



L'ARCHE®  
London

Connection  
Spring 2023



## *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".*



# MARIETTA AND KATIE'S MESSAGE

*Katie and Marietta*



**Katie Mennill**  
Board Chair



**Marietta Drost**  
Community Leader

This issue of Connections highlights stories of learning and growth, sharing and receiving, and the simple joys of life that we experience here in our Community of L'Arche London.

Nicole shares about the gift of her relationship with Janet, and Janet's May 7 Art Show is featured. There is a story from our Community Garden that is currently

welcoming both returning and first-time gardeners this Spring. We share great news from TAYke Off! (a program for transitionally aged youth), and Master Class Mondays. There is a wonderful interview with our Co-Op student from the Forest City Program of Central High School, and we introduce to you two of the Board Members currently serving our community.

We have much to celebrate and at the heart of it, we feel gratitude for all the people who take part in our community. We are grateful for you, the friends who receive this newsletter. If the timing is right to make your donation, please do so! Your support contributes to the richness and impact that our L'Arche London Homes and Gathering Place programs have in the lives of many Londoners today!

Please mark your calendars for our Annual Walk a Thon on September 30th, 2023, and join us for some of the weekly drop-in opportunities that are listed!

## A SUNDAY ENCOUNTER IN OUR COMMUNITY GARDEN

*Toinette Parisio*

### ***Gardening together, growing vegetables and herbs, is an experience better when shared.***

I recall a Sunday afternoon at the community garden at L'Arche London last summer. The teacher from the school who rents a plot came to water her plants, a mother and her son who has some different abilities were there attending to their raised bed, an elder, who had a brother with developmental disabilities, came bringing his fruit and vegetable peels to the compost prior to tend to his plants. Organically, a conversation started while each gardener was being connected to their respective gardens, a discussion on inclusion, on the meaning of community. The moment promoted food cultivation as well as a very fruitful conversation on belonging and community. It felt like a natural space for healthy food to grow, and support to be shared in a very grounded space for all present.



# JANET BLAIR'S ART SHOW AT BYRON UNITED CHURCH



On May 7, 2023, Janet shared her stunning artwork in a solo show at Byron United Church. Janet creates art in various mediums: watercolour and acrylic painting, mosaic, and fabric arts, and works with a myriad of bright colours. As an artist, Janet works intuitively—her friends would say that Janet “dives right in with no hesitation”. Janet shares her art freely and loves to show the beautiful work she creates, often inviting friends to “Look it!” after completing a piece.

Art making is in the Blair family. Janet's Dad Jim had a good eye and was a teacher and a photographer. In her community of L'Arche London Janet has inspired many others to explore art and to enjoy the process of art making.

Janet has shared her art at Queen's Park in Toronto, at local libraries and coffee shops, and at galleries in Richmond Hill and here in London, Ontario. During the pandemic, Janet, along with many Londoners, participated in the community art project “Connected in Chaos - the Richmond Street Underpass Project”. This was a large collaborative project created over the summer of 2020, a powerful coming together of artists and citizens from across the city.

This most recent exhibit was a celebration of Janet's artistry and talent. Many people attended this event, celebrating with Janet and her community of friends and family.

“Your art is beautiful, bright and alive Janet” (recent response from a patron of Janet's work).

# JANET AND NICOLE: SHARING LIFE AND ART TOGETHER



Janet and Nicole have been sharing life at L'Arche London for close to 15 years! Janet recently celebrated her 25th Anniversary of L'Arche, and 15 years ago, welcomed Nicole who was a co-op placement student from the University of Guelph. Nicole has been a Live-in Assistant at Bethany House and Cana House, and Cana's House Leader for the last 6 years.

Nicole and Janet's Story: Nicole Moore

"Through my time at Cana House, I have been struck by a strong sense of community, a feeling of family and mutual relationship. I have not been just the 'helper', but a student to all the lessons that core members continue to teach me.

Janet and I have had many opportunities to collaborate on art, help each other with art projects and bounce creative ideas off each other. Art has been something that has connected us and nurtured our friendship over the years.

I love watching Janet do art. I like seeing her process and intuition on colour choices, her creativity and focus.

We have taught each other a lot throughout our friendship.

We help each other to be patient with art. Sometimes it's good to step back and wait for the colours to dry or see from a different perspective. Other times it better to just dive in and take a risk. We push each other out of our comfort zone by encouraging each other to try new ideas and new methods and encourage each other to new experiences.

Janet teaches me a lot through her art. She is fearless and has no hesitancy in doing art. Janet knows what she wants and just goes for it. Janet is assertive and confident, and by example, she encourages me to be more assertive myself.

Art is very personal, so showing your art can be a very vulnerable experience. I find Janet very noble in her art, very proud and willing to show her art. Also, Janet is very unaffected by criticism. Sometimes you heed it, sometimes you don't. I admire this about Janet. It shows her strength and it's a place where I can grow. Receiving criticism can be challenging.

Janet, I am so grateful for our friendship, and I look forward to seeing how our friendship deepens in the future."

We recently celebrated Nicole as she completes her work with L'Arche London. Thank you Nicole, for your leadership these past 15 years. With gratitude we wish you many blessings and look forward to our friendship continuing!

# RENOVATIONS

— Joslyn Reid —



We have some very exciting news to share about some renovations that have happened in the homes over the past year.

Cana's Kitchen got a full renovation and looks beautiful with a little more cupboard space.

All three of the homes had some sidewalks added to the backyard to make them more accessible. Jubilee and Bethany had some patios added in their back yards while Cana had a new and larger deck and a renovation to the existing shed. We are excited to start spending some time in our backyards this summer!

Thank you to everyone who helped organize and make these projects a possibility and a special thank you to the Saunders students who helped us with the shed renovation at Cana and with some work on the gates!

We are grateful to the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, for their support to complete this good work in our community.

## — Meet the Board —



### **Sara MacDonald**

*Board Member, Director of the Global Great Books Program, Professor in Political Science, Huron University.*

"I joined the Board of L'Arche London because I was inspired by the work of its communities and members in building a more inclusive and caring future."



### **John Pilgrim**

*Board Member, Social Worker, Psychotherapist*

"As a resident of Lambeth and a neighbour of the L'Arche Gathering Place, volunteering with the Board allows me to advocate for and build relationships with vulnerable people in society. L'Arche is an organization that matches my beliefs of community spirit, equality and connection between people of all walks of life"

# TAYKE OFF! IN 10

Eliza McClelland



## DRUMMING CIRCLE

### **When:**

Every Thursday, 4:00 – 5:00 pm

### **Where:**

The L'Arche London Gathering  
Place

### **Who:**

Everyone is welcome!

### **Contribution:**

\$5 per session;  
\$20 for 6 sessions

### **Circle Leader:**

Laurel M.

### **What people are saying:**

“Awesome!”, “Relaxing”, “Fun!”,  
“Friends”, “Energizing!”

1 TAY stands for Transitional-Aged- Youth. This program is designed for participants aged 18-35 looking to deepen their life skills.

2 TAYke Off! is both a recreational and educational program. Each week we have a different life skills theme. Some of our themes were communication, team building, money skills, relationships, internet safety and event planning. We also enjoy karaoke, obstacle courses, games, and dancing.



3 There are 12 participants per session who are supported by an excellent staff and volunteer team.

4 Check-in time is a priority. As a team, we take the time at the beginning of each week to check in with our team and talk about how we are showing up that day.

5 We cook a meal together each week. It is safe to say that kitchen skills and safety are essential skills for us all! With this in mind, we designed the program, so we have time to cook supper together. We welcome volunteer chefs who teach us different meals each week.

6 Along with this, eating together is a fundamental pillar of L'Arche community life. At L'Arche we know that sitting and sharing delicious food and rich conversation is key to relationship building. We take time to eat together each week.

7 Education is fun! Education should continue after high school, so our program is designed to bridge the gap as people figure out life after high school – in a fun way! For example, we learn about communication through a blindfolded obstacle course, telephone and emotion/tone charades.

8 TAYke Off! has a practical component, all our life skills lessons will be reinforced with a practical element of planning a dance. When we learn about money, we create a budget for the dance. When we learn about communication, we talk about reciprocal communication and customer service. When discussing internet safety, we create a social media advertisement about our dance. Our party planning crew then runs the dance that is open to the public!

9 We need to celebrate our accomplishments! The dance is an excellent chance for our party planning crew (TAYke Off! participants) to celebrate their achievements and welcome the broader community into L'Arche London. At L'Arche, celebrating is another strong pillar of our community life, we love to celebrate, and this dance is a perfect way to do this.

10 TAYke Off! is tons of fun! Our sessions go by quickly as we laugh and learn together each week.



# 5 QUESTIONS FOR MELLIE BIALIK



Mellie is a very talented 19-year-old young lady from Lambeth Ontario currently on a work placement at L'Arche London through the Forest City SURE program. She is in her 5th and final year of secondary school and the winner of the 2022-2023 McTavish Award.

## ***Tell us a bit about yourself...***

My name is Mellie, and I am 19 years old. In September I will be 20.

I like hanging out with my sisters. I have three sisters: one lives here in London and two of them live in London, England. This month I am travelling to the UK to visit them. I love music. I like the song I've Got a Feeling by Black Eyed Peas; it's my favourite song. I like nachos and pizza.

My favourite season is summer. I like swimming in the pool, being warm and getting a tan.

## ***You have won a very important award recently.***

### ***Would you like to tell us about your award?***

Yes, I won the McTavish Award for being a hard worker. The gala and dinner are on May 31st. I feel very inspired and ready to go. I am very excited and pumped about this award.

## ***What do you like about your work here at L'Arche?***

I like taking care of things: watering the plants, dusting, cleaning the Snoezelen room, helping with laundry. I am good at keeping things organized. I like coming here to L'Arche and I like talking to people here.

My favourite activity is keeping the plants well.

## ***You are very busy keeping up with different activities.***

Yes, I do gymnastics; I also play the violin, bowling, basketball, I sing, and I work at Giant Tiger. I participated in a gymnastics competition and won first, second, third and fourth place. I do ribbon routines, hoop and rope. My favourite part is the ribbon routine—I like how the ribbon moves through the air.

Singing is my passion. I loved singing the National Anthem at a London Knights hockey game.

## ***What is your favourite food?***

Pizza with a side of French fries.

# ONTARIO ASSOCIATION ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES CONFERENCE

— Mel Quevillon —

On April 20th, 2023, our Camp Director Liza, Camp Counsellor Laura and Program Coordinator Mel presented about Independence Summer Camp at the Ontario Association on Developmental Disabilities conference. It was a wonderful opportunity to share with organizations across the province about the learning, friendship, and fun we had at camp! The presentation was well received, and attendees said they were inspired to run a similar program at their agencies for transitional-aged youth.

## MASTERCLASS MONDAY

# WE ALL HAVE SOMETHING TO SHARE!

— *Dominique Hand* —

Every Monday after lunch, our Day Program gathers for an hour of learning that looks a little bit different each time. Every week, we have a new 'Master' who teaches the group about something that they are very knowledgeable about that could help others in their day-to-day lives. Core Members, Volunteers, and Assistants all have an opportunity to share their master knowledge about things like fire safety, the benefits of spending more time outside, how to safely stand up after a fall, important money matters, or how to brush your teeth for the best sparkle and shine! The collective wisdom in this group is astounding, and a privilege to witness.

## Did You Know?

- Coffee House/Open Mic is back in person every other week on Wednesdays from 7–9 p.m. at the Gathering Place. Please check the calendar on our website for more info!
- Independence Summer Camp will be coming again this summer! Please check our website for the 2023 dates and the registration form.
- Our To Gather Toward Tomorrow Gala event raised an incredible \$38,000. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all our generous donors and sponsors whose contributions are helping us toward our mission. Thank you for your support!





# IS LEAVING A GIFT IN YOUR WILL FOR YOU?

L'Arche London has partnered with Will Power, a national movement encouraging Canadians to think differently about charitable giving, and support the causes they care about through a gift in their Wills.

Did you know that by leaving a gift in your Will you can make a large and lasting contribution to L'Arche London and still support your loved ones in the future?

Learn how you can turn your Will into a powerful tool for change at

[www.willpower.ca/charities/larche-london-ontario](http://www.willpower.ca/charities/larche-london-ontario)

## 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Walk-A-Thon



Mark your calendars and get ready to join us on **September 30, 2023**, at the Gathering Place! We invite you to come out for a morning of community, friendship and fun.

Stay tuned for more exciting details to come—you won't want to miss it!



*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!

2023 Spring

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:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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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:**

- Becoming a Volunteer
- Attending a worship service

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