

Standing on Humble Ground



What does it mean to stand on humble ground? Take a moment to silently reflect on what this means to you. As Stephen M.R. Covey said, “a humble person is more concerned about what is right than about being right, about acting on good ideas than having good ideas, about embracing new truth, than defending an outdated position, about building the team other than exalting self, about recognizing contribution than being recognized for making it”. To have

humility we must first stand on humble ground. We must recognize we ourselves are not the sun - the world does not revolve around us. We must accept putting our pride and egos aside to be better. For humility is not thinking less of yourself, it is simply thinking of yourself less. I grew up alongside my 7 siblings with parents who gave us everything they could. Through my parents I learned humility and essentially how to stand on humble ground. My father was a jack of all trades - he was very intelligent and a problem solver. He was also an alcoholic. When I think of my father the first word that comes to mind is humble- he never was paid his worth, and did not see his true potential and abilities which I believe led him on his path of destruction and turning to alcohol. Through him I learned the true value of helping others, hard work, and the ability to be a giving caring person because he was in such a humble mindset his entire life. Our L'arche core value of “stand on humble ground” is referring to accepting and sharing all our gifts and all our abilities or limitations. Society places a great deal of value on external accomplishments and



appearance and so on. This is where the ego is playing a huge role, however, here at L'Arche we recognize the importance of being humble and not letting that ego take over. We recognize that each and every person has something beautiful to offer this world and that community is key. I think humility makes a person radiate. When I am in the presence of a humble person I feel comfortable enough to let my guard down and be myself. Humility is often seen as a weakness when in actual fact it is great inner strength. Humility goes hand in hand with generosity, helpfulness, and gratitude. I always feel as though I am surrounded by humble people during our L'Arche meetings, gatherings, and craft mornings. I feel as though our L'Arche Avalon community appreciates the smaller things in life and I feel very connected. For many of us, being selfless is second nature. We have each been given a life with many challenges and obstacles of our own. But yet each of our community members are here, being a part of something bigger than yourselves. In a lot of cases, the older one gets the more humble



they become, and that's true – humility does not appear overnight. Walking on humble ground is a learned process and it is something we have to choose each day. I will leave you with one final quote by Gordon B. Hinckley which I believe fits with L'Arche Avalon's goals and mission to create a home here in St. John's: "being humble means recognizing that we are not on Earth to see how important we can become, but to see how much difference we can make in the lives of others"

~Cindy Bishop

Music and Friends

During the month of August, we had a great time partnering with friends in the community and friends at the Vera Perlin Summer Camps. Jan Buley, coordinator for the L'Arche Avalon Music Circles,



launched a new idea called "Tuesday Tunes" and was joined by Maddy Mouland, Cultural

Ambassador with SoundBones. During our five visits, we had a fabulous singing time. Sometimes, we were joined by Muggs (Marg Tibbo), David Buley and Gail





Eldridge. That meant that we could include drums, ukulele and harmony---and lots of new songs! The highlight of our singing collaborations was meeting some new friends and expanding our L'Arche Avalon visibility in the community. We can't wait to sing "Ten Little Monkeys Jumping on the Bed" with those puppets again, and hope that our new partners will join us at The Lantern for future Jam Circle events!

Please contact Jan at her email: jan.buley@gmail.com if you'd like to find out more about the L'Arche Avalon Jam Music Circle events.

~Jan Buley

Anton loving the Special Olympics

Thanks to the wonderful Special Olympics swimming program and their volunteers. Check out the [Special Olympics](https://www.specialolympics.ca/) website. They offer a variety of activities all over the province for persons with intellectual disabilities, all for a small yearly fee that is very much worth it!



Just a reminder that membership fees for 2022 are due and are \$20 for an individual or family. These can be paid at any event or by e-transfer to treasurer@larcheavalon.ca.
Security answer/password: please use avalon



Message from the Board Chair



Dear friends,

Spring and summer have come and gone and it seems as though fall is losing its grip. Snow flurries strongly suggest that winter is on the way. The weather changes with the seasons, but one thing that doesn't change with the seasons is the warmth of friendship which we feel when we come together as a community.

Our recent retreat at The Lantern in early November really served to show how we have grown and continue to grow as a community. The highlight of the two days was the visit from our Regional Leader, Jenn Power, who is always such an inspiration. She has been part of L'Arche for decades and we draw on her knowledge and experience as we continue to work toward our goal of founding two L'Arche Avalon homes.

I take this opportunity to reach out to each and every one of our members and our friends and encourage you to join us whenever you are able. Don't ever feel that if you can't come every week – or month – that you shouldn't join us. You will always be welcome like the friends that you are. It might be to accompany us on our walks, or sit in on our Music Circle, attend a Gathering or Spiritual Expressions, or come to one of our Craft Mornings. I always say that I wouldn't miss a craft morning and only go for the socializing and camaraderie! I am not very creative but actually can help someone else sometimes while enjoying my coffee and chatting.

During 2021, some of you may have celebrated with friends during Ramadan or taken part in the Diwali Festival of Lights, or some other religious or cultural festivals. It is good when we can come together to celebrate and share with each other. By the time I talk with you again through our Newsletter, Christmas and Hanukkah will have come and gone; and so the seasons pass.

My sister, Maureen, joins me in wishing each and every one of you a very happy Christmas and holiday season spent with family and friends.

~Sheilah

Your Board Members

Contact us at office@larcheavalon.ca

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Jenn Power, L'Arche Atlantic Regional Director, Reflects on L'Arche Avalon's Annual Community Weekend: Taking Responsibility Together



Flying into St. John's, looking down at the rocky cliffs of Signal Hill and the crashing waves of the North Atlantic, always gives me a thrill, no matter how many times I do it. And it's not just because I know my mom's Sunday Dinner is just around the corner! It's because this flight means I am on my way to spend time with the folks of L'Arche Avalon – to sing, eat, work, celebrate, and reflect together. And we did plenty of those in early

November, as we gathered for the annual community weekend, this year on the theme of "Taking Responsibility Together".

The core values of L'Arche – welcome, mutual relationships, forgiveness, shared spirituality, and so many more – only come to life when they are shared. Our mission is not a solitary enterprise; it must be lived in community, together. The two days we spent at The Lantern in St. John's were both an opportunity to reflect on the importance of teamwork and shared responsibility in L'Arche, and a chance to witness these values in action.



Around the circle were people with and without disabilities, teenagers and senior citizens, folks who speak with words and without, extroverts and introverts, people who were tired and others with boundless energy. Through skits and songs, video and art, talking and listening, we explored what it means to work together, and what it takes to make this collaboration happen. We talked about the importance of knowing one other deeply, of coming together around a common purpose, looking to others to help us learn, and being willing to forgive when we inevitably hurt one another.



For one of our activities, we traced our hands and talked together about what each of us brings to the circle, what we offer to L'Arche Avalon that helps us to work and take responsibility together. We cut out those colourful foam hands and shared them around the circle, inviting others to name our gifts and write those on our hands. It was a sacred



and humbling moment as each person shared what others had said about them, and then offered their hand to the painted globe that formed the centre of our circle. As the globe filled with hands that offered gifts like welcome, music, listening, passion for the mission, skills in public speaking, humour, and more, the refrain we'd been singing all weekend echoed true – we can change the world when we join our hands together.

~Jenn Power



Building Project Update



As we move closer to the end of 2021, this would be an opportune time to provide an update concerning L'Arche Avalon's building project. As most all of you are aware, we have been negotiating for some time with the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation and the Canada Lands Company (CMHC/CLC) to acquire two tracts of land on opposite sides of Charter Avenue in Pleasantville, St. John's. Some months ago we applied to the City of St.

John's for a development permit in relation to the Charter Avenue property. Given the size and scope of our project, the city determined that a zoning text amendment was necessary before our application could be considered. The city also determined that a public meeting involving local and interested residents was required with respect to our application.

The public meeting took place on August 3, 2021 and was a positive event. At its regular meeting on August 23, 2021, city council adopted an amendment to existing regulations that approved our use of the lands on Charter Avenue for our L'Arche homes and for our adult day program. The amended regulation received Provincial registration and came into effect on October 23, 2021. While there are still a number of additional steps that have to be taken before a building permit will be considered by the city, we are moving in the right direction.



We have also been dealing with the location of a Right of Way (ROW) that is presently located in the middle of the lots on the south side of Charter Avenue. Given uncertainty as to the level of access we would have to the land on which the ROW is located, and also given that the city prefers to move the ROW to the west, we have agreed with CMHC/CLC and with the city that the ROW will move to the western boundary of the lands in question. We anticipate the Agreement of Purchase and Sale relating to the tracts of land will be executed within the next few weeks.



While we are moving forward at a slower pace than was hoped, we are moving forward and expect progress to continue in the coming months. Nobody said it was going to be quick or easy!

~Lewis Andrews, Project Lead

What a Summer!



Our core member Anton and his family were double lucky this summer: the great Vera Perlin (VP) summer program was in-person again this year (after an online-only version in 2020) - If only there were more programs like that for adults with intellectual disabilities! Anton enjoys being a part of the group as well as spending time with the wonderful young people employed by VP to coordinate and run the 'camps'. The second luck is that Anton's old buddy Anna Catherine is now also his part-time worker! ('old' because Anton and Anna Catherine know each other through her volunteering in Anton's previous special needs classroom, where within the Best Buddy program she spent lots of lunchtimes with enthusiasm and more).

The photo says it all - look at the laugh lines all over Anton's face!!

Homemade Cards and Crafts for Sale



All occasion cards
3 for \$5 or 8 for \$10

Embroidered crafts
\$4 each or 3 for \$10

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Wooded disc
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To purchase, email
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Connections

This is the first in a series of articles connecting us to others who have a connection to Newfoundland and Labrador and who have been part of a L'Arche community in some way. We ask each contributor the same questions.



Our first contributor is Sarah Parisio:

I feel honored to have been asked to contribute my experience! I miss you all very much. Strangely enough, I miss the L'Arche Avalon group especially when it rains here in Halifax. I am sending much love your way and hope you (Sheilah), Maureen, and other L'Arche Avalon members are well.

What is your connection to Newfoundland and Labrador?

I initially went to Newfoundland and Labrador in 2015, after having been offered a position to work alongside newcomers to Canada with the provincial francophone organisation. Having enjoyed the adventure of discovering new places in Canada and abroad previously, and having very little knowledge of Eastern Canada, I jumped at the opportunity to transfer my life to St John's, where I stayed until 2018.

What is your connection to and/or experience with L'Arche?

I often say that I "grew up in L'Arche", by which I mean that I grew up in a family very actively involved in L'Arche (prior to my arrival on earth and to this day). The values that we learned at home and in community included the importance of reciprocal relationships across differences, of shared meals, of forgiveness, and of joy. I remained connected to L'Arche communities in the many places I lived. I felt a strong sense of belonging to the L'Arche family, having discovered and chosen L'Arche for my adult self when I lived in a home in northern Italy after the completion of my undergraduate degree.

What made you decide to apply for a job – or to volunteer – as a L'Arche Assistant?

If I think about it, I wouldn't really say that I "decided" to volunteer at L'Arche Comunita L'Arcobaleno, in Bologna. My initial visit to L'Arche Comunita L'Arcobaleno should have lasted a week, after which point I had a flight to France to visit family. Instead, I met Marilisa, Samuele, Liberto, Sofia, Moreno and Maria Rosa. Those

encounters were profound for me, and it is in delving into those relationships (or "volunteering") that I ended up spending much more than a week at L'Arche. My volunteer role changed over the years and in various communities, as my desire to explore those relationships and their transformative impact grew.

What was one important thing that you learned during your time as an Assistant/volunteer at a L'Arche home?

I could name a whole series of lessons that I learned, unlearned, and relearned over the course of my time at L'Arche. But right this minute and if I had to name one, I would say that I began to unlearn the value of independence and individualism, and began to learn about interdependence and love. Through mutual relationships of trust and genuine curiosity about the lived experiences of others, I discovered the importance of reciprocity. I learned that we belong to one another and that my wellbeing is intrinsically connected to yours.

Tell us, in a sentence, why you would (or would not) encourage a young person to become a L'Arche Assistant.

Sharing life with people with intellectual disabilities is one of the most rewarding schools of life you will ever attend.



If you or someone you know worked as a L'Arche assistant and you would like to contribute to this series, we'd love to hear from you.

Email us: sarah.king@larcheavalon.ca



First Sunday of each Month
Spiritual Expressions

Second Saturday of each Month
Walk

Third Sunday of each Month
Monthly Gathering

Fourth Saturday of each Month
Music Circle

Updates sent regularly. Sign up for our
emails to make sure you stay connected
office@larcheavalon.ca

