

One Person
By Trish Glennon

Every September, we celebrate Solidarity month in our community. In our gatherings and events, we reflect on the way our mission in L'Arche calls us to recognize our need for one another — that across all of our differences, we live from the same values and desire for respect, dignity and belonging.

At our Solidarity retreat day, we reflected on the theme: One Person. It was inspired by a beloved phrase that one of our core members, John Smeltzer, used often. John had a particular way of noticing and celebrating each person that he met. Often, when he wanted to give a special shout-out to one person in a group, he would emphatically announce: "And now, there's one person! One person..."

Inspired by John, we asked several of our community members who have lived in other L'Arche communities to reflect and tell us about one person they met in those communities who made a difference or inspired them. We heard many beautiful stories from around the world. Daniela shared about Moises, whom she lived with in L'Arche Quertero in Mexico. Moises made sure no one is left out. For example, he ensured a meal was saved for the person who might be late to dinner. As the founding core member of his community, he stood up during a very difficult time in



Adam Whaley, Letlet Paulino, Joey Shulist and Andrius Vitkanus gathered at Daybreak's Solidarity Retreat Day.

our history and told his community, "I too am a founder. I love you. And I will not hurt you." Prince, a young assistant originally from India, found friendship with Nora, an elder core member in L'Arche in Ireland. Nora kept everyone on schedule and had a gift for turning a bad day into a good day by offering her big hugs to those who needed them most. Liska found companionship with Sylvia in L'Arche in Italy. Sylvia didn't use words, and when Liska arrived as an assistant, she didn't speak Italian. Their connection was built in the deep listening that happens beyond words. Kathy Baroody shared about Suma, whose name means moonlight. Kathy still visits Suma, who

helped to found the former L'Arche community in Bethany. She treasures Suma's gift for remembering and for creating a sense of belonging among those with whom she lives. Our efforts in building community, in peace-making, in making the world a more inclusive and hopeful place often start with one person — and through these relationships our hearts can become bigger, our viewpoints expanded, and we can see that even in all of our differences, we can find connection. We are grateful for the one person who inspired these assistants, who now continue their L'Arche journey here at Daybreak. We give thanks for the one person and the many people in our lives who lead us and inspire us to keep our hearts open.

A Reflection by Henri Nouwen
Here and Now
Living in the Spirit

Birthdays need to be celebrated. I think it is more important to celebrate a birthday than a successful exam, a promotion, or a victory. Because to celebrate a birthday means to say to someone: "Thank you for being you." Celebrating a birthday is exalting life and being glad for it. On a birthday we do not say: "Thanks for what you did, or said, or accomplished." No, we say: "Thank you for being born and being among us."

On birthdays we celebrate the present. We do not complain about what happened or speculate about what will happen, but we lift someone up and let everyone say: "We love you."

I know a friend who, on his birthday, is picked up by his friends, carried to the bathroom, and thrown clothes and all into a tub full of water. Everyone eagerly awaits his birthday, even he himself. I have no idea where this tradition came from, but to be lifted up and "re-baptized" seems like a very good way to have your life celebrated.

Celebrating a birthday reminds us of the goodness of life, and in this spirit we really need to celebrate people's birthdays everyday, by showing gratitude, kindness, forgiveness, gentleness, and affection. These are ways of saying: "it's good that you are alive; it's good that you are walking with me on this earth. Let's be glad and rejoice. This is the day that God has made for us to be and to be together."



Helen Schlichter enjoyed her 80th birthday with a celebratory gathering of family and friends at the Meeting Hall.



Community Notes



Club Leader Fran Johnstone received a blessing for her retirement.

The Craft Studio participated with a table at York Pride in Newmarket on the weekend of June 21st. Handmade candles, pottery and paper designed with Pride in mind were part of the colourful display.

Fran Johnstone's retirement blessing took place in August at the Dayspring where we took the opportunity to celebrate her. Fran started at Daybreak in 2012 at the Craft Studio, and eventually became leader of the Club. She will be missed by her many friends in the community.

The Office Volunteer Lunch was held on August 20th. This group of volunteers assist with our annual mailings, including our newsletter and holiday appeal. We are very grateful for their continued support.

The fall's New Assistant Orientation took place during the first week of September. This is a time when we welcome our newest cohort of assistants who have come to experience life in the community and where they learn more about L'Arche Daybreak.

Our Solidarity Retreat Day at Dayspring themed "One Person," highlighted stories of friendship. Members of our community shared stories of their friendships from L'Arche communities around the world. The day also featured music, lunch, and a celebration of our global L'Arche family.

Hanul Kim and Carlos Maciel welcomed their first child, Leon Hajin Maciel, on September 12th. Everyone is doing wonderfully. Hanul was the house leader at the New House from 2017 until 2022.

Debbie Dew and David Plaxton were celebrated with a wedding shower held at the Meeting Hall where we shared our best wishes, offered wisdom and enjoyed cake. They were married in front of their family and friends on September 13th. Liska Stefko was the officiant on this special occasion.

The Barn Dance for Solidarity rocked the Barn on Friday, September 19th. Our community came together for a fun evening filled with dancing and music by DJ Freda from Corner House, all while raising funds for Solidarity.

Connecting the Community, a gathering focused on community building in Richmond Hill, was held at Daybreak on September 30th. We were honoured to have Mayor David West and Councillor Scott Thompson in attendance. The Mayor spoke about the importance of the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation.



Debbie Dew and David Plaxton were married on September 13th.

Community Wish List

Humidifier.....	\$150
Kitchen Knives.....	\$200
Cleaning Supplies	\$200
Arts & Crafts Supplies.....	\$250
Stainless Steel Table.....	\$300
Bannetons for Bread Proofing.....	\$300
Porch Swing	\$450
Pillows for all homes	\$800
Baking Tins	\$900
BBQ	\$1000
End Tables and Lamps	\$1000
Twin Comforters for all homes	\$2000
Twin Sheets for all homes.....	\$2000

For more information, please call Carol-Anne Forsythe at L'Arche Daybreak's Development Office at (905) 884-3454, ext. 285.

L'Arche Connection By Marc Wopereis and Lisette Tel



Marc Wopereis, Amanda Winnington-Ingram and Lisette Tel shared time together after the Monday morning Dayspring service.

Thirteen years ago we were members of the founding group of our community in Haarlem, the Netherlands. We began our community with a founding group, and thanks to the Sisters of the Good Shepherd, a Catholic religious order, we were able to utilize their old buildings to get started. We had a great first ten years, building a home, an atelier, a farm, and a community, with weekly celebrations and meals and a lot of volunteers. We became know as De Ark Haarlem within the L'Arche International Federation. Over the years, we visited communities in Germany, the U.K. and France (Trosly).

Marc stepped down as community leader in October 2024, and we both wanted to take a break and travel. We were curious about other L'Arche communities, their successes and challenges, and how they deal with them. Most of all, we wanted to make connections with other people in L'Arche: our extended family.

We began visiting L'Arche communities in North America in January. To date, we have visited 22 communities and despite all the differences between people, cultures, and communities, every encounter felt like coming home. People were very welcoming and enthusiastic, eager to hear about our travels, but also pleased to share their own stories. We thoroughly enjoyed the presence of people from various nationalities in each of the homes we visited. We also saw some of the struggles of community life and recognized that the changing times pose challenges to the communities in many ways. We learned that communities can face considerable difficulties for a while, but that the spirit

of L'Arche is strong enough to overcome crises.

What resonated most in our experiences here in North America is the position and role of the core members. They are being taken seriously in their need to belong, to contribute, to value their life as meaningful and important to others and to society. We had many lasting impressions, but the moments we were intentionally blessed by core members and assistants with prayers, gratitude, candlelight and welcome posters all stand out. And all the moments we were unintentionally blessed by warm welcomes, hugs, and handshakes.

We believe that relationship building and belonging should continue to remain the core business of L'Arche. We experienced being so welcomed that we feel like we belong to a worldwide community that focuses on the 'us', not just on 'me'. It's an answer to loneliness, individuality, poverty, discrimination and hate. Independence, in our view can isolate people and deprive them of companionship and a sense of belonging.

We experieced that sharing a meal is the most practical, intentional, and essential way to build relationships and community. It's more than cooking the food and setting the table. It needs preparation, attention and guidance from start to finish. We also felt the power of belonging to our own community, our city and our country. Although we learned to love North America and appreciated our time in the L'Arche Communities, we missed our children, family, friends, and our own community. We are looking forward to meeting them in person again. ✦

L'ARCHE DAYBREAK

The L'Arche Daybreak community is a dynamic example of how people of different intellectual capacity, social origin, religion and culture can live and learn together.

The first L'Arche community in North America, L'Arche Daybreak began in 1969 and now includes eight homes in Richmond Hill, several day programs of creative activities, and the Dayspring Spiritual Centre.

WORSHIP SERVICES

Our Community Prayer Time is held on Monday mornings at 10:30 a.m.



L'ARCHE

In a world that often sees people with intellectual disabilities as less than whole, L'Arche celebrates their creativity, transparency and great capacity for joy as important gifts to be shared. Started in France in 1964, L'Arche has become an international movement with over 150 communities throughout the world.

"What makes us human is not our mind but our heart, not our ability to think but our ability to love."

—Henri Nouwen



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Daybreak Newsbreak

Remembering Tom Krysiak

Tom Krysiak died on September 4th. This is an excerpt from his eulogy given by Debbie Dew.

Tom was one of a kind. Truly unforgettable. He was the kind of person who made you feel seen, cherished, and a little more joyful just by being in his presence. He was vibrant, caring, and funny — and as Steve Knezevic once said, "you are the most interesting man in the world."

There were so many things that Tom loved. He loved his birthday — September 12th (if you hadn't heard.) This year, he would have turned 65. He talked about his birthday in recent times, throughout the whole year. Tom also loved to celebrate others' birthdays. One year, he and I went to Swiss Chalet for my birthday. Yougin, his house leader at the time, took him to buy a card for me. He presented me with two cards — one that said 'Happy Birthday Niece' and one that had David Hasselhoff on the front! Over cake, he turned to me and said, "We family together."

Tom loved his home at 47 Centre Street, where he lived for 22 years, and later, Pine House. He created a home with the many assistants he lived with over the years. Many were away from their families. The current team at Pine House made a home for Tom and he welcomed them in to take care of him in his final days.

Tom loved his family — his beloved mom, Nellie, his stepdad, Zbyszek, and his sister, Eva, and brother-in-law George. I had a chance to speak with Eva, and Tom's profound impact was clear from the beginning. She shared that back in the day, people with Down syndrome were hidden away. Nellie didn't want that for Tom. She did not send him away; instead, she enrolled him in a mainstream school. One day, Tom came home from school, sat on the floor, and looked visibly sad. Nellie asked him what was wrong, and he said, "I am different." He realized that he was different from the other kids at school. Tom's difference was a gift. I



Tom Krysiak and Debbie Dew shared a long friendship while working alongside each other at the Craft Studio.

am not sure where the sadness turned to joy, but I am certain it had to do with his mom's unwavering love and support. He embraced it. He lived out loud and with such authenticity.

Tom was an artist. He never took an art class. He didn't need to. The images came from his heart, straight onto the page. He drew the places that shaped him: The Craft Studio, the Woodery, 47 Centre Street, and the Dayspring. These drawings often featured people from his community, usually accompanied by police cars and fire trucks. He drew his place in our lives — right in the middle, close to us. When friends were getting married, he loved to draw the Bride and the Groom with himself right in the centre because that's where he wanted to be: right in the middle of life, right in the middle of love. Tom drew emotion: When Lissie, a volunteer at the studio, lost her husband, Tom drew a picture of Gustar in his coffin, with waterfalls pouring from Lissie's eyes. He felt her pain.

Two pieces of Tom's artwork offer insight into his spirituality and capacity for love. Trish was on retreat with Tom when he drew a picture of himself with God. God had his arm around Tom and around an empty space on the opposite side. Trish asked, "Who is the empty space for?" Tom replied, "You." Tom kept us close to God.

When Tomek was with Tom in Lourdes, he drew a picture of a man with long hair, which he identified as Jesus standing with him. The figure of Tom had a space missing in his chest. When Tomek asked, "What is on your chest?" Tom said, "An empty heart so that Jesus can come in." Tom held space in his heart for Jesus, a space that was big enough for all of us as well.

The studio was commissioned to paint a series of paintings depicting Peace, Hope, Joy, and Love. Tom painted Love. This painting depicts a man with his arms outstretched with a bright red heart. This is Tom. He lives with an open heart for all and shares all the love he has inside.

From a boy who realized he was different, to a man whose difference inspired us to live freely and authentically, Tom calls us to dance like everyone is watching. ✦



Tom loved celebrating birthdays.