

Reflection on Gratitude

An ordinary life can be extraordinary if you remember to be grateful for what you have. Gratitude means paying attention to the simple pleasures and acknowledging all that we receive. Being grateful should not depend on the situation we find ourselves in — but how we perceive and respond to our situation. We should have a thankful heart for everything we have. Gratitude is the key to happiness.

~Marilyn

“ Every day may not be good but there is some good in every day”

Greetings from the Board Chair

As I write this article I am sitting in my family room looking out the window at a thick layer of ice covering the bare trees in the back yard. As we near the end of March, we have already experienced a number of almost surreal events during the first three months of 2020.

The year started with a series of severe snow storms, including Snowmageddon NL. Then, in February we were informed of the shocking revelations concerning the founder of L'Arche worldwide. And, for the past number of weeks we have been experiencing the reality of the Coronavirus pandemic known as COVID-19.



Maureen and Rhonda showing their gratitude by making a window poster for all essential workers.

In this province we are familiar with severe weather that causes a shut-down of our regular activities for a day or two, and even from time to time the need to declare a state of emergency. In many ways these are “fun” events that result in time off from school for our children, and a break from the day to day routine for the rest of us.

But COVID-19 is something entirely different! The pandemic is disrupting almost every facet of our lives and our social interaction. We cannot engage in our normal activities, such as recreation and grocery shopping, and more importantly, we cannot visit or hug our loved ones. We have come to appreciate how important FaceTime, Skype and Zoom are and how these forms of social media allow us to at least communicate with, and see, those who are so important to us.

At this time we also realize how important our L'Arche Avalon family is to each and every one of us. We miss the Gatherings and other events where we have the opportunity to interact and to check in on each other to ensure everything is going well.

Our routine, which is so important, especially to our core members, has been disrupted completely and indefinitely. As of right now, there is no way of knowing how long this self-isolation will last. What we do know, is that this will come to an end and we will once again be able to get together and continue on our common journey. In the meantime, savour this time with your immediate family members and reach out by phone or social media to your extended family and friends.

Marilyn and Mark join me in sending best wishes for good health. Stay safe and take care at this difficult time.



Lewis

Finding Joy in the Midst of COVID-19

Picture this. Your provincial schools closed down for God knows how long, your 22 year old daughter on the other side of the world, and your Prime Minister telling Canadians they must come home now. Does this image conjure up peaceful thoughts? The only thing I could find peace in were the actual pictures of New Zealand that my daughter was sending me. They were absolutely beautiful, some even breath-taking. One doesn't have to wonder why Manisha and Lindsay were not



getting the gravity of this situation that was rapidly engulfing the world - COVID-19.

Mitchell no longer has the routine of going to school and he was definitely sensing that there was something seriously wrong. Without routine, Mitchell's anxiety increases. With anxiety comes more meltdowns, and a more demanding young man who finds it difficult to get his point or needs across when he is frustrated. With his dad and I feeling stressed, it causes an extra curve in Mitchell's behaviour, thus adding to the tension in the house. Every time Mitchell saw me sitting down with the iPad he would see tears flow

uncontrollably and look at me with a questionable expression, “What is wrong mom? Can I fix you?”. The only thing that could fix me at this point was getting Manisha home.

It wasn't until Australia and New Zealand began closing down areas and blocking admission into the country did the girls see how bad things really were. Who could blame them, travelling in such pristine areas, so far from the intensity and regulations put in place on this side of the world.

After many flight bookings, changed bookings, flight cancellations, flights rebooked, Manisha is home in Paradise, NL. Now she has to self-isolate. After having such anxiety induced feelings with her being away, there was no way Manisha was



doing this alone at home. I am so happy she wasn't forced to do this in another country while en route. So here we are on day 13 of isolation; our sanity maintained, our friends and family helping us out where needed, and our little family together as one with no symptoms of COVID-19. Through all the stress we have managed to find some positives in this situation. I challenge you to do the same. Although these are trying times, it is important to try to find something good in such a bad worldwide

experience. I have been able to find joy in a pandemic. I have found joy through cooking supper together as a family. I have found joy in Sunday drives (even if they occur everyday). I have found joy in seeing Mitchell's excitement as he watches the birds from our window. I have found joy in more cuddles, more long phone calls with family and friends, and more time to just breathe. It is interesting learning about some of the ways people are dealing with the new way of life as we have come to know it. I appreciate the extra time for learning new things and for getting around to projects that have been put on the back burner. I definitely appreciate the love and support our L'Arche community have shown us.



We pray each day for the safety of our extended family, our L'Arche Avalon family, and for all the essential workers who continue to help through this unknown virus.

~ Cynthia

Board Meetings

Maureen Mackinnon has the gift of welcoming. She loves to have meetings at her and her sister, Sheila's house. She lobbied hard to host the January Board Meeting and treated the Board members to her special brownies. She's the hostess with the mostest! Here she welcomes Board member, Patti Bryant.



Annual General Meeting, June 14, 2020

The L'Arche Avalon AGM is scheduled for June 14th, 2020, at the Salvation Army Citadel on Adam's Avenue. As everyone is well aware, there will be no schedule of activities for April as we continue to isolate ourselves and keep ourselves and our loved ones safe. This most likely will extend into May. It is doubtful at this point that we will be able to go ahead with the AGM as scheduled, but it is important for you to have the following information regarding deadlines etc. in the event that we are able to proceed.



The current Board. Maureen was a gracious host. Missing from photo: Sarah and Sheila.

May 9th. – 5 weeks before the AGM members and friends will be sent nomination forms.

May 15th. – 30 days before the AGM you must have paid your \$20.00 membership fee if you wish to become a member and be eligible to: 1) nominate someone to run for election to the Board of Directors. 2) be nominated to run for election to the Board of Directors. 3) vote at the AGM.

May 31st. – You will be sent a list of nominees willing to run for election to the Board with the reminder that there can be nominations from the floor provided that there is a seconder for the nomination and the person nominated is a member and is willing to run.

If we are unable to meet as planned, we will inform everyone via email of alternate arrangements.

~ Sheila, Nomination Committee



Valentine's Social!

Our Valentine's Social on February 16th was the last time that L'Arche Avalon was able to get together as a group. We met at the Kenmount Terrace Community Center on Messenger Drive which is a bright and welcoming facility.



We were happy to welcome some newcomers and one of our old friends, Hannah George. Hannah who was so much a part of our community when she was in high school, was home from University on break and joined us that day. Everyone was very pleased to see her

again. During the up-coming university term, Hannah was scheduled to go to a L'Arche community in Ottawa.

Everyone enjoyed the games and activities which were part of the afternoon and, of course, the food that is always part of our gatherings.

L'Arche Avalon is fortunate to have such diverse ages among us. We enjoyed the company of family and friends from under 1 year old to over 90 years old and everything in between. The photos show our activities and the fun we had that day.

Our March St. Patrick's Day Gathering which was planned for March



15th at the Lantern had to be cancelled. We are all very much looking forward to getting back to normal activities after the danger of COVID-19 has left us. In the meantime, our wish is that everyone stay safe until we can meet again.



Hannah George, who is studying at St. Francis Xavier University in Antigonish, had been planning to take part in an Immersion Service Learning trip this spring through the University. She was scheduled to go to L'Arche Ottawa for 2 weeks in May, however this unfortunately was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Although she is very disappointed, she said that she hopes to be able to go next year.

Hannah was selected to attend this trip through an application and interview process, and there was to be another student and faculty advisor going with her. They would have lived in the L'Arche houses in Ottawa with the core members and assistants, and attended day programs with them.

Hannah will be a shining light wherever she goes. All of us at L'Arche Avalon wish her well and are happy that she continues to be involved with L'Arche.

~Sheilah

Greetings from the Regional Leader

My name is Jenn Power and I'm the Regional Leader for L'Arche in Atlantic Canada, which includes five established L'Arche communities as well as two projects, one of which is the fabulous crowd of folks at L'Arche Avalon. As a Regional Leader, my role is to support local communities to live the identity and mission of L'Arche - to know and live the values of L'Arche in all they do. Some of my activities include regular visits to communities, supervision and support of leaders, and offering training opportunities for community members. I work in partnership with like-minded organizations on projects around inclusion and social justice, and am the link between the local L'Arche communities and the national and international levels of L'Arche.



I grew up in Calvert, NL, and moved to Cape Breton to join the L'Arche community there in 1994. Today, I remain a member of L'Arche Cape Breton. I live in Orangedale with my husband, four kids, a dog, a cat, and (pretty soon) a dozen hens!

~ Jenn



Community Connection

When physical distancing requests officially started it became clear that we wouldn't be able to be together as community, likely for a few to many months. For the community I was concerned about losing connection among our members. Immediately I thought this is where the internet and Facebook makes sense (for certain reasons the Facebook-world is not so much part of my world, hence my sentiment). I proposed that we ask our community members to create or identify contributions for a Facebook initiative we call 'Community-Connection'. This can be anything: photos or videos of us, a rhyme we



create, a poem we like, an uplifting thought, and more - anything that is positive in some way, and may create a smile for the viewer.

In addition we introduced what we call Waving-Wednesday - photos of waving-to-the-camera members, friends and followers of L'Arche Avalon will be posted each week on Wednesday. This is an initiative I was inspired to start when I listened, as I do sometimes, to CBC Radio The Sunday Edition where Michael Enright spoke of his neighbours doing this: waving to each other at a particular time on Sundays.

These initiatives cannot be a substitute for community life when we are physically together, but we can somewhat remain connected and see or hear from our members that way. We hope you all become or remain curious of 'what's next' and what will follow our handful of posts so far. If you haven't seen them yet please to go to our Facebook page and scroll down to the first post on March 26th. Reminders will be emailed asking for contributions for as long as we are in this challenging situation.

~ Petra

L'Arche Avalon Online Auction 2020



In March, the Fundraising Committee launched its first online auction. Community members, friends, family members and local businesses were very generous in donating items. There were donations of gift cards, services, works of art, household items, and personal care products, to name but a few. The bottom line was that the auction garnered \$7748 for the community, hopefully increased L'Arche Avalon's profile in the community, and although it was a lot of work, it was also a lot of fun working together and was a great learning experience for the committee, experience which might be used in future fundraising efforts.



L'Arche Avalon receives The Housing Catalyst Fund grant of \$10, 000 from the City of St. John's.



The Board of Directors was delighted to receive word that in line with the City's Affordable Housing Strategy, the City of St. John's has awarded L'Arche Avalon a Housing Catalyst Fund grant of \$10, 000. Through the awarding of this grant, the city becomes, as the name suggests, a catalyst supporting L'Arche Avalon in the planning of housing solutions for adults in the area with intellectual disabilities. L'Arche is now proceeding with preliminary plans for the building of two L'Arche homes and a community center in the city.



Todd Lehr, representing the city of St. John's, present Lewis with a cheque for \$10,000

Whadda y'at??

During Snowmageddon and this period of forced isolation I have been reading some great books; two great series in particular. Kent Haruf is an award-winning American novelist who wrote only six books: Plainsong, Eventide, Benediction, The Tie that Binds, Where Once You Belonged and Our Souls at Night. I read them in that order. They are all set in the imaginary town of Holt, Colorado. Kent is a great storyteller; he knows rural life and its people really well. I gave all his books 4/4 stars. The second series starts with The Circle of Ceridwen by Octavia Randolph. It is historical fiction set in 9th century Denmark, Sweden and England. Randolph writes very knowledgably about those times and she clearly understands that although history changes, human beings are driven by the same passions. After The Circle of Ceridwen, I read Ceridwen of Kilton, Sidroc the Dane, and then the next three books in the series. I found the stories and the wonderful writing totally captivating. So good in fact that I might go back and reread some of them. 4/4 stars for each of those books.





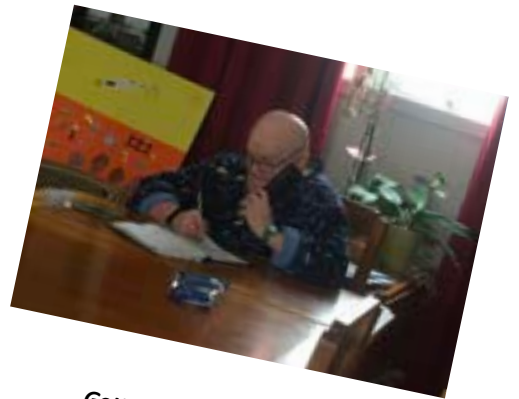
Learning to cook!



Learning to read!



Enjoying the outside



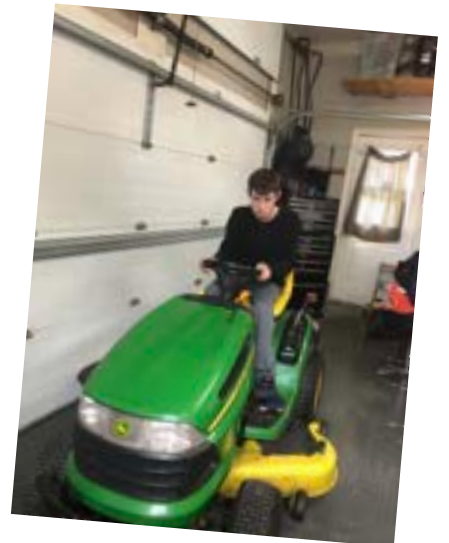
Getting some work done!



Art!



Having fun!



Waiting for summer