

## The Beginning of Our New Mandate

Mary Ann Zarnick

We had the privilege of having Sr. Anita Maroun, the Eastern Regional Coordinator of L'Arche, spend time visiting our community the first week of February. She provided community members with updates on what is happening on the International, Zone and Regional levels of L'Arche.

She introduced us to the "Community Mandate Process." This is a process that takes place approximately every four years in conjunction with the discernment process for community leader.

In this process, a committee will be formed to write a mandate based on the seven calls of L'Arche after gathering information from our core members,

assistants, board members and office personnel.

The mandate is like a strategic plan or road map. The committee will look at each "call" and formulate specific statements as to what L'Arche Erie will strive for over the next four years.

After looking at our current mandate and where we were, where we are and what the Community desires, this new mandate will become our on-going guide in supporting the Mission of L'Arche. We trust that God will direct this committee as they listen, reflect and write the community mandate for 2010-2014.



Sr. Anita Maroun

## Community Council Mary Davis

I have just finished my first year serving on Community Council and now have a deeper appreciation of the "behind the scenes" workings of L'Arche. The role of Council is to carry with respect and love the on-going life of the community and its members. We advise and accompany the Community Leader in decisions, questions, and future planning. Our responsibilities include: being familiar with Policy and Procedures, the International Charter, and all regulations and legal expectations. We also insure inclusive processes where community members are consulted in decisions affecting our community life. It can be a little overwhelming at times, but I'm learning a lot about what it means to be a part of the bigger picture and am enjoying my part in contributing to community life here.



Community Council

### A GREAT IDEA

In January, one of our Board members turned 50. Instead of receiving presents, she asked all her family and friends to donate to L'Arche Erie! We received almost \$900. What a great idea!

### Community Council's Responsibilities and Functions

- To advise and accompany the Community Leader in questions, decisions and planning
- Be familiar with Policy and Procedures, the International Charter and the legal expectations
- To make processes inclusive
- To plan for the future of our community
- To establish committees
- To undertake special projects as requested by the Community Leader

Council will consist of six members and the Community Leader, ideally, two members will be five year + assistants and two will be one-year + assistants.

Elections will be held every January, and anyone who has been a community member for one year may be nominated.

The term of office is two years and is staggered to provide continuity and stability. Consecutive terms may be served without limit.

Vacancies are filled via special elections.

## Who's Who in L'Arche Erie



Matt Johnson

Everyone knows how a friendly hello and a smile can make someone feel welcome. These simple attributes come to life in Matt Johnson. Matt lives at Heart's Garden with five of his friends. He takes pride in helping to cook dinner and assisting with daily household chores.

The fast pace of the real world has always challenged Matt to be his best. His love for hobbies has allowed him to grow and flourish in the L'Arche atmosphere. Matt is very active in Faith and Light, Special Olympics and weekly worship with our community and his parents.

Matt is a devout Catholic and enjoys attending St. Andrew church for weekly Mass. He is also a fanatic workout enthusiast. He exercises daily with his friends at the Glenwood YMCA. He enjoys weight training, cardio and basketball. Matt has always excelled when challenged by his companions.

Like so many others in L'Arche, Matt is learning to appreciate the necessary balance in establishing and maintaining relationships of mutuality. Love, respect, patience and loyalty are the fundamental building blocks of strong and healthy relationships. As Jean Vanier once said, "To love is to live a heart to heart relationship with another, giving and receiving from another."



Aaron Davis

I grew up in a small town 60 miles south of Erie. My main interest growing up was Star Wars, which served as an escape to the alienation I experienced in a struggling working class. I left home for the Air Force 10 days after graduation. Despite the military giving me a sense of accomplishment into my early 20s, I remained always feeling like there had to be more to life. My frustrations for adventure led me down a path filled with risks and thrill. I had a motorcycle accident that allowed me to experience broken bones, a permanent disability, and six months in a hospital. Many hours' reflection took place at this time and became the pivotal point of my life.

After a long recovery, I went to college off and on for three or four semesters in western New York. I began to move around a lot. I remained creative throughout my life and now had opportunity to play music and make art with people all over the country. In 2000, I returned to north western Pennsylvania. Here I found a simplicity that I did not notice growing up. By 2002, I worked at a whole foods cooperative and was slowly becoming aware of what I later learned to be L'Arche Erie. This introduction was through a core person who volunteered as a grocery bagger. I would make him smoothies and chat with him for hours about Star Wars. Our common interests were forming a bond of mutuality and a friendship. We still talk about those days when our paths cross. A couple of years later, I would meet a very special person that opened the L'Arche door that could not be shut. I would visit houses and play games, enjoy the love and share meals. I can honestly say the word "calling" would apply here. I've been in L'Arche for nearly five years and I cannot imagine it not being part of my life. I often think of this and the greater L'Arche community as a large family. Even as I continue to show interests in personal growth and experience, I somehow always try to find a way to apply it to my time with L'Arche. There may be struggles but I always come back to how much we are all together in the same boat. In my time away from Heart's Garden, I work on art projects and music that I want to some way further share the celebration of the L'Arche community. This year I was asked to be part of the pastoral team, and this opportunity has given me even more inspiration and has brought me to an even deeper understanding of how to bring gifts to L'Arche. I often look around during our gatherings and worships and realize all those stars in the sky I had been seeking for so long are now the community that surrounds me. This is home.



John Donnelly

Many of life's experiences have come to bear on everyday L'Arche situations I find myself -whether it was in the military (with its duty in Europe and Southeast Asia); working in hospitals, college, other nonprofits and private sector; or in attaining undergraduate and graduate degrees. Today and every day will present an occasion which connects me to my past experiences.

A unique characteristic of L'Arche is the "sense of belonging" or being part of a larger family (community) as an expansion of my biological one. My bride of more than four decades, Maureen, and I are blessed with two sons, two beautiful grandsons, and their priceless mother and two wonderful uncles.

L'Arche's organizational culture is one, I believe, the rest of the world craves. The L'Arche family is inviting and welcoming to all and, at a deeper level, a "calling" for many. The experience is a "thin place" (a Celtic expression where the natural and supernatural are close) where one senses the presence of God's love and peace in the chaos and challenges of everyday life.