

GRATITUDE



50 years & BEYOND

The L'Arche Winnipeg Newsletter February 2024 Issue 92



Photos from past Walk with L'Arche events, including core members Ricky, Eric, Patricia, Tom, & more!

Treading the Transcona Trails— Celebrating 20 Years of Support



Erin Sawatzky
Community Events

We are on a roll with anniversaries! With L'Arche Winnipeg's 50th anniversary just behind us, we are gearing up for another milestone this spring - our 20th annual Walk with L'Arche fundraising event.

This event started back in 2005 when over a hundred walkers gathered in Kern Park, carrying blue balloons through Transcona on a route leading past L'Arche Winnipeg's 4 homes. Since then, the walk (and L'Arche) has grown, with hundreds of friends, families and supporters coming out every year to celebrate and sustain the

community. We are incredibly grateful for these last 19 years of community support from people like you!

This year, we hope to reconnect with members who have been involved in our community through the years, as we celebrate 20 years of meaningfully impactful Walk with L'Arche events. Barbara, who has attended all 19 fundraising walks, is looking forward to celebrating this anniversary: "I like walking with my friends, and I like the party afterwards. I'm excited to walk with everyone this year!"



Barbara at the first Walk with L'Arche

Our 2024 Vickar Automotive Walk with L'Arche event will be held on **Sunday, May 5th at the Oxford Heights Community Club (359 Dowling Ave E)**. **Registration opens at 12:30**, with the chance to enter for some of our biggest prizes yet (shhhhh - no spoilers!). **We'll gather at the starting line at 2pm**, to walk a 1km or 5km route down the Transcona trail.

Cross the finish line and dance your way into our outdoor afterparty with live music, free BBQ lunch and entertainment for the whole family!



Ross M enjoying the BBQ in 2010

Registration costs \$15 for adults and \$10 for kids. Anyone is welcome to register at the event, but early registration is encouraged- **sign up before April 5th with a minimum of \$100 raised, and receive a free Walk with L'Arche t-shirt!**

And don't forget that everyone who fundraises over \$200 will receive a free gift card to L'Arche's Tova Café! The more money raised, the bigger the gift card- with up to \$200 value.

Continued on next page

Continuing from front page — “I’m excited to collect pledges from people at church,” shares Russell, who has been attending Walk with L’Arche events since the beginning. He is often joined by a large group of supporters: “I like walking with my family and friends.” We hope you’ll join us for this special day- your support,

no matter the size, will help ensure the most meaningful and memorable Walk with L’Arche event to date. Ready to register? See the brochure included with your newsletter to sign up, or visit us at www.larchewinnipeg.org for more information and to register online! **We look forward to walking with you!**



Russell & friends crossing the finish line last year

Unfolding Stories at the Cafe



Jubilee Dueck Thiessen

Communications & Fund Development

Many stories of meaningful

connection unfold at the L’Arche Tova Café, but the hustle and bustle of fast-paced restaurant business means that our volunteers and staff catch only small glimpses of these moments unfolding throughout the day. When our customers share about meaningful experiences they have had at the cafe, we are thankful to be invited into their stories and we feel honored by the vulnerability, generosity, and transformation that these stories reveal.

These stories fuel our staff and volunteers, and your words of affirmation guide and sustain our engagement with our community. Christmas cards thanking us “for the wonderful service, food, and fun!” provide positive feedback about our work, and affirmations that our staff and volunteers “are all so special and we appreciate your kindness” make us feel seen and appreciated for who we are. When customers share that we make them “feel at home,” we feel



Café staff Rob, Carla, Rebecca, Gail, Nolan, Keagan, & Tyler

reassured that we are doing enough to welcome everyone with warmth, joy, and kindness.

“Thank you for the smiles, thank you for the jokes, thank you for the eggs with perfectly cooked yolks!”

Messages like these bear witness to the strong connection that our customers make with our staff and volunteers. This strong connection provides sustenance during times of need, as people who are lonely or grieving come to the café to feel a sense of community. For many, the café is a place where people know they will be listened to, feel comfortable, and be cared for.

One of our long-time patrons lost his wife after journeying through dementia. While mourning, it was important for him to visit the café with his son as he felt a strong connection to the volunteers and staff who mourned with him.

In November, a café patron came to us wanting to donate money to establish a Pay-it-Forward Fund to

give back to his community. Having benefited from the café’s welcoming atmosphere, he wanted to positively impact others by helping them pay for their orders. So far, the Pay-it-Forward Fund has pleasantly surprised over 30 café patrons, and we hope to continue passing on our donor’s act of kindness to as many people as possible.

Thank you for your affirming words, your openness, and your generosity - we love being part of your story.

You're Invited to

PAY IT FORWARD

At the L'Arche Tova Café

Add a donation to your bill or add a note to your online donation to continue Paying It Forward!

Celebrating the Harvest of Tom's Life



On January 7, the L'Arche Winnipeg community said goodbye to a very special core member, Tom N. Tom moved to the L'Arche farm in Lorette on a sunny day in the fall of 1983 and had recently celebrated his 40th anniversary in October. After the farm's closure in 1985 Tom lived at L'Arche's "Gentle Breeze" home on Munroe in Winnipeg, later moving into Dayspring house where he enjoyed drinking coffee or pop, watching wrestling, and hamming it up with his friends around the supper table.

Tom with his coffee tin, 1980s



At Tom's funeral at Blessed Sacrament Parish, Fr Gerry Ward reflected on John 12:24 as a way to understand and honour Tom's impact on the lives of everyone who met him: "unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat. However, if it dies, it bears much fruit." It was beautiful to imagine Tom as a grain of wheat, his gentle love touching our lives and multiplying in our hearts. Fr Gerry invited us to imagine ourselves as being "Tom's harvest" – even as we grieve Tom's death, he leaves behind a fruitful legacy of love, joy, and openness in everyone who knew him.

When we gathered on January 10th at the Welcome Centre to celebrate Tom's life, Hubert Pantel shared a story about the fruitful multiplication of Tom's openness. While walking outside of Bob and Shirley Nolan's home on Melrose in the 1980s, Tom crossed paths with a mailman and got to chatting with him. When a woman approached walking her dog, Tom drew her into his conversation with the mailman and the three of them chatted together. Tom eventually came

back inside the house for dinner, but when Bob looked outside the window some time later, the woman and the mailman were still deep in conversation. This was Tom's gift – his warm openness, pure love, and simple joy gifted him with the ability to foster connection between people who otherwise might have crossed paths without meaningfully connecting.



As we adjust to life without Tom, we take comfort in imagining ourselves as "Tom's harvest," and we treasure the fruits of love, joy, and openness that Tom cultivated in each of us. May we too be like the grain of wheat, bearing fruit in the lives we touch.

Until we meet again, Tom.

Patsy, Halyna, Jotham, Juliette, Albert, Tom, Jaeun, Chris, & Dorothy in 2018



"You Will be Okay, I am With You"



**Jubilee Dueck
Thiessen**

*Communications &
Fund Development*

Now that our year of 50th Anniversary celebrations has come to an end, we turn our attention toward what the next 50 years might hold in store for our community. Our hopes and intentions for the future are shaped by the stories we tell about the past, guiding our decisions and shaping our responses to both difficult and wonderful experiences. Stories like Patsy's provide sustenance for the journey, keeping us rooted in our core values of joy, belonging, solidarity, fidelity, and unconditional love.



Patsy and Tom light a prayer candle

Patsy came to L'Arche as a live-in Assistant to improve her English and experience another culture, and February 2nd marked her 15th anniversary with L'Arche. She values opportunities to develop deep relationships with Core Members, and feels like she has become part of a family. Since joining our community, Patsy says

she has become a better listener, and has learned "to appreciate each moment" with the people around her. Core members have taught her to "be a forgiver," to live life with a positive attitude, and she has experienced "the best relationships of love."

Looking forward to the future, Patsy hopes we will keep up our traditions, and teach the next generations about what makes us special and different from other disability services agencies. 50 years from now, Patsy hopes our "community will keep standing," but acknowledges that we will also change throughout the years. She views long-term assistants as blessings for the community, and appreciates her ability to reminisce with Core Members about stories and events from many years ago:

"On Mother's Day 2009 we were at church, and the priest called all the moms to the front so he could give a blessing. I was missing my kids back home and I was very sad, and Yvonne my sweet heart from the Ark house held my hand and said "Patsy you are a mom you need to go to the front." I said "no," but she held my hand and brought me to the front, she touched my shoulder and told me "You will be okay, I am with you now."



Yvonne and Sandra pray over Patsy, 2011

Patsy has many meaningful memories like this one from her 15 years here, which she holds dear to her heart. Her story of receiving Yvonne's perceptive gift of comfort reveals mutual care shared between Core Members and Assistants, and is a testament to the transformative connection that occurs when we rely on each other for support.

Throughout whatever changes and challenges the future brings, may we be reassured by Yvonne's words: **"You will be okay, I am with you."**



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