

GRATITUDE



50 years & BEYOND

The L'Arche Winnipeg Newsletter February 2025 Issue 95



Photos from our 20th Annual Walk with L'Arche



Juliette & Patsy at last year's walk

Join the Journey: Step up to celebrate inclusion at our annual fundraising walk!



Erin Sawatzky
Community Events

Several years ago, L'Arche Winnipeg Core Member Stacey pulled me aside at a L'Arche Night to tell me how excited she was for our upcoming fundraising walk. Most importantly, she wanted to let me know: "My parents are coming!!". Throughout the years, I've gotten to see Stacey's parents many times at our Walk with L'Arche events- and put faces to the names of many other family and friends I hear of regularly from our community members.

In our daily life at L'Arche, I appreciate the small, intimate feel of our community. I love that I'm surrounded by familiar faces at our regular gatherings; that core members and assistants know and care about what's going on in my life, and that I've developed deep relationships in the community over the years. However, I think what makes the walk so special is that we get to throw our doors open wide and welcome so many others into our community.

"I like that it's an event you can invite people to- bring friends in,"



Stacey & her parents at the 2015 Walk

shared Grace Slivinski. "I went when my sister was working for L'Arche, and got to see what L'Arche was because of the walk." It was this connection that initially drew her into living in the community, eventually leading her to her current position coordinating our Community Circle program. Russell Thiessen - who has attended since the first Walk with L'Arche event in 2005 - agreed, sharing how much he loves that his friends show up to walk with him every year.

"It's fun when it's all of us walking together- the interactions, the kinds of stories you share," explained William, a House Reference Person with L'Arche who enjoyed his first Walk with L'Arche event last year. "You get to meet new people. We have an identity as we walk- there's L'Arche t-shirts, L'Arche signs - the community recognizes that L'Arche is in the neighborhood."

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Follow L'Arche Winnipeg and L'Arche Tova Café on Facebook and Instagram for more!

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Our 21st Annual Vickar Automotive Group Walk with L'Arche event will be held on **Sunday May 4th at a new venue: Park City West Community Centre** (115 Sanford Fleming Road). Though the route for the walk will still follow the Transcona Trail, the venue change aims to increase accessibility and accommodate the changing needs of our community members.

Registration opens at 2pm, with the walk kicking off at 3pm. Our reception from 4-6pm includes a BBQ dinner, live music, prizes, a special community performance, and more. **Registration costs \$15 for adults and \$10 for kids.** Anyone is welcome to register at the event, but early registration is encouraged- [sign up](#) **before April 4, 2025 with a minimum of \$100 raised, and receive a free Walk with L'Arche t-shirt!**



Russell & friends at the 2023 Walk

We look forward to falling into step together, and hope you join us in the journey this spring!

Finding Friendship at Community Circle

By Carl DeGurse

I was attracted to L'Arche by its reputation as a unique community that welcomes the wounded and strives for equality and respect, which is radically different from the way most people live.

In his book *Enough Room For Joy: The Early Days of L'Arche*, Jesuit priest Bill Clarke put it like this: "L'Arche is calling to liberate people caught in, or victims of, a world of excessive individualism and competition." He made it sound like some sort of revolution. In fall 2023, I went to the L'Arche office to apply as a house volunteer. After a screening process that included an interview and background checks with police, I was matched with Roger, a Core Member of Ark House.

It's an understatement to describe my L'Arche buddy as outgoing. When you look up the definition of the word "gregarious" in a dictionary, it should include a picture of Roger.



Carl & Roger at the Assiniboine Park Zoo

We hang out every second Tuesday for a few hours, going for coffee or to the mall, public places that give Roger opportunity to exercise his gift of making friends by approaching strangers with a big grin. He's also been to dinner at my home, and I attended his birthday party at his L'Arche home, a humdinger of a shindig attended by about 25 people. We've been on L'Arche outings to the zoo, the Canadian Museum for Human Rights and the Christmas Nativity. Sometimes we just drive around Transcona, listening to a CD of rock band "Def Leppard" that Roger gave me because, in his opinion, the music in my car needed an upgrade.

I was introduced to the larger L'Arche community when Roger

invited me as his guest to Community Circle, a program held three times each week for L'Arche members who don't attend a Day Program. Core members, staff and volunteers gather to share lunch and a four-hour agenda of social activities planned by event maestro Grace Slivinski, who has a remarkable flair for getting everyone involved regardless of their accessibility needs or their disposition on that particular day.



Roger, Carl & Eric at Community Circle

Activities include arts and crafts, movies, games such as Bingo where participants cheer for each other and we keep playing until everyone wins ("There are no losers in L'Arche," Grace tells me). There are also karaoke and dance parties where participants

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embody the joy of music, some of them with an enviable lack of inhibition.



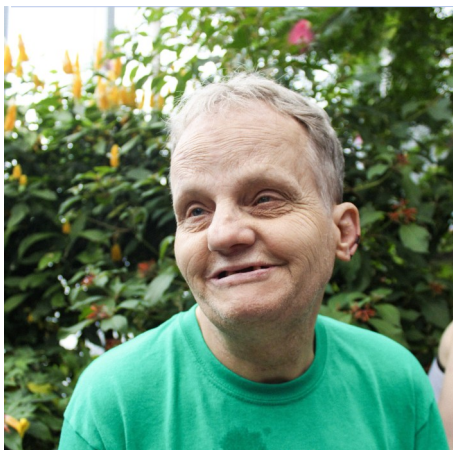
Painting at Community Circle

It's the Community Circle gatherings that most exhibit the L'Arche ideal of a respectful and welcoming community for all. Core members connect with each other according to their individual personalities and capacities. The degree of social adeptness ranges

from Roger—he works the room like an ambassador in charge of hospitality—to core members who use wheelchairs and have difficulty speaking words but, with their eyes and smiles, declare their appreciation of inclusion in the group.

A measure of the tightly-knit relationships was evident at Community Circle in January on the one-year anniversary of the death of a core member. Julie Rempel, Spiritual Life Coordinator, led a sharing session where members offered memories of their deceased friend. Some core members wept.

Apparently, belonging in L'Arche means you're always valued and loved. Even after you're gone.



The Narrative of Jay's Life



Jubilee Dueck
Thiessen

Communications & Fund
Development Coordinator

On November 9, 2024, the L'Arche Winnipeg community said goodbye to a very special core member, Jay LeBlanc. After moving between the St. Amant Centre, a foster placement, a

group home, and a boarding house, Jay moved to the L'Arche home on Foster St. on November 1st, 1983 and passed away only 8 days after his 41st anniversary at L'Arche.

After the closure of the Foster St. home in 1995, Jay moved one last time into The Anchor House in Norwood. He enjoyed helping out with yard work by mowing the lawn, gardening, and shovelling snow, and he helped out around the house by washing dishes, vacuuming, and baking cookies. Assistants remember how Jay could turn chores into a game by tossing his giant teddy bear at the Assistant while cleaning his room, his authentic and joyful giggle causing laughter to break out.

At Jay's funeral at Blessed Sacrament Parish, Father Gerry Sembrano reflected on the

INCLUSION PAINT NIGHT

In support of Community Circle

JOIN US FOR A NIGHT OF ARTISTIC
CREATIVITY, REFRESHMENTS, &
GOOD COMPANY!

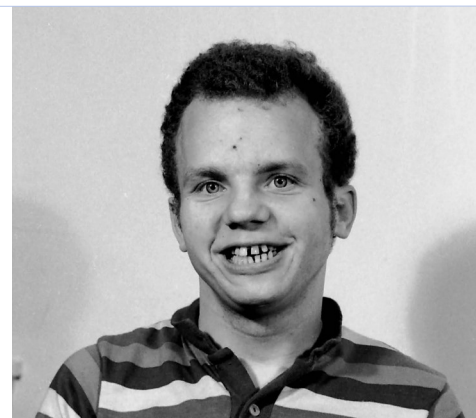
\$30

THURSDAY
APRIL 3, 2025
6:30 PM - 9 PM

L'ARCHE TOVA CAFE
119 REGENT AVE W

VISIT OUR OFFICE
OR OUR WEBSITE
FOR TICKETS

Want to volunteer at Community Circle or in one of our homes? Email Volunteer Coordinator Maureen for more information: volunteer@larchewinnipeg.org



Jay at L'Arche in 1985

narrative of Jay's life, reminding us that Jay's story doesn't end with his death. While Jay may have reached the end of his narrative journey, his story lives on in us – because our lives crossed paths with his, his story becomes part of our story. We might imagine ourselves as the stewards of Jay's story, keeping the narrative alive as we remember and re-tell the stories

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Continuing from page 3 — about Jay's impact on our lives.

Jay's time in our L'Arche community was a significant chapter of his life, during which he shaped our communal and personal stories as a teacher, housemate, and friend. We remember Jay as a joyful person who shared his love through hugs and special attention for those he cared about. Jay taught us how to communicate in new ways, strengthening our appreciation of non-verbal expressiveness through

body language, facial expressions, and touch.

By spending time with him, we learned to take delight in the ordinary - to find fun in everyday activities and to take pleasure in sharing a slow cup of coffee with friends. As we adjust to life without Jay, we take comfort in imagining ourselves as stewards of Jay's story and we treasure the welcoming presence, playful sense of humour, and emotional sensitivity that Jay wove into the story of our L'Arche community.



May we strive to be like Jay, weaving hospitality, playfulness, and sensitivity into each other's stories.

ANCHOR ELPIDA WINNIPEG ANCHOR ELPIDA WINNIPEG ANCHOR ELPIDA WINNIPEG ANCHOR ELPIDA WINNIPEG ANCHOR ELPIDA WINNIPEG

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

L'Arche Winnipeg's Upcoming Events

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MARCH

- March 20: Solidarity Music Night

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APRIL

- April 3: Inclusion Paint Night

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MAY

- May 4: 21st Annual Walk with L'Arche

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JUNE

- June 11: Volunteer Appreciation BBQ
- June 23: AGM

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JULY

- July 31: Solidarity Music Night

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AUGUST

- August 7-23: L'Arche Art Exhibit

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SEPTEMBER

- Solidarity Pancake Breakfast

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SOLIDARITY MUSIC NIGHT

WITH CARA LUFT

JOIN US FOR A NIGHT OF MUSIC, REFRESHMENTS, AND GOOD COMPANY!

\$25

MARCH 20, 2025
7PM-9PM

L'ARCHE TOVA CAFE
119 REGENT AVE W

VISIT OUR OFFICE OR OUR WEBSITE FOR TICKETS

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