

L'ARCHE ERIE

Summer 2009



L'Arche Erie
3745 W. 12th St
Erie, PA 16505
www.larcheerie.org

Points of interest:

- > Father George celebrated 45 in the priesthood
- > 2 new positions have been created
- > 3 new board members will join us in July
- > Arthur F. Schulz donated a chair to be raffled off in November

Mandate Extension

Welcome to the exciting news of L'Arche Erie! The articles and pictures in this newsletter will give you a peek into the current life and some of the future dreams in our community. We are in this exciting time because of the journey we have been taking over the past 36 years. Of course, every good journey requires some directions – a sense of where you're going, what landmarks to watch for. In L'Arche, we use mandates to set the direction for the journey and planning for growth. Our current mandate went into effect June

2005 and was set to expire in June 2009. Unfortunately, June 2005 was a difficult period for L'Arche Erie due to leadership transitions and dwindling Board membership. Much of the 05-09 mandate focused on stabilizing our community, a goal, we are happy to announce, which has been basically completed! In an effort to focus on some of the other goals of that mandate which were unable to receive adequate attention, Community Council recommended to the Board of Directors and our Regional Coordinator that our

mandate be extended 1 year. This will give us time to reflect on our remaining goals as well as appreciate what we've done well. It will also allow us to thoughtfully plan our next mandate to ensure it is a valid and 'living' document for our L'Arche Erie community.

Vicki Washek



Vicki

Board Day

"One giant step for boardkind" – that's how one board member described the Saturday, April 18 all-day retreat. Under the dynamic facilitation of Michael Kumer, director of Duquesne University's Center for Nonprofit Leadership, the members focused on strategic planning.

In recent months the board has recognized the need to shift its focus from smaller, less significant issues to taking a broader, long-range view of L'Arche.

One result of the day's discussions was a restating of the Mission Statement—not a change in direction, but rather an attempt to

make our mission and our identity more transparent to both our own and the larger community.

The greatest efforts of the day went into brainstorming about our vision for the future, how to bring it about, and the prioritization of these efforts. For example, one consensus was that within five years everybody in Erie would know L'Arche and what makes it unique. To help accomplish this, we need a Marketing Program, which would also address general development needs. Government funding, which is becoming ever more restricted as it is, cannot be used for many activities that allow L'Arche to grow spiritually—retreats, regional and

international gatherings, pastoral initiatives, to name just a few.

Two other needs that surfaced are leadership development, at all levels, and building partnerships in the local community.

Funding for the retreat, held at the Medaille Room on the Villa Maria Campus, came from a grant from the Erie Community Foundation for board development.

Paul DeSanti



Paul and Joanne

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Nikki and Lisa B



“The thing about L’Arche Erie is most people seem to find it when they are most broken”

Life Changes

Lost is defined as ‘unable to find one’s way’. This is exactly what I was before I found L’Arche. When I first came to L’Arche as a single mom, full-time college student, I was just surviving life. I was working as a swing manager at a local McDonalds. My significant other, at the time, lived in another state. I was out partying ALL the time, leaving at home my beautiful 2 year old daughter and was recovering from a previous abusive relationship. I had no idea who I was or who my friends were. I was definitely lost. Finding L’Arche was my

saving grace. Within the Bethany home I found peace, acceptance, friends, family and a husband. The relationships that I began building gave me a new path. I became a better person, a better mother, a better friend. I became a leader and an optimist. I was given back the dignity and hope that I didn’t even know I had lost. The thing about L’Arche Erie is most people seem to find it when they are most broken (the assistants as well as the core members). Somehow though, through this common bond, we help each other heal and

Nikki Lavery

become better people. I am now happily married, a mother of 3 and a Master’s degree recipient. I work with children with disabilities as an occupational therapist, helping them to heal their bodies and minds. I have remained a part of L’Arche and now my children are a part of L’Arche. My family and I remain faithful to the teaching of L’Arche in our own house, hopefully installing these values into our children.

I am no longer lost, thanks to L’Arche Erie.

“Attending this retreat helps each of us remember that we are a part of a much bigger L’Arche family”

Core Companions Retreat

On April 20th, 3 Core Members (Mary, David and Mark) and 4 assistants (Mary Ann, Doug, Molly and Leo) traveled from Erie to Villa Maria, PA to participate in the Eastern Region’s Core Companion retreat. We experienced our retreat and wonderful hospitality at the Mother House of the Sisters of the Humility of Mary (this facility use to be a girl’s Catholic high school but is presently a retreat center and is also a working farm). We were joined by 10 core members and 8 assistants from other communities in our region (comprised of the Eastern portion of the United States with communities in Syracuse, NY, The Greater Washington D.C. area, Cleveland, OH, Erie, PA, a community near Boston, MA and a community in the middle of the Blue Ridge Mountains) Every two years, the Eastern United

States Region (initiated by our Regional Coordinator Sr. Anita Maroun and coordinated this year by Sr. Lizette Hoevel from L’Arche Cleveland) sponsors a retreat that offers opportunities for our Core Members and assistants to deepen in their relationships. Our topic this year was “.....And There Was Light”. Bob Kloos, a friend of the L’Arche Cleveland community as well as Faith and Light, shared his many talents with us as animator. Bob drew from his own experiences as well as those from a few characters he seemed to be able to “draw out of his hat” to help everyone learn and deepen in scripture stories. Bob also brought craft activities for each Core Member and companion to

Leo Shriver

participate in to help them deepen in their relationships. Our week included a foot washing ceremony, which has come to be a sacrament that everyone, no matter what their religious or spiritual inclination, can participate in and be moved by it’s rich meaning. Our last evening together was spent in celebration as we danced and “partied” during the fiesta. Everyone agreed that the week was very special and saying goodbye to our new and old friends was hard. Attending this retreat helps each of us remember that we are a part of a much bigger L’Arche “family” and it sure is a lot of fun when we are together. Each of us who were blessed to attend will hold these wonderful memories of



David R during the footwashing



Community Life Coordinator

A long awaited day is dawning with the creation of a Community Life Coordinator (CLC) role! This new role has been formed to support the Community Leader to assure the growth and vision of L'Arche Erie. The CLC will work closely with our Home Life Coordinators, core members and assistants to enhance the quality of our community life in fostering the vision and mission of L'Arche.

It is exciting that the persons who share this role will be able to focus on the gifts of L'Arche as they oversee orientation and

functional accompaniment of the Home Life Coordinators, welcome of visitors and the coordination of community activities/celebrations.

Life in the home is essential to our spirit and foundation. Therefore, the CLC will be assisting with team building, communication and conflict resolution as well as providing L'Arche formation, including L'Arche spirituality and traditions. This role is like a burst of life! To have someone who has lived L'Arche, believes

Mary Ann Zarnick

in the mission, foster and empower community growth in our day to day living is so encouraging! It feels like the roots of our foundation are becoming stronger and possibilities for transformation are endless. As in the words of Vanier, "We all need to be encouraged and stimulated to repent and set off again with a new enthusiasm and ardour. But for that, we have to reopen the doors of our hearts..." As we continue our journey in L'Arche, may the door of our hearts be



Mary Ann and Frank K

Life in Spokane

In 2007 I was made aware of a shortage of assistants in L'Arche Spokane. It seemed like a good opportunity for me to live in the broader L'Arche community, so I went there for 5 weeks. This past year I was asked if I'd consider going again. This time the needs were greater so I committed to

6 months (December 08- June 09). Please pray for our brothers and sisters in L'Arche Spokane; pray for assistants who can be dedicated full-time for the long term and also pray for the wounds of the past few years to be healed.

We often reflect on the notion

Tasha Amey

that we are different parts of the same body. You might say I was the feet. But without the flexibility and support of the rest of the body, you, L'Arche Erie (especially the Bethany home), I couldn't have gone. So thank you; thank you from me and thank you from L'Arche Spokane.

"We often reflect on the notion that we are different parts of the same body: you might say I was the feet"

New Faces

My experience in L'Arche has been nothing but uplifting and inspiring. Within L'Arche I have been given so many opportunities. The opportunity to grow has become important to me. Adjusting to this particular way of life was difficult but along the way I have learned that patience, love, and trust are key attributes to have while living and working alongside the core members. I

have learned that there is humanity, compassion, and love in the world around me. I was given a home when I did not have one, meals when I had no money for food and for that I am thankful every day. I have never felt so accepted, loved, encouraged, and appreciated than I do right now as a friend, a coworker, and a family member. The core members have become a very important part of my life

Christen Murphy

and I feel like they have given me the ability to love and trust others again. In the last nine months with L'Arche, I have faced and conquered many obstacles in my life that would not have been possible without the love and support of my family within L'Arche. In many ways L'Arche has saved my life and directed me to a path full of life, love, and room for growth.

Susan and Christen



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Beyond Intellectual
Disabilities: Learning through
the Heart of Another

We'd like to start emailing more newsletters than we mail. If you'd like to receive our newsletter via email, please submit your info to larcheerie.org

Reverse Raffle Planning

Jason Lavery

We are again in the process of planning our annual Reverse Raffle to be held November 7. Beth Gee, who had organized this event for the past two years, has stepped down and I have accepted the role of Event Chairman. The entire community is grateful to Beth for her commitment and time and I ask for your prayers :)

To help relieve the cost of this massive event, we are asking for individuals and organizations to consider sponsoring it at a variety of levels. Sponsoring this event will make it possible to use the money we raise towards furthering our L'Arche mission,

which cannot be done with government money. Many of you may know that the bulk of our funding comes from the government but this money can only be used for programmatic purposes, such as food, vans, housing, etc. What this money cannot be used for is any mission specific activity, such as retreats, trainings, formations, gatherings, etc. We love to send community members away to be formed in L'Arche because they invariably come back with a deeper sense of mission and commitment. Without your generous support and donations, no one would be able to attend. This also means the light of L'Arche is being

carried on and is being passed onto the next generation directly through your contributions. That's something to be proud of. We look forward to seeing you in November!



Jason & Meara

L'Arche Erie is a non-profit faith based organization striving to reveal God's love for all people by creating home with faithful relationships of mutuality lived between people with developmental disabilities and those who share life with them.



L'ARCHE ERIE

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