



L'ARCHE®  
london

# Connection

Spring 2022



# 25

YEARS

*Celebrating 25 Years of  
Friendship & Inclusivity*  
1997-2022

## *Mission Statement*

*"We are people with and without intellectual disabilities, sharing life in community... we celebrate the unique value of every person and recognize our need of one another. Mutual relationships and trust in God are at the heart of our journey together."*

# THE DRUMMING CIRCLE

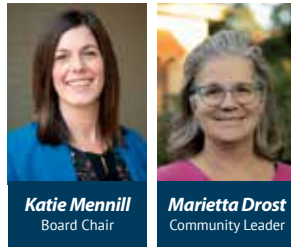
By Laurel Martin



After two years, our Drumming Circle is back in person at the Gathering Place! It is an amazing feeling to welcome people back to the circle and share our rhythms together after such a long time. While our other music programs transitioned online during COVID, it was decided that Drumming would be put on hold. I was not sure how it would feel to meet back in person at this time while we are still maintaining physical distancing, wearing masks, doing COVID screenings. Well, it feels great! In spite of the changes we've had to make to ensure safety, the happiness, hope and healing of the drum circle has not missed a beat! Some people in the circle were part of our drum circle pre-COVID, while others we are meeting for the first time. People of all ages and abilities are finding it to be a nice time of community connection and stress release. Maybe you want to consider joining us for one of our six week sessions? Contact me at laurel@larchelondon.org if you are interested.

# KATIE AND MARIETTA'S MESSAGE

By Marietta Drost



**Katie Mennill**  
Board Chair

**Marietta Drost**  
Community Leader

Last evening Jim and I attended the 25th Anniversary of Father Tom's priesthood. It was a beautiful evening, that ended with a church service where Tom shared about his journey into the priesthood, his years of service to people and the community, and his reflection on what is most important now that he is a retired priest. A part of his journey involved leading the L'Arche Stratford Community, being a member of L'Arche London's founding Board of Directors and walking with this L'Arche London community these 25 years. I was touched when Tom shared that it really comes down to love. Loving our neighbour as ourselves is the fundamental ingredient of a growing community, all else can be considered unimportant.

This year, L'Arche London is celebrating 25 years of journeying together here in our city. On our drive to Thamesville last evening, Jim and I recalled how he and his parents Carole and Vince had a dream that L'Arche be planted in London. We remembered how we, along with Toinette and Tony and others, were part of the original Faith and Light community here in London. There were people of that group who were part of the founding of L'Arche London.

What a wonderful journey! In this issue of Connection we will be sharing stories of yesterday, today and even Summer 2022. You will read about a precious founding friendship, volunteers who are making our community strong, the energy of the drumming, drama, and therapeutic movement classes that we are enjoying, a nascent Community Garden on our property and a unique Summer Camp that will be engaging with people who are transitioning from high school into adult life. It is a joy to share these stories! We are mindful of abundance, even in the midst of these challenging times.

Tom shared last evening, that love is the core element in life and in a growing community. To this we add gratitude, for all the rich blessings of today, and the 25 years of L'Arche in London.

On behalf of Katie and your L'Arche London Community, warm regards to all, we hope you enjoy this issue of Connection.

*We are deeply grateful to all the generous sponsors listed below who sustain the work and mission of L'Arche London — Thank You!*

# INDEPENDENCE SUMMER CAMP

By Mel Quevillon

Spring is in the air and planning is well underway for our Independence Summer Camp! As many of you may remember from the Gala in February, we are creating an exciting new program for Transitionally-Aged Youth. In July and August, we will be welcoming campers who have recently graduated from high school to join us for 2-week day camp sessions. Camp will be run at the Clubhouse (the home next to the Gathering Place) - both inside and under a large tent in the backyard. Together, we will deepen campers' knowledge on various independence skills, such as internet safety, financial literacy, bus training, finding a job, laundry, meal planning and preparation. We also look forward to having campfires, playing music, doing art, movement and drama.

At the Gala, the Fund-A-Need was to support this wonderful new initiative. Our goal was to raise \$30,000 and thanks to your generous support, we raised \$47,000! We are excited to announce that we have hired Eliza McClelland, a long-time relief Assistant at Cana House and a Disability Studies graduate from King's University College, to be our Camp Director. If you or somebody you know would be interested in learning more about camp, please contact Eliza at camp@larchelondon.org. We look forward to sharing some wonderful memories with you!



# MAYOR'S SPEECH

By Ed Holder



On behalf of London city council, I'm very proud to join you to help celebrate this significant milestone, 25 years of L'Arche London. It is often been said London is an urban oasis in a sea of agriculture, well if that is true then L'Arche is the shining jewel within that urban oasis. For 25 years you promoted inclusion and belonging for countless Londoners both with and without intellectual disabilities. My Cape Breton mother used to say that a caring community is measured by how well it cares for those who have needs. She also used to say there are two kinds of people in the world, givers and takers. If you surround yourself with the givers well you are going to be ok. Well each of you involved in L'Arche certainly falls into that category.

We all have 3 gifts – time, talent, and treasure – you give of your time, your talent and certainly your treasure all in the service of helping our community live, work, learn and grow together. It truly excites me to think of how L'Arche will develop over the next 25 years and beyond especially with new additions like the Gathering Place which continues to serve up to 180 people each week that is despite COVID restrictions and you have done that with your online programming and I say bravo. So on behalf of the London City Council, from my heart, let me thank you once again for the tremendous work that you all do on behalf of our community because it truly does matter. Thank for your service. Thanks for caring.

# THERAPEUTIC MOVEMENT

By Nathan Hill

Our Day Program continues to thrive and discover new and musical ways to move and groove! Every Monday afternoon, our friend Ruth Douthwright has been providing Therapeutic Movement classes. With a joyful combination of music and low impact movement along with using tactile objects and our imagination, Ruth has provided ways for people to participate regardless of their fitness level. What makes the class unique is how core members are able to contribute the songs we move and groove to, which ultimately shape the overall structure of the class. It is quite empowering! Be it using our bodies as percussion, pillows for comfort, music for the soul, making faces, or simply moving around the room to the rhythm of the music, everyone has enjoyed exploring the nurturing space that Ruth leads provides with Therapeutic Movement. Join us!!!



# GARDENING TOGETHER!

By Toinette Parisio

L'Arche London is creating a Community Garden to celebrate 25 years of life, growth and being rooted in community. The garden is an opportunity to use the land belonging to L'Arche London. It will become a source of life and food right next to L'Arche London Gathering Place, with the inclusion of core members, assistants, neighbours and the local school. We are grateful for the Canada Healthy Communities Initiative Grant from the Community Foundations of Canada that supports the construction of this garden project. The Community Garden will be a place that will help alleviate the post-COVID isolation of people with intellectual disabilities, neighbours and friends who come to grow their vegetables in this 14 plot garden. One of the plots will grow vegetables that will be harvested for the London Food Bank.

The community garden will be a place of welcome and a place to be co-creators with the spirit of life. The garden will bring us joy, and will increase our capacity for joy.

I would like to share the words from Mary Ann Kechego, of the Turtle Clan Oneida Nation of the Thames, who came to teach us about the land, the Creation Story, our relationship to the land, and the 3 sister plants. She invited us “to be of good minds and good hearts” in life. When we harvest, “to take what we need and leave some for others” and “to express our gratitude for the seeds, the earth, the sun, the moon, the fire and the water”.

The garden is an opportunity for L'Arche London to express gratitude for all we have received during the last 25 years, and to continue to be a community of inclusion, solidarity, and of mutual relationships with All our relations and with the Creator.



# ONTARIO VOLUNTEER SERVICE AWARDS 2022

By Jennifer Topfer

This past year we had the opportunity to honor some of our volunteers in a special way. We were able to nominate Garry Dodman, Paul Jarvis, Elsi Minor, Joan Taylor and Jeff Bell for an Ontario Service Award. This award recognizes volunteers for providing committed and dedicated services to an organization. We thank these volunteers for their spirit, energy and commitment. They continue to make a huge difference in our community life. Please join me in congratulating these amazing volunteers for their support, love & long years of commitment. We are excited to continue this new tradition in the years to come.

*The volunteer service award ceremony  
was held February 28, 2022*



ONTARIO VOLUNTEER SERVICE

Awards

## L'ARCHE DRAMA CLASSES

By Jim Schaefer

Hi! My name is Jim Schaefer. You can call me Jim. There is only one thing you need to know about me. I am a theatre guy. I have been one all my life. In my childhood, I produced plays in the family garage. The audience sat on the driveway. The garage door was the curtain and when it opened, our play would start.

And what is a play? A play is a story that can be acted. Sometimes it's long and sometimes it is very short. Maybe only one word long. A play is performed by actors in character. And how do you become an actor? You open the little door in your forehead and let your daily life out and you let a wish in. And how do you do that? You imagine!

And what has that got to do with L'Arche London? Well, for the past three years I have been fortunate enough to lead acting classes for the core members and their wonderful assistants from Cana, Bethany and Jubilee houses and a special new group too. Sometimes I have worked with everyone at the Gathering Place. Sometimes I have gone into one of the group homes and worked in their living room. And throughout COVID, I have conducted workshops on Zoom.

And what do we do when we get together? We become actors. And we imagine. We imagine we are wild animals and we roar. We imagine we are magicians and we cast spells. We create small plays and share them with each other instantly. The assistants lead and adapt and help us all create. And we know, whether we are in a wheelchair or on a couch or standing in a circle, we know that we are special. Because for that moment, we are not ourselves, we are actors. And we imagine. We create. We share. Together.

## AROUND THE GATHERING PLACE...

By Marietta Drost



Joe Naus is constructing built-in bookshelves and a desk in our Gathering Place Library and Meeting Room. This is a gift from Joe and his wife Cathy. It will provide a home to our community library, and an extra flex workspace for people seeking a quiet place to work. We are deeply grateful for this gift, and for Joe, who served faithfully on our Board of Directors from 2009 – 2019, and continues, with Cathie, to be a great friend and supporter of L'Arche London.

## WEDNESDAY COHORT

By Mel Quevillon

We are so thrilled to be able to take a first step in re-opening our Day Program! On March 9th, 2022, we welcomed 5 Core Members to a Wednesday program at the Gathering Place. These Core Members live with their families and have been, like so many other people in London, feeling isolated over the past 2 years because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Together, we create friendships, do Reading Club, Karaoke, an art class, drama class and Snoezelen. "It's always fun to meet new people and learn new stuff", says DJ, one of our Core Members.

We look forward to welcoming more Core Members to this cohort, and to eventually expanding beyond the Wednesday. If you are interested in submitting an application for a half or full day, please contact our Program Coordinator Mel Quevillon at [mel@larchelondon.org](mailto:mel@larchelondon.org).



# IN MEMORY OF SONIA LABATT

*Passed away on March 14, 2022*

Sonia along with her husband Arthur, was instrumental in making L'Arche London's dream of Gathering Place a reality. Sonia and Arthur were the Honorary Co-Chairs of the Capital Campaign to build our community hub and provided fundamental support for this project. Sonia's generous spirit and deep care for people on the margins inspired our community. We extend heartfelt condolences to Arthur and his family, and deep gratitude for Sonia's life and legacy which has had such a vibrant and lasting impact on our community of L'Arche London.

## THE AFTER SCHOOL CLUB

— *By Laurel and Robert* —

The Musical Mentors has expanded its vision once again! While we continue to offer the program in several virtual school classrooms around London, we have also launched a virtual afterschool club this year! Youth aged 16-21 are welcome to join this virtual club Tuesday afternoons where they will meet a new Musical Mentor every month. Our mentors are all music loving adults living with developmental disabilities who share their music and experiences with our younger members. Here's what Robert Pio Hajjar said about the experience of being a Mentor. "It's fun and exciting being a Musical Mentor. I am the leader and good role model. I have a great sense of humour and lots of smiles. I like being part of the L'Arche family. I inspire them and they inspire me."

### Art of Wisdom Classes

Thank you to the Government of Canada's New Horizons For Seniors Program for providing funding for our Art of Wisdom Classes. We are deeply grateful for your support!



Artwork created by Linda Rowse



Last year we received funding through the Resilient Grant stream. This allowed us to work with consultants to create a Business Plan for our Gathering Place. This will support us in making the Gathering Place sustainable.

Thank you to the Ontario Trillium Foundation for your incredible support!

Ontario Trillium Foundation

Fondation Trillium de l'Ontario

An agency of the Government of Ontario  
Un organisme du gouvernement de l'Ontario

## THANK YOU!

*Thank you to everyone who supported our Pasta Dinner Fundraiser. We raised \$3700! All proceeds will go towards our art and music programming.*

*A HUGE THANK YOU to our largest sponsor - Remark's for your incredible support of providing all of the ingredients. We couldn't have done it without you!*

*Thank you also to Costco Wholesale for your support.*



## Art Classes for Golden Artists Ages 55 +

Free of Charge \* All Abilities Welcome \* Space is Limited.

Contact [mel@larchelondon.org](mailto:mel@larchelondon.org) to Register



Mosaics: Thursday September 8-October 13, 2022 from 1:00-2:30 pm (in person - TBD)



Dot Art: Thursday November 10 - December 15, 2022 from 1:00-2:30 pm (online)



Printmaking: Thursday February 2 - March 9, 2023 from 1:00-2:30 pm (online)



# CORRINE AND I

By Toinette Parisio

"If I am pressed to say why I loved him, I feel that it can only be expressed by answering: Because it was him, because it was me." Michel de Montaigne, I am grateful each day because I share community with Corrine, a friend who engages me just because. I never have to be anything I am not when I see her. She does not care about roles. Corrine reads me better than anyone from a few meters away. And this is a journey of more than 25 years. Both our families were part of Homeshare prior to joining L'Arche London. I know Corrine has a place for me in her tent. Corrine loves to jump up and down when she sees me and her dance is an invitation to join her in the playful jumping just because we are together. She also stands in front of me in the middle of a room and let herself go backward trusting that I will catch her. Corrine taught me a lot about mutual trust.

We share some common interests: good bread, good chocolate, water games, mischief, teasing, and good laughter. Her genuine acceptance of me is the foundation of our friendship. Her legs can be wobbly,

her startles can cause her to fall...but she is a reliant, a strong, a courageous woman who over the years has extended the circle of her tent of relationships, and I feel blessed that she still finds room for me in her larger circle.

Corrine has been part of many of our family moments: health, grief, celebrations... When with Corrine, I do not question my existential questions, I am loved and I am enough. She knows our family and I know hers, and we continue the journey confident we will be there for each other. COVID has stretched us both in the how we could be together - the window visits, the outdoor encounters, the regular facetime moments. Although not perfect and frustrating at times, we've been creative in nurturing the friendship we celebrate.

At this time of our 25th Anniversary of L'Arche, it is a joy to share about the 25 plus years of Corrine and Toinette's friendship - Corrine as a founding Core Member at Cana House, and Toinette, as the Community Leader of L'Arche London from 1998 - 2015.

# LETTER FROM THE BISHOP

By Marietta Drost

**The Most Rev. Ronald P. Fabbro, Bishop of London, extended congratulations and prayerful best wishes to us on the occasion of our 25th Anniversary of L'Arche London. Here is an excerpt from Bishop Fabbro's letter:**

"L'Arche has provided a witness to the world that all people should be treated with respect. The L'Arche community provides the space and the environment so that all will have a place in which they belong, and where each person is accompanied through life's joys and sorrows. May all those who are a part of this remarkable community continue to be enriched by the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and may God bless all of you abundantly"

**Thank you Bishop Fabbro, for these kind words!**



capital colour

L'Arche London extends its sincere appreciation to our friends at Capital Colour for the overall production of this newsletter.

## L'Arche London Needs YOU!

I would like to help the L'Arche London Community build a stronger future by making a tax-deductible gift. Charitable registration #89183 5241 RR0001

My personal cheque is enclosed for

\$ \_\_\_\_\_

or donating **online at [www.larchelondon.ca](http://www.larchelondon.ca) with a credit card.**

**Please direct my funds to:**

Gathering Place  Operations/Homes  Day Programming

Please make the receipt to:

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**Thank you for your generosity**

Please mail this form to our office or contact us online at **[admin@larchelondon.org](mailto:admin@larchelondon.org)**

I want to do more! **Please enroll me as a Friend of L'Arche London with a monthly gift of:**

\$ \_\_\_\_\_/month.

**Please send information on:**

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2022 Spring