



## A Note from Our Executive Director and Community Leader, Raphael Arens

We are only four months into the new year, but it seems that L'Arche Toronto has already experienced a year's worth of change, challenge, and new life. Priorities and goals that have emerged from within the community as well as from outside have led us to review and adapt our ways of sharing life together and supporting one another.

On January 1, 2018, Bill 148, Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act, became law in Ontario. Along with the laudable aspects of this new legislation, we are faced with the financial challenges that it poses. In addition to the need to create a new rhythm for our live-in assistants, the implementation requires a significant increase in the funds necessary to integrate all aspects of the law into our community life.

Throughout these past months we have been working diligently with our representatives from the Ministry of Community and Social Services to raise awareness of the precarious financial situation of L'Arche Toronto.

In collaboration with our partners, OASIS, Ontario Agencies Supporting Individuals with Special Needs, we have lobbied the government for a substantial increase in funding.

Despite these significant financial concerns, I am happy to share with you that our community continues to thrive and grow. Our Trying It on For Size (TIFS) program started at the beginning of the year; our Sol Express program has expanded to five days a week and will have a Summer Program; and Sol Express will hold an art show in June as well as perform for a second time at the Fringe Festival in July.

We certainly hope to welcome you at these wonderful events as well as to our main fundraiser, Twist n' Sip on May 31, 2018. At times of increased financial insecurity, fundraising activities are more important than ever. We invite you to continue your support of L'Arche Toronto by participating. You will help us sustain and nurture our community as we work to create a world where everyone belongs.

## What a wonderful possibility!



The Riverdale apartment is ready. The walls are freshly painted, the cupboards are clean, and the sun pours into the front room. We officially launched Trying It on For Size (TIFS) at the beginning of 2018 after learning about Community Living Toronto's (CLT) successful program. TIFS was created in response to the need for opportunities for young people with intellectual disabilities who desire to have more autonomy in their lives.

TIFS offers individuals a safe environment in which to evaluate their independent living skills and creates opportunities for personal growth. Participants gain

experience in living independently, explore decision making, build their self-confidence and learn practical ways to identify their strengths, as well as, those areas where more support may be needed to be successful. CLT has been an excellent source of support and knowledge as we developed the TIFS curriculum, with uniqueness shaped by the values specific to L'Arche. TIFS' innovative, well-rounded approach enables participants to explore independent living through a person-centered curriculum and experiential learning. Participants increase their self-confidence and their capacity to discover their own places of belonging. L'Arche Toronto's TIFS program has an emphasis placed on the value of relationships, belonging and community, alongside building life skills.

Living independently does not mean living in isolation. TIFS participants will learn how to build and nurture relationships, be able to explore their dreams, and experience possibilities that they never could have imagined. Riverdale is ready and waiting to welcome TIFS participants.

For more information, please contact, Amanda Hickey, at [amanda@larchtoronto.org](mailto:amanda@larchtoronto.org), or call 416-406-2869, x22.

# ANOTHER FULL AND FRUITFUL YEAR!



L'Arche Toronto Sol Express is having a full and fruitful year! Following a successful run of *Seasons* last summer in the Toronto Fringe Festival 2017, Sol Express returns this year to the Fringe with a new performance called *Birds Make Me Think About Freedom*. The title is the creation of an institutional survivor who is helping to guide our process.

Members of Sol Express initially began by looking at themes of freedom, choice and safety. As they are currently in the midst of researching, listening to stories and meeting with survivors and family members, the aim is to hold this collective wisdom and, through the metaphor of birds, create a performance piece that is both truthful and hopeful.

Sol Express is also preparing for an art exhibit at the Papermill Gallery at Todmorden Mills, June 26 to July 8. The group has been studying diverse artists and exploring various styles of work in order to develop individual interests. Some participants have also gained inspiration by recently visiting several exhibits at the Art Gallery of Ontario.

The Toronto Fringe Festival runs from July 4 to 15, 2018, at multiple venues in the city. Check out the website at <https://fringetoronto.com/festivals/fringe> for updates on performance dates and venues for *Birds Make Me Think About Freedom*.

## Staying Connected with L'Arche Toronto



As I left the birthday dinner that Mortimer House hosted for me, holding my homemade birthday sign and the flowers chosen by Andrea, I once again reflected on how L'Arche Toronto continues to offer me more than I could ever give back.

When I first came to L'Arche ten years ago, I imagined that my time would be spent giving, but I didn't grasp what I would receive in return. So much of what I value today about my own household came from my time as an assistant: the meal as a sacred time of gathering, connection (no phones please) and simplicity, leaving more time and room to enjoy what matters – the people in our lives. My life has certainly changed a lot over the last decade, and I am touched by the welcome my growing family also receives. Indeed, at the birthday dinner when I apologized for my toddler's less-than-ideal table manners, what instead followed was not only the reassurance from the members of the house that they'd seen worse but also an impromptu game of catch at the table to keep him engaged.

About a year ago I was very happy to accept a position as a volunteer board member for L'Arche Toronto, bringing to the group the perspective of a recent assistant. The board meets one evening a month to discuss the community's well-being, including finances and strategic long-term decisions that reflect the community's desires and values. My 9-to-5 world doesn't always jive with community life, and I saw this as an opportunity to stay connected and give back.

Once again coming from an optic that I would only be giving, I am surprised by what I have received from being on the board. Each meeting grounds me as it holds something of the sacred of L'Arche – from the initial short reflection to the respectful listening of all voices. Being on the board has given me a deeper understanding of the challenges that the community faces and a firmer grasp on what it offers to the wider world with programs such as TIFS and Sol Express that reach well beyond the homes. – **Bronwyn Hannelas**

# INVESTING IN JUSTICE FOR INSTITUTIONAL SURVIVORS

By John Guido

There is a cemetery in Orillia where most of the graves are unmarked. The people buried there were residents of Huronia Regional Centre. In the government's 2013 apology, Premier Wynne acknowledged, "Their humanity was undermined; they were separated from their families and robbed of their potential, their comfort, safety and their dignity."

The apology was mandated in the \$35M settlement of the class-action suit brought by survivors of Huronia, Rideau, and Southwest regional centres. After a painful claims process, over \$7M remained. Groups were invited to propose projects that would directly benefit survivors in a process entitled *Investing in Justice*.

L'Arche Toronto felt called to participate. We recalled that L'Arche began when Jean Vanier invited Raphaël Simi, Philippe Seux and other men who lived in institutions to make a home with him. For over 50 years, L'Arche communities have supported survivors in their journeys to new life.

We submitted three proposals, and all were accepted.

- *Supporting the Supporters of Institutional Survivors* consists of two formation sessions for people who are engaged in supporting survivors. The sessions will be conducted by institutional survivors and siblings of former institutional residents. Madeline Burghardt coordinates the project.
- *Healing and Belonging* will help two survivors with more complex needs to continue to heal, increase their personal networks, and participate in the wider community in meaningful ways. Jane Powell coordinates this project with the respective house leaders and circles of support.
- *Birds Make Me Think About Freedom* will create a multimedia performance to teach people about the lives and strengths of survivors. "Survivor guides" are shaping the process of listening to the experience of survivors and family members that will be developed into a theatre piece by Sol Express. Cheryl Zinyk and Victoria Freeman with Matt Rawlins coordinate this project.

L'Arche Toronto is also supporting a project called *Lost but not Forgotten*, an annual memorial to honour the people buried in that cemetery in Orillia. For the past two years, L'Arche members have participated in this powerful act of remembrance.

These projects began in January and will be completed by June 2019. In each, we will be guided by survivors. We will create videos to share what we have learned. We hope they will help survivors and their supporters, and educate people who don't know what happened in the institutions. We can't undo the harm of the past, but we can ensure that we don't forget it, and we can support the survivors and help create a world where everyone belongs.



## COMMUNITY WISH LIST

Shower Caddy and Bathmat \$50  
Set of Pots and Pans \$225  
Paper shredder \$500  
Desktop Computers \$825  
Laptop Computers (five needed) \$850  
Framing of Sol Express artwork \$1,500  
Apple I Mac Computer \$1,500  
Professional Camera \$2,500

Smart Stove for TIFS accommodation \$3,000  
Dishwasher for the Gathering Place \$7,000  
Wheelchair accessible van \$45,000

For more information, please call Caroline Hughey at L'Arche Toronto's Development Office 416-406-2869 ext. 35.

# Join us for the 3rd Annual Twist n' Sip for L'Arche Toronto

## Everyone Belongs Monthly Donor Campaign

Sign up as a monthly donor to support women and men with intellectual disabilities and help grow our community. As a monthly donor, you will help create a stable income for L'Arche Toronto throughout the year. To be part of this exciting adventure, sign up at [www.larchetoronto.org/everyonebelongs/](http://www.larchetoronto.org/everyonebelongs/)



Yes, I would like to make a donation to sponsor (individual or team name) at the Twist n' Sip

SINGLE GIFT:  \$250  \$100  \$75  \$50  OTHER

### PAYMENT METHOD

Visa  Mastercard  Cheque (payable to L'Arche Toronto Homes Inc.)

CARD NUMBER: \_\_\_\_\_ EXPIRY: \_\_\_\_\_

CARDHOLDER'S NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE #: \_\_\_\_\_

You can also donate online at [www.larchetoronto.org/twistnsip/](http://www.larchetoronto.org/twistnsip/) or call 416-406-2869 x 35

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"Fundraising is proclaiming what we believe in such a way that we offer other people an opportunity to participate with us in our vision and mission." – Henri Nouwen



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