

THE WORD

From Winnipeg



L'Arche
Winnipeg
Newsletter #39

Building on Success: Our 2nd Annual Park Pontiac's Walk with L'Arche on May 7th

by Hubert Pantel

Kern Park in Transcona may be presently covered with snow, but we at L'Arche Winnipeg are already thinking green grass and sunshine as we plan our second annual Park Pontiac's Walk with L'Arche for Sunday May 7th 2006.

Our first walk was a real success, with nearly 300 participants and \$25,000 raised towards the purchase of a wheelchair accessible van. And the party afterwards was great fun too: live music, food, and lots of prizes! So we hope many of you are ready to join us for an even better 2nd edition of the walk. You can already start collecting pledges by using the pledge form in the enclosed brochure. Proceeds will again go into a fund for the purchase of a wheelchair accessible van. More detailed information on the walk can be obtained from our Office or on our website.

Register

Registration is step one. If you are collecting pledges, you need to be **registered as a walker** with the L'Arche Winnipeg Office: registration fee is \$10 for adults, or \$5 for seniors, students, and those on fixed incomes. Register by mail, in person at our Office, or online at runningroom.com (an online processing fee is added; online registration ends on April 30th). All those who register before **April 7th** will be eligible for a draw for one night stay at Canad Inns in Transcona.

Teams

New this year is the possibility of



Walkers at the 2005 event.

creating a **Team** of walkers. A team must have a minimum of 5 walkers. Create a team with family members, neighbors, friends, co-workers ...choose a Team Captain, a Team Name, and fill out both the Individual and Team registrations. On the day of the walk, a trophy will be presented to the team that has raised the most money. A team can also have their team name on their walk T-Shirt **if** they submit their registration **and** a minimum of \$50 of pledges per team member by April 7th. A detailed **Team Captain's Kit**

is available from our Office (or website).

T-Shirts

Walkers who raise a minimum of \$50 will receive a walk T-Shirt. If you plan to raise a minimum of \$50, please indicate your T-Shirt size on the registration form.

Prizes

Prizes will be awarded to the 1st and 2nd top individual fundraisers with the first place winner receiving a package valued at over \$800. A trophy will go to the top fundraising team with a special prize to their team captain. All walkers can earn prizes according to the pledges they raised. To qualify for prizes, all pledge money has to be turned in before 1:45 p.m. on May 7th.

Pledge Drop Off

Pledges can be dropped off at the L'Arche Office (118 Regent Ave. East in Transcona) Monday to Friday from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. In order to shorten check-in time on May 7th, we would ask those who can bring in their pledges to the Office prior to the event to please do so. People giving \$15 or more in pledges will automatically receive an income tax receipt. Please make sure that name and complete address (including postal code) of each donor is clearly printed on your pledge form.

Volunteers

An event of this magnitude would not

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For more information on L'Arche, visit the L'Arche Winnipeg Web site at:
www.larchewinnipeg.org

Another piece to the puzzle

by Chris Koebel

There are so many unsung heroes at L'Arche, its hard to pick just one. One of these heroes is Valerie Wolbert.

Val has been with L'Arche for almost two years, where she is an endless resource for the office. Whenever there is something that needs to get done, we know that we can count on Val. Val heard about L'Arche through her husband, Harry, who was a respite worker for L'Arche. Val originally got involved during L'Arche's 30th anniversary celebrations in 2003. After the event Tammy Sutherland, L'Arche Volunteer Coordinator, approached Val about becoming a volunteer. In Val's time with L'Arche she has done a plethora of activities such as helping out with a silent auction, the distribution of newsletters, and various clerical tasks in the office and from Val's home. Val was also one of the founding members of the committee, which planned and started the first annual Park Pontiac's Walk With L'Arche. Val helped out wherever she could, with the telephone marketing, soliciting of prizes and even recruiting a friend as a volunteer clown. Val says that she enjoys helping in all areas at L'Arche. It is her commitment to help others that makes her such a great asset here at L'Arche. She has such a wonderful and caring spirit; she gives of her time freely and is always excited to meet new people.

In volunteering for L'Arche, Val feels that she really has grown as a person. Val says she has a better understanding of things and feels she is a better listener because of all her involvement at L'Arche. Val has also learned the importance of teamwork and that she can be a reliable team player. Val feels that the highlight of her volunteer activities at L'Arche has been her



Val (right) helping prepare balloons for the first Walk with L'Arche.

involvement with the walk. "I was amazed at the amount raised for the walk." She remembers vividly how her body shook with excitement when she heard that she had been part of raising over \$25,000. A person such as Val is vital to any organization, especially one as dependant on their volunteers as L'Arche. The role of the volunteers is an essential one for L'Arche to function day to day. Val's involvement with L'Arche is that of the unsung, but irreplaceable family member. Val enables the staff to have a dependable person to rely on in the busy times, so that all the work can get done on time. Just like a body, where no one part can survive on its own, at L'Arche everyone is inter-dependant on each other. None of the pieces are able to make it without the other. Val and the other volunteers complete the unique package that is L'Arche, allowing it to run like a smooth locomotive.

Walk with L'Arche...

(Continued from page 1)

be possible without the help of many volunteers. If you would like to help in some way – prior to or on the day of the event - please contact our Volunteer Coordinator Lani Thiessen at 237-0300, ext. 8 (lthiessen@larchewinnipeg.org). There will also be a special prize draw for a volunteer.

Sponsors

This event could not be a success without the support of its sponsors! Our event sponsors provide funds, services and products, and last year prize sponsors contributed over 120 prize giveaways. They reduce and defray costs and also add to the excitement of the event. We would like to recognize and thank the Catholic Foundation of Manitoba, the DeFehr Foundation, Running Room and especially our long-term event sponsors: Knights of Columbus, Olympic Building Supplies, Park Pontiac Buick GMC Ltd., Presto Pizza, Vickar Community Chevrolet and Wyatt Insurance & Financial Services, whose support is vital to this event's success. If you are interested in becoming a sponsor, please check out our sponsorship proposal or video on line at www.larchewinnipeg.org or contact Terry Wiebe: 237-0300 ext 1 (terrywiebe@larchewinnipeg.org)

Check-in on May 7th

Check-in time at Kern Park on Sunday May 7th is between 12:30 and 1:45 p.m.: submit final pledges, pick-up T-Shirts and numbered walk bibs (you will need these to get free food & drinks after the walk). The walk starts at 2:00 p.m. sharp! In case of poor weather, check-in will be at Assumption Parish Hall, 711 Leola Street.

Party Time!

Immediately after the walk and until 5:00 p.m.: free food and live stage entertainment, prize giveaways, gift presentation to two top fundraisers and trophy to top team fundraiser.

Reflections From The Community Leader

by Dennis Butcher
Community Leader

At the end of May four from Out Community will be attending the Zone General Assembly meeting at the mid-point in its present six year Mandate. Three years ago the previous Assembly had approved an ambitious set of goals to bring L'Arche into the 21st century. A task force worked with the Zone Coordinators, Zoel Breau and Hollee Card, in developing a strategic plan and the newly formed L'Arche Canada Foundation under Nathan Ball was fortunate to get 1.5 million dollars from the McConnell Foundation over the next six year Mandate for L'Arche Canada to develop organizationally and to increase its national profile. As a result of the increased funding, many of the hopes and dreams of the Mandate have moved forward at a pace which has been hard for many of us at the Community level to keep up with.

I will attempt to summarize some of the major developments of the past two years and eight months. The Zone structure and staff have increased significantly. Peggy Kerney, a former Community Leader and Regional Coordinator, working as the Human Resources Coordinator, has been working on a diploma program in care through St. Francis Xavier University, on a new direction for the Leadership Development Program, on a national RRSP program and tentatively on a national salary grid and policy. Jane Powell from the Ontario Region has been engaged as a Project Coordinator for Special Care for Aging and Dying Members, an area which is taking on an increased importance and urgency for most Communities but which may be terminated shortly due to

funding shortage. A new Cultural Engagement Team is attempting to share the vision and values of L'Arche with an ever growing sector of the Canadian population. Jean Louis Munn, a member of the Team, has developed a much improved website for internal and external communications at www.larchecanada.org.

The work of Beth Porter has resulted in the book in both French and English, More Than Inclusion which includes stories from most Communities showing the gifts and contributions of members with a developmental disability in their communities.

A high school curriculum entitled "Belonging", based on a video of the same name, has been used extensively in Ontario and Alberta. A high quality L'Arche thought sheet, "A Human Future", continues to contribute to the public conversation about values in the contemporary Canadian scene. On Tuesday January 31st, the first L'Arche Forum, a conversation between Jean Vanier and Balfour Mount, the founder of the hospice movement in Canada, on the theme "Journey to Personal and Spiritual Transformation", was broadcast from the Parliament Buildings as a live simulcast to 20 public gatherings across Canada.

Another new initiative, "Communities of Belonging", under the direction of Joe Vorstermans, is running pilot projects across Canada to share L'Arche values with other care providers.

A final draft of the L'Arche Canada Membership Document with many appendices containing the evaluations for the various levels of membership has been distributed for feedback from our communities in preparation for adoption at the May Zone Assembly. As well, during February, all communities are being asked to undertake a discernment process, "Creating our Future", similar to that used by all Communities internationally for the recent Identity and Mission statement. At the mid-point in the present Zone mandate, long term assistants and Board members will have the opportunity for input. With all the changes, the Zone Coordinators are gathering with long term assistants at the end of February in Hamilton to reflect on living L'Arche well in this time of transition.

It is an exciting time as L'Arche evolves and engages with Canadians at many levels, but we need to continue to remember that our primary purpose continues to be to provide homes where members with a developmental disability live and share life together with those who assist them.

L'Arche Lenten Journey

You are invited to attend evenings of reflection and sharing based on the talks and writings of Jean Vanier and Henri Nouwen, Wednesdays during the Lenten period.

Wednesday evenings, from March 8th to April 5th

7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

L'Arche Winnipeg Office
118 Regent Ave. East, Transcona

Information: Shirley Nolan - 255-1862

A letter from Jean Vanier

Excerpts from a recent letter by Jean Vanier sent to the L'Arche communities.

Many events in past years have made people live in fear. We all risk closing up in our religious, cultural and national certitudes and securities. Walls are being built and reinforced between groups, races and religions. At the same time, however, more and more men and women are rising up against the danger of these closures. Many are taking the risk of opening their hearts to the marginalized, to those in pain and those who are different. They are rooted in their faith and live in communion with the God of goodness, tenderness, forgiveness and compassion, a humble and vulnerable God, close to the excluded for God himself is the most excluded One in our world today. Brother Roger Schutz of Taizé was one of these gentle, humble men. Did he have to die by shedding his blood like Jesus? His life and that of his brothers in Taizé have given so much hope to millions of young people throughout the world ever since the foundation of the Community in 1940. Thank you, Brother Roger, for the gift of your life.

Our societies tend to forget the importance of being with people in pain, accompanying them in all their fragility. They want immediate healing or simply the elimination of the weak; they seek rapid solutions and quick easy integration: curing instead of caring. L'Arche, Faith and Light, Palliative Care, the Little Brothers and Sisters of Jesus, Sant'Egidio and many others know the importance of "being with", "walking with" people who are fragile as with brothers and sisters. We need of course to do all we can to relieve suffering, with the help of technology, but healing of the heart comes from presence and friendship. Some of the greatest suffering comes when people feel

they are treated like objects not persons.

Different events I lived during these last few months have given me much hope. In August, the World Youth days in Cologne: the thirst for God in the hearts of so many young people, yearning to know the Gospel better. Then all the young people in Taizé for Brother Roger's funeral: in spite of the tragic way he died, they desire to follow in his footsteps to work towards unity and reconciliation. I remain deeply touched by the Brothers of Taizé. I had the privilege of being with them for the funeral and again a few weeks later. I am deeply touched by the Brothers. Their way of opening the hearts of the young to God and to the weak and the poor is a light for all of us. Then there was the retreat in Slovenia organized by L'Arche and Faith and Light and another in St Petersburg (Russia). These retreats were a source of life and a real nourishment for those wanting to deepen their commitment with the weak. And I met a group that has a great desire to found a L'Arche community in Siberia... it will take time!

In July, I was invited to Jordan by an organization called "Questscope" to meet young Muslims in difficulty, some in prison or in specialized centers, and the psychologists and educators who accompany them. We worked together to find an anthropology adapted to these young people. In order to grow, to get out of their situation, they need to find someone who will accompany them, as a friend; someone who can listen to them without judging and who can see the beauty in them; someone who, with others, will create a network of friendship, a community. They need also to discover their own inner space for God. In September, the community of Sant'Egidio organized a big interreligious meeting in Lyon. I participated in a Round Table

discussion with a Muslim philosopher and a Jewish Rabbi on "An anthropology for the 21st Century". Very interesting! The vision of the human being evolves, is transformed and deepens throughout the centuries. The closing ceremony, with the kiss of peace between Rabbis, Imams, Muslim theologians and leaders of Christian churches - and the whole meeting itself - was a real witness to unity and peace.

In order to continue to live day after day with people in difficulty, we need to be part of a community founded on faith, a community that is open, welcoming and helping each one of us to grow and become more free of our fears, our prejudices and our compulsions; thus helping us to become more loving, more human; a community that is a place of forgiveness and celebration. One of the founding texts of L'Arche is the blessing of Jesus: *When you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame and the blind... and you will be blessed* (cf Luke 14: 12). To share our meals with those who have been marginalized is a sign of our desire to enter into relationship with them, a relationship which transforms us; it is to take our place in order to reduce the gap between the have and have-nots, the powerful and the powerless.

Yes, it is truly a blessing as Jesus says to sit down at table with people who had been excluded, to become their friend. Through that friendship we are gradually transformed. In our communities of L'Arche and Faith and Light we live times of struggle, grief and death, but what a joy for me to see the faithfulness, love and competence of so many committed people.

Healthy Aging Program Underway

by Craig Harren

Since November 2005 L'Arche Winnipeg has embarked on a new program to help us all move into our next phase of aging. After much planning, the **Healthy Aging Program** has begun.

The Healthy Aging Program is to help all of our members look towards aging in a more positive light. As the coordinator of the healthy aging program I feel that my past experience in other L'Arche communities in Canada and around the world will help me move this program forward. In the last few months we have begun the ground work to expand the Activity Night, a

monthly program that is a medium for creativity, to gently bring awareness and ideas about healthy aging. We are starting the Activity Night programs with a slide show to remember where we have come from, and a game of Healthy Aging BINGO to give us tips on how to get to where we are going. We are planning other fun Activity Nights including square dancing, crafts and even a comedy night.

We are organizing information programs for staff and the whole community, to help everyone to understand the different issues affecting them. One of the most important aspects of this program is to foster an understanding and a comfort around the idea of death and grief.



*Craig Harren, Coordinator of
Healthy Aging Program*

The next year looks to be an exciting one, and I look forward to connecting with the community and having fun.

Trees - Communities - Volunteer-ies

by Lani-Marie Thiessen
Volunteer Coordinator

David Suzuki recently spoke at the University of Manitoba. One of the topics he spoke on was from his book called *Trees*. He talked about the idea that trees communicate with one another for the betterment of their community. If one tree is attacked by an insect, it disperses a chemical which warns the other trees to be on guard. He even brought to light recent research which has suggested that in certain environments different types of trees unite together in order to exchange nutrients.

I know you might be wondering what on earth trees have to do with L'Arche, but give me a moment to explain.

If we were to think of the community of L'Arche as a forest, each member with a disability, assistant, volunteer, staff member and

supporter of L'Arche, would be counted as the trees. Together a forest can withstand a lot more adversity and challenge, than a single tree standing on it's own. In a community we learn from each other's struggles and try our best to support one another during difficult times. And just as certain trees give and take nutrients from one another, our participants in the L'Arche community share their gifts and receive the gifts of others. L'Arche is a community, a family and a forest.

Now just as certain trees unite/merge with other trees to supply them with much needed nutrients, we as a community have developed needs that must be filled. As our Park Pontiac Walk with L'Arche draws nearer the following are ways that you might be able to contribute as a tree:

WWL T-Shirts Coordinator

Someone who is willing to make and maintain the list for PPWWL T-

Shirts. They would also be involved with contacting our T-Shirt company once all the orders are in. On the day of the walk they would be responsible for organizing the distribution.

Poster & Registration Form Distributor

People who are willing to contact and drop off posters and registration forms to various organizations, business and churches.

WWL Speakers

People willing to participate in speaking engagements in order to increase awareness and support for the PPWWL and L'Arche Winnipeg. So maybe you are thinking, I'm one of those trees that can meet that need. If you are interested, or you know someone who is, please feel free to either call or email me (Lani-Marie Thiessen, Volunteer Coordinator) at 237-0300 ext 8, lthiessen@larchewinnipeg.org

Days Away Place for Assistants Needed

Assistants in L'Arche, as most of you know, come from all over the world to live in our Community. You can imagine the many adjustments they have to make to adapt – language, culture, food, seasons, not to mention all the demands of Community living!

In our present group of 27 assistants living in L'Arche Winnipeg homes, 16 are from a country other than Canada. Assistants coming here often know no one in Winnipeg other than the L'Arche members they now live with. Thus there is always an important question, sometimes a dilemma, "Where to go and stay on my day away, on my weekend away?" Going to an-

other L'Arche house for a day away is not a good solution, it doesn't really allow for a break and rest needed. Assistants are mostly looking for a quiet place for rest, a good sleep, on their days away.

Part of the Mandate we started in June states "Provide a place for days away for assistants." So we are sending out the call to you, friends of our community, for ideas and offerings. Do you know someone, some place that would be good for assistants to go? A free room in your own house? If so, please contact our Office, we would love to hear from you.

Jean Vanier and Balfour Mount in Conversation

A unique event sponsored by L'Arche Canada happened on January 31: an evening of conversation and reflection with Jean Vanier, founder of L'Arche, and Dr. Balfour Mount, founder of the hospice movement in Canada, was broadcast live over the Internet. Originating from Parliament Hill in Ottawa, the 2 hour simulcast was viewed by some 20 groups gathered across Canada and another 540 individuals who logged on from their own computer onto the simulcast on the CPAC site (Canadian Public Affairs Channel).

The theme of the evening was "Journey to Personal and Social Transformation".

The good news is that CPAC receive a lot of favorable reaction to the simulcast, and decided to archive the episode on the Web. This means you can still view this Vanier/Balfour conversation by using your computer to connect to the site. L'Arche Canada has created a link to it, so the easiest way is to go to the L'Arche Canada homepage and follow their instructions (basically, just one click to

choose to view it in either English or French):www.larchecanada.org

Briefly ...

- **Our Office** needs a lateral file cabinet with lock, and a standard 4 drawer file cabinet with lock. Please phone 237-0300 if you have one to donate.
- **The Winnipeg** launch of L'Arche Canada's More Than Inclusion: Honouring the Contributions of People With Developmental Disabilities will take place at McNally Robinson Grant Park on Tuesday, March 7, at 7:30 p.m. Please join us if you can.
- **Volunteer Appreciation** night will happen on Thursday April 27th at Salle Vanier, 525 Day Street, starting at 7:00 p.m.
- **Renovations** at L'Ainé and Chimo are in full swing, and will hopefully be completed soon.

New Board Chair

The Board of Directors of L'Arche Winnipeg has a new Chair in the person of **Jim Lapp**. Jim has a long history of involvement with L'Arche, having been an assistant here in the first years of our Community, as well as time in L'Arche Stratford, Ontario. Jim has been on our Board of Directors for a total of over ten years: 9 consecutive years, followed by a mandatory step-down for a year. Jim came back on the Board 1 ½ years ago.

Doug Steinburg, outgoing Chair, has also spent many years on the Board, starting from 1992 to 2001. After a mandatory step-down, Doug returned 2 ½ years ago and had been Chair since then. There will be a special evening on Thursday March 30 when the Community will have the opportunity to properly thank Doug for all the work he has done for us over the years.

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