



NEWSLETTER - April 2012

"Where we love is home, home that our feet may leave, but not our hearts" *Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr. 'Homesick in Heaven'*



Mark & Nathan at Christmastime

Mark and Nathan – building a relationship in L'Arche

If I was Jean Vanier, I would be able to tell you, in about 2 or 3 sentences, how I met God in Mark. Yet, as I reflect on my relationship with this ridiculously wonderful man who changed my life, what keeps popping up into my brain are two words: Ernie and Bert. The image of Mark and I, leaning over the answering machine and, in our contrasting sing-song and flat nasal voices, recording our first experiment in communal living: <Please record your message ... BEEP> "Hello! This is Nathan and... MARK. And we're not ... HOME. So, leave a message and we'll call you

...WHEN WE GET HOME. Yes, when we get home. OK Bye! BYE. Bye! BYE."

Suffice to say that when I moved to Halifax, L'Arche had already changed my life, and my experience with it in Antigonish had filled me to the brim with ideas, hopes, and energy for helping start L'Arche in Halifax ...My mission was clear: fill that house up with people, and teach them what it was to be a community! Traditions, communication, celebration, sharing, worship, singing, exercise, cooking, cleaning, vacations, baking!

But instead, I found myself in a small west end apartment with a man named "Mark". The L'Arche house was not ready. It stood, vacant, half completed, and we would have to wait. Mark needed a new live-in at his apartment, so this is where we would wait.

Having met once, and only briefly, I moved in, confident of my brilliance. Who better than me (well seasoned, and confident in my interpersonal skills) to befriend someone and introduce him to the world of L'Arche? And so I began to talk with him, to talk and talk and talk. And share, and talk, and share some more. Mark did not say much; he was more interested in his puzzle book. I decided to stop sharing. The TV went on. And stayed on. It stayed on for 3 days.

And then I was faced with it: the absolute barest essence of L'Arche ... I could have all the ideas,

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L'Arche Halifax At A Glance Contact Information

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Vice-Chair: Carol Evans
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Mark and Nathan – building a relationship in L'Arche (*continued*)

energy and faith in the world, but if I did not find a way to meet this man, if I did not develop a relationship with him, there was nothing.

Saturday came and I was faced with a whole day of interacting with Mark. I suggested we clean the apartment ... and to pass the expected silence (and avoid the TV coming on) I put on some music; an old favourite mix on my iPod of Peter, Paul and Mary.

The music started, and I started to sing, quietly, so as not to bother Mark. And then on the chorus of *Blowin' In the Wind*, Mark's voice came in like a bullhorn. Overwhelming, nasal, atonal - but passionate, and somehow sweet. This man was singing at the top of his lungs!

We spent the rest of the day, as we did many days after that, filling the apartment with song, our Ernie-and-Bert voices a clashing and imperfect,



Mark & Nathan, Halloween 2010

More discoveries of mutual passions followed: the drawing, the board games, our mutual obsession with dinosaurs, and for junk shops, for making silly faces, our dislike for shellfish, our inexhaustible love for teasing and silliness, and our ability to wander and explore every corner of this city until after sundown. We could do it all, side by side, exchanging a word or two, but mostly just experiencing it together.

And I began to become aware that I could feel secure and validated in the closeness we felt without verbal expression. Music had helped find comfort in not talking in the beginning, but soon I learned the value of simply sitting together in real silence. Of course, I can't help myself. If you ask Mark about me, he will most likely *not* look up from what he is doing and say with a big smile, "he's always buggin' me ... but I don't mind."

As it is with any true story, the adventure is not always happy. The miracle of our close friendship has come with all of the pain, mistakes and misunderstandings that lead to growth, closeness and trust. For all our progress, Mark and I sometimes shook each other to the core of who we were. But Mark's lesson of silence was our saviour, and in the quiet that followed, the healing would come. And in the quiet I learned something else amazing: the words that would surface were often transformative. After one particularly painful week, Mark and I were walking in the gardens, and had not spoken for hours. How was this going to work? How could the two of us ever start a L'Arche house? I was at a loss, and although I knew saying something would probably frustrate him, I couldn't help it anymore. I opened my mouth and with absolutely no sing-song left in my voice, said 'Sorry Mark. I love you.'

And quietly, I heard the atonal, nasally voice of Jesus say, 'It's OK, Nathan. I love you. ... You're my brother.'



FROM KELLY'S DESK...

The theme for this newsletter is "Home."

Home means different things to different people and this usually changes as we grow.

Home for me used to be where my parents lived, and still is to some extent. Now, home is where Alex and Bobby are.

I also feel at home when I am at L'Arche Cape Breton, a place where I lived, learned, loved and was loved. And L'Arche Halifax is feeling more like home.

I feel at home when I am with certain people, regardless of where we are. I think home is a feeling you get from being with people who love you and accept you for who you are.

Home is where you belong ... Mother Teresa said, "If we have no peace, it is because we have forgotten that we belong to each other." So maybe home is the place that holds the people we belong to.

- Kelly Geddes, Community Leader

What does 'home' mean to you?

Marcel (Assistant) "Home is where we plant seeds because we know we'll be here to watch them grow."

Anna (Core Member) "Home is a place where you live and you are independent doing stuff and hanging around your friends."

Kathleen (Assistant) "Home is where you are comfortable being yourself, where you retreat to when you don't want to be anywhere else."

Rev. Dianne (Board Member) "Home- A place where one feels they belong and can contribute to daily life."

Jeanette (Family Member) "Home is the place where my husband and I, our children and grandchildren gather to love, laugh and make wonderful lifetime memories!"

Nathan (Assistant) "Home is where you make the most mistakes and people still love you the most."

Barb (Board Member) "Home is a place where they accept you just as you are warts and all and they still love you...home is that soft place to fall when life is tough and its the place to be yourself and have FUN!"

L'Arche Halifax Needs ...

- Volunteers
- Tools
- Gardening tools and supplies
- Good set of knives
- Spiritual books, CD's
- Wheelchair van
- Big stewpot
- Small fridge
- Arts and crafts supplies
- Friend with a cottage for L'Arche

No Place Like.....

My Tom smiles when I tell him that he's a lucky guy because he has two homes, my "tree house" and his house at Bonny Lea Farm. He seems instinctively to know there is a difference between a house and a home, although he might not be able to define either word for you. Some years ago, as we were beginning the long drive back from a happy week at summer camp, he stopped in the middle of the many stories of his wonderful experiences to tell me something important. When I was too slow to interpret his remark, he drew on his archive of movie lore and carefully explained, "You know, Wizard of Oz, there's no place like home."

Home...everyone has a different idea about what that word means...

My mother's family was part of that Antigonish homeland which my French father slyly termed "the holy land". Placing people correctly required answers to questions like "Who were your people, dear?" or "Who's your father?" I thought that my mother had cousins with truly strange names. There was no one on Leeds Street with a name like Rose Dan Will or Rose Dan Archie, but anyone from "home" would know how to place either of them in the vast MacDonald clan.

Home, then, is where we all come from. If we have been among the fortunate and the blessed, it is a place where we knew love, appreciation, security, warmth, comfort, good example, kindness, and the assurance of belonging to something wonderful. Still most of us grew up wanting and needing to leave this place of our beginnings and our great happiness. When we came home again as the visiting son or daughter, we found that our place there had either subtly or vastly altered. We were from away. "You can't go home again", according to Thomas Wolfe. If our home then is no longer to be where we come from, it must be wherever and whatever we come to.

Wherever we go and whatever we do in life, we will yearn for and search out and model our ideal of home because there's no place so sweet.

Many will recognize the quotation from Robert Frost's Death of the Hired Man, which defines

home as "the place where, when you go there, they have to take you in". I rather like the wife's response, "I should have called it something you somehow haven't to deserve". I think she is so perceptive. All those good and wonderful things that echo for us in the word "home" and all the innate promises to us of a happy life in a loving community are the hope of all of us. You know, Wizard of Oz, there's no place like home, and we all long to be there, deserving or not.

- Mary Ellen Clancey, family member

SAVE THE DATE!

L'Arche Halifax Monthly Gatherings

Next meeting: June 10, 2012

Times: 1:30 pm – 3:30 pm

(No gatherings in April & May)

St. Agnes Church Hall

6903 Mumford Rd, Halifax, NS

2nd Annual Art Show

Friday, April 20 to Sunday, April 22, 2012

St. Agnes Church Hall

6903 Mumford Rd, Halifax, NS

L'Arche Halifax Open House

Saturday, May 12, 2012

2pm – 4pm

5512 Sullivan St., Halifax

Annual General Meeting

Tuesday, June 12, 2012

6pm

St Margaret of Scotland Parish Hall (downstairs)

3571 Robie St, Halifax, NS

Refreshments will be served & parking is available. ALL ARE WELCOME!

4th Annual Golf Tournament

September 6, 2012

Sherwood Golf

& Country Club,

Chester, NS

Contact: David Banks

dbanks@assante.com

The United Way Campaign is a great way to support L'Arche Halifax!



Handsome Danny & Shawn!



Mark, Shawn and Anna working together on a puzzle!



Jackie the happy gardener!

***The
Beautiful
Smiles
of
L'Arche
Halifax!!***



L'Arche Halifax enjoying the backyard in 2010

HOME

"There's no place like home". I believe it was Dorothy in the Wizard of Oz who said this. Dorothy had found herself in a strange world where she met many new personalities – some nice and some not so nice – on her quest to find the Wizard of Oz. The unfamiliar surroundings made her long for home. Home represents the familiar, the constant and the unchanging. But home can also be the hub, the command central and the launching point for various welcome adventures into the "outside" world.

With two adult daughters and two teenage sons heavily involved in sports, our home covers both ends of the spectrum. It's a lively place with people going off in different directions on a daily basis. Recently we've added a couple of members to the family – Halifax Moosehead hockey players, Marc Olivier Daigle and Alex Grenier. We are their billet family. Our job is to make them feel at home. We are their "home away from home". Even the addition of the two Moosehead players with their busy schedule and dietary needs (Alex is on a 6,000 calorie per day diet!) are no match for my wife, Noreen. She somehow keeps us all going in the right direction at the right times – this, on top of a busy job as a medical sales representative. She works best when she is busy and stays close with her Blackberry messenger.

But our home is also a retreat after a long day doing whatever it is we do. Our children often return home with friends and teammates in tow – sometimes an entire team (hockey, soccer, basketball, lacrosse). Alex and Marc's fellow Mooseheads are often here as well - hanging out and playing video games. All of this is a testament to Noreen's welcoming personality.

Because of our busy schedule most days we eat when we can and rarely do more than 2 or 3 of us eat at the same time. However, on Sundays we eat our evening meal together. Often my daughters join us with their boyfriends and doggy, Teddy. There's usually a friend or two as well. The music blares and people dance around the kitchen (literally) preparing food. A stranger might find the scene somewhat chaotic, but it is always fun and the folks we care about are with us.

In the end whether your home is a peaceful retreat or exciting planning station or combination of the two, in the end what makes a home a home is the family of people there who choose to spend their lives together.

Enjoy your home.

– Brian J. Hebert, Chair, Board of Directors

I WANT TO HELP L'ARCHE HALIFAX!

Please send me information on how to:

- ☐ Become a L'Arche Halifax Assistant
- ☐ Become a Volunteer at L'Arche Halifax

Name : _____

Address: _____

Postal Code: _____ Phone: _____

Email: _____

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!