



We're Growing!

By Peg O'Brien

Jean, Jeremy and our newest core member Mike are all moved into an apartment half a block from our original home.



Though the red tape, real estate searching and discernments took enormous time and effort, there is real joy at the community's growth. "We are all so happy that we finally got the apartment. It's an answer to our prayers," says assistant Steve. Chris, a core member, speaks enthusiastically of his new peers: "They are very, very awesome and it is very, very awesome to have them."

"It's an answer to our prayers"

"Jean is super excited" adds Steve. "She has a sense of ownership and pride that she probably has never had before in her life." Jean wears the new keys proudly around her neck and tells everyone she encounters, whether she

knows them or not, about her new place. She likes that there is more quiet and that her room is big and bright. She demonstrated her feelings clearly when she walked into the community leader's office with two just-completed paintings. "The houses looked pretty much the same," says Alex, "with slight color differences but she explained them as L'Arche One and L'Arche Two!"

Steve had a yeoman's part in the move. One day he and new board member Rob Vall got in the van that Rob had generously rented and went first to Ronnie's soon-to-be-former group home in Mount Prospect.

While the men lugged furniture, Rebekah spent hours tracking down required forms, pursuing elusive pieces of information and working her way through procedural mazes so that Jean could move from Angel house to the apartment, Ronnie could move into



Angel house with her funding to support her and Mike, who is new to the system, could qualify for funding.

With Ronnie moved, Steve and Rob went off to Mike's house in Brookfield. Mike would be moving out of his mother's home for his first adult place.

He explains that his room is big and blue. "I like to sleep in it" he says "It feels good to be here". The apartment community goes to Angel House to sit around the big table for dinner together and this is one of Mike's favorite things. He likes pizza and chicken and says it's "fun to try new things."

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L'Arche Spirituality



Welcome is one of the signs that a community is alive. To invite others to live with us is a sign that we aren't afraid, that we have a treasure of truth and of peace to share. If a community is closing its doors, that is a sign that hearts are closing as well.

But before we welcome people, we have to exist as a community. When a community starts, it is frequently more closed, so that its members can get to know each other and a unity be created. The same is true in marriage; if a newly married husband and wife are constantly inviting friend in, they will have no time to forge their own unity.

There is a time for everything; a time to build community and a time to open its doors to others. The second

period does not necessarily follow the first; they are bound up in each other. A community will always need times of intimacy, just as it will always need times of openness. If it has only one or the other, it will die, or at least suffer periods of setback. A community which is constantly welcoming people will soon become dispersed; it will end

"Love can never be static"

up like a railway station where people just run into each other and part. A community which is closed can become stifling and suffer from dissension and envy, and may cease to be alive.

A loving community is attractive, and a community which is attractive is by

definition welcoming. Life brings new life. There is an extraordinary gratuité in the power of procreation: the way a living being gives birth to other living beings is marvelous, and this is true for the living body which is community.

Love can never be static. A human heart is either progressing or regressing. If it is not becoming more open, it is closing and withering spiritually. A community which refuses to welcome whether through fear, weariness, insecurity, a desire to cling to comfort, or just because it is fed up with visitors is dying spiritually.

But there is a time for everything: a time to be and a time to welcome.

~ Community and Growth, p. 266-267

L'Arche Chicago honors friends, celebrates growth

More than 100 of our closest friends gathered July 19th at Concordia University to honor our friends and collaborators and to share the excitement of our L'Arche Chicago community as we open a new apartment and welcome two new core members. Friends and collaborators Katie Keiling and Denise Fisher received the Elbert Lott Service Award and the Arlene Bozek Vision award, respectively.



Mike (new core member), Jean, Elbert, Christianne and other members of the Arts of Life Band.



Steve (assistant), Gerry McAuliffe (friend) and Joe Koller (board member)

See more photos on our website:
www.larchechicago.org
...(in the community photo album under the listen & see section.)



Elbert Lott Service Awardee Katie Keiling (former assistant) with core member, Christianne

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When asked what he likes about going to Angel house he says “Rebekah, Jeremy and Steve and eating dinner.” Mike also likes Jean “She’s funny and likes to tell jokes.”

“Do you miss your mom, Mike?”
“No.”

Mike’s mom has this to say:
“(Mike) has told me that he is happy and that is the thing I really needed to hear. (L’Arche) is just a caring loving place.”

The transition has been smooth, but in typical L’Arche fashion, offered new challenges to people’s creativity and cooperation. Jeremy expressed this in words that except for “websites” recall anecdotes of the founding the original L’Arche community and of our own first home:

“One of the really exciting and really stressful things about moving into a new apartment is that neither Jean, Mike, nor I have any idea what we are



doing! Whether it’s getting to know the neighbors, organizing donations, fixing the phone line, stocking the kitchen, getting lost in IKEA, furnishing the living room, repairing pipes, or installing the internet system, we’ve had to rely on instinct, luck, advice from friends, and lots of how-to websites.”

When the word went out that the lease was signed and a big apartment needed to be made into a home the greater L’Arche community,

particularly friends from St. Catherine/St. Lucy parish, responded with their usual kindness.

“We started from scratch, but the crazy thing is that most of what’s in our apartment has been donated by friends who heard the call of God – or Jim Hargadon (religious education director of St. Catherine/St. Lucy parish) – and brought stuff over. So in the end, having a community means never starting from scratch.”

“The neighbors are wonderful,” raves Steve. “The day we signed the lease and moved Jeremy’s stuff in, our neighbors invited us to dinner. Louis and Stephanie on the first floor had a giant economy size package of brats so they asked if we wanted to share them. We brought wine...and Jean, Jeremy and I sat outside in the yard and enjoyed our new neighbors and their generous hospitality.”

An evening of music, food, drink and... **“A LITTLE HELP FROM MY FRIENDS”**

Cabaret Show & Silent Auction

TO BENEFIT L’ARCHE CHICAGO

October 10, 2009, 7:00-10:00 PM

Old Town School of Folk Music 909 W Armitage Ave, Chicago

Ticket donation: \$45 if purchased by Sept. 28: \$60 thereafter *(tickets will be held at the door)*

AOK Cabaret

Acts Of Kindness Cabaret is a volunteer, not-for-profit association of cabaret professionals. They provide benefit cabaret performances, largely free of charge, at fundraising events for not-for-profit organizations in our communities. We are thrilled to have them performing for us.

Food & Drinks

Complimentary beer and wine plus an amazing collection of hors d’oeuvres will be awaiting your arrival at the event. Mingle with friends and make new ones before the show starts. L’Arche board members will be available to answer your questions and fill your glasses.

Pay Green, Save Green

To defray costs and to eliminate paper waste, we enthusiastically encourage you to buy tickets online at www.larchechicago.org

Director's Desk

It was a big moment when our founding director, Maria Zeimen invited Elbert to be the first core member and he happily said yes. It was the beginning of many wonderful firsts, mostly a wonderful tradition of welcome.

L'Arche Chicago has always been good at welcoming people. From our founding in 2000 to spring of 2005, we invited five core members, four of whom have stayed. We have also welcomed a number of assistants who have taken the spirit of L'Arche with them and stayed in touch with the community even when they moved on. Since August 2007, though, we've been blessed to be pretty much a constant community. These two years have been a time for each of us to grow closer and freer with each other and time for us to grow deeper in our understanding of this community's place in Chicagoland and within the concentric

circles of L'Arche Central Region, USA Zone and International Federation. They have also been a time to form a mutually nourishing relationship with the Arts of Life, a sister organization that shares our commitment to recognizing the gifts of each person and our need of one another.

"We look forward to the day when... we can welcome even more new friends..."

The Arts of Life helped us to realize that we were ready—in fact eager—to welcome new members. Several artists at Arts of Life asked if they could come live with us and the core members and assistants and I wanted very much to say yes. We talked about this with our board, friends and financial supporters. We told them about Ronnie who wanted to live with people of

her own choosing, to go to church and to live closer to work. We introduced Mike, who wanted to take the mature step of moving out of his mom's home, but wanted to live with friends. We all agreed they should come.

Of course, the practical considerations were messier. Since all the bedrooms at 1049 S. Austin were claimed, we had to look for an apartment that was comfortable and nearby. We talked about who would move from the original home to the apartment in order to integrate existing and new members into one community. We thought about where to find furniture and appliances and how to get personal possessions across the city. We worked on getting donations and hoped for a firm commitment from the state so that we would have the money to pay the rent and utilities.

Remarkably, all these things came together, quickly and in a way that suggested God was working a little more immediately than we've usually experienced. A great apartment opened up half a block south and the landlord held it until we could make a commitment. Jean wanted to found it and the rest of the community supported her choice. Mike was accepted for state funding, despite a monumental budget crisis. Friends and parishioners donated furniture, lamps and linens. Rob, one of our board members, rented a van and spent the day helping us move things across town.

And now almost seamlessly, Ronnie has fit right in, with her signature phrase; la-di-da and outta-my-way walker (which is mostly handy as a place to hang her purse, her lunch-bag and a few other key items). And Mike has become a welcome part of our community with his dry humor and a hesitant but willing approach to trying new foods.

We look forward to the day we can open an entire second home and welcome even more new friends to share our life together.

~ Alex Conroy

Calendar

August

17 Steve's Anniversary

25 Rebekah's Anniversary

September

10 Community Night

12 Sales party at CHICO's in River Forest (Lakes Street and Harlem), 8-10 am

October

8 Community Night

9 Chris' Birthday

10 "A Little Help from my friends"
Cabaret event, 7-10 pm

11 Elbert's Birthday

13 - 18 L'Arche Central Region General Assembly

Our Identity

We are people with and without developmental disabilities sharing life in communities of faith.

Mutual relationships and trust in God are at the heart of our life together.

We seek to build a world that recognizes the unique value of every person and our need for one another.

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