivity to interpersonal situations, the depth of their empathy, their willingness to overlook and to forgive, their faithfulness, their acceptance of difference, their originality, their capacity to be present and to cut through pretense, their resilience, the creativity of what they produce, and their gift for celebration. People like David Gray and Maggie Sutherland, whose stories are told in this little book, have made a tremendous success of their lives because they have not hidden their sensitivity and their delight in others and have reached out in freedom to those around them. People like Dennis Murphy, who generously shares his artistic gifts, and Cecile Aubé, who in her last days still gave her gift of friendship, model a “choosing of life” that can inspire many others.

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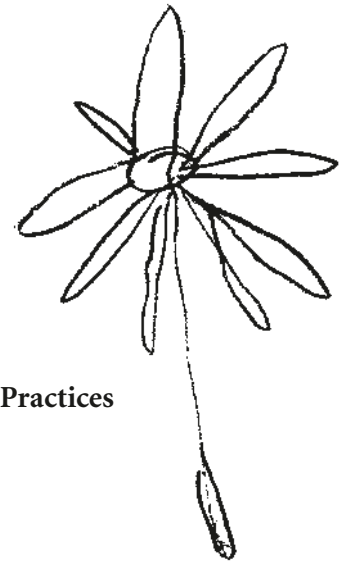
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Beth Porter

L'Arche Canada

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*C*an we reasonably have a dream, like Martin Luther King, of a world where people, whatever their race, religion, culture, abilities, or disabilities, whatever their education or economic situation, whatever their age or gender, can find a place and reveal their gifts? Can we hope for a society whose metaphor is not a pyramid but a body, and where each of us is a vital part in the harmony and function of the whole? I believe we can, because I believe that the aspiration for peace, communion, and universal love is greater and deeper in people than the need to win in the competition of life.



Irene Borins Ash

Jean Vanier
Becoming Human

**Old friends Jean Vanier
and Francis Maurice
have lived in L'Arche
for many years.**

FOREWORD

Across North America our research suggests that there has not been great progress in providing opportunities for people with developmental disabilities to participate fully in community life. While there are many reasons for this limited progress, perhaps the most common reason is the power of the idea of protection.

We all feel a need to be protected and to protect. It is a good and basic motive. Certainly infants need to be protected. And nation states are formed primarily to protect us internationally and in our civil society. However, this very positive protective motive can also be a negative force.

We can see this historically as Nazism grew by claiming to protect the German nation against the Jewish people. The Soviet system justified its tyranny by claiming to protect its people from the ruling class. Many nations repress women by claiming to protect them.

At the community level, there are similar abuses of protection. Police sometimes violate our rights and claim their action was necessary to protect us. But the most common abuse occurs when we claim we are protecting vulnerable people, especially children, and people who are disabled or mentally ill. The consequence of this protection is usually isolation or segregation – always justified as protection.

The paradox is that in their isolation or segregation, vulnerable people are often victimized and abused in ways much worse than any they might have experienced outside the protective system.

The danger vulnerable people are protected from is usually called “the community.” There are some physical dangers and social threats outside the protected space. However, the cost for life in a protected space is the absence of many of the relationships and opportunities that make life worth living for most of us. Indeed, it is being able to go outside this protected space that many people feel is the meaning of freedom.

So there is a genuine dilemma. We all need protection as well as community and freedom. However, to be vulnerable often means we are led to accept protection rather than community and freedom – a choice no one should have to make.

This book is a collection of stories in which people, usually associated with L'Arche, have tried to deal with this dilemma. The stories demonstrate the new life that experience in the wider community provides to the vulnerable person, their allies and the people in this wider community.

But most important, the stories show how the greatest protection is a web of relationship in the community – and not a “special” life of segregation.

For community people, these stories also show how to be a guide into everyday life for people who have been overprotected.

And for the community, these stories show how we need vulnerable people whose gifts, once given, will make our lives and our communities much stronger.

John L. McKnight

Professor

Education and Social Policy

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Evanston, IL USA

INTRODUCTION

In L'Arche, people with developmental disabilities and those who come to help them share life together in homes or in meaningful work or day activity settings. Thirty-five years ago, L'Arche in Canada was at the beginning of the movement to de-institutionalize people with developmental disabilities. Today there are 26 communities of L'Arche across Canada, with nearly 200 homes and day settings. Because L'Arche offers a home for life, it tends to attract more people with complex needs for lifelong support and relatively fewer people with mild disabilities. L'Arche does not aspire to be very large, but it is a sign of what is possible when barriers fall away and people of very different abilities come to appreciate one another deeply as friends who have important gifts to contribute to each other and to the wider society.

As L'Arche grows and diversifies, we realize that, while life in a L'Arche community does not suit everybody, much of what L'Arche does to foster social inclusion is transferable to other settings. Other human services do some things better than we do, but we know that, like every good organization, we have a body of time-tested knowledge, even wisdom, that can be helpful to others. For one thing, L'Arche puts a great deal of energy into facilitating social inclusion and it has a vision and practices that have proven effective for people with developmental disabilities to contribute to the wider society. In this little publication we offer some of this knowledge.

L'Arche has one overarching best practice that, if well-disseminated, can make an important contribution to bringing about genuine social inclusion: it knows how to create environments where relationships of mutuality can develop and it knows the importance of teaching and modelling these ways of relating for newcomers, visitors and others in the wider society. Many of L'Arche's best practices are in the subtle realm of attitudes and expectations and small gestures that help provide a space for people to contribute. Jean Vanier, founder of L'Arche, took as his inspiration the biblical passage from the Beatitudes which declares that the poor are "blessed." L'Arche believes that every person is blessed with important gifts to offer others and that we are called to help create a society in which each one's gifts can be given and recognized.

This book begins by outlining L’Arche practices that are helpful to people with disabilities in making contributions to society and having these contributions recognized. The bulk of the book presents representative stories and vignettes, grouped thematically. The stories are about the goodness and mutual enrichment that grows from relationships. Each story illustrates at least one of the practices described in the opening pages. At the end of each story, the “Of Note” or “For Reflection” comment extracts an idea readers might carry forward.

We chose a number of areas into which to group the stories, beginning with “An Attitude of Welcome” – the spirit, circumstances and attitudes that make genuine, life-shaping encounters possible. Other areas represent other aspects of what constitutes a good life for most of us – a life in which we have rich relationships, can contribute to and help shape our society, enjoy meaningful work or day activities, develop our creative gifts, and have as much control as possible over decisions during and at the end of our lives. The final grouping, “Ending Life Well,” recognizes the possibilities for finding continuing fruitfulness in the midst of ageing and loss. The element of relationship is foundational to all the practices in this book and the stories that illustrate them.

This publication is not research-oriented, but it does reflect and perhaps advance some insights from contemporary research in the field of disability. Appendix Two situates it in the wider field of current research and policy advocacy for people with developmental disabilities.

Our hope is that this little book will stir individuals in the general public and social service agencies, friends and family members and also government policy makers to imagine new ways of seeing and welcoming the potential contribution of people with developmental disabilities. A society needs all its citizens to contribute if it is to be healthy. Ironically, it is the very people whom our society so readily excludes whose humanizing gifts are most needed today. It will be through meaningful relationships – relationships of mutuality – that lasting changes will come about in the perspective and practice of individuals and eventually of society as a whole. And when the wider society grasps the benefits it receives from including all its citizens, the work of pleading for inclusion will no longer be necessary.

Honouring Contributions and Discovering Mutuality L'Arche Practices

The primary aim of L'Arche is to welcome people with developmental disabilities, to reveal their particular gifts and give them a valid place in society. – L'Arche Charter

The best practices outlined below are the customary activities and proceedings that L'Arche finds most effective in highlighting the contributions of people with developmental disabilities so that these contributions are visible, fruitful and valued in the wider society:

1. Promoting a humanizing social vision that includes all people, especially those readily marginalized, and that expects people with developmental disabilities to contribute to society. This practice is supported by the conviction that in a healthy society there should be an exchange of gifts between all citizens of varying abilities. It seeks to nourish the moral imagination of Canadians and change prevailing attitudes.

2. Facilitating valued relationships of mutuality and educating caregivers, friends and the broader public to notice the contributions that people with developmental disabilities make to relationships and to the quality of our society. This practice includes challenging social norms that permit discrimination and pointing toward changes of outlook that will bring greater inclusion and social cohesion. L'Arche wishes to reveal the dignity of people with developmental disabilities. Wherever L'Arche caregivers engage with people with developmental disabilities, whether at home or in public, they hope to model genuine and respectful relationships – consulting, talking to rather than about the person, doing with rather than doing for, encouraging each one to lead where he or she is able, whether in small gestures, such as greeting a salesperson or passing a dish at table, or in larger ones, such as giving a public presentation.

3. Creating small, welcoming and safe home and work environments where people with developmental disabilities can grow in confidence. L'Arche believes that home should be a place of friendship where each person contributes. People with developmental disabilities share home life with assistants as a family of brothers and sisters, and relationships are a priority. Everyone helps shape the home life or day environment, participates in meetings and decision-making, and in chores, activities and traditions, as he or she is able. Work or day activities are planned to respond to workers' interests, and organized so that they may use and develop their skills. While independence is valued, it is not more important than relationships and interdependence.

4. Providing people with developmental disabilities with meaningful work or, if they are not able to work for remuneration, ensuring that they have enriching daytime activities integrated as much as possible into the wider society. People with developmental disabilities may be helped to hold jobs or volunteer positions in the wider community. Also, L'Arche establishes small creative ateliers where people who need more support can do work of which they are proud and for which they receive suitable remuneration. These settings often welcome people with developmental disabilities living in the wider community beyond L'Arche.

5. Supporting people with developmental disabilities, according to their interests and desires, to participate in and contribute to the activities, opportunities, and institutions of the wider community where they live. L'Arche expects that people with developmental disabilities will enjoy doing the same things that others in society enjoy and that, with imagination and good accompaniment, such participation is almost always possible. People with disabilities may be helped to be part of and contribute to recreational, cultural and social groups – service and sports clubs, educational and cultural events, and churches, synagogues, mosques, temples or other faith communities. Similarly, people with disabilities have enjoyable annual vacations with others with whom they wish to spend time. Caregivers learn to support people with multiple and severe disabilities in public settings, interpreting their communication so that they also may be understood and their contributions appreciated.

6. Helping people with developmental disabilities acquire a global social vision and awareness of those who are less fortunate and ensuring that they have the dignity of being able to give to others. People with developmental disabilities may be supported to volunteer in a food bank or shelter, and to learn about areas of the world where there is much suffering. L'Arche communities in Canada have links with L'Arche communities in Central and South America. Some L'Arche people with disabilities have participated in solidarity visits to Honduras, the Dominican Republic and other countries and returned to share their learning.

7. Developing circles of friends and community networks of support that are mutually enriching, help caregivers maintain the needed energy for relationship building, and offer people with developmental disabilities a variety of options. This practice includes creating well-planned social events where people with developmental disabilities can meet and form relationships with people from the wider community; enabling those with developmental disabilities to entertain their families and friends; supporting them to maintain long-term relationships with their families and friends through calls, letters and visits, and when caregivers change, passing on the history of people's relationships to new caregivers so that continuity is maintained.

8. Assisting people with developmental disabilities to integrate their life experiences, age well, grieve losses, and approach the end of their lives with awareness and dignity, making their own choices as much as possible. This practice includes assisting people with developmental disabilities to gather together their life stories, to share them with others, and to have them celebrated; and sharing and cherishing the stories of family and friends who have died and helping keep alive a sense of the gifts of their lives for those who remain behind.

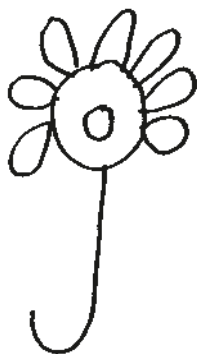
Investing in the Caregivers

It's only when I know who I am that I can discover who you are. – Jean Vanier

L'Arche invests much in the assistants and friends who help provide support to people with developmental disabilities in its homes and day settings. It does so because the quality of life of the people with developmental disabilities is directly affected by the way caregivers think and relate and view the world.

Besides training in skills and competence, L'Arche provides educational experiences on broader topics – for instance, “What does it mean to be human?” or “to be a friend?” L'Arche encourages caregivers to take responsibility for their personal growth and to develop their reflective capacity so as to discover meaning in their relationships, and to this end it provides mentoring. Weekly assistants' meetings, regional training sessions for heads of houses, and occasional retreat opportunities foster reflection and growth. Caregivers are able to accompany their friends with disabilities to social events, to weekend gatherings and on vacations, and to participate themselves to the extent they wish in the ecumenical or interfaith life of their L'Arche community. At a fairly early stage, assistants may be invited to take leadership in various ways, also giving them opportunities for growth.

See Appendix Two on benefits and limitations of professional distance.



Stories That Reveal Best Practices

What makes communities work? The principal ingredient is stories. – John McKnight

When Gord was mourning the death of his friend Henri, he said, “I miss it that Henri’s not here to tell stories about me.”

Henri’s stories were about Gord’s gifts of sensitivity and care for others and his sense of fun. Who among us does not enjoy hearing others speak appreciatively of us and recall special times we’ve spent together? Such stories can help us know ourselves and our gifts and can impart insight into the value and meaning of our lives.

Today, Gord memorializes Henri by telling stories about their friendship.

Storytelling is an essential part of life in L’Arche and a sign of the health of a community. Volunteers, friends and caregivers tell stories of awakening, bonding and new understanding that have come to them through their relationships with people who have developmental disabilities; people with disabilities tell stories of achievements and memorable moments with their friends or ask others to help them tell these stories. Stories are told on any number of occasions – over meals, at parties and meetings and special gathering, when we welcome visitors, and when we relax together. Stories are best told in contexts that encourage reflection on their meaning because it is through such reflection that learning is extracted.

- Stories undergird and strengthen our relationships, they open the eyes of our hearts to the gifts of others, and they offer hope and insight into human community.
- Stories reveal values and invite us to reflect on and examine our own values. The stories in this collection heighten ethical awareness, enabling us to see life through the eyes of others and to recognize the benefits we all receive by encouraging social inclusion.
- Stories are remembered. They provide visual pictures and touch the heart, and so stay with us.

- Stories about good relationships influence us because we all need and appreciate such relationships. Psychologists point out that what is most personal is often what is most universal – we can usually relate deeply to another’s story even if not to his or her ideas.

In this book we’ve chosen to convey some of L’Arche’s best practices through stories, partly because this medium reflects who we are and partly because we’d like to encourage more storytelling, for we believe it has a humanizing influence on our society.* The stories are told wherever possible in the first person, because they are more vivid in this form. As editor, I had the privilege of gathering many of these stories on visits to L’Arche communities across Canada. Some stories are told in my voice, as I experienced them.

Michael and I are “old friends,” he often tells visitors. Then, because he has difficulty speaking, he may ask me, “T..t..tell them about that snow – those kids!” Years ago, when we were both fairly new in L’Arche, Michael and I were snowbound in a Georgian Bay blizzard and a rural family took us in. For Michael, who loves children, the most important part of the adventure, besides the fact that we were together, was the delight that Michael brought to the children when he got down on the floor and played with them. I also love this story because through it I came to know and appreciate Michael more deeply as a companion and friend and someone with admirable inner resources. Every time Michael and I tell that story, it strengthens the bond of friendship between us. – BP

* To find ourselves incapable of telling stories can be a sign of dehumanizing conditions, as Pamela Cushing points out: “One striking example of this comes from research showing that a majority of American state hospital nurses in the study could not recall *any particular stories* about particular patients in the preceding month.” Patricia E. Benner, “Caring as a Way of Knowing and Not Knowing,” in *The Crisis of Care*, eds. Susan S. Phillips and P.E. Benner, (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 1994), p. 58, quoted by P. Cushing in her doctoral dissertation, *Shaping the Moral Imagination of Caregivers: Disability, difference and inequality in L’Arche*, p. 200.

An Attitude of Welcome

It's the people with developmental disabilities that change us. When I came here, I planned just to stay for the summer, to have an experience in a different country. Being with Michael and Nancy – the way they welcomed me into their lives – made me want to stay. We have a lot of fun together, and I know it's good for me to be here. It's neat to watch the assistants who came because they didn't want to do military service in their country and this was an alternative. At first they think they are just going to put in some time here, but then they get to know the people with disabilities and they get involved and love it.

– Alex Kater, a second year L'Arche assistant from Brazil.

In the early 1960s, when L'Arche's founder, Jean Vanier, first met people with developmental disabilities, he was struck that they were interested in him as a person, not in his academic qualifications or his social or economic status. They accepted him without question, calling him to be in the present moment and asking him to be their friend. Their welcoming acceptance invited him into an inner liberty to be himself and, in the absence of others' expectations, to grow more fully into who he was at the deepest level of his being. He sometimes calls L'Arche “a school of the heart.”

In many ways L'Arche is built on this recognition of the ability of individuals with developmental disabilities to welcome and accept others. This has an important transformative effect, freeing (even healing) so-called normal people to become more fully human and thus helping to humanize our entire society. At the same time, for people with developmental disabilities to welcome and to influence others confers on them the status of citizens who contribute to as well as receive from society.

Richard Hinds and the Wayfarer

I was making my supper in the youth hostel kitchen at Lake Louise. Besides myself, there was a group cooking a Vietnamese recipe that smelled really good. One of them wandered over to me and said, ‘Hello, my friend!’ Then he looked at my meal and commented that it was ‘kind of poor.’



Richard and Hiro, “the wayfarer,” in 2003

I was preparing only noodles and tuna because I was almost out of money. The man, whose name was Richard Hinds, lingered with me for a few minutes, then returned to his group.

I was on the last leg of my yearlong trip around the world. That day I’d had trouble with my bicycle and I had stopped early. I was feeling tired and discouraged and a bit lonely, and I was glad for this unusual man’s friendliness.

Then Richard came across the kitchen again, this time with his friends, and they invited me to have dinner with them. I found out that they were all members of a L’Arche house in Edmonton. This was the first time I’d

heard of L’Arche. We talked together a long time that evening. One of them was Japanese and helped translate. The next morning we all had breakfast together. Richard was there again calling me his friend. Before we said goodbye, we took a picture of us all and exchanged addresses.

Before I left on my trip, I had worked as a travel agent in Japan. All through my trip I had one important question: What should I do with my life? When I reached Lake Louise, I’d seen a lot of the world but I had not yet found the answer to my question. As I continued my journey, I thought much about the people I had met from L’Arche. I was touched by their friendliness and realized I was very happy being with them. I decided that when I returned to Japan I would look for a job working with people with developmental disabilities.

I worked in an institution for three years. It was hard because there was a lot of heavy lifting, and I realized I could not do this for very long, but I really liked the people. During this time I kept thinking that I would like to send a gift to Richard and the other friends I had met from Edmonton, but I couldn't decide what to send. Then the Japanese assistant returned to Japan and called me up. I asked her what gift I could send. She replied, "Send them yourself! They need people to come and live there with them." So I came to L'Arche Edmonton. That was five years ago, and it is really because of Richard that I am here.



The group at Lake Louise: a nearly identical photo seven years later

At first I lived in the same household as Richard. Now I am house leader at another household nearby. All of us in the group that met in the youth hostel returned to Lake Louise to mark the seventh anniversary of our meeting, and we took a nearly identical photo. – *Hiroshige Watanabe*

Over the years, Richard's gentle, friendly way has continued to draw new people into relationship with his home.

Of Note: While Richard had the gifts of sensitivity and initiative to welcome Hiro, he needed the collaboration of his caregiver companions. The caregivers, for their part, had the imagination and generosity to trust Richard's intuition and follow his lead.

A Place Where Honesty and Trust Come More Easily

Many services for people with disabilities are beginning to regard student volunteers as problematic because of students' rapid turnover and the suffering this turnover entails for their clients. Some agencies now refuse short-term service learners or buddying programs. By contrast, L'Arche Antigonish, in Nova Scotia, nurtures friendships with students from nearby St. Francis Xavier University (St. F.X.) that often last the entire three or four years of the students' academic program and continue afterwards. The L'Arche community and the university have a long history of collaboration. L'Arche provides student volunteer opportunities, co-facilitates the Best Buddies program with a student leader, and maintains a relationship with the Student Services office. When new people with or without disabilities come to L'Arche Antigonish, they choose the community's mission of welcome. It is a winning situation for all. These student profiles reveal some of the elements that make for stable, mutually enriching relationships.

Emilie Martens

I've been connected to people in L'Arche Antigonish since 1993. After I graduated from St. F.X. the first time, I went to Japan for a year. I kept a journal, and I found I was often writing about my relationships at L'Arche. I realized that I always felt happy the night I spent cooking with Margie MacDonald and being with her and the others around the table, taking our time and everyone participating, having prayer at the end of the meal, and then washing up together. The people with disabilities and the assistants were very welcoming and very honest right from the start. I returned to Antigonish to live in one of the



Mary Anne and Emilie: "I like Emilie's smile."

L'Arche homes, and I felt loved and uplifted by our life together. I've been deeply moved and changed by my relationships at L'Arche. They are different from my other friendships. There's a lot more honesty and trust. These two qualities just come more easily. There's nothing fake; I can be who I am.

I'm often touched by the little gestures I see in our house – how we celebrate birthdays and anniversaries by each naming what we appreciate about the person, how two members with disabilities express their love for one another even though they might find it hard living together sometimes, and how they are free to show happiness.

In 2005 I will finish my B.Sc. in nursing. Last year I married Arne, one of the other assistants. We are expecting a baby and are no longer living with people with disabilities, but we are close. I love the people I've lived with in L'Arche. My friendships with Mary Anne MacKinnon, whom I've been supporting in her apartment, and with Margie and others, have shaped the way I want to live my profession as a nurse. I can see myself choosing to nurse people with developmental disabilities if I have the option. I've learned a lot about community living through L'Arche, and I'm interested in public health and education.

Michael Aucoin

In my first year of university, I began stopping by LEAP when I had a free hour. LEAP, L'Arche Enriched Activities Program, is a day program run by L'Arche Antigonish in a house on campus. Some of the L'Arche people with disabilities have part-time regular jobs and do activities with LEAP during the other part of their day. I spent most of my visits with Shane Greencorn, who lives with his family. Shane is limited in his speech and mobility yet so alive that he quickly made me comfortable. His constant laughter is contagious! We often ran errands for the program, and our relationship grew in the time we spent downtown. At first I had reservations about wheeling Shane around town, but the fun we had quickly replaced any apprehensions.



Michael: "More alive in spirit"

Over the four years of my degree, I visited Shane, and others at LEAP weekly. Why did I keep coming? In spending time with people with disabilities in L'Arche, I came to feel more alive in spirit and alert to the unique gifts we all possess.

During my final year at St. F.X., I chaired the Best Buddies program. I remember trying to match a young female student with a great guy who is unable to hear or speak and whose walk-



Michael and Shane running errands in 2002

ing is quite unstable. I knew some students might find him challenging, and in her interview, she had said that she was comfortable being matched with anyone regardless of their abilities. I really don't think she was expecting to be matched with someone like this man. Initially she was extremely hesitant, but sure enough, they really connected. They are continuing to get together this year.

Currently, I'm studying medicine at Dalhousie University. I have a lot on my plate, but I stay in touch. One of my L'Arche friends with a developmental disability recently spent his weekend away visiting me in Halifax. I know that the friendships I made within L'Arche have better prepared me to serve the health care needs of people with disabilities. Perhaps this preparation is one of the greatest gifts that I have been given through my friendships at L'Arche.

Andrea Cowan

I did my B.A. in history at St. F.X., and now I'm studying education, with a focus on special education, at the University of New Brunswick.

L'Arche had a table at St. F.X.'s Societies Night, and I signed up to volunteer in my first year because I like to cook and there was an opportunity for someone to help Donald MacIntosh cook once a week. Residence can be a bit barren, and everyone in Donald's house

was so welcoming that it really became my home away from home. During two summers I moved in as a house assistant. One of the people I lived with is Tom Gilfroy. Tom has a gift for making almost anything funny. At moments when everything seemed to be going wrong, he would usually say something to make me laugh. I always looked forward to the weekly assistants' meetings. They were a mixture of skills training and sessions on L'Arche – on themes such as creating “home” and holding good house meetings.

Because of my connection with people with developmental disabilities, I'm less inhibited and more self-confident. I'm also more sensitive to other people's body language, because some people I lived with couldn't talk much or verbalize their feelings. With people with disabilities, no one judges anyone else. Social barriers fall away, and you don't care if you look silly. If there's music playing and you feel like dancing, you dance. It's great to see how the people with disabilities have also grown. For instance, Carolanne used to be afraid to go out for walks but now she has gained confidence and enjoys walks.

I often have people from my L'Arche house come to visit. We go shopping and we play a lot of music. My parents love it.



Andrea with Tom, who can make people laugh

Angela Miller and Lisa Leuschner



Angela and Lisa after working out at the university gym

“Lisa Leuschner and my best friend, Beverly, used to work out together at the university gym and I would see them there. Before Beverly graduated, she helped Lisa and me get to know each other, and now we work out,” Angela Miller explains. Lisa nods and adds, “Track and field.” I don’t quite pick up Lisa’s speech, but Angela repeats Lisa’s words in a natural manner that draws no attention to the fact that she is actually translating for my benefit. Lisa is training for the Special Olympics, I learn. “She is a very good runner and soccer player,” says Angela. It’s clear Angela and Lisa enjoy being together. “Sometimes we

rent a movie after the gym. Sometimes Lisa comes for an overnight in my residence,” Angela adds. “We stay in touch with Beverly, who is studying in Toronto and is connected to L’Arche Toronto now.”

Of Note: The L’Arche community makes it easy for the students to connect, providing an on-campus environment where they can sign up for as little as an hour a week. A gentle progression often occurs as the people with disabilities invite the students to their homes. Both the assistants and the people with developmental disabilities welcome the students. The L’Arche home or program provides a context for their relationship and an informal place of belonging for students, and it supports the continuing contact with the students after they graduate.

For Reflection: L’Arche has given thousands of young people an experience with people with disabilities that has changed them, some of them would say “transformed” them, and left them better prepared for life. Are there elements in this story that might be transferable to a setting you know?

A Friendship with Maggie

Maggie Sutherland loves music and shouts her joy, hopping up and down to the rhythm. When in town, she introduces herself to passersby, insisting on their attention. They may begin a little bewildered or even startled, but when they move on from their encounter with Maggie, they realize she has imparted something special to them. They feel better about themselves and they remember her. But life is not all joy for Maggie. She lived in an institution for quite a few years and carries anguish that shows in various ways if something in her world is not right – if, for instance, she doesn't get the right mug at dinnertime. She sleeps with her most precious possessions under her pillow. "Her smile is sometimes right on the border between crying and laughing, and her emotions are very intense. We see this when something happens that delights her – when friends come to visit or when her favourite song is playing," says Jenn Power, one of Maggie's friends and community leader of L'Arche Cape Breton, where Maggie lives.

"I met Maggie in 1997, at a low point in my life. I immediately appreciated her spontaneity, her love of life, and her insistence on connecting with me," explains Ian McNeil. "We met at a L'Arche social event, and one of the assistants invited my wife, Marg Coady, and me to Maggie's house for dinner. We enjoyed this, and we struck up a friendship. Maggie accepts me totally with no judgments, so that I feel completely free to be myself. She helped fill a void I was experiencing back then because of the prolonged absence of my young son from my life.

"Maggie can make me feel ten feet tall



Maggie and Ian: "Maggie can make me feel ten feet tall."

when I arrive to pick her up for a visit or for one of our favourite drives, which we call ‘cruisin.’ After she’s dragged me around the house to say hello to everyone, we hop in the car, carefully select the fiddle tunes, crank up the volume, and head out, making ‘driving fast noises,’ as we call them, and sometimes driving at a good clip while we beat time to the music. Maggie likes beeping sounds, so some days we make a point of visiting bank machines and grocery stores, where we can hear these noises.

“Marg and I have both become friends with Maggie. Maggie made a strong connection with Marg immediately because they share the name Margaret. Maggie has visited the school where Marg teaches, and Maggie and I have worked together. She’s been on the CBC program that I host, and we co-emceed a variety concert. For the latter we worked up a comedy routine during which we pretend to be on the radio. I ask her for the weather report and the driving conditions, to which she responds ‘Snow!’ As the concert happened in July, it was pretty funny. We also co-hosted a national radio special, which we recorded at L’Arche – a two-hour afternoon program in which we reflected on L’Arche’s contribution to life in Cape Breton. Maggie helped introduce the guests on the program.

“I’m fairly well known in this area, but when Maggie and I go out in public, I am humbled by the fact that more people know her and approach her than recognize me.

“There have been a few challenges for Marg and myself in inviting Maggie for visits in our home. Maggie has some difficulty with motor control, and we needed to get used to a certain level of messiness when we share a meal together. And Maggie is a bit possessive of us. When other visitors come over, she makes it clear that she expects still to have our full attention. But she brings out the best in each of us and, I believe, in everyone who knows her. Marg and I both love to be with her and love having her visit us.” – *Ian McNeil, host of the CBC radio weekday morning program in Cape Breton.*

For Reflection: Maggie might seem unattractive or even frightening to people who don’t know her. What do you think enabled Ian and Marg to appreciate Maggie’s unusual ways and the gifts she brings? Do you know someone like Maggie who has much to give to others and could be helped to make a friend?

Community-Building and Solidarity

“Lightening Up” Church Groups

Three people with developmental disabilities in the L’Arche Winnipeg home on Cherry Crescent are involved in the local Catholic parish. I had breakfast with them one Sunday morning, and they took me with them to church. After the service they introduced me to some of their friends in the Catholic Women’s League (CWL) and the Knights of Columbus.



Barbara, Carol, Denise and Linda. Inset: Michael

Carol Subtelny, president of St. Bernadette’s CWL, explained, “I talked about the idea with the group and then approached Barbara Waedt and Linda Bauch to join the CWL. I have a son with Down syndrome. I know how much it would mean to him to be invited to join a men’s group. I assumed Barbara and Linda might feel the same way.” Carol and Denise Novog, another CWL member, expressed their appreciation for Linda’s and Barbara’s presence in their meetings: “They’re not so inhibited as some of us. Both of them know how to have fun and to lighten up the group. They have a gift for spontaneity, and they are not afraid to speak up. Linda will ask the question we all want to ask when the meeting goes long: ‘When are we having the dessert?’ And then we’ll all laugh! When we discuss our social justice and community-building projects, sometimes their questions will make us think about why we’re doing something. Both of these women are good for the spiritual growth of our group.” Denise adds, “My husband and I have gotten to know Barbara and Linda in other ways

too: They've come to our house sometimes, and we've visited their home for tea. Their housemate Michael and Carol's husband are both in the Knights of Columbus."

Barbara Waedt is a confident, articulate woman, 50 something, as are several other women in the Catholic Women's League. Her hobby is rug-hooking. About her involvement in the CWL she says, "We meet on Monday evening once a month. I help set up for the meetings, put the coffee cups out and invite the women to come up for the coffee and cakes. We talk about things that are coming up: the Christmas party, the prizes, the decorations and the CWL convention."

Linda Bauch is a warmhearted, middle-aged woman with striking red hair and a bright smile. She enjoyed touring me through her home and pointed out some of Barbara's rugs. Of the CWL Linda says with pride, "I am a member." She enjoys helping with the refreshments and welcoming the other women. Like Barbara she is on the phoning committee. Each has a commitment to phone two other women to remind them of meetings and upcoming events.

Michael O'Conner is a member of the Knights of Columbus men's group at St. Bernadette's. "I'm on a list with everybody," he says. When asked what the Knights do, he replies in a near whisper, "It's a bit hush-hush between the men." He adds that some of the Knights have fought in World War I and II and III. From his Knight friend Val Joyal, I learn that Michael helped with a delivery of Yellow Pages as a fund-raiser for a women's shelter, and with other social projects. There is much joking between the two men and they obviously like each other.

Of Note: The church members had the imagination to grasp that people with developmental disabilities would like to be part of church associations, could be received as equal members, and would bring special qualities to these groups. They took the initiative in inviting the people with disabilities to join. Assistants in the home set mealtimes to facilitate their members getting to church services and to CWL and Knights meetings and help them entertain church friends.

For Reflection: How would our society be different if all service clubs had one or two members with developmental disabilities?

Growing into Adulthood

Over the years, the leadership of some key educators in the little town of Courtenay, British Columbia, has provided several local young people with developmental disabilities a fairly seamless transition through school and into early adulthood. “Twenty years ago Rachel’s mother was one of a new kind of parent who not only desired but expected integrated classroom placement in a neighbourhood school,” recalls Lock Mawhinney, former Director of Student Services for the Comox Valley Public School System. Lock, with his wife, Joanne, and a little group of friends, dreamed L’Arche Comox Valley into existence.

Rachel Scott, who was born with Down syndrome, participated in a progressive, semi-integrated high school program, taking parallel life skills training during some of the academic subjects and working with a small team of dedicated teachers who emphasize what the students can do. At home, her mother says Rachel was an equal in the family and was taught like her siblings to imagine an adult life outside her home of birth. “She has challenges like any of us, but she has a very positive self-image. She feels beautiful and yet she’s not vain,” remarks her mother proudly.

Rachel brings the benefits of these positive home and school environments to her life in L’Arche Comox Valley. For its part, the L’Arche community has a gift for hospitality that benefits others in the town. The community hosts a weekly gathering for ecumenical prayer and a shared meal for friends,



Rachel and a colourful birdhouse she painted

some of whom have developmental or other disabilities, some of whom are former teachers and teaching assistants or family or board members.

Rachel knew older students from school and from her young people's group who had moved to the L'Arche home and she would attend L'Arche gatherings and drop by on visits. In time, she told her parents that she would be moving to L'Arche. Shy at first, she sometimes remained in the hallway when guests were present. A turning point came when at a L'Arche social event Rachel put on her favourite CD and taking her housemate Gary by the hand, initiated what became a line dance of forty people snaking around the hall to loud country music.

When I visited, Rachel wanted to show me her bedroom, papered with posters of country music stars. I had dinner with her and the others in their home – four people with disabilities and three assistants. I notice many of the practices common to L'Arche – a hand-made welcome card at my place, the table set attractively with a centerpiece of garden flowers, a delicious meal, the seating planned so that those who need assistance in cutting their food or eating can be helped discreetly, and everyone having an opportunity to speak about his or her day. A neighbour with a disability came by to cut their grass and was included for tea. I watched Rachel, so obviously at home and taking her place in the conversations and life of the household. Earlier in the day I had seen her distributing cups of punch to the elderly residents of the personal care home where she volunteers, seemingly unaware of the interest that her winning smile awakened. “What are your hopes for the future?” I asked. “Maybe a regular job?” “But not until I'm ready,” she responded with an air of confidence.

Of Note: Rachel has benefited from the cooperation and the convergence of visions of her family, her school, and her L'Arche community. An inadvertent effect of the normalization movement has sometimes been that, for the sake of independence, the richness and happiness of relationships is sacrificed. In this regard, Rachel seems on the road to finding a good balance.

Being Good Neighbours

Welcoming visitors is an important part of life in a L'Arche home.

The home can provide a nonthreatening context for interpersonal contact where visitors can see friendships modelled, and new friendships can be nurtured.

The people in one of the homes of L'Arche London host a monthly potluck supper for neighbours and friends of their community. Many attend, staying sometimes for a sing-along or even a little dancing after the meal. Janet, Martha, Corinne and Mary, who have some fairly complex needs, have the value-enhancing role of welcoming guests into their home. In this, they are helped by the

assistants who share home life with them. These social evenings provide an opportunity for the guests to get to know each other and learn to relate to their hosts, as well as opportunity for the hosts with disabilities to contribute to the wider community and to be appreciated and thanked.

Of Note: Sometimes neighbours are resistant to the presence of people with disabilities living near them. In this story, a two-way bridge has been built. While neighbours' attitudes are being shaped positively towards people with developmental disabilities, the self-esteem of people with disabilities is enhanced.



Garry Dodman and Jim McGeough enjoy potluck evenings

Participating in the Apple Blossom Festival Parade

Each spring for several years the people of L'Arche Wolfville in Nova Scotia have prepared a float for the Annapolis Valley Apple Blossom Festival parade. Twice they have won first prize – one year, for a replica of Noah's ark, and another for an Acadian kitchen, in celebration of the 400th anniversary of the arrival of the Acadian people in North America. In this activity, they



Noah's Ark:
one of
L'Arche
Wolfville's
winning
floats

both create links of goodwill with the wider Annapolis Valley citizenry and strengthen friendships among themselves and with others who are close to the L'Arche community. Almost everyone in the L'Arche community is involved in working on the float and costumes. The Friday night before the parade, they come together to put the finishing touches on their float and celebrate with a barbeque. Several L'Arche people always ride on the float, and Christina, who has a motorized scooter, follows it. After the parade there is a gathering of the community and its friends and volunteers.

Of Note: Because of the quality of the L'Arche floats, people in the wider community associate people with disabilities with excellence and also with commitment to good citizenship and participation in society.

Human Solidarity: The Dignity of Giving to Others

To know about the world beyond one's immediate locale is enriching for any person. Also, part of our human dignity lies in being able to help others. This is especially important for those who find themselves most often on the receiving end of help. L'Arche seeks to foster a broad social vision and to provide opportunities for people with disabilities as well as assistants to think about social inequities, to meet people from other countries and to respond to needs both locally and internationally.

Visiting Maison Revivre

One of the L'Arche homes in Quebec City is near Maison Revivre, a shelter for homeless men that also welcomes destitute families for meals. At Christmas and on some other occasions the L'Arche people share dinner there and lead a musical evening. Marc Godin, who lives in the L'Arche home, has a heart for the homeless people. "He knows they have no money. This touches him," explains his long-term assistant friend Denis Boudreault. "Marc is usually the person who suggests it's time for another visit. 'Bring your guitar!' he'll say. We may have as much as two hours of music after dinner. The homeless people choose the songs. Sometimes there's even dancing."

One of the shelter staff comments, "You can see that some of the men are really touched by the way the people with developmental disabilities reach out to them. I've seen them wiping tears from their eyes. They're thinking, I don't have anything but here are people who in some ways have less than I have."



Denis and Marc share a love of music-making

Of Note: Some schools of thought discourage association between people who are already easily marginalized and other groups who are marginal. In this encounter, each group seems touched and also broadened in their self-understanding by their encounter with the other.

Supporting Vulnerable Young People

Partage and Amitié (Sharing and Friendship) is a collaborative project of the Lisette Dupras Centre for Rehabilitation, a government social service, and a team from L'Arche Montreal. Its purpose is to provide a supportive meeting place for people aged 16 to 25 who have mild developmental disabilities and are vulnerable to abuse and exploitation. Some live with foster families or in group homes, others with their families. Most are still in school, but they often face bullying in addition to the usual challenges teens encounter. "They suffer a lot," says Sandra Dunn, a young assistant who, with Robert Larouche, helps lead the L'Arche team. The group meets monthly for a social evening that includes fun and learning. Usually 25 or 30 attend, of which a core group find an important place of belonging there.

Robert Kane and Nathalie Aubut, members of L'Arche Montreal who have developmental disabilities, have been on the L'Arche team since Partage and Amitié started three years ago. The evenings always include music. "Robert has a great sense of rhythm," says Sandra. "He brings his drum and allows the young people to try it." Through theatre improvisation, the young people articulate some of the challenging situations they experience and work on self-understanding and problem-solving. They choose the themes themselves. One topic was "How can I be myself when others mock me? Or when my family mocks me?" Nathalie gave the opening talk, describing something that happened in her family and the ways she has grown and learned responsibility since coming to L'Arche. Her talk helped others to speak of their own difficult family experiences.

Of Note: The adults with developmental disabilities are friends and models for the at-risk youth.

A Man of Passion

When the acclaimed photographer V. Tony Hauser heard a CBC program about L'Arche Montreal, he thought he would ask Robert Larouche, who was interviewed on the program, to be one of the 60 inspirational Canadians in his National Arts Centre photo exhibition, "The Power of Passion."

"When I talked to Robert Larouche, he said, 'The person you really want to photograph is Robert Kane, because he is passionate about every aspect of daily life and in this is truly an inspiration.' I was touched by this idea and also a little scared because I didn't know what it would be like to photograph a person who has limited ability. In fact, Robert was very easygoing and he knew just how to be. He has a special quality about him. Anyone who is lucky enough to be in his presence would experience him giving back to them. Visiting his L'Arche home was one of the most wonderful experiences of my life. It felt totally liberating. In a way, it was a spiritual experience because it's a place where nobody is pretentious. One can be completely oneself." – V. Tony Hauser



V. Tony Hauser

Robert Kane: his portrait in "The Power of Passion" exhibition

Robert Kane's photo is among others of artists, activists, scientists and altruistic citizens who live with passion. With each photo, in French and English, is the person's description of what he or she loves. Here is part of what Robert wrote:

"I love to work...to do good work, to work hard. I draw tablemats. I like to look after the garbage in my home. I like to learn...to learn numbers, to learn about planets and satellites. I like to read in books. I love to take the metro. I'm able to take it by myself. I love my friends a lot. I love to take my bath in the morning; I love to shave. I like to look good. I love to travel by bus because there is always a lot of people in buses. I love celebrations. I love gifts. I love to play drums. Everyone loves it when I play my drum. It's beautiful."

The exhibition, held at the National Arts Centre in Ottawa, was published in a book, The Power of Passion (Studio Gallery Press, 2004). It is now travelling to other Canadian centres.

For Reflection: Allowing others to be totally themselves is one of the contributions that people with developmental disabilities can make to our society. Can you think of places where this gift is especially needed?

Working at a Food Bank

Mel Kirzner lives in the L'Arche Toronto community. When in his mid-forties, in spite of being legally blind, Mel announced, "I want a job where I am helping poor people." His desire was triggered by having visited a soup kitchen where one of his friends was volunteering. The experience of meeting the men who came there for a meal had a profound effect on Mel, awakening his compassion. Mel's friend helped him find a job at the Daily Bread Food Bank, where Mel has worked for 15 years as one of a very few paid volunteers. He is a valued worker and has received the Volunteer of the Year award. Now, in his 60s, Mel still travels to work independently by public transit each day. Mel helps sensitize people with and without disabilities to the needs of those who are poor. His quiet dedication inspires all who know him.



Chong Wu: Chong Wu Photography

Mel at work at the Daily Bread Food Bank in Toronto

Of Note: Mel's compassion and his faithfulness in putting it into action could be a model for many of us.

Gaining a Global Social Perspective

Machelle Hubley likes to show people the album that she and Suzi (Azucena) West made of their visit to L'Arche Santo Domingo. "I helped in the school and I helped make cards in the workshop," explains Machelle. Canadian L'Arche communities are linked to L'Arche communities in Central and South America in a program L'Arche calls "Solidarity." Machelle and Suzi have worked together on Solidarity for several years and have become good friends.

Through Solidarity, L'Arche people with developmental disabilities and their assistant friends exchange cards, pictures, and letters with their sister communities and try to help financially. In the process, the Canadians gain an awareness of inequalities in our world and they

also see that life can be lived more simply. While "Solidarity" in L'Arche Wolfville has a very practical expression in monthly fund-raisers – from barn dances to a "Death by Chocolate" recipe book and a Homemade Ice Cream Café – its essence has to do with a shared vision. Says Suzi, "When we met the people of L'Arche Santo Domingo, I realized that we had been living in solidarity in our daily life all along! That which creates solidarity in L'Arche is the living out of our common mission through our relationships, welcoming the person who is easily marginalized and empowering that person. Our visit was wonderful for us and for the people of L'Arche Santo Domingo. Their hospitality was so warm, and I know they really felt our friendship."

Of Note: Most people with developmental disabilities can grasp unfairness or injustice and are enriched by being helped to think about the needs of others. With good accompaniment, travel to other countries can be deeply meaningful.



Machelle and Suzi often spend time together on weekends

Good Work

The Toy-Cleaning Business

An Enterprise Serving Forty Day-Care Centres

“The children will not get sick because I am cleaning the toys,” Rose-Marie Morais explains with evident pride, as she stands stalwartly at one of the four commercial-sized stainless steel sinks, rinsing a colourful barn and animals in a disinfecting solution. She’s right. Statistics show an 80 percent reduction in the passing on of germs when day-care centre toys are regularly cleaned. I ask her why she has stayed in this job when she quickly tired of others. “Because I want to help children,” she responds simply.

In the office, Daniel Parent peers at a computer screen, checking to see that he has entered all the toys onto the order form from the long penciled list in his hand. While the document is printing he leans back in his chair to talk to me. His posture and demeanor might be that of any confident young business executive. “I love computers,” he tells me. I ask him whether he’ll be staying in this job. “Yes,” he says firmly. “This is the first job that I like. I keep track of the toys so the customers get all their toys back. And



Rose-Marie carefully wipes a non-immersible toy

I make up the invoice so we get paid.” I express surprise at the complexity of the form he’s just printed. “A friend, Jean, set up the software and this template for me. He showed me how to use it. If I have a problem I call him,” Daniel responds.

Meanwhile, the day-care operators are delighted. Says Marie-Claude Savard, “This service means that, for a modest fee, most of the toys can remain available to the children most of the time; it saves me an enormous amount of work, and it allows me more time with my own family.”

Background

The L’Arche Gatineau community created a small committee to review the needs of individuals with developmental disabilities who were having difficulty finding work that suited them. Both Rose-



Daniel entering a list of toys before printing a work order

Marie and Daniel had tried several work options and had been unemployed for some time. With their consent, an assistant and a volunteer assessed their interests and abilities and the emotional and environmental factors that could make for their successful employment and also researched needs in the wider community to which they might respond.

Rose-Marie had good cleaning skills and loved children but found it overwhelming to work in an environment with children or with many distractions, and she refused to do work she did not

consider meaningful. Daniel was interested only in a job where he could use his computer skills, and he had some limitations, including paralysis of one arm. The committee investigated successful projects of other groups and noted a travelling toy-cleaning project in another city. They discovered that the Gatineau area has many small day-care providers who find the cleaning of toys an arduous task after their long days. They also learned that local people with disabilities living with their families lacked job options.

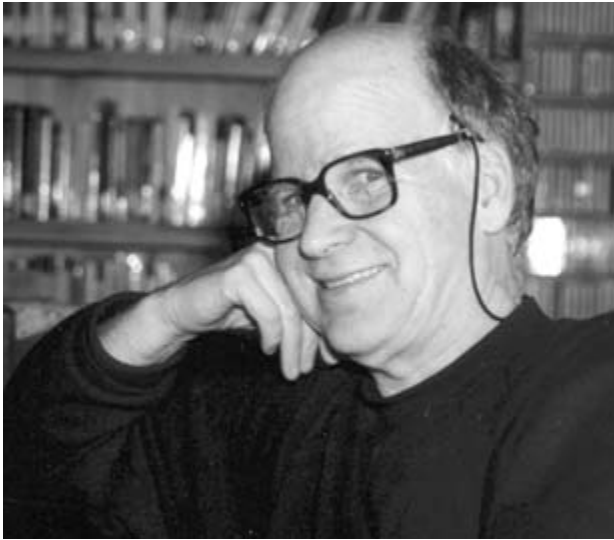
The Community applied for a grant to open a toy-washing service to day-care providers in the area. Laurence Lendormy, a long-term assistant who knew Rose-Marie and Daniel well, was selected to head up the project. They experimented with visiting a day-care centre to wash the toys on site, but Rose-Marie was clear that this setting was too disturbing. Instead, a suitable building in the business area of town was rented, renovated and made accessible. Laurence, Rose-Marie and Daniel began with just three customers, so as to work out together the best processes and work flow. They soon welcomed Claude to their team, a quiet young man with a disability who lives with his family, and also another part-time assistant. A year later the business has found longer-term funding, operates full-time, has two more workers and several volunteers and serves 40 day-care centres. Daniel and Rose-Marie love their work. An attractive sign over their building announces their service, “Jouets d’Arc-en-Ciel” (Rainbow Toys), a name Rose-Marie chose because of the many colours of the toys.

Of Note: The workers’ needs and interests were determining factors in choosing this project. A person whom the workers with disabilities know and like was asked to head the project. Work was started gradually. The business is located in an upscale business area of town, where workers can interact with other local business people. Their building adds to the ambiance of the street and gives status to the people working there.

The David Gray Award

This story is about an outstanding employer, Alutron Modules, Inc., of Aurora, Ontario, that recognized the contribution of an outstanding employee, David Gray, of the L'Arche Daybreak community in Richmond Hill, Ontario.

As David approached his mid-fifties, he expressed discontent with his work at a sheltered workshop. A cautious man, he wondered whether he might be able to do an “outside” job. He began an employment preparation course at a government-sponsored project called Job Find.



David enjoyed the music of the Grand Ole Opry

Meanwhile, Vern and Lynn Cunningham, who were starting a small business making components for vacuum cleaners, decided to hire someone with a developmental disability. Lynn had worked with people with disabilities as a nurse. She and Vern knew people with developmental disabilities needed jobs and recognized that an employee with a disability could do certain of the tasks and might also add to the family-like environment they wanted in their factory. They hired David because he had the needed fine motor skills to assemble circuit boards and because they were drawn to his friendly personality.

With a L'Arche support person David learned the route to work, undeterred that it entailed a 30-

minute walk after disembarking from the regional bus. A Job Find coach accompanied him for two weeks while he mastered the work and a L'Arche support person continued to drop in to ensure David was managing well. David hit it off immediately with the Cunninghams and also with the family dog who spent his days at the factory and seldom left David's side. David did his work well and soon became a cherished employee.

David would rise very early, dress, and be at the bus stop by 6:30 a.m. This allowed him to take his breakfast at a restaurant in Aurora en route. He quickly came to know by name the bus drivers and regulars on the route, brightening their day with his greetings.

David's friends in L'Arche noted that he was being transformed. He never complained about the long hours. The job seemed to give him a sense of dignity and purpose. He spread acceptance and goodwill wherever he went, and each evening he returned home full of stories of the people he had met.

As Alutron grew, Vern and Lynn included more people with developmental disabilities among their employees. One of their hiring conditions for any new employees was that they would work well with co-workers who had disabilities.

David's friendly way and his determination, courage and positive attitude in the face of the challenges that confronted him as he

became less well after some years and dependent on canes, then a walker and eventually a wheelchair, won him much respect. In the last two years, when David's health declined greatly, his co-workers bore with his limitations and short working hours, still valuing his presence.

In 2002, at age 65, David was finally ready to retire. The tributes were many at the retirement party that the company held for him. The crowning moment was when Vern and Lynn spoke about his contribution and how they would miss him. David had helped them build the business from its



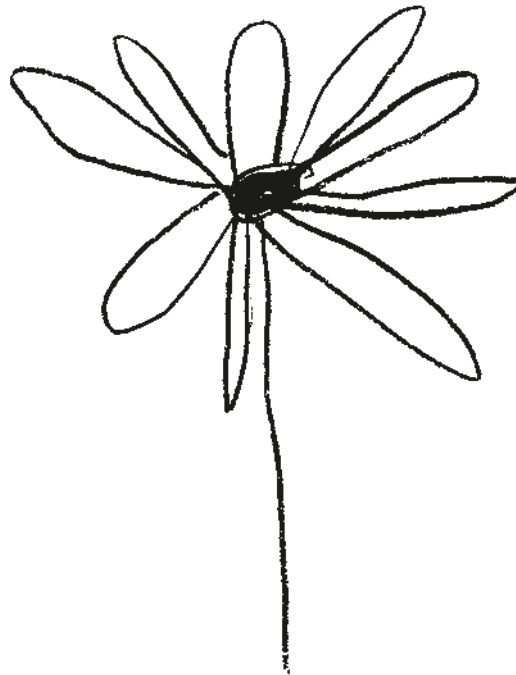
David returned to visit Alutron. Vern and Lynn: 2nd row, right of David

earliest days, and he had continually inspired them. Then they announced the establishment of an award in David's honour.

The David Gray Award is given annually to an employee who reflects the qualities David brought to Alutron over the ten years he worked there – “his kindness, his generosity of spirit, his respect for everyone no matter what their station in life, his perseverance in overcoming obstacles in his path and his ability to bring out the best in everyone he met.”

David passed away on January 25, 2004. Lynn and Vern gave a moving eulogy at his funeral.

Of Note: Besides their goodwill in hiring a person with a disability, the Cunninghams had the intuition that hiring David made good business sense. Perhaps the imagination and the care that the Cunninghams showed by hiring David was the foundation of an exceptional care for their customers – the kind of care that undergirds all successful businesses.



Les Ateliers de L'Arche, St-Malachie, Quebec

Les Ateliers de L'Arche is located in a neatly kept industrial building by the Etchemin River in the beautiful village of St-Malachie, a 45-minute drive south of Quebec City. When I dropped in, everyone was occupied in the production of their line of modular shelving – François running lumber through a saw, Diane sanding pinewood components, Genevieve working at the assembly table, Hugette operating a drill press, Yvon seated in his wheelchair stamping the Atelier logo on completed items, and others moving lumber into the shop. Jigs and switches were being used for protection, and workers were wearing safety equipment. Johanne Roy, the atelier manager, gave me a tour, explaining that the component shelving they produce is constructed in stages, with each worker knowing his or her task and working with minimal need for support.

At the break, everyone joined us around a large table in the lunchroom. Madeleine, another of the workers, drew my attention to a new product they had recently added – a tall rack for wine bottles. The workers, I learned, keep abreast of sales, and follow the whole production process, helping prepare their products for shipping and sometimes selling them at local fairs. The shelving, of high-quality



François Marquis showing the saw and jigs he uses to make pinewood shelving

pine, assembles and disassembles easily. In addition, it is affordable, attractive, and environmentally friendly (fasteners are made of recycled plastic).

In this region of rural Quebec, where job opportunities for people with disabilities are scarce, L'Arche St-Malachie had run an artisanal workshop and recycling project since its founding in 1974. This line of shelving has become its primary focus, providing valued work on a product that can be marketed year round.

... And L'Arche Wood Products, Vancouver

In an industrial area of Burnaby, British Columbia, L'Arche Wood Products, produces the same line of shelving as does Les Ateliers de L'Arche. In fact, the Vancouver workshop helped birth production by L'Arche St-Malachie, sharing the blueprints and sending the initial orders of pinewood.

In 1992, the L'Arche Vancouver workshop seized on the potential of this line of shelving to offer excellent work throughout the year. L'Arche Wood Products eventually purchased the rights to the speed clip that makes the product unique – able to be assembled without tools.

These two small companies, technically day programs, run by L'Arche communities on opposite sides of Canada, provide meaningful work to employees with diverse levels of ability and needs for emotional or physical support that can make finding employment in a regular job unlikely. Guy, in Vancouver, for instance, has the use of just one hand but operates the pneumatic drill press with his foot, and Yvon in Quebec, works from his wheelchair.

Like their Quebec counterparts, the workers in British Columbia are clearly enthusiastic about their work. They participate in team meetings to discuss quality control and marketing, and there is a sense of ownership and friendship. “Everyone knows we’re out there competing with other businesses,” says the manager, Lorne MacDonald. Of course, part of their job satisfaction lies in knowing they produce fine products that buyers appreciate. L'Arche Wood Products has won two regional awards for its line of shelving.

Of Note: A recent study of the best employers revealed that more important to workers than various perks, is the sense of meaning they have in companies where communication is good, and where they know the overall production plan and company goals, how the business is doing, and how their work fits into the whole.



Theresa Meyers: "I like to make the speedbraces."

Educating Society

When you meet a person with a disability, if you see only the exterior, you may experience pity or even revulsion, but if you are present to the moment you will discover the person's strength, not just their weakness. Every person is a mystery and wants to be seen as beautiful in the eyes of some others. Whether with people who are fairly independent or have multiple disabilities, concrete tasks can be a context in which to develop a relationship – not simply ends in themselves. – Isabelle Robert

Tables Turned: Artisans with Disabilities Teach the Teachers

Professionals sometimes have much knowledge about the phenomenon of developmental disability without necessarily having any experience with people who have developmental disabilities and without necessarily knowing how to develop relationships with people who have such disabilities. – Éric Bellefeuille

When the Quebec Ministry of Health asked Isabelle Robert, Coordinator of L'Arche in Quebec, to present a workshop to teachers of personal care workers and nurses at several sites across the province, she saw an opportunity to give these teachers, who shape the attitudes of future caregivers, a meaningful experience of interaction with people with developmental disabilities. With her co-presenter, Éric Bellefeuille, community leader of L'Arche Gatineau, and four people from the arti-

sanal workshops of the L'Arche communities of Beloeil and Mauricie, she incorporated a mini artisanal workshop into the two-day sessions.

The mini-workshop put the teachers in relationship with people with disabilities in a way that turned the tables: the people with disabilities became the teachers, guiding them in making one of their artisanal products. The atelier manager remained in the background after briefly describing the procedure. When the mini-workshop ended, besides being pleased with the products they had made, the teachers expressed several other learnings.

Stéphane Poulin, serious and neat in his atelier T-shirt, runs his hand around the unfinished wooden frame of one of the teachers. “Rub the sandpaper a little more here,” he suggests. The teacher, who is completing the first step in making a framed papier-batik picture, follows this advice and raises her hand again for Stéphane to check her work. This second time, they smile at each other and exchange some small comments, and he confirms that the frame is ready for staining. At another desk, Diane Vincent, who like Stéphane has a developmental disability, is pointing out an inside corner where a teacher has not managed to apply the stain. When the teacher is clearly having difficulty holding the freshly stained picture while trying to get at this last bit of raw wood, the artisan offers to do it for her and deftly manipulates the paintbrush to reach the difficult area. Across the classroom, Marlyn Demers, a young woman with striking reddish hair and a warm smile, explains to one of the teachers, “You’ll need to make the lines in your picture darker.”



A teacher asks Stéphane to check the quality of her sanding

The atmosphere is quiet and informal. As the teachers move from step to step, they appear increasingly comfortable seeking assistance from the artisans with disabilities who have come to instruct and do quality control. The artisans themselves are focused on their task of giving guidance and help.

At the coffee break, the group does not segregate, and the teachers engage the artisans in conversation. One of the teachers approaches Claude MacLean to show his finished product. Claude, eldest among the artisans and a modest man whose papier-batik art is widely admired, responds pleasantly, “It’s very nice!” An observer might think these 15 or so people, so different in life experience and abilities, interact in this natural manner as colleagues every day.

Comments from the Teachers

- Before the workshop, I was skeptical and a little afraid – I had never tried to talk to people with developmental disabilities. But I was surprised that we could talk easily. This leads me to reflect on what it means to be handicapped.
- The four people with disabilities had very different personalities. They became ‘real persons’ for me. I could sense the strength of their intelligence, and that each is strong and well-rooted in him or herself.
- I learned that I can learn from people with developmental disabilities.
- I was struck by their seriousness and that they were happy to take responsibility for guiding us.
- They treated me well and honestly – telling me when I had not done something properly, encouraging me, validating me. They were competent and kind.
- Being required to do something concrete where we were dependent on the person helping us was good: I had to connect.
- They had a clear sense that they had come to do a service. They worked well together and respected each other.
- Their presence brought a sense of celebration at the end of the workshop, and we wanted our photo taken with them.

From the Workshop Leaders

It is because the teachers had a simple experience with the people with disabilities that they became more confident, comfortable and open to the relationship. The activity was only a pretext to allow them to experience the steps everybody moves through when they first meet people with disabilities. Of course, the aspect of being taught by the people was important, but the activity was only a way to lead the teachers to think more deeply about the interaction – to reflect on what they are going to say and how they are going to behave.

The teachers often ask us: “What do I need to do to be an effective practitioner with these people?” Or “What advice can I give to my students so they will be less afraid in their experience with people with disabilities?” The answer is simple: One of the easiest (and fastest) ways to enter into a relationship with a person living with a disability is to do something with him or her. Invest some time in a simple activity, and you will create an experience that will help you in everything you have to do with the person.

For Reflection: Do you have memorable experiences of discovering the abilities of people with developmental disabilities? Where do you tell these stories that can open others to such possibilities?



Teachers, artisans and workshop leaders: happy with their experience together

Dalton Heard Presents His Story

A Computer-Based Assistive Technology Project

It is the people who make technology powerful by creatively using it to fulfill their dreams.

– The Alliance for Technology Access, 2000

Through specially adapted computer technology, Dalton Heard, who cannot speak or move his body very much, can, with effort, patience and the support of an assistant, use a switch device to move through a PowerPoint presentation about his life, showing the home where he lives in L'Arche Stratford, people he lives with and what he likes to do. He has made presentations to church, university and community audiences.

Dalton, who lived some years in an institution before being welcomed into L'Arche Stratford, loves to share about the unfolding opportunities in his life. He is always quite excited when giving a major presentation, and he will call out “Yah! Yah!” and wave his arms. Sometimes he can be so happy that he hits the switch repeatedly and the



Anne and Dalton reviewing his presentation

slides progress too quickly to follow, so someone guides Dalton's hand when he is giving public presentations.

Anne Escrader, a former L'Arche Stratford assistant, worked with Dalton to discover which technology best suited him and assisted him in developing his presentation. Every two weeks for several months, an assistant in Dalton's community would make the one-hour drive with Dalton in the community's wheelchair van to meet Anne at The Centre for Assistive Technology in the Public Library in London, Ontario.

Says Anne, "Within the context of special education, we can analyze our time together in terms of assessment, limitations, strategies and so on. But it is not just about these. In the simple act of working together more as friends than as 'client and staff,' we share in each other's gifts. The philosophy of L'Arche emphasizes recognizing the unique value of each person. We live this philosophy in our own way."

Dalton loves music and will choose (by pointing) a particular song to play when giving a presentation. Anne recounts being moved by the silence that came over a class of university students as Dalton played for them Anne Murray's "Lord, I Hope This Day Is Good, I'm Feeling Helpless and Misunderstood." University students and members of the wider community are often very touched by Dalton's sharing and have many questions for him. He uses a Bliss Board to answer.

When Dalton made a presentation at an event to celebrate the contributions of people with disabilities, he received a \$100 honourarium. Anne, Donna Hoskin (a Creative Memories consultant), and L'Arche assistants in Dalton's home helped him put together and offer this major presentation with text and graphics. Dalton used the honourarium to take those who helped him to lunch.

Anne Escrader is writing her doctoral dissertation on L'Arche and the education of the heart at The University of Western Ontario, Faculty of Education. Anne invited Dalton to help her present her Master's thesis, "The Pedagogy of L'Arche: A School of the Heart."

Of Note: Dalton Heard is able to help educate many people about the potential of people with developmental disabilities because a few people with different skills collaborated creatively and because a public library has an excellent resource centre.

Calling Forth the Goodness of Teens An Outreach to Schools

A boy in grade nine asked Mary and her caregiver if he could wheel Mary back to the car. Mary, a woman with a developmental disability who uses a wheelchair, had just helped give a presentation to his class. The student's attentiveness to Mary and to the responsibility of getting her safely through doorways and down crowded school corridors totally absorbed him. Caught up in the moment, he ignored the stares from students all around him.

This young person is part of the upcoming generation learning about the lives of people with developmental disabilities and about L'Arche in Calgary. L'Arche Calgary applied for a grant from a Government of Alberta "community capacity building" fund to offer an outreach program to junior high schools in the Calgary Catholic School District. All the schools, whether visited or not, received a copy of the video *Belonging: The Search for Acceptance*, the accompanying study guide and the L'Arche Canada CD-ROM. The *Belonging* curriculum material introduces students to the social vision of Jean Vanier, founder of L'Arche. The CD-ROM presents some of the many activities of individuals with developmental disabilities in L'Arche communities across Canada and introduces the idea of volunteering with L'Arche – something these students may consider when they are older.

In one year L'Arche Calgary gave 18 presentations to 700 students. Teachers were supplied with the video and study guide to use in class before the L'Arche team visited. At each presentation a person with a developmental disability and an assistant would share about their life together and take part in a question-and-answer period. Students were then given an opportunity to experience being in a wheelchair and negotiating a set course. What students rated highest in the presentations was the wheelchair experience and learning about the lives of people with disabilities. L'Arche Calgary is applying for funds to expand this program.

For Reflection: What do you suppose enabled the grade nine boy to take the risk of wheeling Mary down the school hallways in front of his peers?

Performing and Visual Arts

You Are Special – A Travelling Dramatic Presentation

“I was looking for something that would deliver the message of L’Arche about changing the world one heart at a time, and our conviction that every person is special, when I came across Max Lucado’s story for young people,” says the former community leader Tammy Bartel, explaining the genesis of L’Arche Arnprior’s travelling drama, *You Are Special*.* “We got permission to adapt it and also to make a video, and we received funding from government sources and a local service club.”

The community has presented *You Are Special* at various locations in the Arnprior and Ottawa area, including the National Awards Dinner for the United Nations International Day of the Disabled Person. At 20 minutes in length, the play can be used very effectively to introduce a discussion on labelling



Wemmicks Anne and Wendy on the “*You Are Special*” set

and views of the “other,” on personal and spiritual identity, or on community-building and human society. It builds self-esteem and offers a different paradigm from which to understand ourselves and others. While the presentation in churches concludes with a Christian song, it could easily be adapted to interfaith settings that assume a Creator.

The play portrays relationships among the Wemmicks, a community of people made of wood, and between them and their maker, a woodworker named Eli. While it explores profound themes, the

play is suffused with a gentle humour. Almost all the action is between pairs of friends (the cast is composed of roughly equal numbers of people with and without developmental disabilities), and although some of the actors have significant disabilities, it is sometimes difficult to know who has a disability and who does not. The role of Eli is played by a person with a developmental disability. The play presents a threefold message: Our primary identity, no matter who we are, is as beloved creations of a benevolent God; each of us has been made in the Creator’s image and been given a heart that can love; and if we regard ourselves and one another in this light, labels fall away.



Visiting Eli. Actors: Matthew Abbott, Greg, Wendy and Janet

Actors wear simple, comfortable costumes, and props and set are readily transportable. Narration is uncomplicated and accented by appropriate music. Marjorie Manion, the community's part-time outreach person who produces and narrates the play, explains that they revise it to accommodate changes in cast and venue, especially where performance space is not accessible. "Some churches have actually asked us to perform as part of their campaign to raise funds for accessibility renovations," she adds. "Staging *You Are Special* is a lot of extra work, and we have to be careful not to overschedule it, but everyone who is in it loves presenting it."

"Rehearsing and presenting the play together has deepened the friendships among the cast," says Tammy. L'Arche Arnprior's videotape of *You Are Special* includes members of the cast discussing their roles. Their comments convey their mutual appreciation and the significance of the play for them. Says Wendy Gozzard, one of the actors with a disability, "I get really emotional when we sing 'You have a heart to change the world.' Everybody has a heart to change the world – at least, we try to." Anne Craig, her acting partner, adds, "I feel I've grown in the role I play, realizing we all have pain." Greg Russell, who plays Eli, and whose wife Janet also acts in the play, comments, "What I like is at the very end: the people always stand up [applauding]." Wendy expresses appreciation for the calming support of Anne just before the play begins, and Anne responds, "That's what community's about – we support one another."

**You Are Special*, copyright 1997 by Max Lucado (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossways Books, Good News Publishers).

A VHS video of their adaptation of You Are Special may be purchased from L'Arche Arnprior.

For Reflection: What might major commercial theatre productions gain by including someone with a developmental disability in their casts?

The Spirit Movers An Inclusive Liturgical Dance Troupe

“**T**his past summer six members of the Spirit Movers came to Boston to participate in our annual summer school. Since many members of L’Arche travel with the help of wheelchairs and move with the help of their assistants, I was wondering how we would approach the integration of a wide variety of movement expressions.

Any apprehension I had about how we would find a common language of movement disappeared



Manfred Breuller

**The troupe: rear, from left to right: Leslie, Bruce, Rebecca, Anna, Tracy, Marg, Michael, Kim, Alia, Kathy, Patrick.
In front: Marisa and Janet**

as I witnessed the loving interaction between Mike and his assistant, Steve, and Rebecca and her dance partner, Anna. In addition to the forward, backward and turning movements of the wheelchairs, these two couples partnered beautifully as their bodies created shape and form together. Neither Mike nor Rebecca are able to communicate with verbal language but they speak volumes with their facial expressions and their limited physical movement range. Over and over again I was humbled to see the ways in which the slightest movement and gesture could express the depth of the emotion living in the depth of these two individuals.” – *Robert Verecke, sj, Director of the Boston Liturgical Dance Ensemble.*

Mike Barrett and Steve Knezevic live in L’Arche Daybreak; Rebecca Beayni lives with her family in Toronto. Anna Mongillo is her friend.

Founded in the 1980s by Marcie Taylor, a L’Arche assistant who had danced professionally, the Spirit Movers dance troupe has become famous for its beautiful, inclusive liturgical dances, in which people with developmental disabilities, some of whom are in wheelchairs, are fully integrated, dancing with partners who facilitate their movement.

Their approach to choreography is unique: Troupe members listen together to potential music and story content in a meditative spirit, experimenting individually or in pairs to find the movements to which the material calls them. They then share these movements with the group, working together to discover how these will meld and emerge to express a powerful message. “Often,” says the Spirit Movers director, Kathy Kelly, “it is a dancer with a developmental disability who comes up with the key movements of a dance.”

An interfaith troupe, they have danced before enormous audiences at teachers’ conventions and World Youth Day, at Police Association dinners and at many churches and smaller venues. They create dances for particular occasions – weddings, for instance. While often they bring alive sacred texts, one of their most intense dances celebrates the story of a friend who was close to death and whose life was saved through a heart transplant; they created it for the 10th anniversary of their friend’s new heart. A steady drumbeat throughout the dance conveys the presence of the heart. The Spirit Movers

are in demand as well to give workshops to high school students. The power of these workshops lies in the students' being partnered with dancers with disabilities. "Wow, this is incredible!" is a common student sentiment.

In its early years, the Spirit Movers depended entirely on volunteers, and it continues to rely on the generosity of the dancers, who often give of their free time to dance at weekend and evening events, but it is also a recognized part-time day program of L'Arche Daybreak. The troupe includes some dancers from L'Arche Toronto and some dancers and volunteers from families in the wider community.



Jessie Steinberg

Patrick: "A middle-aged man" discovers dance

Patrick Brisbois

Patrick Brisbois, with his formal self-presentation, might not seem a likely dancer, but he has found in dance a source of inner liberation. He divides his week between a woodworking job and the Spirit Movers. He explains:

"I can say that Spirit Movers is my enjoyment and I feel an openness to God when I dance. I have been in Spirit Movers for eight years. I joined just in time to dance at the concert we gave with the Bach Consort. We were reviewed in *The Globe and Mail*.

I truly shine out among the stars when I dance. When I am down, I know that God will always send me the innermost beauty to dance. I feel connected at the point of a miracle to the other dancers. This is the story of a middle-aged man who finds dance as a way to communicate with life. I hope that I will be an inspiration to others who see me dance."

Janet Munro

Janet Munro is poised and at ease in front of an audience and has co-hosted major L'Arche events. Janet had a lifelong ambition to be on the stage. She tried piano but didn't experience the success she had hoped for. She sometimes acts in mimes, but it is dance that has most allowed her to use her gifts. Janet writes:

“Marcie invited me to join the Spirit Movers. I listened to my heart and my heart told me that this is the place where I should be. I have enjoyed dancing since I was a little girl. It is challenging for me. Our time together in Spirit Movers is a time of prayer, because we dance our prayer. Our World Youth Day performance was a highlight for me. That was televised all over the world. Many of my family members saw me dance on television. I felt very honoured that my family saw me dance.”

Janet Munro and Patrick Brisbois live in L'Arche Toronto.



Jessie Steinberg

Janet (left) and Rebecca enjoy dancing together

For Reflection: Our society conditions us to idealize beauty in certain forms – in the graceful bodies of lead dancers in the National Ballet, for example. What if we were all “reconditioned” to recognize the joyful smile of a dancer in a wheelchair – perhaps a dancer who has cerebral palsy – as our ideal?

Two painters make an impact

Virginia Fawcett

Virginia Fawcett's bold, bright paintings are in the vein of early American primitive art. Virginia has studied at the Bowen School of Art in Lethbridge for over ten years. The Bowen, which offers integrated classes, includes Virginia's paintings in their shows and facilitates the sale of her work. Recently, some of her work was exhibited at the Lethbridge Public Library. Her colourful paintings were also part of an exhibition at a popular Lethbridge mall. Her simple figures with their expressive faces are pictured close-up, usually in groups engaged in some activity – boating, sharing a meal. When I visited, she was working on a depiction of her household at dinner that she had lightly sketched in pencil on a large stretched canvas. Already the picture conveyed the air of happiness at



Virginia adapted the L'Arche motif of Noah's ark in a painting for her home

the table. "I use acrylics now," Virginia tells me. "Before, I did watercolours." Being recognized as an artist has helped her grow in confidence. "I've come out of my corner!" she says. Her L'Arche Lethbridge community encourages her work, featuring it on its cards and literature. One of Virginia's paintings hangs over the fireplace in the living room of her home. The Community has set up a small studio in one of its homes for Virginia and others who have artistic interests.

Dennis G. Murphy

Dennis G. Murphy paints maritime scenes inspired by the harbour of his hometown, Ingonish-by-the-Sea, a fishing village on the Cape Breton coast, and by pictures of boats in some of his favourite books. He also enjoys painting animals, to which he gives intriguing characters, leading the viewer almost to suspect they might talk! “My mother is also a painter, and she helped me get started,” he explains. Dennis works with oil paints in pen-type markers on heavy artist’s paper of standard size, occasionally applying gold or silver highlighting with striking results.

Acclaimed in local newspapers, his work has been shown at the Cape Breton Artists Association’s “Celebration of the Arts Society” and is exhibited in the Inverness County Centre for the Arts and the Swandaly gallery in North Sydney. Dennis works in a cooperative structure with other artists and artisans in his L’Arche Cape Breton commu-

nity. His work is put into hand-made frames produced in their woodworking atelier. Income from his pictures, which sell well for a set price of \$50, goes into a kitty to purchase art and other supplies for the group. He has recently donated two paintings for fund-raisers for young artists and for L’Arche. Dennis says, “I really like to paint, as I think it is a way I can express myself. It makes me happy to know people want to buy my work.”



Dennis checks boat details carefully as he paints

Of Note: People around Virginia and Dennis recognized and found ways of honouring their gifts.

Ending Life Well

Making an End of Life Plan

“The weather,” was Gwenda’s response when I asked her what they talked about at the Seasons of our Lives meeting. Gwenda has Down syndrome, and I wondered whether she had been able to follow the content of the meeting, which I knew was to be about ageing and dying. But, I also knew she had lost important family members in recent years. Maybe, like many other people, she just didn’t want to talk about death.

– Marni, a friend of Gwenda, in L’Arche Vancouver

Conscious that several of their members with developmental disabilities and some of their older assistants were likely to die in the coming few years, the people of L’Arche Vancouver asked its coordinating team to develop a process to help everyone in the community think about their stage in life and to make an end of life plan that would express their wishes for their care, their estate and their funeral and burial. Here is a description from two of the team members.

We encouraged everyone to choose a friend or family member to talk with in making decisions. We developed a three-stage process, with three large meetings to initiate the stages. The meetings were for all of us in L’Arche, people with disabilities and the longer-term assistants especially, and any family members and friends who wished to join in.

The first meeting, which we called “Seasons of Our Lives,” inaugurated a phase of looking at where each of us is in our particular life journey. We spoke very simply about the life cycle, drawing parallels with the seasons in nature. We spoke about some of our friends or family members who had died, and about the fact that we will all die one day. At the meeting, each person received a one-page

summary of the “Seasons of Our Lives.” Some identified themselves as in the spring or summertime of life, and others were able to recognize that they were in the autumn of old age. Just as important and sometimes more difficult, the process helped some of us come to terms with the fact that our parents were approaching death. The fact that we were all sharing in these conversations together seemed to help those who had difficulty with this topic.

At the second meeting, we introduced the topic of planning for old age and death. We invited a speaker from a funeral home to tell us what happens to people’s bodies when they die and what the options are – a closed or open casket, for instance, whether to be buried or to be cremated and where one might be buried or have one’s ashes placed. The speaker talked simply and sensitively, and people could ask questions. Her presentation seemed not macabre but quite natural. Most of us, disabled or not, realized that we didn’t know much about what happens at death.

Bill Collins, a man with a mild disability who was one of the founders of L’Arche Vancouver, agreed to be the first person actually to make an end of life plan. Bill was suffering from Parkinson’s disease and was conscious that his health was failing quickly. In the ensuing several weeks, we worked with Bill and he helped us figure out the parts of a decision-making package that everyone could be offered.

The third meeting was a celebration of Bill and of the completion of his plan and also the inauguration of end of life planning for the rest of the community. It helped that Bill, who was respected as a leader, had made his plan. He lifted it up proudly and told others that it was a good thing to do. At the end of that meeting everyone received the package we had prepared. At this time, we also encouraged people to join a memorial society, since doing so offers substantial financial savings.

Completion of the plan can take some months as the plan has several phases – preparing a living will, choosing a power of attorney, preparing a last will and testament, deciding on and purchasing a burial site and prearranging the funeral. People often want to indicate their preferences for visitation and the funeral service – listing songs and readings and people they would like to speak.

– *Laurie Duke and Denise Haskett*

Bill Collins

I visited Bill Collins shortly before his 85th birthday. He was becoming quite weak and had moved into a house that his L'Arche Vancouver community had adapted to function as a nursing home for three of its senior residents. Bill took pleasure in showing me his life-story photo album. Some pages elicited stories he would share: "That's Nelson Eddy – our cat. I ran over its tail with the lawn mower. Good that it wasn't a power mower or it would not have had any tail left!" Bill's friend, Craig Herren, an assistant in the Seniors' house, was making a video with Bill using stills from his album along with Bill's reminiscences. I sensed the pleasure and pride they shared in their project.*

Bill died a few months after my visit. I asked one of his community friends, Denise Haskett, to describe his death and how his having made an end of life plan had helped. Here is part of her account:

"Bill died on Palm Sunday, the Sunday before Easter. Some who mourned his passing took comfort that Bill returned to his God on this special day. He had some pain that afternoon and was taken to hospital. He died that evening from sudden onset pneumonia. He had been registered to go in the Sun Run that morning, although it was evident a few days before that he was not up to it. Bill had participated annually in this fund-raiser to support Parkinson's research and other good projects, making the shorter course in his wheelchair in recent years.



Bill tries on reindeer antlers, Christmas 2001

Bill was persuaded to prepare an end of life plan because he understood it would help others when he died. He did not like to talk about his death. He would politely change the subject or imply that someone else was going to die but not him! However, when asked who he would like to give his things to, he lit up and was quite clear. ‘My electric bed could go to Guy, a good friend who has lived many years with me in L’Arche. My wheelchair and walker can be given to whoever needs them. My stereo can go to a drop-in center for street people, whichever one wants it, and my CDs and tapes as well.’ (Bill had a wonderful collection of classical music, which he loved.) He also wanted \$100 to go to his foster child in Zambia. Bill was always looking for ways to help and to give of what he had. This process of naming who would get what seemed to give Bill a lot of joy and peace. He had great clarity about his wishes.

For those planning his funeral, to be able to follow through on the wishes he had expressed in his plan was very helpful and consoling. For example, he wanted an open coffin so his friends could say goodbye to him, and he had named his pallbearers. Following his wishes was a way of really honouring this great and humble man.”

** Part of this story appeared in the United Church Observer September 2002.*

Cecile Aubé

Cecile Aubé, a 75-year-old woman, quietly became a leader in her L’Arche Ottawa community during the months she was dying of cancer. Says her friend and seniors’ club leader Rebecca Happy, “Cecile’s capacity to speak about death matter-of-factly and peacefully pushed the rest of us to grow. She was able to ask us questions that helped us think about death.”

I saw the effects of Cecile’s leadership in one of my friends, also a woman in her seventies, who had recently been told by her doctor that she had a heart condition. My friend had been completely unwilling to acknowledge this news, but when Cecile spoke with such naturalness about her terminal cancer, my friend, for the first time, talked about her condition and acknowledged that she was “a little bit scared.”

Cecile had a friend who had been on a respirator before she died, and she was clear she didn’t

want this sort of intervention. With assistance, she arranged a power of attorney and expressed her wishes for her care. She wanted to remain as active as possible, and with the help of those in her house and the seniors' club, she did so. In the months before she died she was able to contact and visit many of the people she had stayed in touch with over the years.

A few days before she died, Cecile asked for the Catholic prayers and anointing for the sick, inviting a few friends to be with her. Comments Rebecca, "She was a woman of faith, and she always seemed to find joy in just trying to be a good person and to love God and love her neighbour. She must have had pain, but when she complained about pain, it was in much the same way that she might complain if she had stubbed her toe. And she was gracious about receiving personal care from us. She was amazing!

The day Cecile died, some of us from the seniors' club came to have lunch with her in her home. She wasn't feeling like eating and she was very tired, but she sat up with us. She talked about going to heaven. Afterwards, we helped her back to bed, and she passed away that afternoon."

For Reflection: Bill and Cecile made a success of their lives, living with good humour, dignity and generosity until the end. They are remembered for this, not for having disabilities.

Preparing a Life Story

Life review work is recognized by gerontologists as an important aspect of ageing well. It needs to be done sensitively, and only when a person is ready. Some people have painful periods in their past that they do not wish to touch on. This is fine. Preparing a life story book can give an opportunity to review, integrate and savour many past moments. To help a person with a developmental disability prepare his or her life story book can be a great privilege, as enriching for the helper as for the person helped. The book should be a celebration of special relationships, events and milestones in a person's life and should lift up the person's gifts and goodness.

A simple approach to preparing life story books

1. The person with a disability chooses a partner to work with – someone who knows him or her well, and they agree on a regular time to meet.
2. They purchase an attractive acid-free album with moveable pages, so a chronology can be arrived at later. (Acid-free materials will keep pictures from discolouring.)
3. Together, they write a letter to friends and family, asking them to send photos and write letters sharing memories and describing the person's gifts. (Enclose acid-free paper.)
4. They record stories that the person with a disability may be able to tell himself or herself. Together, they interview family members about childhood high points.
5. As letters arrive, they read them aloud, record other memories the letters may evoke, and place them in the book. They mount photos and add captions to augment the letters. Special photo trimming templates can be used and the person whose book it is may add artwork to embellish the pages.
6. They visit old friends and tape their memories. They may visit family graves and sites that were important in the person's past, for instance, a childhood house or neighbourhood, and take photos and record memories.
7. When the book is complete, they plan a celebration with friends and perhaps a blessing of the book. The book becomes an enjoyable resource for further reflection and integration.

When Helen was in a nursing home with dementia, we wanted the caregivers to know what a wonderful person she was and what a rich life she had led. We felt this would increase their respect for her and their sense that they were caring for a real person, even though Helen was mostly unresponsive at that point. Besides making a photo collage for her wall, we placed her life story book in her room so nurses and visitors could look at it with her and learn about her life.

Saying Good-Bye, Remembering, Celebrating, Memorializing

Vignettes from Various L'Arche Communities

- **Robina:** When Robina was hospitalized, she was never alone. We had a roster where friends and community members could sign up to visit. Each person who visited could add a note in the journal we kept by Robina's bed. This journal of Robina's last days is precious to us.
- **Donald:** Donald died at home of Alzheimer disease. I was moved by the way some of his housemates responded. Marie-Claire usually withdrew when we gathered with a guitar to sing. On the day we knew Donald was dying, she stayed with us and asked that we sing for Donald "Country road, take me home to the place where I belong." The day after Donald died, John kept looking into Donald's empty room. John himself has Alzheimer disease. When I inquired whether he wanted to say something, he began to sing "Amazing Grace."
- Alligators were special to Donald. The first Christmas after he died our house received a gift of an alligator tree decoration. Each year when we hang it on the tree we remember Donald, who was much loved by all of us.
- **Helen:** After Helen died we planted a lilac bush, and we all held hands and remembered her and said a prayer. The bush reminds us of Helen, especially in the spring, when it blooms.
- **Roy:** Roy was an exuberant man and he could swear as well as any sailor. At his funeral, we sang his favourite song, "Pop-Eye the Sailor Man," with great gusto and laughter, just as Roy himself used to sing it, except that our laughter was mingled with tears. It felt very right to sing "Pop-Eye." We knew Roy would have loved it!
- **George:** The church was overflowing for George's funeral. A neighbour summed up the reason so many came to say farewell to this gruff, good man: "He never failed to say 'Hello' to me as he walked by."

- **Peter:** We pass around a picture of Peter on the anniversary of his death. Each of us takes a moment with the picture. We may just look at it and remember Peter, or we may speak about him. Doing this gives us peace and builds our sense of togetherness.
- **Larry:** We who had been with Larry when he died visited our L'Arche homes so that Larry's friends could hear the news firsthand and ask questions. At the visitation, we all shared memories of Larry. To tell these stories was deeply meaningful – a part of claiming for ourselves the gifts Larry had given us and integrating his loss. Some were short – “He gave me a kiss!” “He liked apple pie.” But every story represented a special pool of memory. The mix of serious and funny stories enabled us to laugh and to weep together and to arrive at a sense of celebration and gratitude for Larry's life.
- When Mel's father died, his house hosted the shiva. On the anniversary of his father's death, Mel stands up in the synagogue and joins those saying Kaddish for loved ones.
- When someone with a disability loses a family member, we make sure that one of us assistants is available to go with the person to the visitation and funeral. Sometimes others in the family may not want the person with a disability there, but they usually are happy when they realize we will come too. Our accompaniment takes the pressure off them, and it allows the person with a disability to be present for as long or as short a time as he or she wishes.
- Someone arranged that each of the assistants and people with disabilities in Larry's house had a red rose to put in the casket or in a vase beside it. His special friend, Audrey, had a white rose.
- We mark the anniversaries of deaths of our parents or people close to us, lighting a candle, mentioning their names when we have prayer after dinner, perhaps visiting the grave. Almost everybody wants to remember people who have loved them, even if it's hard.
- Our community has a memorial wall with pictures of people in the community who have died. It gives others comfort to know that when they die they will not be forgotten because their pictures will also be on the wall. Each year on November 2nd, which is All Souls' Day in the Christian calendar, we bring pictures of parents and others who have died and we have a service of remembrance.

Thanks to L'Arche Sudbury for several of these vignettes.

Strategies for Using these Practices

With little adaptation, the L'Arche practices illustrated in this publication can be transferred to many other settings. We hope that the *Of Note* or *For Reflection* entries at the ends of the stories have stirred the reader's imagination.

A fabric of attitudes and expectations, a kind of mental and emotional culture, forms the backdrop to all the stories. Any group can choose to weave such attitudes and expectations into their individual and corporate behaviours. What follows are some suggestions for building this attitudinal culture through reflection and some practical actions for strengthening inclusion and the experience of mutuality, and for honouring the valuable contributions that people with developmental disabilities make.

Reflection as an entry point for action

An on-going reciprocal movement between action and reflection enhances the quality of life of any individual and has a similar effect on organizations.

Unleashing creative energy

Groups can structure reflection time into their training and professional development. Try opening meetings with some sharing of positive stories of relationships and brainstorm about the learnings that these stories hold. This can release hopeful energy for creative problem solving and the imagining of new ways to support and honour the contributions of people with developmental disabilities.

Integration and transformation – personal, and then societal

The stories in this little book came to light because people took time to reflect on their lives and relationships. Through reflection, people integrate the experience of inner liberation characteristic of truly mutual and accepting relationships. Stories of personal transformation, such as were told by the university students and others in this book, nourish the moral imagination and can influence the values of our society. They invite people to think outside the socio-economic box of our culture and to recognize some of the less tangible relational contributions that people with developmental

disabilities make and call forth in others – contributions that are often the true measure of happiness and a successful life.

Models and sources of inspiration

It is a good discipline to look for the giftedness of people who have developmental disabilities. When we let go of our usual categories and the productivity-oriented measuring systems so common in our culture, we can be surprised by the abilities that people with disabilities often reveal – their keen sensitivity to interpersonal situations, the depth of their empathy, their willingness to overlook and to forgive, their faithfulness, their acceptance of difference, their originality, their capacity to be present and to cut through pretense, their resilience, the creativity of what they produce, and their gift for celebration. People like David Gray and Maggie Sutherland have made a tremendous success of their lives because they have not hidden their sensitivity and their delight in others and have reached out in freedom to those around them. People like Dennis Murphy, who generously shares his artistic gifts, and Cecile Aubé, who in her last days still gave her gift of friendship, model a “choosing of life” that can inspire many others.

People our society needs

Through reflection members of our society can be encouraged to anticipate and to see the competencies and strengths and the humanizing influence of people with developmental disabilities – to see how much our society benefits from their contributions, rather than being distracted by what may seem lacking. Broad social reflection in many different venues – work and educational settings, cultural and social groups, extended families – will gradually bring about a paradigm shift so that people with disabilities can more and more make their important contributions and have them honoured.

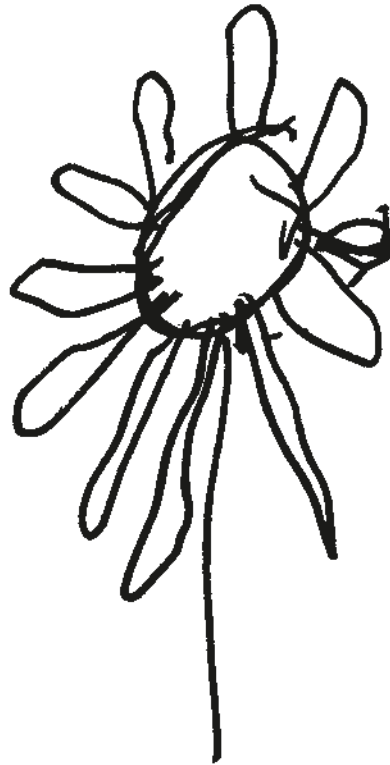
Some practical actions

- Build and sustain networks of friendship. These may include paid caregivers but are primarily gratuitous. The network functions as a small community with the person with a developmental disability at the heart. Potential new friends are welcomed by this group and find support, modelling

and mentoring there. Primarily, these are peers with and without disabilities who share some interests with the person around whom the group has formed and are held together by their common appreciation of that person.

- Encourage caregivers and potential friends to engage in one-on-one activities with people with developmental disabilities as a context for building their relationship. Bear in mind that people with developmental disabilities enjoy doing many of the same things as anyone else.
- Work on inclusive language, because it affects how we and others think and act. We benefit today from language that puts “people first” but, among services for people with disabilities, insensitive hierarchical language persists. Parents, schools, employers and agencies can find language that builds esteem, encourages mutual respect, and brings people together. The object is not to deny differences – to do so feeds into the myth that difference is not good – but to look for ways to express differences that convey equality and a valuing of diversity.
- Support people with developmental disabilities to participate in activities and opportunities in the community around them, not just to be present.
- Support people with developmental disabilities to entertain their friends with and without disabilities in their home and to visit, write, call and generally nurture their friendships. The maintaining of friendships could be included in role descriptions of paid caregivers.
- Look hard for meaningful work or daytime activities. Focus on interests before looking at abilities, and consider ways people can be supported to pursue their interests. Rose-Marie and Daniel, in *The Toy Cleaning Business*, shine because they have jobs that correspond to their particular passions.
- Provide opportunities for giving to others. The experience of being a blessing to people who in some way have less than we do is a fundamental source of human dignity and a basic privilege of citizenship. Giving, in the stories in this book, takes many forms – the presentation of a workshop, care shown for friends, work at a food bank, the spending of time with at-risk youth, the welcome of neighbours.

- Enable one-on-one partnering so that people with developmental disabilities who wish to participate in more complex activities such as dance and drama can do so. Promote the recognition that such partnered participation can bring a new element of surprise and creativity to performances.
- Assist people with developmental disabilities to prepare and share their stories. The presenters in the Calgary schools and Dalton Heard in Ontario have a profound influence on the students they talk to.
- Speak about the potential of people with developmental disabilities to develop faithful relationships of mutuality. Tell stories that reveal the impact of their lives on others.
- Celebrate together. As we recognize we belong to one another in the human family and, indeed, need one another, joy flows.



APPENDIX I

An extract from “Key Elements of a L’Arche Community”

The following extract is from an internal L’Arche Canada document, part of an evaluation tool for L’Arche Communities, developed from the L’Arche Charter and extracting principles and practices from it.

The Value of Persons with a Developmental Disability (“core members”)

“The aim of L’Arche is to create communities which welcome people with a developmental disability, to reveal the particular gifts of people and give them a valid place in society. The people with a developmental disability are at the heart of a L’Arche community.” *The L’Arche Charter*

Principles

- The life of core members has value, dignity and integrity.
- Core members have gifts which the community seeks and actively finds ways to reveal.
- Core members actively participate in all aspects in the life of a L’Arche community.
- The community wants to secure for its member’s education, work and therapeutic activities which will be a source of dignity, growth and fulfillment for them.

Practices

- Core members have stable, on-going, valued relationships within the community and outside of it.
- There are clear means of communication for core members to express their dreams, desires, needs and choices.
- Each core member has a program of growth, which is reviewed annually.
- Core members participate in decisions concerning them.
- Each core member has meaningful work or daytime activity.
- Outside professionals work with the community to support the growth of core members.
- Core members have opportunities to participate in and contribute to their local neighbourhood and local community life.

A Note on L'Arche Best Practices and Social Inclusion

The stories in this book are all, in a way, success stories of social inclusion. They are about people with developmental disabilities participating in and bringing their gifts to others in the wider society. But most of the stories are about more than this: They are also stories of how people in the non-disabled community came to esteem the contribution that people with disabilities make to their lives, and to value their relationships with these people. In other words, these stories are about the discovery of mutuality. L'Arche believes that social inclusion happens where mutuality is discovered.

Social inclusion has been the admirable but often elusive goal of people with developmental disabilities, their families and progressive thinkers and practitioners in the disability field for more than 30 years. The concept of social inclusion went under different rubrics in earlier years – school integration, normalization, independent living – but always the goal has been a rich and varied life in the wider society for the person with a disability. L'Arche stands in admiration of the groundbreaking work done in many areas by research and advocacy organizations and other services for people with developmental disabilities. Person-centered planning, the option of individualized funding and other structures have been put in place to help towards this goal. Yet, as the pioneer teacher and activist John McKnight recently observed, most people with developmental disabilities are still excluded and lead lonely lives, whether living independently or more or less segregated in group homes or, sometimes still, in institutions (Comments at “Northern Roots: Nurturing Inclusive Communities” Conference, Huntsville, Ontario, April 20, 2004).

“Social inclusion” is in vogue today, and the concept it embodies has been broadened to encompass all who are marginalized. It is being adopted as a major policy thrust in the European Union, and in Canada we see projects such as the Inclusion Lens in the Atlantic Provinces and Manitoba. At the same time, the concept of social inclusion is being defined according to local understandings of marginalization and local differences in its manifestations – in one area, poverty; in another, health,

and so forth. L'Arche believes it is vital to highlight the importance of rich interpersonal relationships of mutuality in broader social inclusion policy frameworks, and we hope that this collection of stories reflecting L'Arche's best practices will contribute to this development. Why is this important? Almost all people with developmental disabilities indicate that having a network of friends, such as anyone else would expect to have, is of the highest importance to them.

What mitigates against social inclusion? An extensive 2003 Roeher study identified the two major barriers to social inclusion as *poverty* and *isolation* (Cushing, "Policy Approaches"). When asked, people with disabilities often cite the reluctance of caregivers to inconvenience themselves, as a major impediment to social inclusion. Clearly, structures can impede the development of friendships. In another study, people with developmental disabilities were asked what constitutes abuse (Crawford, *Harm's Way*, 1995). They identified abuse not in the usual categories but more in terms of what others might call "benign neglect" or simply "budget and staff scheduling realities" – the kinds of realities that tend to foster isolation from valorizing relationships in the wider community because, for instance, clients are put to bed early so that staff can leave. Not being able to participate in evening activities can certainly limit one's opportunities to develop friendships in the wider community!

Another study identified the two essentials to overcoming isolation and enabling social inclusion as *access* to opportunities for relationship, work and recreation, and to opportunities to contribute as citizens in the wider society, and *support* to engage meaningfully in this society. (Crawford, 2003) If agencies focus too much on access – the placement of people in jobs or recreational programs in the wider society, for instance – and not enough on relational support, they do not achieve social inclusion. For people with developmental disabilities simply to be present is not enough. They need support to participate and be included (Crawford, 2003). To this observation, L'Arche would add that the *kind* of relational support, its tone and message, is also important.

While the role and responsibility of caregiver is always primary for L'Arche assistants, L'Arche eschews the "staff-client" model in favour of a community model of shared life. In doing so, L'Arche challenges some of the boundaries between caregiver and friend. In general, people who become friends tend to invite one another into their lives and activities, and thus, for the person with a dis-

ability, “access” occurs almost incidentally. The assistant friend is likely to provide the needed support quite naturally or solicit aid from his or her other friends, often thereby opening the door for further friendships to develop. At the same time, the attitude of welcome in the home or day setting invites a blending of relationships among people from the wider society, caregivers and people with disabilities.

As Pamela Cushing notes, “There is some disagreement on whether it is desirable or ethical to promote mutuality between people who are different and unequal,” and L’Arche is aware of this. (“Negotiating Mutuality,” 2003) The professional distance expected in “client-staff” relationships is, as David Hingsberger emphasizes, to protect both individuals in situations of uneven power distribution (“Life, Death, and Disability,” 2001). However, as Cushing observes, while clients’ freedom does need to be protected, for people with developmental disabilities who already suffer from a paucity of informal social contact, it seems illogical to prohibit friendships with caregivers. This is especially so for those who have complex and multiple support needs and who therefore spend most of their waking hours with caregivers. More important, it would seem, is to ensure that necessary training and safeguards are in place and that mutuality is negotiated with an awareness of the differing power dynamics (Cushing, “Negotiating Mutuality”).

Governments have traditionally funded readily quantifiable services and programs, and this custom has encouraged a somewhat bureaucratic model of service delivery. A government policy shift toward endorsing the goal of mutuality in relationships and finding ways to assess this may be under way. In 2004, L’Arche Lethbridge successfully stated in their funding request that the service being purchased by the Government of Alberta was not only its demonstrated capacity to meet all provincial standards but also “its capacity to facilitate relationships of mutuality.” At the same time, the Alberta government revised its 2001 standard in the area of Relationships to put greater emphasis on the quality of relationships. For instance, to its indicators for measuring the quality of life of the individual with a disability, it added: “The individual has reciprocal relationships in which each person feels he gets something meaningful from his relationship with the other person.” And to the indicators for quality of care: “Staff take concrete and appropriate steps to support the development of relationships that are of the individual’s choosing.” It also added the following paragraph to the quality

of life standard: “Paid staff play a significant and important role in the lives of many individuals. However, unless these relationships transform into a freely given connection beyond paid staff time, they cannot be considered true friendships.” (The Certification Standards of The Alberta Association of Rehabilitation Centres: Creating Excellence Together, August 2003, pp. L7, S7, L6). This is an observation, not a directive, and while one certainly hopes it would not be used to pressure typically not-well-remunerated staff to put in longer hours gratuitously, it is significant because of its recognition of the possibility of staff having genuine friendships with clients.

Relationship-building requires effort and some financial resources. Mutuality in relationships can be hampered by the inability to pay one’s way. Besides funding that addresses the three areas of (1) support, (2) income and (3) employment, identified in the *In Unison* inter-governmental document of 2000, this fourth area, relationships, needs to be recognized for funding (Styan, 2004).

The Laidlaw Foundation explored the meaning of social inclusion across marginalized groups. The five “Cornerstones of Social Inclusion” which emerged are benchmarks today. The Laidlaw Foundations cornerstones, below, are all embodied in the L’Arche practices in this book.

1. Valued recognition – includes recognizing differences...and therefore not equating disability with pathology...
2. Human development – nurturing the talents, skills, capacities and choices of children and adults to live a life they value and to make a contribution both they and others find worthwhile...
3. Involvement and engagement – having the right and the necessary support to make/be involved in decisions affecting oneself, family and community, and to be engaged in community life...
4. Proximity – sharing physical and social spaces to provide opportunities for interactions, if desired, and to reduce social distances between people...
5. Material well-being – having the material resources...to participate fully in community life...includes being safely and securely housed and having an adequate income.

These five points are reflected in the University of Toronto Quality of Life Research Unit markers – Being, Belonging and Becoming. (A conversation with Pamela Cushing.)

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“Celebrating Life: Preparing for Our Final Journey” is the title of a workshop that people with developmental disabilities and assistants of L'Arche Ottawa offer in collaboration with local churches and professionals.

L'Arche Communities in Canada

Atlantic Canada

L'ARCHE ANTIGONISH

4 West Street
Antigonish, NS B2G 1R8

L'ARCHE CAPE BRETON

3 L'Arche Lane
Whycocomagh, NS BOE 3MO

NEW DAWN COMMUNITY

54 Old Black River Road
Saint John, NB E2S 2Z2

L'ARCHE WOLFVILLE

10 Gaspereau Avenue
Wolfville, NS B4P 2C2

***HALIFAX PROJECT:**

CANA COMMUNITY

7596 St Margaret's Bay Road
Ingramport, NS B3Z 4A4

***SAINT JOHN PROJECT:**

NEW DAWN COMMUNITY

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Saint John, NB E2S 2Z2

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Gatineau, QC J8Y 3M4

L'ARCHE D'AMOS

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C.P. 33
Amos, QC J9T 3V5

L'ARCHE BELOEIL

221, Bernard Pilon
Beloil, QC J3G 1V2

L'ARCHE JOLIETTE

879 rue St-Louis
Joliette, QC J6E 3A3

L'ARCHE L'ÉTOILE

617 Christophe Colomb Ouest
Québec, QC G1N 2K5

L'ARCHE LE PRINTEMPS

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L'ARCHE MAURICIE

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L'ARCHE MONTRÉAL

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Ontario

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Arnprior, ON K7S 3W4

L'ARCHE DAYBREAK

11339 Yonge Street
Richmond Hill, ON L4S 1L1

L'ARCHE TORONTO

186 Floyd Avenue
Toronto, ON M4J 2J1

L'ARCHE HAMILTON

862 Main Street East
Hamilton, ON L8M 1L9

Ontario (continued)

L'ARCHE LONDON

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L'ARCHE NORTH BAY

233-101 Worthington Street E.
North Bay, ON P1B 1G5

L'ARCHE OTTAWA

11 Rossland Avenue
Ottawa, ON K2G 2K2

L'ARCHE STRATFORD

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L'ARCHE SUDBURY

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Western Canada

L'ARCHE WINNIPEG

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L'ARCHE EDMONTON

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Edmonton, AB T6C 2Y8

L'ARCHE LETHBRIDGE

430 Chancery Court
220 – 4th Street South
Lethbridge, AB T1J 4J7

L'ARCHE COMOX VALLEY

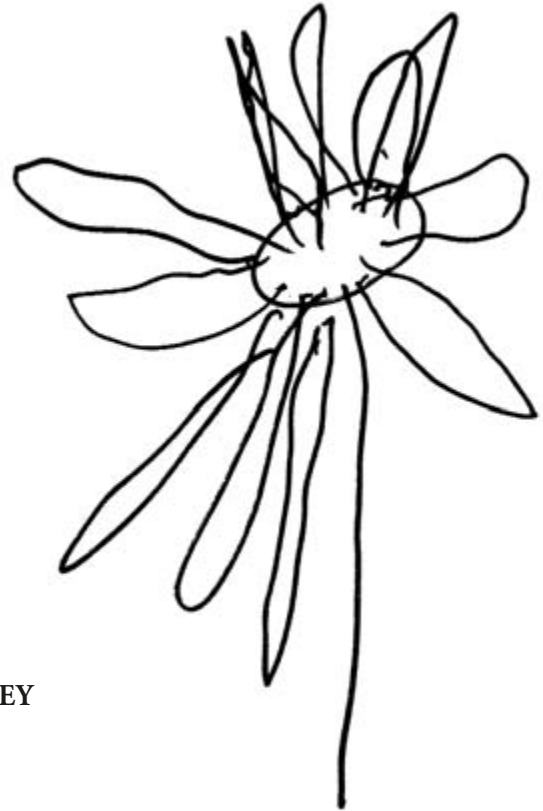
534 – 19 Street
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* L'Arche communities in the process of being established.