

THE WORD

From Winnipeg



L'Arche
Winnipeg
Newsletter #42

Three Years And Still Walking Strong

by Brian Campbell

Like all Winnipeggers, February causes those of us at L'Arche to get our minds thinking of one thing and one thing only...Spring. More specifically Sunday, May 6, 2007 and the third annual **Park Pontiac's Walk with L'Arche** at Kern Park in Transcona. With our first two Walks



Walkers in 2006 enjoying the start of the walk

Identity Statement of L'Arche

- We are people, with and without learning disabilities, sharing life in communities of faith.
- Mutual relationships and trust in God are at the heart of our life together.
- We seek to build a world that recognizes the unique value of every person and our need of one another.

Mission Statement of L'Arche

- To make known the gifts of people with learning disabilities, revealed through mutually transforming relationships.
- To engage in our diverse cultures, working together toward a more human society.
- To foster community that is inspired by the core values in our founding story and responds to the changing needs of our members.

succeeding in raising enough funds to purchase a wheelchair accessible van, the purpose of this year's walk is to raise funds to upgrade homes and vehicles to improve the quality of life for L'Arche members.

The third annual Park Pontiac's Walk With L'Arche and Party Celebration is already off to a rousing start with the promise of entertainment by Japanese Taiko drummers Fubuki Daiko Kagemusha, the Celtic party sounds of the Dust Rhinos, not to mention our own L'Arche Sunshine Group. The party can only grow from this solid base, so don't hesitate to join the fun. The walk begins at 2:00 pm and the celebration will start the moment people return to Kern Park and con-

tinue until approximately 5:00 pm.

We at L'Arche are extremely grateful to all who have supported us in the past two years, as sponsors, donors, volunteers, or walkers, and we look forward to working with you again this year and in the coming years. It is to you that we owe our past success.

Our walk brochure, registration & pledge forms are available on our website. So register soon and start collecting pledges towards many great prizes. Registration is only \$10 for adults or \$5 for seniors (55 plus) and students. All those registering before April 6 will be eligible to win the early bird draw of a night's stay at the Canad Inns Transcona. You can

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

A Family Within a Family

by Hubert Pantel

Vic is from the Philippines, and is an assistant in L'Arche Winnipeg. Dimple is also from the Philippines and an assistant in L'Arche Winnipeg. Nothing unusual or unique about that ... except that they are father and daughter!



Vic and Dimple Estocapio

Five years ago **Vic Estocapio** was living in Winnipeg and getting ready to return to his home in the Philippines. As fate would have it, a friend introduced him to Genaro Guevarra, an assistant in L'Arche Winnipeg. Genaro shared with Vic what he was living in L'Arche, and Vic immediately knew there was a calling for him here.

"The very next day I went to the L'Arche Office to talk to Evelyn, the Assistants Coordinator", Vic recalls. "I told her: I don't want to talk about salary, that's not important. I just want to know what this community of L'Arche is all about."

Vic's first impression was actually a visual one - the L'Arche logo on the side of the Office building. "The picture of the ark with the people in it told me that this is all about family, togetherness ... living together with people with a developmental disability spoke to me of the spiritual journey that I was looking for."

Previously, Vic had worked for 20 years as a nurse in Saudi Arabia. "My spiritual life was neglected for most of the 20 years I lived in Saudi Arabia", says Vic. "It was a country where you were putting yourself in danger if you showed any expression of faith. My focus during those years was more on making money. But now I knew that I wanted something else in life."

Vic became an assistant in L'Arche Winnipeg, living at *Chimo* for the first year and a half. "The welcome from members with a disability was amazing", recalls Vic. "I felt very comfortable, I felt the joy and the trust in people. I said to myself: I think I'm

going to like this!"

Vic left the community for a short period and worked as respite for L'Arche for a while. He returned to be a full time assistant and is now House Leader at *The Ark*.

While in L'Arche, Vic was sharing his experiences with his mother, his son and his daughter through e-mails and phone calls. "I would tell them that I have a journey here, not a job", says Vic. What he shared with his son and daughter must have impressed them considerably, as both decided they wanted to come and live in L'Arche. Vic told them they should first volunteer at L'Arche Punla in the Philippines, which they did.

Dimple's Journey

Dimple Estocapio, now 25 years old, recalls her first visit to L'Arche Punla. "My brother and I volunteered there on weekends. I remember my first visit, there was a girl who was so nice and asked me things about myself. It touched my heart, how she was interested in me."

"After my studies, I had been working in an office for 3 1/2 years," says Dimple. "I wanted a different goal in my life, to accomplish something else, and when my father told me what he was doing, I wanted to come and help."

Both Dimple and her brother applied to come but were denied their work visa. Dimple persevered. "I cried when I was denied because I was missing one document", recalls Dimple, "but I was determined to come and so I started the whole application process all over again and made sure everything was in order the second time." She got her visa.

Dimple arrived in L'Arche Winnipeg 14 months ago, and is living at *The Anchor*. "When I first arrived, it was the Christmas Party at Salle Vanier" remembers Dimple. "I could sense the warmth, the joy in the room, the strong relationships between people - people were very accepting, very open."

"There is a strong spiritual life here, a real sisterhood / brotherhood in relationships. This is the real world and it helps me be the best person I can be, and to give the best of myself."

And what does it mean for Dimple to be an assistant in the same community as her father?

"It's a great opportunity to spend time with him", says Dimple. "I know that at age 25, most people are thinking of leaving home,

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Reflections From The Community Leader

by **Dennis Butcher**
Community Leader

On November 16 we laid to rest our good friend, Greg, who's sudden and quick decline and premature death left all of us reeling. We will long miss his quiet presence in our midst, his faithful love of our Judeo-Christian God, his warm, wondering, trusting eyes. His influence and his value as a human being were made manifest by the large group of family and friends who gathered at Shaarey Zedek Synagogue to celebrate his life and witness to the effect that he has had on all of us. Well done, good and faithful servant.

Greg's death reminds us of the fact that our L'Arche Community is aging, a fact which we highlighted in our current four-year mandate:

"We acknowledge the changing needs of our members as they are aging in our Community". We have begun to address this reality in a number of ways. We have adapted two of our homes to make them accessible to those who have difficulty with stairs. At Chimo we have created two wheel-chair accessible bedrooms and a washroom on the main floor with ramp access and at L'Aîné we have built an addition with elevator, two wheel-chair accessible washrooms, a sunroom and some additional storage. Sprinklers and fire alarms are currently being completed at L'Aîné so that we can have members in wheelchairs residing there.

Our Health Care Coordinator has begun an annual longitudinal study of our members with a disability's physical and mental abilities, and has offered a number of "In Service" seminars on aging issues (diabetes, lifts

and transfers, dealing with death, etc.). Our Healthy Aging Coordinator, funded by an anonymous foundation and the Manitoba Marathon, has been leading Activity Night in which a healthy lifestyle is encouraged, developing an aging compendium, polling members around their hopes and thoughts on aging & retirement, and will be working with members and families around end of life issues (wills, funeral or memorial service choices, burial or cremation choices, etc.).

Several weeks ago, representatives from L'Arche met with a coalition of groups, including Community Living – Manitoba, the Hospice and Palliative Care Association of Manitoba, Cropo Funeral Home, and other service providers to plan a day to assist agencies to begin discussion with their residents around "end of life" issues. "End of Life - Planning and Support" will be offered on Thursday, April 26, at Cropo Funeral Home towards this end.

At the Zone Community Leaders Meeting from which I have recently returned, an announcement was made that due to new funding from the Royal Bank, the Zone was re-instituting its priority on Aging and Dying as part of its Strategic Plan, recognizing the challenge that all Communities are facing now and in the future.

As we look at the changes in the physical, psychological, and emotional situation of our members, particularly during the last five years, our Community must strive to obtain the necessary financial, staffing, training, physical and volunteer resources to be able to meet the challenges that are in front of us.

A family within a family ...

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leaving their parents. But for me I always thought that I would like to spend more time with my father, and this is a great opportunity for us to be together. When I have questions, he can give me some advice. Now I know also how much he loves L'Arche, and why."

And what does it mean for Vic to have his daughter here in L'Arche?

"At first it felt weird, to see her here doing the same things I'm doing", says Vic. "But really it's so amazing, I'm so happy to be with her. She loves it, she's a very positive person and enjoys what she does. Now she understands what my journey is, my purpose in staying in L'Arche."

"During those 20 years I was in Saudi Arabia, I would only see her twice a year. Now I feel much more connected, more loved by my daughter".

"And it's like that with L'Arche now," says Vic in conclusion. "It's a



Dimple, with Patricia

part of my life and will always be in the future, in one way or another. Before, I had a "job", but this community has shown me that there is much more to life than money and material things."

Alzheimer Society of Manitoba

Annual Meeting

March 5 & 6, 2007

Canad Inn Polo Park
1405 St. Matthews Ave.

More information:

Norma Kirkby at
943-6622 ext. 210

A letter from Jean Vanier

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

I am starting this letter in Bangalore (India) where I am giving a retreat to the elder members and friends of our communities of Asha Niketan in India. Yesterday I finished a first retreat for young people and for those who have been in an Asha Niketan for a short time. When I arrived in Bangalore last Tuesday I was deeply moved to be welcomed by all four communities gathered together for a day of celebration. 150 all together! 60 came from Kolkata - a 36 hour train ride! - 40 from Nandi Bazaar, 20 from Chennai and 30 from Bangalore. I met many of our Indian brothers and sisters a long time ago. I felt like weeping with emotion as I was greeted by Srinivas, Veeran, Modhu, Mitran and many of the other men and women I had known in the very early days of Asha Niketan. Some of them had been quite violent and have become now people of peace; they have been transformed to become builders of community.

The joy and peace that rose up from this magnificent gathering were like the joy that must spring up in us when we discover the Kingdom of God. Yes, God is truly present in the poor, the lowest and the lost. Yet our people in Asha Niketan are no longer as poor as they were, for they are rich in love, kindness and gentleness. They are no longer lonely for they are in a place of belonging. They are no longer lost for they have been found.

I think of the beginnings of L'Arche with Père Thomas forty two years ago. I did not know what I was doing. I started to live with Raphaël and Philippe. I had no idea where they would lead me or the consequences of this commitment. And never in my wildest dreams could I have imagined that I would be mak-

ing such a trip to India some years later, accompanied by Martha Bala who had been in Asha Niketan in 1974-1978. L'Arche is truly a miracle of Providence. This time in India has deeply confirmed my conviction that our communities are the work of God. The prophet Isaiah announces the vision of Providence when he proclaims in the name of God:

“Be not afraid for I have redeemed you (liberated you), I have called you by name and you are mine. If you pass by the waters, I will be with you... for, I am your God, and you are precious to my eyes and I love you... Do not be afraid for I am with you”. ..(Is 43)

Each one of our communities throughout the world has been through crises and moments of pain, yet each one is still there, radiating life. Yes, our communities are truly God's work. And it is not just the transformation of people with disabilities which is so beautiful, but also the way hundreds of assistants and friends have been transformed. Our lives together, our friendship, our covenant relationships reveal our mission in a world which so quickly despises, looks down upon and pushes aside the weak and the humble, where so many are killed even before their birth.

People with disabilities – like each and every other person - are precious, sacred and should be respected. They have a gift to give to us all. In a world that cultivates efficiency and the search for power and wealth, our people reveal the value of loving kindness and presence to one another. In a world that fosters individualism, our communities reveal the importance of belonging, of celebrating life together and of celebrating

each person. In a world where individual people, countries and religious groups want a God of power to exercise power and domination, our people reveal the God of love, of gentleness and of forgiveness.

As I grow older I realise what a privilege it is for me to have lived the largest part of my life with my brothers and sisters who, in their humility, have brought me on the path of love. I hope and pray that as I grow older and weaker I will be able to continue to share my life and my death in their midst.

The growth of L'Arche and Faith and Light is like a little miracle. I believe that this growth is for our societies, especially for all those who believe in the mystery of God and in the personal relationship between God and each one of us, and for all those who trust that the poorest and the weakest are close to God. They do not seek power but relationship, friends.

I always remember my first visit to the Val Fleuri in 1963, and meeting the men there with their spoken or unspoken cry “Do you love me? Will you become my friend?” People with learning disabilities are truly attracted to the message of God and of the Gospel.

We are all called to let God come and live in the “innermost shrine” of our hearts and to reveal God through our lives and words. May God keep our love in flower, that is the secret: to let our hearts blossom fully and bear much fruit.

Remembering Greg

by Linda Filjak

There was great sadness in our Community last November as we mourned the loss of Greg, a long-time member of our Community. After a brief battle with leukemia, Greg passed away on the morning of November 14th at Dayspring, which was his home in L'Arche Winnipeg since November 2003. His close friend and fellow community member, Barbara Pantel, was with him at the time of his passing.

Greg was 46 years old and had spent 28 years of his life in L'Arche Winnipeg. Greg became a member of L'Arche Winnipeg in 1978, when he was welcomed to our home on Foster Street. He moved to The Anchor on Claremont Avenue in Norwood in 1994. Greg was also a founding member of Dayspring and lived there with Dorothy, Marge and Tom from November of 2003 till his death. Our Community has been blessed by Greg's life and all the gifts he shared with us during the 28 years he spent in



Our Community gathered to celebrate Greg's 46th birthday and to pray a blessing over him, just days before he passed away.

L'Arche Winnipeg. Greg was a quiet, peaceful man with a warm smile and gentle nature. He enjoyed spending many evenings at home sewing and watching T.V. He also enjoyed shopping at Wal-Mart for sewing and rug-

hooking supplies. Greg will be sadly missed by his family, friends, and fellow Community Members.

L'Arche in School & University Programs

Canada in the Contemporary World is a new publication (2007) for grade 9 Social Studies Curriculum in Manitoba schools. The book includes a page on L'Arche and Jean Vanier, under the heading of *Outstanding Canadian*. Students are invited to reflect on Vanier's values in our world today, and to research L'Arche.

A draft curriculum package based on Jean Vanier's popular CBC Massey Lectures, Becoming Human, is now available to Grade 12 Philosophy and Religion (ethics) teachers who would like

to pilot it. For more information, please contact Beth Porter at: eporter@larchecanada.org

L'Arche in the Atlantic region is also collaborating with St-Francis Xavier University in Antigonish for a new Diploma in Assisted Living - Human Care and Community (Continuing and Distant Education Program).

Initial intake of students for this course is in February 2007. For more information, write to : assistedliving@stfx.ca, or check the L'Arche Canada website for more details and a link to the assisted living online brochure.

Discover L'Arche

You are invited to join us at these monthly gatherings:

L'Arche Night

2nd Thursday of the month,
7:00 to 8:30 p.m.

Prayer Night

4th Thursday of the month,
6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.
*(supper provided by L'Arche.
Please let us know in advance if
you are planning to attend)*

Place:

Salle Vanier
525 Day Street, Transcona

*Please call our Office at 237-0300
to confirm.*

Still Walking Strong ...

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register at the L'Arche Winnipeg office or online at www.runningroom.com.

Put in a team of at least five walkers and get the chance to win a trophy with your team name on it to keep for a year, \$125 in Running Room gift certificates and a special prize for your team captain, as well as regular prizes. To get your team name on a Walk With L'Arche t-shirt, each team member must submit a minimum of \$75 in pledges before April 6.

T-shirts are available to all registered walkers who raise over \$75 in pledges, just make sure that your t-shirt size is marked on the pledge form. April 6 is also the deadline to get your pledges in if you want to have your t-shirt available on the day of the walk.

Walkers can earn prizes that increase in value based on the amount of pledges raised. Prizes will also be given to the 1st and 2nd top individual fundraisers, with the top fundraiser receiving a package valued at over \$800. To qualify for prizes, all pledges should be dropped off before 1:45 pm on May 6. Registrations and pledges can also be dropped off between 9:00 am and 4:00 pm, Monday to Friday at the L'Arche office 118 Regent Ave. East in Transcona. To avoid delays on the day of the walk, we encourage everyone to bring their pledges in to the office by Wednesday, May 2nd.

We would like to recognize our major sponsors and others who helped defray costs. Our naming sponsor, Park Pontiac Buick GMC, as well as Doug McDonald of Dundee Wealth Management, Olympic Builders Supply, Presto Pizza, Vickar Community Chevrolet, Wyatt Insurance and Financial Services, Knights of Columbus, Nelson Tent Rentals, Canad Inns Transcona, Best Sleep Centre, Casera Credit

Union and the Running Room are all committed sponsors to this year's event.

Anyone interested in sponsoring our upcoming walk with products, services or financial support, please contact Terry Wiebe - 237-0300 ext. 1.

As one may guess, an event of this magnitude couldn't happen without the help of many who volunteer their services. We owe so very much to you for your help in past walks and look forward to working with you in the future. To volunteer for our walk, please call Brian at 237-0300 ext. 8 and we'll find a place for you. To find out more about registering, volunteering or sponsoring the walk, go to www.larchewinnipeg.org

Whether as a volunteer, walker or sponsor, the Park Pontiac's third annual Walk With L'Arche and Party Celebration at Kern Park on May 6, 2007 has something for everyone. Come for the walk, stay for the party. Experience laughter, love and the celebration of life. Experience L'Arche.



Victoria Houston

As of January 2007, **Victoria Houston** is our new part-time **Healthy Aging Coordinator**. Victoria is no stranger to L'Arche, having worked for 1 1/2 years in L'Arche Edmonton's Day program.

In January we also hired a part-time **Properties Coordinator** in the person of **Eldon Zigarlick**.

English Language Teacher Needed

We are looking for a volunteer who would be willing to teach English as a second language to our assistants who come from different countries. If you are interested, please contact Micheline Girouard at 224-0300 ext. 2, or by email:

micheline.larche@gmail.com

Other Needs

- We are looking for an office volunteer with good phone skills and good computer skills (Microsoft Office Suite).
- We need a lateral filing cabinet (4 drawers) with key.
- We are looking for storage space in the Transcona area.

If you can help us out with these needs, please phone our Office at 237-0300 ext 0. Your help is greatly appreciated.

THE WORD FROM WINNIPEG

L'Arche Winnipeg Newsletter # 42

EDITOR: HUBERT PANTEL

Published 3 times a year

(February, June, November)

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L'Arche Winnipeg Inc. is a non-profit organization. Donations are tax-deductible.

Charitable Reg. No.
107597692 RR0001

This newsletter is available in French /
Ce bulletin est disponible en français.