

HOME*matters*

BUILDING COMMUNITIES OF FAITH AND LIFELONG HOMES WITH PEOPLE WHO HAVE INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES

GET INVOLVED

L'Arche Greater Washington, DC accepts applications on a rolling basis for assistants in Washington, DC and Arlington, VA. We're also looking for volunteers! If you're interested in these opportunities, having dinner, or praying with us and more, check out: **larche-gwdc.org/get-involved**

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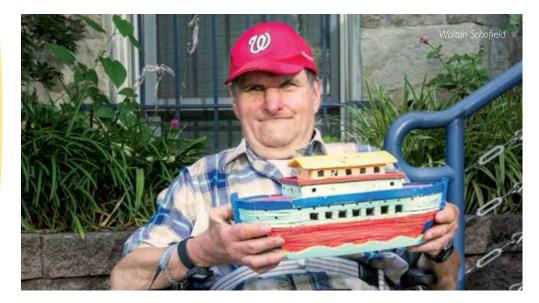
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Gentle Waltico, Fierce Love, Cherished Gifts By Vasu Abhiraman

"¿Cuantos hermanos tienes?"

"He wants to know how many siblings you have." Surrounded by family, friends, and L'Arche Greater Washington, DC community members who traveled from far and wide the moment they heard the news, Walton Schofield said his final goodbyes on January 18, 2018. With a pen in one hand, and a New Yorker in the other, Walton, a core member at Ontario House, passed away after over 14 years of living in the community. He was 69 years old.

Walton's journey into L'Arche was long coming. After the Schofield family emigrated from Cuba in the early 1960s, Walton and his brother Johnny were cared for by their parents in Miami. When Walton's sister Virginia decided to care for the brothers in Washington, DC in the 1980s, Johnny joined the L'Arche community soon thereafter. After Ontario House installed its first elevator in 2003, Walton could finally follow Johnny and reunite with his brother in a home, which, as Virginia relates, was a longstanding dream of the Schofield family.

The life of L'Arche involves intentionally and relentlessly affirming the gifts of community members. When a core member like Walton leaves us, through the tears, mourning, and sorrow, the affirmation continues. In the days after Walton's passing, many gathered at our DC homes, Euclid ("The Red Door") and Ontario, to trade stories of Walton and memories of his gifts.

Universally, those gathered remembered that Walton was content "with the simple things in life." Not only did he ooze a sense of "contagious" peace from simply holding just the right pen, cup of coffee, or magazine, but he also told stories with as much excitement, animation, and passion as anyone else.

L'ARCHE GREATER WASHINGTON D.C.

Longtime community member Melissa Javier-Barry remembered the period in which Walton was welcomed to the L'Arche community. She described how she and other community members spent many days at Virginia's house learning how to care for and love Walton:

"Virginia set an expectation for a level of fierceness in our love for Walton. This set a precedent, passed from person to person, for the way we love each member of our community."

Others remembered how Walton taught them about "contemplation and solitude." How he exuded a "benevolent" and "magnetic" presence. How he invited the community to contemplate the "sacredness" of routine.

Many of those who were unable to attend, in their grief and gratitude, took to social media. Former assistant Anders Carlson shared memories from Minnesota:

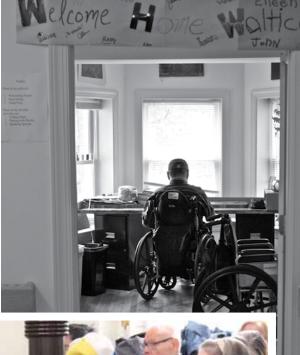
"Walton and I could sit for hours in a coffee shop or on a park bench. He'd slam a coffee (with plenty of azucar y leche) and just sit quietly, looking around, shaking hands with people and charming them with his handsome smile and vintage Cuban style. He didn't have to say much. And to be sitting in a coffee shop in Washington DC without a laptop, without a phone in our hands, not yapping away at each other, it felt like a protest. But it was just his way. I think that's why people instantly loved this man. He reminds us of how sweet it could be if we just slowed down a little."

Former assistant Kara Cunnane also shared from afar, with an immense sense of thankfulness:

"Thank you [Walton] for all of the handshakes, all of the opportunities to recap your pens with the right colored cap, the bedtime whispers and cheek kisses, the daily discipline of gently caring for our burdened bodies, for reluctantly sharing your goras and guayaberas, your patience with my clumsy Spanish, the soothing sound of your bloques sliding across your desk, your stories about the dentist, your love for la playa and postre, your insistence on speaking your needs and desire ...Thank you for teaching me that every day is a new opportunity to re-meet those we know."

Walton's relationships with other core members of the L'Arche GWDC community were paramount as well, often modeling the beauty of connection through silence. Core member Andrew Commisso and assistant Summer Elliot reminisced on Walton and Andrew's relationship, how Walton would "put down whatever he was doing" to shake hands with Andrew. Other core members expressed simply that they will miss their interactions with Walton. While Walton Schofield, immigrant, citizen, and gentle lover of pens, will no longer be with us in the flesh, his brother Johnny, his sister Virginia, and the fierce love that Virginia modeled for this L'Arche community will remain.











How I Met Hazel By Liza Karlin

The story of how I met and became friends with Hazel is one I truly love.

I was late to Mass (as usual), and wanted to sit near the choir, admittedly, to be in closer proximity to a boy I had a crush on. I noticed a pew close to the musicians with enough space for me. I asked the stranger on the end if he'd scoot over a bit. He looked a bit worried and shook his head, no.

I was a bit startled. Who says 'no, we won't make room for you,' in church?

Confused, I found a seat in the next pew. As Mass progressed, I realized why the stranger had said no: he was sitting with several people who couldn't just scoot over—at least one had a physical disability and the others wouldn't understand the need to quietly move to make room for one more during a hushed, solemn Mass. My amazement and slight annoyance quickly turned into humility.

Soon after that, I attended the birthday party of one of our priests. I recognized the stranger and one of the people he had been sitting with. I sat down with the two of them—James and Hazel—to enjoy the festivities. I learned that Hazel, like me, loves champagne! (And I was a bit jealous: she had a designated driver—James—and could drink as much as she wanted! I had to content myself with just one glass.) At that same birthday party, Hazel's friend Jack presented her with a bracelet from one of his recent travels. Out of kindness, he gave one to me, too! We had matching bracelets and a matching love for champagne: a friendship was born!

I WORE THE BRACELET FOR WEEKS AND EVERY TIME I SAW HAZEL AT OUR LADY QUEEN OF PEACE, WE'D EACH POINT AT OUR MATCHING BRACELETS. SOON AFTER THAT, HAZEL, JAMES AND THE OTHERS BEGAN TO SAVE A SEAT FOR ME AT MASS (REGRETTABLY, I DID NOT LEARN TO ARRIVE EARLIER).



I love the story because, I believe, it is a quintessential story of friendship.

Friends learn about—and from—one another. That day I learned Hazel loves bubbly and that people in wheelchairs who may not be able to communicate as clearly as I can still, of course, have interests and favorites just like anyone else. In the years since that party, I've learned that Hazel loves hotdogs and bracelets, coffee and parties, travel and playing jokes on friends. She loves her family (especially her sister Pam) and her housemates (especially those who closely support her: James, Sarah, Lauren). And I've learned that watching someone you love go into a surgery—even a routine one—is scary.

Friendships and relationships thrive in love and community. I am thankful to Jack and James for bracelets and honesty and welcome. L'Arche and Our Lady Queen of Peace and my and Hazel's friends in those communities nourish us. Their love makes each of us and our friendship better.

Friends are open to each other and imagine a future with one another in their lives. A chance encounter developed into a life-changing relationship and a story frayed with loving retelling. A church event led to shared meals, a vacation to New Orleans, invitations to each other's homes, and many adventures yet to come.

Thank you, Hazel, for the memories! I love ya!



Hazel and Liza

Dear Friends,

As we reflect back on 2017, we are reminded of all the change that L'Arche Greater Washington, DC has undergone. The community navigated leadership transitions, changing needs due to aging, and many goodbyes and welcomes. Through it all, we continue to recognize our need for each other.

L'Arche Greater Washington DC is a community of faith, transformation, and belonging. In 1983 we embarked on a journey to create homes that center around adults with intellectual disabilities who call us to deeper, more vulnerable, and trusting relationships with each other and with God. L'Arche has become a family of belonging where every member is celebrated for their gifts, supported in their changing needs, and challenged to grow. Mutual transformation occurs when those with and without intellectual disabilities foster relationships built on value, respect, and dignity.

As L'Arche founder Jean Vanier writes in his book Community and Growth, "A community is only being created when its members accept that they are not going to achieve great things, that they are not going to be heroes, but simply live each day with new hope, like children, in wonderment as the sun rises and in thanksgiving as it sets."

The beauty of L'Arche is that through many acts of love and forgiveness our hearts are transformed and we begin to see ourselves and each other differently. It is through the refining seasons of change and growth that we begin to see that we are being renewed.

Thank you, friends, for joining us in our mission as we live each day with new hope.

Tom Gaunt, S.J.

Fr. Thomas P. Gaunt, SJ, Board President

New Board Members

The L'Arche Greater Washington, DC Board of Directors is made up of dedicated and faithful servants to our mission. Here are its newest members:



Laura DeMaria joined the L'Arche board in September of 2017. Laura is the Executive Director of the National Association for County Community and Economic Development (NACCED). She is an alumnus of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and the American University School of Public Affairs, where she earned a Master's in Public Administration and Nonprofit Management.



Tim Malone joined the L'Arche board in January of 2018. He first connected to L'Arche through St. Mary's Episcopal Church in Arlington, a church he shared with many members of the L'Arche community, where he served as the Senior Associate to the Rector. Tim brings twenty years of experience in the Federal Government as a Mental Health Therapist. He specializes in family therapy, couples counseling, and substance abuse work.



Carolyn Rumer joined the L'Arche board in January 2017. She is an attorney and a former L'Arche GWDC Assistant who works for the Legal Aid Society of DC. She attended law school at the University of Virginia. Before law school, Carolyn completed a B.S. in Anthropology and Honors History at the University of Notre Dame.



Community

L'Arche Greater Washington, D.C., is an interdenominational Christian community that welcomes people of all backgrounds to share life together. Community life is centered on four communal homes and the fifteen members who have intellectual disabilities, known as core members.

Each community member is encouraged to discover and deepen his or her spiritual life and live it according to their particular faith and tradition. Those who have no religious affiliation are also welcomed and respected in their freedom of conscience.

Here are just a few highlights from our active community:

- Charles and Luke represented L'Arche GWDC at the L'Arche International Federation Assembly in Belfast, Northern Ireland
- In June, all members of our L'Arche GWDC homes ventured to Scranton, PA for the L'Arche USA Eastern Regional Gathering
- In August, L'Arche GWDC took its annual trip to Bull Run Regional Park and Atlantis Waterpark
- The community conducted a number of successful open house events, including one to coincide with the opening of a new apartment for Euclid core members
- L'Arche GWDC partnered with various organizations this year including Georgetown, the ARC, various parishes, visiting schools like Assumption College and Notre Dame, Dignity Church, St. Matthew's Cathedral, and many more
- The L'Arche GWDC Executive Team reached a new shared leadership model, between the positions of Human Services Leader and Community Leader

- Laurie was sponsored on Virginia local news for her weaving prowess
- L'Arche GWDC held its annual SolidariDAY to raise money for L'Arche International
- The Mo Higgs Gallery: L'Arche GWDC's partner in the community, Art Enables, opened a new permanent off-site gallery space named in honor of L'Arche member Maurice 'Mo' Higgs
- Kelly performed in the play "Out of Monet" through ArtStream
- Hazel and Liza traveled to New Orleans
- Many community members entered into marriage with L'Arche GWDC core members at their side or delivering toasts
- Eric and Fritz played for Arlington Red with Special Olympics basketball at the Marymount University tournament
- Fritz and Vince held an Art Show at Church of the Pilgrim with all proceeds to support L'Arche India

L'ARCHE GREATER WASHINGTON D.C.











Professional Services

Foundational to the community's well-being and the fulfillment of the L'Arche Greater Washington, DC mission is the dedication and tenderness of the professionals who provide support for daily living. Within the context of the home, L'Arche assistants administer medication, provide personal care, plan nutritious meals to suit particular diets, help navigate complex social settings, and offer guidance in decision making.

The community continues to deal with joys and challenges in these areas as core members age in place, providing necessary accommodation with the generous support of our donors.

In 2017, L'Arche improved its professional services in these ways, among others:

- Due to accessibility concerns at Euclid House, core members Sonny, Mo, and Andrew moved around the corner from Euclid to a more accessible Jubilee Housing apartment, a product of our strong relationship with Jubilee Housing
- The L'Arche GWDC team reviewed and updated its orientation process
- Longtime assistant and administrator Eva-Elizabeth Chisholm took over as community Human Services Leader, supervising the provision of professional services
- David Wiley came over as our new Chief Financial Officer from Jubilee Housing, bringing scores of experience in nonprofit management and finance
- Personal MAPs with service goals were discerned for sixteen core members, as a precursor to ISP meetings with governmental agencies in DC and Virginia

- The DC community welcomed Maryanne Henderson as new Service Team Leader
- Responding to expressed needs of core members, a walk-in accessible bathtub was installed at Ontario House
- An accessibility ramp was revamped for Highland House
- Core members like Laurie traveled far and wide with the support of other community members ensuring mobility and access to care. Laurie visited her childhood home in Norway, accompanied by Tam
- L'Arche explored additional ways to support our community in using Spanish and ASL communication, including a training co-led by core members and assistants hosted at an All-Employees café



Advocacy

For generations, people with intellectual disabilities have been ignored, excluded, and spoken for. L'Arche aims to change that by advocating with people who have intellectual disabilities for the rights and dignity they deserve.

Advocacy can mean working to change policies to give core people more freedom. It can mean calling a reporter to help illuminate problems in our system. It can include calling an insurance company and spending an hour on the phone. Most often, advocacy means asking questions and really listening to the answer, then joining our voices together to speak up for change.

Here are just a few examples of our advocacy:

- Many L'Arche members including Sarah, Eva-Elizabeth, Fritz, Laurie, and John visited Capitol Hill for the National Down Syndrome Society's Buddy Walk on Washington in April, where they met with the office of Sen. Mark Warner and Rep. Don Beyer from Virginia among others
- L'Arche advocates including Charles and Eva-Elizabeth joined a contingent from the Arc of Northern Virginia to visit representatives in Richmond to ask for additional Medicaid Waiver "slots" and funding for community-based services
- L'Arche members gathered in February for letter-writing day to representatives regarding disability rights
- Former assistant Yuko advocated and achieved a change in her textbooks in medical school regarding disabilities due to her experience at L'Arche

- Kelly and Lauren traveled to Chicago in November as part of the L'Arche USA Inclusion Team formation
- Fritz and Katie delivered a presentation at the Ignatian Family Teach-In for Justice conference, sharing about L'Arche and everyday solidarity with students, faculty members, and teachers
- Francene and Lauren participated in Proclamation Day for people with disabilities for Arlington County
- Members of the DC and VA communities participated in The Arc of Northern Virginia's Corporate and Community Team Challenge at Burke Lake Park, specifically the "2-mile walk with sprints in between"

Photo Album



















PH II







Our Community at Bull Run Regional Park



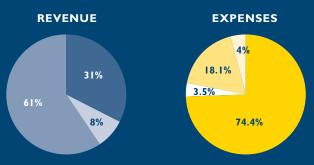
Financial Statement

October 1, 2016 - September 30, 2017

The public version of our 990 is available upon request.

At L'Arche Greater Washington, D.C., community life centers on four homes where fifteen core people, members with intellectual disabilities, live together with the people who assist them. In addition to these life-long homes, L'Arche provides professional-support services and seeks ways for core people to be actively engaged in the social, civic, and spiritual life of Greater Washington, D.C.

Thank you to the many generous donors whose financial gifts supplement government contracts, making a holistic, high-quality life possible for L'Arche members.



REVENUE

Government Contracts	\$2,282,85 I
	\$1,135,910
Individual Donors	\$672,146
Foundations	\$139,766
Churches	\$164,766
Corporations	\$133,278
Other	\$25,954
Other Income	\$298,603
Total Revenue	\$3,717,364

EXPENSES

\$2,611,920
\$122,204
\$633,463
\$141,772
\$3,509,359

Total Assets	\$6,771,979
Total Liabilities	\$2,874,091
Total Net Assets	\$3,897,888

Johnny The Baptist By Charles Rousseau

When I joined L'Arche GWDC as an assistant in Ontario House, I was decidedly not a Christian. In fact, I have the distinct honor of scandalizing our beloved Sarah Ruszkowski (Home Life Leader 2012-2017) in our first accompaniment meeting. Apparently, I was the first person who ever told Sarah that I wasn't sure I believed in God. I remember telling her that I didn't even know what it would mean to believe in God. She didn't share her surprise until years after the fact. But that's for later in the story.

I first arrived at Ontario amidst the hustle and bustle of dinner. I don't remember much from that first meal together, except the water that burned behind my eyes as we passed the candle. I had just left graduate school at an esteemed university where I had spent an unhappy year studying theology. Something was broken in that prestigious place and in myself too. But during that first supper with L'Arche, I felt the fugitive hope that I finally had found the right place to bring my brokenness, and the right place to transfigure it. Somewhere between the two seconds Michael spent with the candle, and the two minutes Johnny spent with it, I experienced the first of countless times I'd fight back tears around that table.

That night, Johnny's two minutes at the dinner table were just a warm-up. In the lull that followed our meal, as the assistants went about attending to the various loose ends of the day, I wandered toward a desk in the corner of the TV room. It was covered in papers, notebooks, pens, Bibles, and crayons. Johnny looked up at me with a big smile. It was the first time he'd direct the warmth of his attention my way.

It is hard to describe that posture, but everyone who knows Johnny has been beckoned by it. He leans toward you and dials-in on your person, as if you were the only thing in existence; he tilts his head down slightly to look intently over the top of his glasses; and he raises his right hand in a gesture that now strikes me as a kind of benediction. When Johnny beckons, and when he holds his right hand up in prayer, his hand often resembles the manual gesture used in the iconography of Christ to signify benediction: the thumb, index, and middle fingers are raised, while the ring and pinky fingers are lowered. It is the gesture priests continue to use when performing benedictions, and the resemblance is fitting. Not only does Johnny love the priesthood, but the English word "benediction" is a translation of Latin words that mean to "speak well." Little did I know that the man inviting me into conversation that evening would indeed speak so very, very well.

"Heeeeey! Cómo se dice tu nombre?What is your name?"

"My name is Charles. What is your name?"

"Ah! Chow! My name is John Schofield. How many years in Washington, DC?"

I pulled up a chair and we spoke for nearly two hours. Sadly, I didn't speak Spanish then, and I don't speak Spanish now. But Johnny is an incredible communicator. Though I did not know the meaning of many of his words, a kind of Pentecostal understanding began that night. Despite all that I did not know, it was abundantly, gloriously clear that John Schofield was a man of passion and compassion, intensity and conviction, warmth and generosity. I knew right away that I had made a friend. Not long thereafter, I learned that I would have the profound privilege of sharing accompaniment with Johnny.

The year I lived in L'Arche was one of those rare experiences when something is all that you hoped it would be. It was, as we say, transformative, and my friendship with Johnny was central to that transformation. But as we who have formed and been formed by L'Arche must continually learn, transformation is not a static point of arrival. Transformation, like friendship, is ongoing.



Charles and Johnny







Charles, Sarah, and Johnny

So this past October, when I found myself in conversations about being baptized, I had transformation on my mind once again. Having never been baptized, and having recently accepted myself as a Christian, I was excited and nervous to engage the formal process of the baptismal sacrament. Part of this process, my Episcopalian priest explained, would be identifying someone who could sponsor my baptismal candidacy, someone who could speak to my belonging in the beloved community of those who follow Christ. I immediately thought of Johnny.

Happily, Johnny agreed to be my sponsor, and on Saturday November 4th, I drove to pick him up from DC and bring him down to NC. In a providential turn of events, Sarah Ruskowski just so happened to be in DC that weekend for a wedding. She, too, has been a transformative friend, and I asked if she would consider leaving DC at 4am and driving a rental car down to NC to join us at the baptism. To my great joy, that is exactly what she did. On Sunday morning, November 5th, during the celebration of All Saints Day, I found myself in a situation I never could have imagined: I was in a church I loved, about to be baptized, with frankincense in the air, my family all around me (including my eight-month old nephew in my Iap), and my dear friends from L'Arche by my side. Johnny's tarea said, "Today is the baptism of Charles my friend."

THE FAMILIAR BURN BEHIND MY EYES WAS PRESENT THROUGHOUT THE SERVICE, BUT I ALMOST LOST IT WHEN THE GOSPEL WAS READ: "BLESSED ARE THE POOR IN SPIRIT, FOR THEIRS IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN..." I am, and have been, and will be, the poor in spirit. But on that day, the day of my baptism, I once again had the rare experience where something is everything you hoped it would be. It was a reunion many years in the making, long hoped for and unlikely (just ask Sarah!). Yet there I was, surrounded by what have been, for me, the two best examples of the kingdom of heaven: the family I come from, and the L'Arche family that welcomed me.

When the time came for Johnny to present me for baptism, the man of benediction did not disappoint. Johnny not only said that I should be baptized, but he also offered up his passionate prayers for the poor, for the people of his own church, for the L'Arche community, for the people of Cuba and Puerto Rico, and for all who are sick. It was a glorious and unscripted moment of joy – and it was pure Johnny.

After the service, Sarah, Johnny, and I joined with the church congregation and my family to enjoy a big potluck meal. We spent a long and happy afternoon talking and eating together. When the potluck died down, Johnny joined my father and brother-in-law to watch football and relax on the couch, while I made sure to find, and thank, the counters of the day's tithes. During the offering, Johnny had very generously given a galloon-sized ziplock bag full of pennies. That night, we gathered together for a meal, and afterwards, we shared our thoughts on the day as we passed the light of a candle from person to person. When it came time for Johnny's two minutes, he spoke about the number of people in his church: "seventeen, eighteen, a hundred thousand people!" he said. And as he spoke, I realized that now, as of this day, that number included one more.

Sisters & Brothers By James Schreiner

Between March 2010 and November 2017, I was welcomed as a member of four different L'Arche communities: L'Arche Clinton, L'Arche GWDC, Asha Niketan Asansol and Asha Niketan Chennai. I also enjoyed extended visits with L'Arche Erie and Asha Niketan Kolkata. It has been wonderful to live with these six communities and appreciate several mutual relationships. Now that my commitment with L'Arche FMR India is complete, Edna asked if I would share a brief reflection about my experience of solidarity within L'Arche.

A few weeks after I joined L'Arche GWDC, I was in the kitchen with Bruce and Luke, when Bruce asked us, "Why are we brothers?" Having grown up as an only child, Bruce had only ever lived with his parents before joining our community. Charles kept referring to everyone as sisters and brothers, and Bruce was trying to make sense of it all. "Why do you think?" Luke responded. "Because we live together, and we love each other," Bruce suggested. Bruce's beautiful understanding has often come to mind when I have reflected on solidarity. It is moving to realize, that in all the L'Arche communities throughout the world, community members are growing in love as they live together as sisters and brothers.

In Asha Niketan Asansol, community members refer to anyone who is older as Didi or Dada (Elder Sister or Elder Brother). Since most of the Core Members were children and teenagers when I joined the community in 2015, many referred to me as James Dada. I loved it, especially when Pintu shouted "James Dada!" whenever I chased him around or carried him on my shoulders. In Chennai, Akka and Anna are expressions used for elder siblings, and since most of the Core Members were older, Assistants used these terms out of affection and respect. Sometimes I would smile when referring to Peter Anna as my brother, because he is thirteen years older than my parents. Peter Anna has taught me so much about openness, trust, healing, and fidelity in prayer. While living as sisters and brothers, members of L'Arche grow in gratitude for all of creation together, and it is inspiring to learn of various affinities fellow members have for plants and animals. Fritz has taught many to recognize the sacredness of flowers. He and I often purchased flowers to take to his mom and always a second bouquet for his bedroom. In the L'Arche communities in India, flowers from the community gardens are offered to guests as a gesture of welcome. Linda had a deep appreciation for animals, and it was a gift to share with her over Skype about a stray cat and a family of dogs that lived on Asha Niketan Asansol's property before she passed away. Over the years, I have found myself delighting in certain plants and animals that have brought joy to fellow community members.

Many family members and friends have asked if it was challenging to live in cultures where English is seldom spoken. "How can you regard someone as a sister or brother when you are incapable of having a full conversation?" I have come to realize that dialogues are unnecessary for mutuality to be experienced. Offering one another tenderness and sharing in a common way of life allows for bonding without words. I will always be grateful for Victor, George, Harlan, Francene, Hazel, Fritz, Linda, Maria Dada, Akash, Bittu, Muneshwar Dada, Bala Anna, and Franci Akka for all they have taught me in silence and compassion.

Thank you for reading this reflection and for all the support you offer members of L'Arche GWDC. Hopefully you will also have a chance to visit or join another L'Arche community for an extended period.





Thank you to our donors!

These gifts were received in our fiscal year calendar October 1st, 2016 - September 30th, 2017. Donors who made gifts received after September 30th, 2017 will be acknowledged in our next annual report.

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The Heart of L'Arche Society was created in 2009 to build a sustainable foundation for L'Arche's financial future. Donors pledge \$1,000 or more per year for three years, allowing L'Arche to plan ahead. Thank you!

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\$25,000+ per year for three years Chapman, Grace, Crawford, Jade, and Jarman Taylor

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