



THE

GATHERINGS

WINTER 2017

A NOTE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND COMMUNITY LEADER, RAPHAEL ARENS



We have been busy at L'Arche Toronto over the last eight months, and are all looking forward to spending time with family and friends over the holiday season. This is a time of community traditions – decorating our Christmas trees, getting together at the annual Carol Service, welcoming neighbours and friends to Open Houses at each of our homes, and having Christmas Day celebrations.

This newsletter offers a glimpse into all the exciting developments of the past months. For instance, the community has come together to develop and approve a new four-year strategic plan that focuses on three priority areas. As a result of this process, new areas of growth have been identified, starting with our Try It on for Size (TIFS) program to be launched in early 2018 for individuals who dream of moving into a place of their own one day. We will continue to work on developing more ideas for innovative housing models.

This year Sol Express delighted seven great audiences at the Toronto Fringe Festival with its performance of a new show called Seasons, created and produced by Sol Express and in collaboration with visiting artists. In addition, members of Sol Express were honoured to take part in the L'Arche International Federation Assembly in Belfast with other L'Arche members from all over the world.

We have continued our fundraising efforts to support core member access to meaningful daytime activities with the successful Twist 'n' Sip event and the Harvest Howl for L'Arche Toronto Sol Express. For #GivingTuesday, we launched a campaign to purchase a new fully accessible wheelchair mini-van. Read about all this and more in the following pages.

May a feeling of home and belonging be present for you throughout this holiday season and into the New Year. Best Wishes!

Seasons – A WONDERFUL SUCCESS AT THE FRINGE!



L'Arche Toronto's Sol Express showcased Seasons at the Toronto Fringe Festival from July 7 to 16, 2017, with seven performances that were attended by over 600 people. An interdisciplinary collaborative arts project,

Seasons was produced in partnership with artist Angela Blumberg and four visiting artists.

The project explored life through the lens of the seasons in an hour of movement, music, poetry, film, and clowning. While working with the visiting artists, Sol Express participants reflected on each season – exploring how the season looked, felt, sounded, smelled and tasted. Over many months the artists workshopped and fit together the creative pieces – rehearsing, creating masks and collages, and developing characters and costumes.

Everyone benefitted from spending time with the visiting artists, performing on stage, making new connections, and having an impact on the wider community. Sol Express connected with people who were beyond our circle of family and friends. Audience members included community artists, members of the disability arts culture, and others who may not have ever experienced theatre with people who have been labeled with a developmental disability.

This September, Sol Express members returned to their program with a greater sense of confidence and motivation. Participants spoke about growing as artists and looking forward to new opportunities. They expressed appreciation of working on a team and creating Seasons together with artists, fellow participants, and volunteers. "We are now living our time together with renewed energy!"

"Seasons ... was a really excellent production with a great cast of professional, well-rehearsed actors and a really

strong script. The ways that both the production and the actors integrated accessibility into the aesthetics of the play were effective, innovative, and – I think – precedent-setting ... Fantastic show – all should be congratulated!" Eliza Chandler, former Artistic Director of Tangled Arts + Disability

Special thanks to Angela Blumberg, Natalie Breton, Katherine Duncanson, Sasha Pierce, David Rawlins, Alison Bjerkseth, and the Ontario Arts Council.

BELFAST 2017 - A FEW REFLECTIONS by Kathleen Bomers



How often in life do you find yourself waving ribbons over your head in a church on a sunny hill in Ireland, blowing bubbles at Italians, or singing a song in Swahili? This past June, I was reminded again of L'Arche's strange ability to bring about just such random, joyful situations, starting from the simplest of foundations. I was reminded again of how the unexpected power in that little house in Trosly-Breuil was able to change the world.

It was a privilege to be able to travel to Belfast as one of L'Arche Toronto's representatives to the L'Arche International Federation Assembly. Every five years, delegates gather to spend a week together to join in fellowship and information sharing, and to vote on a new International Mandate and leadership team.

Together with Chris Butler, I spent a week attending presentations and workshops on a wide variety of topics. We heard from Michael McDonald, the filmmaker behind the As I Am web video series, who told stories of his experiences in the various communities where he made each film. We also attended workshops with members of L'Arche Kenya, who taught us about the importance of hospitality. In Kenyan culture, "the first priority is the person immediately in front of you" – a belief that doesn't help people to be very punctual for appointments, our host joked, but that can help keep

our L'Arche mission alive when meetings and emails and paperwork threaten to overwhelm our days.

We also heard from Nathan Ball, who reminded us that fundraising is a crucial mission for L'Arche everywhere. As he put it, L'Arche is like a bus and money is like gas – we need to keep filling up with gas in order for the bus to go. If we keep reminding ourselves of what a great and worthwhile bus we've got, it no longer seems so difficult or awkward to ask for money.

We elected our new International Leader, Stephan Posner, and Vice-International Leader, Stacey Cates-Carney. Wearing their captain's hats, they stood ready to take charge of our L'Arche Ark for the next five years, as the rest of us danced and cheered. We voted for the new International Mandate, which was written on a giant cloth banner and passed around the hall so each person had a chance to hold it up. Throughout we watched Sol Express members Nick, Andreas, and Matt represent Toronto as frontline members of the Drama Team which animated each gathering.

As always in L'Arche, mealtimes were the heartbeat of our time together and the times of the greatest fellowship and learning. Chris and I met new people at each meal and learned about life and L'Arche in many places. Each new friend we made would cross our path throughout the rest of the week, so that by the end, everywhere we walked there were smiles and waves of "hello."

Thinking about that week, my mind always returns to Toronto, to the lives we're all living in our homes and community spaces each day. Seeing that room full of diverse people from over a hundred different countries, all coming together in complete solidarity, fellowship, openness, and joy, I suddenly found myself faced with a view of L'Arche as the worldwide source of power for change that it is – a very quiet, slow, humble, almost invisible, but unstoppable force for good in our world.



ANNOUNCING OUR NEW STRATEGIC PLAN FOR 2017-2021

Over the last few months, the L'Arche Toronto community has been meeting to develop L'Arche Toronto's Strategic Plan for 2017-2021. This exciting process has included input from core members, community members, volunteers, assistants, the leadership team, and the board. Developed through many hours of reflection and consultation, the Strategic Plan was approved by the Board of Directors at its October meeting. The strategic plan identified three priority areas – Servant Leadership, Outreach, and Mission and Growth.

SERVANT LEADERSHIP

Goal – We will provide opportunities for members to develop and share their gifts and skills as leaders shaped by the core values of L'Arche.

Strategies

1. Integrate Servant Leadership practices and tools into all aspects of our community life.
2. Identify opportunities within and outside L'Arche that will enhance members' leadership skills and foster their personal growth and development.
3. Strengthen all current training, formation, and reflective practices within the community.

OUTREACH

Goal – We will boldly engage with society to share our vision, reveal the value of people with intellectual

disabilities, and ensure that L'Arche is more visible in our neighbourhoods and throughout the city of Toronto.

Strategies

1. Enhance the visibility and impact of Sol Express.
2. Develop and implement a strategic outreach plan.
3. Identify, pursue, and secure stable funding.

MISSION AND GROWTH

Goal – Rooted in our mission and committed to sharing it, we will grow to serve more people and enhance support to our current core members.

Strategies

1. Strengthen residential supports for our current core members.
2. Explore and pursue alternative residential options and programs to welcome and support more people.
3. Expand Sol Express and establish additional creative daytime options.

Try It on for Size (TIFS) is one of the exciting programs that has come from the Strategic Plan. Program implementation will begin early in the new year and will focus on assisting and supporting individuals with intellectual disability to build skills and readiness as they prepare to live independently, with supports, and secure and maintain access to community activities and programs. Watch for further updates!

GIVE THE GIFT OF MOBILITY!!

Women and men with physical and intellectual disabilities need accessible transportation in order to get where they need and want to go! Be it to their day programs, their employment or volunteer positions, or to visit Variety Village to have a swim with their L'Arche support assistant. An accessible vehicle also ensures

that people with mobility challenges can easily reach their various medical appointments and be able to participate in recreational outings.

L'Arche Toronto's aging wheelchair-accessible van needs to be replaced. It has faithfully transported numerous individuals on a daily or weekly basis over many years. Vans should ideally be replaced every eight to ten years in order to ensure their safety and reliability. Without these vehicles, our core members' quality of life would suffer tremendously; and as the women and men we support age, the need increases. In other words, L'Arche Toronto cannot deliver on its mission to 'create a world where everyone belongs' without the ongoing support of a new fully accessible wheelchair van.

An additional \$23,000 would allow us to purchase a new van. Please help by making a donation today at www.larchetoronto.org/donate/mobility/.



Thank you for your generosity!

As the holiday season is upon us and we prepare for the new year, we'd like to say thank you to everyone who contributed to L'Arche Toronto's recent fundraising events and to all who took part in the Twist 'n' Sip and the Harvest Howl Open Mic.

TWIST 'N' SIP - JUNE 8, 2017, AT CROW'S THEATRE



— RAISED: \$72,000!

THANKS TO OUR CORPORATE SPONSORS



HARVEST HOWL OPEN MIC - OCTOBER 25, 2017, AT DORA KEOGH IRISH PUB



— RAISED: \$12,500!

THANKS TO OUR CORPORATE SPONSORS



And special thanks to Joan Curran, David Herd, and all the boys in Work in Progress, our band.



EVERYONE BELONGS MONTHLY DONOR CAMPAIGN

You can sign up as a monthly donor today to support adults with intellectual disabilities and help grow our community. Get started at www.larchetoronto.org/donate/everyonebelongs/

My name is _____ and I will help create a world where everyone belongs!

☐ MONTHLY GIFT:

☐ \$60/mth ☐ \$40/mth ☐ \$30/mth ☐ \$20/mth
☐ OTHER

☐ 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: _____

SIGNATURE: _____

PHONE #: _____

You can also donate online at
www.larchetoronto.org/donate
or call 416-406-2869 x 35

DEC17

"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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