



GRATITUDE

L'Arche Winnipeg Newsletter #87



New participants, warm temperature highlights of the 18th annual Walk with L'Arche

With a balmy temperature of 23 degrees, the May 7th Vickar Automotive Group's Walk with L'Arche was probably the warmest walk day of the past 18 years of our annual walk.

Over \$37,000.00 was raised with this year's walk. Though a virtual event again, the walk still attracted new participants. There were 24 new people participating in a L'Arche walk for the first time. Two of these new participants were Christie and Brian L. (pictured above) and when

asked why they decided to join the walk, Brian replied:

*"For many years we have sponsored Walk with L'Arche through a former co-worker. These sponsorships brought us the **Gratitude** newsletter and with that, the stories about the L'Arche Winnipeg community members, and they touched our hearts. Especially the stories about **Linda's Wedding**, her **Wish** video and **Remembering Linda**.*

A reminder was put on our calendar to watch for the walk's sign up information and our 2022 walk is now history. We look



forward to next year's walk and the opportunity to walk as a group."

The top individual fundraiser was Hazel V. (above photo) who raised a total of \$4,843.00 with the help of her friends Kathy and Roger.

Walk prize draws were done as a Zoom event on May 18, and gift card earners have all been contacted.

We certainly look forward to walking as a group next year and adding back the element of "party celebration" to the event!

- Hubert Pantel



L'Arche Tova Café Celebrates 10th Anniversary

The 10th anniversary celebration took place on April 2nd and was a hybrid event - the festivities inside the Café were live-streamed via Zoom to a larger audience. See page 4 for more Café news.



Faithful Walk Participants Support the L'Arche Community



Thank You to Our Walk Sponsors

**Vickar Automotive Group
Casera Credit Union
Olympic Building Centre
Wyatt Dowling Insurance Brokers
BPG Benefits Planning Group**

We are also grateful to the individuals and companies who donated prizes for the Walk.

Thank you as well to all the walk participants who raised pledges, and all those who sent in photos of their own walk. We received walk pictures taken in St. Vital Park, Kildonan Park, Assiniboine Park, on the Transcona Trail, South St. Vital Trail, as well as pictures taken in other un-identified places in our city/province. All these photos of walkers aged from 1 to 81 years old gave us a fuller appreciation of the generosity of our friends and supporters.



Retirement, With Gratitude

by Hubert Pantel
Newsletter Editor

After 29 years as editor of the L'Arche Winnipeg newsletter, I am finally moving into retirement this summer, leaving future editions of *Gratitude* in the capable hands of Eliane Vieira. Since 1993, this newsletter has sought to keep friends, families, and supporters of L'Arche Winnipeg informed about our community's many activities, needs, and growth. I have enjoyed sharing stories about the gifts of our core members, and how they touch and transform other peoples' lives.

My personal involvement with L'Arche goes back much further, though. In 1973, I was a 23-year old participant in a *Faith and Sharing* retreat held in Gimli, Manitoba, with 600 other participants. Led by the founder of L'Arche, much of the focus of the retreat was on people with intellectual disabilities. Sister Cecile, an Oblate Sister attending the retreat, was inspired to offer the Sisters' convent in Transcona to become a L'Arche home - and very quickly that same year, the L'Arche community in Winnipeg was founded. As a then journalist-editor of the weekly *La Liberté*, I wrote a story on the opening of L'Arche Winnipeg, got to know all the people of L'Arche, and started "hanging around" as a friend.

It has been a great privilege to have been involved since the beginning, part of the unique founding story. Most of the first people welcomed came from a large institution in Portage-la-Prairie (which, in the 60's, had over 1,000 residents). I don't want to dwell on the hardships or dehumanization of life in a large institution, but I can say this: I have witnessed incredible transformation in the lives of people who were given the opportunity to leave the institution and to live in an "ordinary" home on a residential street; to live with friends ("assistants") who gave them the opportunity to learn new skills and become more independent; to make their own decisions, choose holiday outings... so many "ordinary" things that most of us take for granted.

The years - decades - of relationships in L'Arche have been life-

transforming for all involved. Those welcomed have "paid it forward" by being our models and teachers in matters of the heart, of faith, for knowing how to live with joy in the present moment.



First time meeting my grandson Noah in Panama, August 2021

With the passage of time, frisbees and soccer balls have given way to walkers and wheelchairs, and sadly we have lost many of our founding members. What's important is that we journeyed well together, in the time that we were given to be with each other. New people have been welcomed over the years, and our community has grown to six houses, an apartment, and a Café. I first met Barbara (also a L'Arche assistant) in 1975 as we were preparing the *Faith and Light* pilgrimage to Rome that year. We were married in 1983, and two years later welcomed baby Monique into our lives. We re-joined the community in 1990, as a family living in a L'Arche home for several years. Unique formative years for Monique, growing up with "brothers & sisters" of many different abilities, with a rich variety of faith and cultural traditions brought by L'Arche assistants who come from many different countries. Today, Monique works for L'Arche Canada and is also a photographer (the lens cap doesn't fall far from the camera?).

If I had to choose only a few words to express what I feel is the essential gift of L'Arche, I would say it's **discovering that you are loved as you are.**

I recall being a delegate of Canada at an international Faith & Light meeting in Cork, Ireland, in 1978. The guest

speaker was Abbé Pierre, who worked for many years with homeless people on the streets of Paris. I've always remembered and appreciated his reflection on how do you come to know God. He made a comparison to salt.

"It is like salt. I can know everything there is to know about salt - where it's mined, how it's produced, what quantities to put in a recipe, but... if I've never had a grain of salt on the tip of my tongue, I cannot understand what a person means when the person says the soup is too salty, or not salty enough. The only way to truly know salt is to TASTE it.

So it is with God. I can read all the books about God, contained in all the libraries of the world, I can know everything there is to know about God, but ... If I do not love, I cannot really know God. God is love, and the only way to really know God is to love, to TASTE God."

I can't think of a simpler, better way to express my appreciation for what L'Arche offers us: the possibility to know God through love, to **taste** Love through the relationships we live and build in the community - helping us to dare to believe that we too can be, and are, loved as we are.

Now I look forward to discovering the beauty of life, again, through the eyes of a child (grand-child!). I also look forward to participating in a big celebration of L'Arche Winnipeg's 50th anniversary in 2023!



During the month of April, L'Arche Tova Café offered customers a special Ukrainian menu item for \$10.00, with all proceeds going directly to help L'Arche in Ukraine.

We raised and sent \$1,952.38 to L'Arche Canada for the **L'Arche Ukraine Fund.** Thank-you for your support!

Kindness Goes a Long Way

by Eliane Vieira

Director of Fund Development and Communications

Born and raised in Transcona, Carla Wright has welcomed patrons and served meals at L'Arche Tova Café for almost one year.

"We are a wonderful team here. I like to share my ideas and make suggestions for the menu, and I love that I can contribute that way."

Carla believes that social enterprises that offer training and practical experience to people with intellectual disabilities are fundamental in our society. *"We need places like this that prepare people to get their foot in the door. These folks have a hard time finding work even though they are perfectly capable."*

Carla also feels great about working

in the same area she grew up. *"Here we say 'hi neighbour'; we greet each other; we care about each other. The customers are so friendly and kind."*

Even during the busiest hours, Carla always chooses to have a positive attitude. She believes that even a small kindness can go a long way.

"Tomorrow is not promised. When you see that somebody is having a bad day, why not try to make it a little better?"

And it was Carla's kindness that inspired one of the Café's customers to send an email that brings tears to the eyes of anyone who reads it. You can find (portions of) the email at the bottom of this page.

Next time you come to the Café, please say 'hi' to Carla and the wonderful team at L'Arche Tova Café. They feel grateful for your support.



Carla (left) and other L'Arche Tova Café staff at the 10th anniversary celebration on April 2nd

A Customer's Appreciation of L'Arche Tova Cafe

I really want to share how I feel about Tova Cafe. I have cried there, received hugs and laughed a lot. The food is amazing BUT it the people there that make it EXTRA AMAZING!

In a world where stress and anger can be so easy, the staff here go out of their way to do way more than nourishing me with food. (One homemade treat after another!) No one knows what the next person is going through, so being kind is always good.

Today, I could see it was another busy breakfast and the staff was working hard as usual but the waitresses and kitchen staff were still smiling. Please send Carla a virtual high five along with everyone else there. I think that Tova has nailed their own vision for everyone building compassion and kindness. I see it. Thank you! - Donna K.



Walking 20K for L'Arche

As a first time participant in the Walk for L'Arche event, 81-year old Elma Plett didn't limit herself to walking just 1K or 5K. She walked a distance of 20 kilometers, going through River Heights, Grand Park, and Assiniboine Park.

She also found sponsors and raised \$450.00 for L'Arche. Thank-you Elma!

GRATITUDE FROM WINNIPEG

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