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Beyond Intellectual  
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## Sue Mosteller and L'Arche Erie

I was lucky enough recently, along with Steve and Vicki Washek and Father George, to hear Sue Mosteller speak in Erie about the late Henri Nouwen's vision of fundraising. Sue came from Toronto on January 13 to speak to the Diocese of Erie priests and administrators about a possible new approach to raising funds. She outlined Nouwen's book, *The Spirituality of Fundraising*, and told us some moving stories about her life and the life of Henri.

Mosteller is a L'Arche 'celebrity', having served as Community Leader in Toronto and also as International Coordinator at the Federation. Sue continues

to live in the Daybreak Community outside Toronto, Ontario. Sue was named the executrix of Nouwen's literary estate and finished his last two books for him after he died in 1996.

Sue impressed upon us that fundraising is not begging, rather fundraising is a chance to invite others to join us on a journey together. She insisted we shouldn't approach people from poverty but rather from our strength; our strength as a faith community with a vision. Fundraising in L'Arche is about building relationships and spreading the Gospel and mission to new ears!



Jason Lavery



# L'ARCHE ERIE

## Winter Newsletter 2009-2010



### New Core Member

Welcoming core members is at the heart of our mission at L'Arche. The slow process of watching these beautiful human beings realize they are valued and respected is deeply moving. This past January, Bethany Home in Lake City had the privilege of welcoming Raymond M. to L'Arche Erie. Ray is 76 and has lived with his sister and brother-in-law for most of his life. Ray decided to come to Bethany after much reflection between him and his Supports Coordinator.

I was with Ray his first two days at Bethany Home. His

first night was a bit unusual because the team at Bethany was trying to learn about Ray and help him, while giving him as much independence as possible. Unfortunately, we had to do a fire drill in a snowstorm to make sure he could evacuate properly. Ray keeps saying "I'll stay here" and "it's nice here," which is very reassuring.

We found Ray is a calm and gentle man; he likes to watch "Jet TV" news and the sitcoms on after that. Ray likes being with Delores (they have been Retirement Center friends for a long time). He enjoys sipping on

Jason Lavery

coffee with his new housemates and definitely enjoys the culinary tradition that is L'Arche!

He stayed home from the Retirement Center on his second day and attended L'Arche's Chat n Chew lunch. Ray was able to meet more community members and again enjoyed our generous mealtime traditions. The transition is ongoing at this point, but Ray has seemed content and happy in his new community since he first walked through the door. Everyone in L'Arche looks forward to getting to know Ray better and revealing his wonderful gifts to the world.

L'Arche Erie is a faith-based community where life is shared between people with and without intellectual disabilities.



Jason & Ray

### Visions for the Future

In L'Arche Erie's 37-year history, we have been incredibly blessed to have been able to live out our mission of shared life between people with and without intellectual disabilities. An essential aspect of this mission is to enable men and women with an intellectual disability to express their gifts and so have an impact on the people around them and on the wider community. This can be so exciting! It calls us all to dream and envision wonderful things together!

Some of these dreams we hope to realize are:

- Finding new ways for the skills and talents of individuals with an intellectual disability to be celebrated in this world. During the day most of the core members

attend various programs and activities outside of L'Arche. Our community has always dreamed of developing daytime opportunities of our own.

Creativity, passion and fun are all vital aspects of this dream. Some ideas being thrown around currently are baking bread, making pottery, screen printing, a greenhouse, candle shop, soap shop, or cider mill. The core members would be involved in every aspect of planning, production, marketing and delivering goods to local vendors. How much joy there would be from seeing products made with our collective hands being sold at local stores!

- Ensuring that people will be able to stay in their homes and

neighborhoods as they get older and deal with the impacts of aging. There are issues of accessibility in most of our homes with second-floor bedrooms and stairs to get in and out of the home. We dream of renovating or replacing homes so that the changing needs of our members will be able to be met for many years.

- Empowering our members to be fully integrated and actively participating in their local neighborhood, their church and the wider community.

Working together toward these dreams can be an incredible testament of the L'Arche mission and a sign of hope in our world. I ask for your prayers to help us realize these dreams.

Peace in this New Year.

Vicki Washek



Brigid & Vicki

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## Pastoral Team 2010

Our pastoral team is committed to the spiritual life of L'Arche Erie, and we have started the new year with lots of enthusiasm and creativity.

"Embracing our brokenness" is our theme for 2010. We plan to incorporate this as we prepare our seasonal activities and our weekly worships throughout the year. The pastoral team consists of Vicki and six assistants, representing five of our eight homes. We come from a few different faith traditions and take turns leading the weekly worships. The spirituality of L'Arche helps to unite and inspire us. We encourage core members to share their talents and energy during worship- helping with singing, leading a prayer, holding a candle, etc.

Each person on the Pastoral Team is linked to one of our homes, to offer support and encouragement. We are avail-

able to help with prayers for special occasions and to attend the core member's yearly ISP (an annual meeting organized by the State Mental Health Department). This gives us input to plan retreats and other areas of interest for our core members. One important focus every year is the Community Life Review. It is always a great experience to honor each person and record their Sacred Story, with contributions from family and friends.

Plans for the new year include inviting some volunteers from the community to give us feedback on our worships and developing a stronger connection with the churches we attend. Even as we try new ideas, some of our favorite events will always be our traditional Taize, prayer and soup supper on Fridays during Lent, and Emmaus prayer where we share the gospel with Fr. George

## Commitment and Belonging

"How are commitment and belonging understood and lived out in L'Arche today?"

"What are the questions and concerns about commitment and belonging in L'Arche?"

"In light of what we have learned (from answering the preceding questions), what are... next steps?"

L'Arche's three-year Commitment and Belonging process aims to answer these three questions to improve support for membership and commitment in L'Arche. L'Arche Erie recently completed the first stage of this process. We prayed and shared about our experiences of commitment and belonging before and since coming to L'Arche.

The process took place in two parts. A community process, led by Community Life Coordinators Jess Haney and Jessie Ochalek, involved core members and assistants. Each house created a symbol of belonging and presented the symbol during community worship. In addition, a reflecting group of 11 people vol-

unteered to pray, reflect, and seek to discern common elements in their experiences of belonging and commitment. Sr. Anne McCarthy, a long-time friend of L'Arche Erie, facilitated the group's three meetings.

Reports from Erie's two processes went to Portland, Oregon, in mid-January to L'Arche USA's national reflecting group. Representatives from the three U.S. regions entered into prayer and discernment to identify such common elements as the strong relationship between commitment in L'Arche and our faith journeys or the importance of family in forming patterns of belonging. Bob Sackel from L'Arche Syracuse, who facilitated the national group, represented the U.S. in France at a late January meeting to discern the essential fruit from communities and reflecting groups worldwide.

Throughout this process, participants expressed gratitude for the opportunity to share, for the lives and experience of others in L'Arche, and for the process itself. People also had great hope that this intentional dis-

Connie Reinwald

leading lectio divina and then a meal together.

Everything happens Fridays at 4:00. Come join us in our community worship space at the Hearth; all are welcome!



Bob & Connie

Mary Ann Ramey

cernment may guide communities to support more wisely commitment and a sense of belonging in L'Arche.



## Thank you to the Sponsors of our 2009 L'Arche Dinner!

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## International Renewal

This summer I attended a mini- international renewal in Trosly, France. Gathered there were 14 members of the Federation for a month of formation. We were moved by our founding story and each other. The program was intense but allowed us to grow in our understanding of L'Arche's mission and values and what it means to be a member of an international family.

We spent our first week learning about the three elements of L'Arche—our professional, spiritual, and communal aspects. Our speakers were inspiring and shared lessons learned from many years in community. The highlight for me was a presentation on Pere Thomas. I grew to a greater appreciation of this humble and loving man as well as his place in our founding story. We also toured Trosly focusing on the history as well as current reality of the founding community.

We spent the second week sharing life in a French house. This was intimidating since I do not speak French. The community was in Pier-

refonds, and a castle sat outside the front door. Everyone was extremely welcoming, and fortunately a few spoke English including a Core Member! I was able to learn a little French and was able to bond through nonverbal ways. In a week, I was able to become a part of the house, and it was sad to leave but I will cherish my memories.

The third week was a silent retreat with Jean. I had been on retreat with him five years ago. I discovered that his message of love, justice, and peace does not change. However, I discovered that I have changed in that time. Community life and L'Arche have molded me into who I am today. Jean has such a gift to proclaim the gospel and be present to others that this time truly was a blessing.

The fourth week included formation on identity and mission and evaluating and presenting our communities with regards to this. We also spent time reflecting on what we had lived together as well as how we would share that with our communities. We ended with a celebration of



## Community Life Coordinator Updates

Jess Ochalek & Jess Haney

WOW! We've been in our roles as Community Life Coordinators for six months. First, we would like to thank the board for recognizing the necessity for such a support system for our community. On a more personal level, we would like to express our gratitude to the community for affirming our gifts and for believing in our potential for growth in calling us into this new role.

We have dearly appreciated the opportunity of visiting other homes on a regular basis, getting to know assistants and core members better. It has been life-giving to be walking with new Team Leaders and an honor to be accompanying Home Life Coordinators (HLCs) in their roles. We have been humbled by the trust that our HLCs have in our experience and knowledge.

As we have been able to be embedded more deeply into each home of the community, we have gained a greater perspective on the life of our community on a day-to-day basis. We have observed many gifts and strengths which our community has, and we have also observed some of our weaknesses. One of these weaknesses is the lack of a structured formation of L'Arche for assistants and core members, which makes it chal-

lenging for individuals to take ownership of the community. Another weakness is that it is challenging for individuals and houses to grasp a sense of solidarity among houses in L'Arche Erie and throughout L'Arche International.

We would like to end with recognizing the strengths of our community. We have a sense that our houses are filled with people who have good, warm hearts. There is a good sense of mutuality between core members and assistants. Finally, it is important to recognize the gift of prayer not only that we have each night in our homes, but also that we come together weekly for community worship.



Team Jess

Molly Brechtel

our graduation from the program.

Looking back, the renewal seems like a dream. I learned so much, experienced so much, and returned not as the same assistant that had left a month prior. I feel that my own inner light has been nurtured by our founding light in Trosly as well as the lights of L'Arche that shine all over the world. Thank you to L'Arche International for offering this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and for my own community's support.



Jean & Molly