

GRATITUDE

The L'Arche Winnipeg Newsletter

July 2023

Issue #90



50 years



Photos from the community through the years. Community members photographed include Russell, Kathy, Jim, Hazel, Roger, and more!

L'Arche Winnipeg's 50th Anniversary Celebrations



Erin Sawatzky
Community Events

2023 marks L'Arche Winnipeg's 50th anniversary! Since our founding in 1973, L'Arche Winnipeg has grown, changed, and explored so many new ways to celebrate the gifts of people with disabilities in community. Our 50th Anniversary celebrations are a special opportunity to share stories of our past, and celebrate the amazing people that make our community today!

We are excited to mark this milestone in a variety of ways this summer. Available for sale at the office while quantities last are our 50th anniversary hats, t-shirts, and water bottles for \$20 each. Payment is accepted by cash, cheque, or credit card at our main office (118 Regent Avenue East).

All are welcome to join us on Wednesday, August 23, 7 PM at Blessed Sacrament Parish (710 Roanoke Street, Winnipeg) for a L'Arche thanksgiving service and reception led by members of our community.

Finally, our 50th Anniversary Gala Dinner will take place on Saturday, August 26th at the Canad Inns Club Regent Hotel. We welcome all friends of L'Arche to join us in this special evening. Come share a 3-course dinner, listen to stories of our community, enjoy a special performance by L'Arche members, and dance the night away! Registration is open until August 10th and costs \$40 for adults, \$20 for youth, and \$10 for children. **Details and registration can be found on our website, or drop by our office to fill out a registration form!**

We are so grateful for the incredible support from our community over the last 50 years, and we look forward to celebrating with all of you who have been a part of our story!

Hitting the Ground Walking for L'Arche

The 19th Annual Vickar Automotive Group Walk with L'Arche



Jelynn Dela Cruz
2023 Walk Chairperson

From snow or sleet to a global pandemic, our Walk with L'Arche — L'Arche Winnipeg's largest annual fundraiser — has historically defied the odds to unite the community in support of people with disabilities and L'Arche Winnipeg's vision for a just society where everyone has the opportunity to thrive. With its own set of challenges, this year was no exception.

On Saturday, May 6, 2023, we welcomed the community back to Oxford Heights Community Club for our first in-person Walk with L'Arche event in three consecutive years. This year we were able to raise over \$65,000.00 for our organization— an ordeal that we surely would not have been able to accomplish without the generosity of our participants and sponsors.

Sponsors who donated prizes, gift cards, food, and supplies are largely to thank for



our ability to host over 160 attendees and provide memorable event, especially during our golden jubilee.

Our naming sponsor, Vickar Automotive Group, helped to resource the event by providing balloons, volunteers, company SWAG, and bringing along a crowd pleaser, the freshly tuned Vickar Automotive Jeepney. Teams of volunteers and registrants were also brought out by sponsors and supporters like Casera Credit Union and the Knight of Columbus. These volunteers and registrants helped raise funds, cook food, and run the event smoothly.

Most notably, the event's success is greatly owed to members of the 2023 Walk with L'Arche Committee: Erin, Maureen, Cindy, — *Continued on back page*

Living Ubuntu at L'Arche



Dominic Opaka
Community Leader &
Executive Director

Remembering the words of John Muir, founder of the National Parks in the States that he would “rather be in the mountains thinking of God, than in church thinking about the mountains” the second Sunday of May, I went for a lovely, quiet, reflective walk at the International Peace Gardens. I instantly liked the place, with a network of clear, paved pathways to make the nature walk easier. I walked among tall trees, feeling really good and at peace which was occasionally interrupted by the chirping of a hummingbird.

As I marveled at the beauty of the gardens, I noticed in the midst of the tall trees, there were seeds sprouting and beginning to take root. I thought this to be very symbolic in every aspect of life and indeed of community. I pondered inwardly, what fruit will this seed bear in our life together, in our community? What friendships will grow; what provision will be provided? What will we learn together? What connections will blossom?

I think we are ridiculously lucky to be celebrating our 50th anniversary and embrace something that money cannot buy, a great sense of community, relationships and connectedness. We think of the last 50 years with a deep sense of gratitude and for the initial seeds that were planted by those who came before us.

Nothing captures better the mood of the time than a quote by Hazel:

“My shoes were tattered runners, and I really wanted new shoes. A few days after arriving at L’Arche, Sr. Marie took me shopping and we found a special pair of shoes for my feet. Supper that night

was very festive. I said ‘Sister Marie, I can dance now. Come dance with me!’”

We might as well say that was the dance that formed the community, and for fifty years we have danced countless times.

And while it is undeniable that we have stood on others shoulders to become the community we are today, It’s been a journey of blessings and turbulence; times of enormous joy, pleasure and satisfaction, challenges overcome, opportunities taken, and lives touched and transformed in both ordinary and extraordinary ways. There were also times of great difficulty, painful periods of pressure and failure. There have been many seasons of hope as well as some permeated with fear; illuminating periods and the contrasting episodes of struggle.

In a world that is tearing itself apart because of differences, our community remains a vibrant example of how people can easily adopt to diversity and live together. In ours, as in every L’Arche community, we see day in and day out people reaching out to each other in spite of profound diversities in tradition, language, race and religion. The African philosophy of “ubuntu” comes to mind—

It’s a way of living that begins with the premise that “I am” only because “we are”...

We are a relationship species and our deepest level of feeling safe comes from being accepted by others. You can’t be human all by yourself. Ubuntu encourages us to step in to the lives of others, to share their experience and understanding thus creating a sense of healing and inspiration. We are all bound together in ways that are invisible to the eyes.

This monumental year, provides a fitting opportunity to reflect on our role and mission of making known the gifts of people living with disabilities through building of mutually binding relationships. It comes at a time, when our Federation is adopting a new Mandate and Charter of Communities. The invitation to sacrifice for each other is a valuable opportunity to build community. As we redefine ways to re-tell our story and in reflecting on our lives, we realize that whenever we truly

work for something we believe in or make the effort to care for others, we gain much more than anything we give up. A community created by shared mission is a gift to all and worthy moment of our time. When we pause in silence, we, are able to listen. Silence allows us to be still, to listen and to reflect and take action to bring perpetual hope to others.

Collective accountability in our shared spaces is what brings us together in the community.

We have a responsibility towards each other.

In Swahili we say “Nimekuona” meaning I have seen you. Do you see yourself? Do you see others around you? As we march forward with resilience, lets look out for one another. **Namaste!**

Updates from the **L'ARCHE TOVA CAFÉ**

NEW OPERATING HOURS

The Café is now open 7:30 AM to 2 PM from Tuesdays throughout Saturdays.

WE’VE GOT ICED COFFEE!

We are once again serving up your favourite cold coffee to go!

BIZ MARKETS ARE BACK!

Every Thursday from 10 AM to 2 PM this Summer at the Transcona Christian Reformed Church Lot, the Café will be selling baked goods such as scones, squares, cinnamon buns, and our gourmet bread!

SOLIDARITY MUSIC NIGHT

After an overwhelmingly successful return of our Solidarity Music Night in June, we are bringing it back on August 10th.

Tickets remain \$25 each. Contact 204-237-0300 ext. 100 for more info.



L'Arche Winnipeg's 50th Anniversary Gala Dinner

YOU'RE INVITED!

Saturday, August 26, 2023
Doors at 4pm, Dinner 5pm
Canad Inns Club Regent Hotel,
1415 Regent Ave. West



BANQUET DINNER, FRIENDS, STORIES, DANCING, A SPECIAL PERFORMANCE- AND MORE!!

Farewell to a Dear L'Arche Winnipeg Friend: **Yvonne Van Walleghem**

Submitted by Kathy French
Friend of L'Arche Winnipeg

In mid April 2023, a dear long time L'Arche Winnipeg and former Board Member, Yvonne Van Walleghem, left us to join many of our other L'Arche friends in Heaven. Yvonne had just celebrated her 96th birthday in March 2023.

Yvonne was the Secretary on the very first L'Arche Winnipeg Board of Directors and was directly involved with the move of the first Core Members from the institution at Portage La Prairie, into the first L'Arche house in Winnipeg — *L'Aine, formerly Rosseau Court*.

Yvonne was an especially dear friend to L'Aine core member, Hazel, and supported her each year, generously sponsoring Hazel in the annual "Walk with L'Arche" fundraiser. For almost 50 years, Yvonne would always remember Hazel's birthday, never forgetting to mail her a card, each with a gift card enclosed. As a testament to the special friendship that existed between Yvonne and Hazel, they spoke on the phone every Friday, for many, many years.

Yvonne was also a great supporter of

the L'Arche Tova Café and enjoyed the occasions when she was able to meet up with long time Core Members and Assistants to share a meal. In 2017, we celebrated her 90th birthday at the Café, with 18 long-time community members in attendance.



Yvonne and Hazel smiling with Hazel's annual birthday card—September 2022

Yvonne was a woman of deep faith. We know she is now celebrating with those L'Arche friends who went before her and she is waiting to welcome those who are yet to come.

Our hearts are filled with gratitude for the times spent with Yvonne, while she was with us here on Earth.

Being Heard and Truly Hearing Others



Julie Rempel
Spiritual Life

As a new Assistant in L'Arche Lethbridge in 1998, I discovered that people truly cared about my thoughts, my experiences, and my personal journey. When in meetings we would methodically go around the room hearing from every single person on a particular topic. It was in this setting that I felt empowered to share my experience and I began to, in a new way "find my voice". The fact that people really wanted to know what I thought had a profound impact on my self-worth and helped me understand that my voice really mattered. This continues to be my experience in L'Arche though nowadays I also understand the importance (and the challenge) of keeping quiet in order to ensure that the voices of our Core People are really heard and valued.

This spring, Michael O. and I took on the role of Community Delegates for L'Arche's Virtual and International Federation Assembly in June. We had the chance to attend a 6-hour virtual workshop (spread out over two days) on "Inclusive Videoconferencing". The presenters (with and without disabilities) started a session with a role play showing us an example of a non-inclusive — *Continued on next page*

Continuing from front page — Nathaly, Dominic, Jim, Fe, Grace, Leah, Julie, Stacy, Barbara, and myself—who had the privilege to serve as Chairperson. Thanks to this team’s dedication, skillset, and compromise, we were able to make unprecedented things happen!

In order to accommodate supporters of all walks of life and comfort levels, this committee had to make two unprecedented decisions: (1) To make the event hybrid for registrants who were unable to join in person and (2) To host the reception outdoors, in order to increase our capacity while minimizing risk for attendees.



While the rain blessed our trail, the community kept spirits high and the 1 KM or 5 KM run, walk, or roll continued on! Upon return, participants enjoyed a

19TH ANNUAL VICKAR AUTOMOTIVE GROUP

WALK WITH L'ARCHE

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RECYCLE EVERYWHERE

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Sherwood's Lounge & Bistro
Transcona Salon & Spa
Transcona Scouts - Beaver Squadron
Winnipeg Jets

& MANY MORE GENEROUS FRIENDS OF L'ARCHE WINNIPEG!
THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

program with a live funk band, large games, good food, and lots of dancing! This year, our top fundraisers were Hazel VanDamme (raising \$3,275.00) and Romeo Belisle (raising \$1,170.00). Thank you to all of our fundraisers, donors, and sponsors for your solidarity and generosity.

Because of your help, L'Arche Winnipeg is starting our next 50 years strong and we are thrilled to be walking into this next chapter with you.



Continuing from previous page — video presentation. At one point in the skit it is the Core Person’s time to talk but the Assistant (in a very annoying way) kept whispering words into the core person’s ear. After the core person protests, the Assistant recognizes their mistake and apologizes for “treating the person like a microphone”.



Julie and Michael in their yellow shirts—June 2023

Though I laughed at the humorous exaggeration, I also saw myself as the Assistant. In the past, I also wanted to create a perfect presentation by prompting the core member to say just the “right” words. This training session from L’Arche International was an important reminder to me that a good presentation is less about being smooth or perfect and more about making space for all voices to be heard in an authentic way.

Interestingly, after our facilitator asked “any questions?” Michael’s hand went up and he asked “I was just wondering how everybody’s doing over there where you are in France?” I was touched deeply by Michael’s question

because in that moment he had shifted the workshop to another level. Michael’s simple, spontaneous question invited us to a place where we could really make a heart connection with each other—human to human.

Whether through sessions on videoconferencing, spontaneous questions, consultations on important documents (Charter and Mandate) or involvement of the whole community in this year’s Federation Assembly, a strong message is coming through... **In this vibrant and diverse movement with communities from around the world... each voice truly does matter!**

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