

THE WORD

From Winnipeg



L'Arche
Winnipeg
Newsletter #44

The 4th Annual Walk With L'Arche Gets A New Name

by **Karen Griffin**
*Communications & Fund
Development Officer*

2008 marks the end of a three-year commitment by Park Pontiac Buick GMC and it is with deep gratitude that we thank them for all their generous support. As longtime support-

ers of the L'Arche Community, the Dveris' contributions to the Walk and L'Arche will always be deeply appreciated.

I would like to join the L'Arche community in welcoming **Casera Credit Union** as our new naming sponsor for the next three years.

They have graciously partnered with us for the Walk and we are all looking forward to the 4th annual walk on May 4 2008 as the **Casera Credit Union Walk With L'Arche & Party Celebration**.

Leonard Welcomed to Dayspring

by **Manuela Schmidt**
House Leader - Dayspring

After Greg's death last November and with Marge moving to Park Manor Personal Care home this spring, Dayspring needed more members. The big house felt empty and it was time to look for somebody new to move in.

In April everybody was excited to meet Leonard, his brother Nelson and his sister Lydia for the first supper visit. Everybody enjoyed that evening and was curious to get to know Leonard better. At the end of April Leonard stayed for his first weekend at Dayspring. He seemed to be overwhelmed by the big house and the new people, but everybody tried to make him feel at home. Overall the weekend went well and it was time to decide if he was a good fit for the house or not. Tom and Dorothy liked him and were looking forward to have Leonard living with them. The house team decided to give it a try.

Leonard moved to Dayspring on June 30, 2007 just before the big Canada Day celebration which was happening at our house. During his first weeks Leonard seemed to be confused about the big change, which is not surprising after living his whole life with his family. Leonard has a kind character and



Leonard

a great sense of humor, and it didn't take long for him to be embraced by everyone in the house. It took Leonard only a few months to adjust really well to the house. He is easy going and gets along with everybody, especially with Dorothy with whom he has built a friendship over the last months. They are joking around, teasing and also helping each other. It is great to see them having fun.

We are very glad to have Leonard living with us at Dayspring and hope that he will continue being with us for a long time.



Michele & Ross with Casera Credit Union mascot

Meet The New Staff!

Hi! My name is Karen Griffin and I am thrilled to be your new Communications and Fund Development Officer here at L'Arche Winnipeg.

I'm originally from St. John's, Newfoundland and I have a Bachelor's Degree in Journalism and Communications from Ryerson University in Toronto.

I've spent my professional career, so far, in varying capacities at daily and weekly newspapers and freelance

(Continued on page 3)

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

Healthy Aging Program Focuses on End of Life Issues

by **Barbara Pantel**
Healthy Aging Coordinator

After a quiet summer, the Healthy Aging Program is well under way again. Our focus for this year will be on end of life issues: will writing and funeral planning. To get things rolling in September, we had an evening panel discussion featuring Dorothy from our community with her sister Val, along with a lawyer, Ralph Newman. Dorothy and Val shared how they went about getting Dorothy's wishes down on paper regarding her will and funeral planning. Ralph was very helpful in explaining the ins and outs of will preparation for persons with a developmental disability. At the end of the meeting, when asked how she felt about having done her will, Dorothy answered "It's a load off my mind now!"

For our October Activity Night, we welcomed John Legatt from Cropo Funeral Chapel. John helped us to understand the importance of pre-



Dorothy, Val, and lawyer Ralph Newman led panel presentation.

planning and making our wishes known before a crisis arises. John also explained some of the costs involved with funeral planning.

In November we are having an evening presentation on Estate Planning for the families of our members with a developmental disability. Now that these topics have been introduced, I hope to

meet individually with members and their families to do some planning.

After a break for our Advent Retreat in December, our Activity Nights will resume in January and will be more focused on fun activities such as exercise, crafts, games, slide shows, life stories.

New Volunteer Coordinator, Community Events Coordinator

Hello, My name is Theresa Meinders.

Bonjour, je m'appelle Theresa Meinders.

Buenos Días, yo me llamo Theresa Meinders.

Well, after three introductions, I should like to say that I am pleased to join the office team at L'Arche in the capacity of both Volunteer Coordinator as well as Community Events Coordinator.

I learned about L'Arche when I was a teenager through a CBC radio program highlighting Jean Vanier. He lectured on the idea of "Becoming Human" and a spark was lighted in my imagination. I wanted to become a part of this



Theresa Meinders

great idea, and that led to my being a live-in assistant at L'Arche Hamilton for just under a year. I have worked as respite in both L'Arche Edmonton and L'Arche Winnipeg. These opportunities

have offered me many friendships, as well as some insight into the greater questions of life including what it means to be human.

I am presently taking two language courses, French and Spanish, at College Universitaire de St. Boniface. I am also training for a cross-country bike tour that will start in June, 2008.

Should you have any volunteers, volunteering ideas, event ideas, time, or just want to chat, particularly over a coffee, drop by or give me a call, I'd be delighted to talk with you.

You can reach me at 237-0300, ext. 20, or by email at: volunteer@larchewinnipeg.org

Reflections From The Community Leader

by **Dennis Butcher**
Community Leader

Since becoming Community Leader more than seven years ago, I came to the realization this week as the deadline for this article approached, that I had never written on the subject of the recruitment of L'Arche assistants, those who live with and share life with our members with a disability on a daily basis. I do so not because we have a particular shortage at the moment – we have had more assistants and we certainly have had less – but because of an article in the most recent issue of my denominational magazine entitled “The minister in your midst”, encouraging congregants to be on the look-out for people who seem to have the gifts to study and prepare for ministry. This made me realize that there may be acquaintances or family members of our readership who might only need a word of encouragement to become the next new assistant at L'Arche Winnipeg or another Community world-wide.

Although we have a high percentage of Canadians within our administrative group, there are few at the moment who live daily as assistants in our homes. We are indebted to a large group of internationals to be the bulk of assistants living daily in the homes with our members with a disability. L'Arche International suggests it is preferable to have 75% of the assistants of one's own nationality (for many reasons including familiarity with the local cultural context, issues of communication, dietary consistency, etc) with the remaining 25% from other countries. The reality in most Canadian Communities including Winnipeg is that we are about the opposite – at best 25% native Canadian and 75% from other countries.

As friends of L'Arche, maybe there is someone in your family, circle of friends, congregation, acquaintances, who you feel have the attributes to be a live-in assistant to people

with an intellectual disability – someone who is looking for a year of service, a change in their life, something to do while they are waiting to get into a program of studies, has a caring compassionate attitude who would be open to sharing themselves with persons with a developmental disability and is ready for a potentially life transforming experience as part of a faith-based Community. If you know such a person, whether they be 20 or 50, maybe you could plant a seed in their mind to consider a year (or a life-time) with us. We have a pamphlet, a CD, and a new program beginning in the

new year called “Discover L'Arche” which we invite you or such a person to avail themselves of. If you, or someone you have encouraged, would like to explore this further, please be in touch with me (237-0300, ext. 6, dennis-butcher@larchewinnipeg.org) or Linda Filjak, our Assistants Coordinator (237-0300, ext. 2, linda@larchewinnipeg.org). Thank you for giving this some thought. Maybe someone's heart will be changed as a result of an invitation that you or someone you speak to respond to.

Meet the New Staff...

(Continued from page 1)

writing. But L'Arche Winnipeg feels like home.

I am so excited to be planning the **Casera Credit Union Walk with L'Arche 2008** already and I'm interested in meeting all of you through your involvement in the Walk in whatever capacity you choose.

To find out what you can do as a volunteer, please contact me or Theresa Meinders, our new volunteer coordinator. We need as many people as we can to fill a lot of valuable roles so please get in touch with us as soon as possible.

This year the Dust Rhinos will be joining us again for more fantastic live Celtic music and shenanigans. Stay tuned to our newsletter and website for all **Walk with L'Arche 2008** updates!

We're inviting school aged kids between Grades One and Six to get involved in our **'What is a Friend' essay writing contest with the opportunity to win an Ipod!**

See our website in January or drop by your local **Casera Credit Union** for details and entry forms.

We are also excited to soon be announcing our **“Discover L'Arche”**



Karen Griffin

events to introduce new comers to the L'Arche Community. These events will offer a one hour introductory session with videos and live testimonials. If you're interested in attending one of these events please contact Terry or myself. Space is limited so contact us early for details.

For further information on anything you've read about please give me a call 237-0300 ext. 8 or introduce yourself in person at the office.

What else am I doing? I will be telling everyone I meet from the greater community of Winnipeg about my new **L'Arche** family. I've already discovered it to be the most warm, open and welcoming place I know!

A letter from Jean Vanier

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

At present I am in the monastery at Orval: a gentle time of quiet, of peace, of prayerfulness... While here in Orval I have been reading the proofs of a book which is the collection of all my letters to our communities and friends since 1964 and which will be published in Canada (in English only for the moment) by Harper Collins in October of this year, 560 pages! The previous books edited by John Sumarah 10 years ago, contained the letters up until 1994.

The letters tell the story of the beginnings of l'Arche and of my many travels: sometimes a day by day account of l'Arche in India, in Haiti, Honduras, the Ivory Coast, and then in Burkina Faso ... It tells of the growth of l'Arche and of Faith and Light in our world. I was moved as I read the story of 43 years. In fact I was amazed by all that has happened. It seems so clear that God had been there guiding us all on this journey, in the discrete way that God does such things: giving the impression that we are doing it all, whereas in reality it is God who is shaping, guiding things through us all, inspiring people to be committed to the vision.

In our world where people with intellectual disabilities are so often seen as a problem and a hardship (which of course they can be for some parents) the book shows an expanding vision of how God has chosen them to be in all our churches, religions and in our very different cultures, a sign of contradiction but also a sign of peace. If in our world and in all our societies, we take the time to be with them and enter into a true relationship with them and with others who are weak and vulnerable such as old people and people who are mentally ill, they will change our hearts from being

closed on themselves, hard and protective, to become open and loving towards them. In this way they can become our wonderful teachers: teachers who through and in places of belonging can help us understand the real purpose of our world and our lives: not to seek for ourselves more wealth, more power, more acclaim, more security and more pleasure, but to make of our societies a better place, where each person whatever his or her culture, abilities or disabilities can grow more humanly, in peace and in freedom. Where difference is not seen as a threat, but as a gift.

L'Arche and Faith and Light as they spread over the world can become a sign of a new world which is being born. But of course that means that all of us in all our communities must "work at it". This transformation towards a greater love does not come easily. It is not easy to open up to others in love and particularly to those with whom we have difficulties. It is never easy to become vulnerable to them. It is not easy to be faithful to community life. We are all a bit frightened of being diminished and hurt. Obviously for this transformation we need the power which flows from our loving God, from the gift of the Holy Spirit. I wonder if Jesus today is not crying over our world as he did over Jerusalem as he said: "If you had but recognized the message of peace but it was hidden from your eyes ..." Luke 19,41

In a year I will be 80! I can hardly imagine it. Time goes by so fast! I want to give thanks for all those who carry responsibilities in L'Arche and in Faith and Light today and in a particular way to Jean-Christophe Pascal and Christine McGrievy. Yes I feel that our two Federations are in good hands, heads and hearts. They are together growing in a common spirituality of love and of compassion.

As founder (with Marie-Hélène in Faith and Light) it is such a gift to be able to withdraw in such peace and trust. Yes, God is good.

I will return to Trosly in a few days. Barbara is not there to type this letter. But with Christine McGrievy we will find new ways of how to live her departure. This year will be less full: I will continue giving retreats at "La Ferme" in Trosly and now and again in other places. In September I will be in Lithuania and in October in Ukraine for retreats for Faith and Light and young people and for those who are preparing L'Arche.

My joy is to announce how people with disabilities can be a source of transformation for us all and a road to the heart of God and so teachers of peace. And my great joy is to be in my home with Albert and André and so many others. The work of transformation of my heart continues day by day in the celebrations and the hurts of life... Peace and love to each one of you,

Jean Vanier

An Invitation to our Advent Retreat

As in past years, we are inviting anyone interested to join us for our annual Advent Retreat, which will be held on Saturday December 1st, from 9:30 a.m. till 5:30 p.m.

The retreat takes place in the basement hall of St. Boniface Cathedral (190 Cathedral Ave. in St. Boniface).

We ask everyone to bring their own bag lunch. L'Arche Winnipeg will provide supper at the end of the retreat.

Please phone our Office (237-0300, ext. 0) by Tuesday, November 27 to let us know if you are planning to join us.

Work Done, New Friends Made on “Impact Day”

All our houses were brimming with activity on Friday September 7, with the presence of 30 volunteers from Deloitte & Touche, each one ready and eager to do six hours of work for us.

Each year the firm of Deloitte & Touche sets aside the first Friday of September as “Impact Day” across Canada and encourages all their employees to participate as volunteers at a variety of charities. L’Arche Winnipeg benefited from their generosity this year, getting lots of cleaning and yard work done, as well as having many rooms painted. It was also a day to make new friends and share a meal with 30 new people discovering L’Arche for the first time. Thank-you, Deloitte & Touche!



Petra & Russell had help in the garden, and Albert (right) enjoyed the company of three painters from Deloitte & Touche



Being Truly Present to Another Person

A reflection

by Shirley Nolan

The most profound experiences I have had in L’Arche have been of a spiritual nature. I truly believe that our people with a mental disability are the prophets of our day. I used to think that a prophet was someone who foretold the future. But prophet is someone who lets you know what God is trying to tell you – what He wants you to know. One of the important lessons they have taught me is to be present to the other – and in acknowledging that presence, we will encounter Jesus. Let me explain.

When I was Community Leader, I was usually pretty exhausted when I came home from the office. One evening as I sat alone in the living room relaxing and enjoying the newspaper, Tom walked into the room in his robe. He was barefoot and I noticed that his toenails really needed to be trimmed. My first thought was to tell Tom to get the clippers from the kitchen, bring them to me, put his foot up on the



couch and I would clip his toenails (that way I would not have to move). But with a little nudging from the Holy Spirit, I chose another way. I got up, took Tom to the kitchen, had him sit on a chair and I sat on the floor. As I held Tom’s feet in my hands, I looked up into his beautiful blue eyes and it suddenly seemed that we were in a “spiritual bubble” – that suddenly Tom was Jesus and Jesus was Tom. This amazing mystic moment has remained with me and has helped me to know that when I am truly engaged with the other – I will meet Jesus. And when I ignore or shun the other person I am, like the apostles, asleep in the garden of Gethsemane.

Celebrate, Pray with L’Arche Winnipeg

Anyone who is interested in spending an evening with the entire L’Arche Winnipeg Community can do so on two occasions per month.

The second Thursday of each month is “**L’Arche Night**”, from 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. at Salle Vanier, 525 Day Street.

The fourth Thursday of each month is our “**Prayer Night**”, starting at 6:00 p.m. at Salle Vanier. The Community provides supper following a time of prayer.

Please phone our Office to let us know if you are planning to attend : 237-0300, ext 0.

Note that L’Arche Night and Prayer Night do not take place in the month of December.



Thank you for your generosity

This group from L'Arche enjoyed a performance of "Lost Action" by Kidd Pivot last September. Our thanks to **Winnipeg's Contemporary Dancers** for providing the complimentary tickets to this performance. We would also like to thank these other organizations who have gifted us with complimentary tickets over the last year: **Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra, Royal Winnipeg Ballet, Shakespeare in the Ruins, Winnipeg Art Gallery, Winnipeg Folk Festival, and the Winnipeg Goldeyes.**



- Leather couches, loveseats and chairs
- Large coffee table and several wooden end tables
- Filing cabinets, computer desk and a computer chair
- Lamps, blinds, stereo unit
- A fax machine
- A 35mm film / slide scanner
- Rocking chair, recliner chair

If you have any of these items in good condition to donate to L'Arche, please call our office at 237-0300.

Please consider making a gift to L'Arche Winnipeg in your Will. By Leaving a Legacy, you will make a difference in the lives that follow.

Yes, I would like to make a Celebration Gift to L'Arche Winnipeg

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Christmas 2007

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