



L'Arche Greater Washington, D.C.
P.O. Box 21471 | Washington, D.C. 20009
202.232.4539 | www.larche-gwdc.org



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FALL 2023

HOME MATTERS



CREATING A MORE HUMAN SOCIETY WHERE
PEOPLE WITH AND WITHOUT INTELLECTUAL
DISABILITIES SHARE LIFE TOGETHER.

CO-CREATORS OF BOLD HOPE

BY LUKE
FRANCIS SMITH
Community Leader,
Executive Director



In celebrating 40 years of community, I am mindful of the importance of co-creation and being partners with God in creation. 40 years of community life, the importance of those who have led us: Michael as a founding core member, Ricky as the newest core member, and the new assistants we welcomed this week.

All the people, thousands of people—who have been assistants, siblings, cousins, guests, parents, volunteers, board members, leaders, core people, neighbours, friends, and government partners—whose names I have not mentioned.

Each of them, like you and I—yes, you reading this—are co-creators in the story, lived reality, and daily experience of our L'Arche GWDC community.

Community hasn't just happened. It is called into being each day through our generosity, questions, prayers, and celebrations, each of us a piece of the fabric of L'Arche.

This co-creation requires daily tending, to find the courage to let go of what should be and let flourish the unknown fruits, finding and welcoming new ideas and experiences.

Increasingly I understand L'Arche as a movement made up of countless moments.

A movement for justice and integrity, a movement towards the light; we are called to stretch and rely upon those around us to know the direction we should be moving.

This image of co-creation is one that I am particularly drawn to; it is in my leadership style, and it's in the rootedness of our community as a diverse group of people. It's inherent within our relationships as people with and without intellectual disabilities.

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202.232.4539
info@larche-gwdc.org
larche-gwdc.org

Mailing Address

L'Arche Greater Washington, D.C.
P.O. Box 21471
Washington, D.C. 20009

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COVER STORY, CONTINUED →

Over the last 40-plus years, the social connections and community that have been co-created at and with L'Arche have led to an impact far beyond the dreams of our founding in the late 1970s.

Transforming relationships has meant countless weddings, birthdays, graduations, visits from newborn L'Arche Babies, a multitude of guests, encounters in coffee shops, post offices, banks, cinemas... We could spend our next 40 years recalling all of the stories of the past, AND that is not our sole focus.

Instead, we live daily, broadening and inviting more co-creators; that is how we as a community want to be reaching out.

In looking at what we are tending to, I give thanks for all of the ways that each of you makes the investments and partnerships that further our commitment to create meaningful change for people with intellectual disabilities and for those working with and for them; ensuring L'Arche is part of the fabric of our local daily life. This same commitment calls us to daily growth.

Growing in our listening and responding to what is needed.

Growing to be better at listening to and amplifying the voices of core family members.

Growing to ensure we pay our assistants and leaders well and meaningfully for their transformational and beautiful work.

And growing to know how best to live as a community when that looks different now than in the past.

At prayer night, someone recently shared, "L'Arche is a place of hope." This is also my experience. I encourage us to be people of bold hope: co-creators of bold hope in the power of community, where we continue to move forward in creating a more human society, where each of us is needed, where each person is known and seen because of our unique, sacred values. Each of us co-creators. ●



Top: Luke and Laurie in front of 6th Street.
(Rachel Schrock Photography)

Right: Hazel enjoying a beer at a local brewery.



Above: Johnny celebrating his birthday.

Below: Francene and Mary at the Kennedy Center.



Above: Celebrating L'Arche style—with a blessing!



PEOPLE HELPING PEOPLE: CARE FOR OURSELVES AS A COMMUNITY



AN INTERVIEW WITH MARTIN CALDERONE

Meet Martin Calderone! Martin is one of the first kids to have grown up in L'Arche GWDC. Both of Martin's parents were part of L'Arche and his childhood was spent in our homes and at community events. Sometimes referred to as "L'Arche Babies," there's quite a few kids that have grown up being part of L'Arche in myriad ways and they are integral to our lives in community.

Martin and his wife, Erica, have two kids and are currently living in Maryland. We had the chance to catch up with Martin, surrounded by his L'Arche t-shirt circa 1993 and his Mo Higgs (founding core member of GWDC) original painting. [Some responses are shortened for length or clarity].

Q: Tell us a bit about yourself.

Martin: I'm a physical therapist assistant and I've been working for almost 15 years in a skilled nursing facility. My wife is an occupational therapist and she works in outpatient. We met working together. We have two kids and I mean, life is pretty much all about them right now and just enjoying it so much.

Through L'Arche, community has always been so important to us. Like being able to introduce our kids to different neighbors, whether it's next door neighbors or neighbors within the community... meeting people not just kind of similar to us in one way or another but having differences.

Q: So both your parents were part of the L'Arche community when you were born, which kind of answers how you came to L'Arche, but how did you feel about those first years?

Martin: I was basically born into L'Arche... I think it was 1983 [when] they had started the two homes and I was born in '86. There are pictures of me as a newborn at prayer nights and kind of sing-alongs and everything... Some of

the original core members were kind of like grandparents to me, like Mo Higgs and Michael Schaff and Glen and Eugene... I didn't really know life without L'Arche as a kid.

It's interesting though, the idea of just singing and being together in a group. One of the songs I actually sing for my daughter every night is *This Little Light of Mine* and I've always had a really vivid memory of Eileen just dancing and singing to *This Little Light of Mine* and holding her finger out and my daughter's now started getting one or two words of the song.

Q: I'm curious if there's other things through your day-to-day now, like that song, that you feel came from L'Arche?

Martin: Oh yeah absolutely. With my type of work... I try to feel that level of empathy and just caring for another person and not seeing them for anything besides just being a different person.

...just making sure that you're treating people with compassion and not getting complacent and saying [things] like, "Oh well this person doesn't mind because [of] their thought processes. They're not able to understand what they're going through," like no.

I was always around people helping people, and it was kind of a community. As a child, I didn't really have those initial biases of like this is a person with a disability... versus this is like a more able bodied person... It felt like just kind of friends. It felt like a family of people being there with each other and just joking around.

There was one core member, Raymond, he loved toy cars and so we would play on the ground and just play with toy cars and it wasn't till years later to have thought of if someone else might see a fully grown 40 year old adult male...

someone might think of them as being weird or different or something like that and I just thought man this is the coolest guy ever, he likes playing with cars just like me!

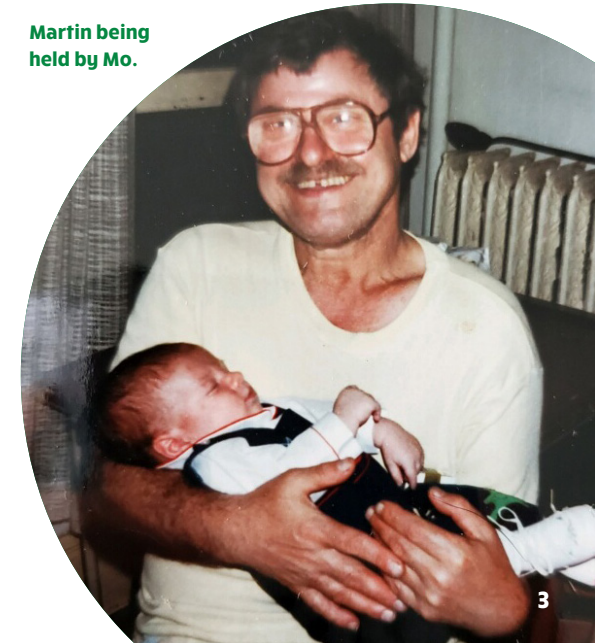
I feel like some of my experiences through L'Arche also let me understand that being able to have fun, like you shouldn't worry about what people are seeing when they're looking at you, and hey, if you enjoy playing with cars you enjoy playing with cars.

Q: What do you hope for L'Arche?

Martin: I wish more people could have the experiences of seeing what L'Arche is about from any age group. I feel like it was such a huge advantage for me as a young person to be able to see people different than me... to be able to just understand the compassion of seeing people caring for other people...

I feel like there's been such a focus on, "just take care of yourself and you'll be fine," and for me, I've just always been like "no, we need to care for ourselves as a community." ...being able to have that sense of not just yourself, but being aware of the greater community is such an important aspect of life and who we should be as a people. ●

Martin being held by Mo.



40 YEARS

CREATING COMMUNITY TOGETHER

Through many welcomes and farewells, challenges and tribulations, celebrations, and thousands of meals shared, we arrive at the threshold of our 40th anniversary with much to be thankful for and a lot of work still to do. Thank you for being part of this journey.

2023

Jeremiah and Ricky smiling in front of a rainbow.



1977-1983: Planning & Preparing

Many people worked together over several years to establish L'Arche GWDC first in Adams Morgan, D.C. A local partner, Eighth Day Church, donated a row house that would become "Ontario" after renovations. Our first fundraiser started with a concert by the Eighth Day Musicians at the Potter's House, a local cafe and gathering place.

October 6, 1983: Ontario Opens in Adams Morgan

Ontario house became a home when our first core member, Michael Schaff, moved in on October 6.

1987: Relaxing Together

The community went for a weekend vacation in September to Rehoboth Beach in Delaware. And thus, the practice of relaxing together, away from the buzz of city life began!

December 11, 1988: Euclid Opens in Adams Morgan

Euclid house opened and would soon be called "The Red Door," thanks to its notable front door color.

2004

Highland house renovations in 2005. We added a whole new edition, plus our ramp. Look how much the front tree has grown!



1983, left to right: In front of Ontario house; Our first Christmas tree.



1987
Community members vacationing together in Milton, DE. Later, core member Eugene named an adopted cat Milton.

2003: Mission & Identity

GWDC takes part in the Mission and Identity process, as mandated by L'Arche International, which continued over three years and established our mission and identity as we know it today.

2004: Moving into Virginia

In June, we purchased two houses in South Arlington, VA. Plans were made for renovating one and renting the other. In August, monthly prayer nights began at Highland house in preparation for it becoming a L'Arche home.

August 28, 2006: Highland Opens in South Arlington

The long-awaited opening of Highland house happened with celebration.

2010



Many joined for 6th Street's ribbon cutting ceremony in 2010.

August 18, 2010: 6th Street Opens in South Arlington

There's a new kid on the block! 6th Street house opened its doors and with that, our community included four homes across two districts.

2011: Strengthening our Structures

This year marked more growth and change in the organizational structure of L'Arche GWDC. The D.C. community relaxed and had fun at Melwood in Southern MD for 3 days. One highlight was a 5.8 earthquake that shook the grounds for 40 seconds.

2013: Diversity Commission Beginnings

Founded as the Diversity and Inclusion Team in 2013, GWDC's Diversity Commission calls L'Arche to celebrate our diversity through invitations to share our identities and cultures in all parts of our lives together at L'Arche.

March 2017: Euclid Moves

Euclid house moved from "The Red Door" to a more accessible apartment around the corner.

April 2019: Inclusion Party Team

Community members co-founded GWDC's Inclusion Party Team in line with our community's mandate to focus on the leadership of core people, practice more inclusive communication, and further our commitment to valuing difference.

March 2020: Community and COVID

The pandemic impacted every aspect of our lives with certain government protocols, such as eating our meals 6 feet apart inside our homes, in place for 3 years!

2020



Kelly and her mom, Paula, meeting up for an outdoor, distanced Christmas in 2020.

August 2020: Equity & Belonging

50 community members attend Racial Affinity Groups to process the events of summer 2020, which propels the Diversity Commission to develop annual trainings, engage with the Board of Directors, and join with L'Arche USA and two Data and Diversity external partners to complete a Diversity Equity Inclusion and Justice Assessment Report by 2023.

June 2023: L'Arche's New Charter Approved

Beginning in May 2019, we joined L'Arche communities around the world in contributing feedback for the creation of our new Charter! The Charter process took over 3 years to complete as a federation. The new Charter was approved at L'Arche's International Federation Assembly.

September 2023: 40th Anniversary

Today, we whole-heartedly celebrate 40 years of creating community together. Together! It is because of thousands of people, like yourself, choosing to be part of this community in so many different ways that we are thriving. **Imagine what we can do together over the next 40 years...**

2017



Blessing Euclid's new home at the apartment.

WELCOME (BACK) TO THE FESTIVAL CENTER!

L'ARCHE GWDC'S NEW OFFICE SPACE

In March of this year, L'Arche moved our office to the newly renovated Festival Center (FC) in Adams Morgan, having previously had our office there almost ten years ago! The FC has origins in the Church of the Savior community, just like L'Arche GWDC. Church of the Savior is a community founded in the mid-1940s, from which many local, justice-oriented organizations and ministries grew.

We had conversations with Bill Mefford, FC Executive Director, and Caitlin Smith, GWDC's Director of Human Resources, about the new space.

In contextualizing for today the original vision of The FC, Bill shared about their desire to provide a safe space. "Safety breeds creativity. When people feel safe they can dream, they can wander in their thoughts, they can do all kinds of stuff!" He elaborated on wanting to be, "...somewhat of an incubator space, for nonprofits to come and do their work and to think and dream and collaborate and coordinate with others for new works in the city."

L'Arche GWDC has certainly felt that spirit of collaboration already. "What I experience from their staff and from our people who go to the office is that we want to interact with people," Caitlin shared. "It's not a stale office building where we go in, we go up the elevator, we go out... there's actual conversations happening with The Festival Center staff and we learn about their work that's happening outside of the building... they are very eager to support us too which, ...is really important to where L'Arche chooses to office."

L'Arche's new charter highlights care for our common home, so it's quite fitting that where we have our new office is also considering how to be a good neighbor in offsetting carbon emissions. Knowing that 72% of carbon emissions in DC come from buildings,* The FC sought to live out their values through their actual building by including the addition of solar panels in their renovation plans.

On speaking to the future of both The FC and L'Arche, Caitlin and Bill shared:

"I hope the festival center can continue to prioritize [their work] in a city and in a neighborhood that is constantly being pulled in different ways, where it would be easier to be a franchised coffee shop, it would be simpler to have their event space be a particular way in the DC model," Caitlin said. "I hope they continue to go against the grain and create what they're creating."

As for Bill: "I want more people to know about L'Arche and in some way, be involved."

When you have ministries of presence and relationship, like L'Arche, that are at the heart of what you do, you become an invaluable institution, both in what's done but also in the model that's presented to the rest of the neighborhood." ●

Right, from top to bottom: Festival Center; Solar panels on the Festival Center roof; Eva-Elizabeth, Caitlin, and Crisely in our new office before move-in day.



From left to right, top to bottom: Mo and Dottie enjoying a bike ride at the beach (when Ontario was our only GWDC home), October 1987; Community vacation, 1997; Debora at L'Arche USA's Eastern Regional Gathering (think: family reunion for L'Arche communities), 2004; Linda, Mulu, Dottie, and Toni eating a pretzel in Lancaster, PA on Highland house vacation, 2015; Laurie decorating shells on 6th Street's house vacation, 2016; Ricky and Santiago in Reedville, VA on Euclid house vacation, July 2023.

The L'Arche liturgy we use to guide various times of celebration says it well:

**"Here at L'Arche in the midst of the busy schedules and the buzz of city life, we pause.."
We pause to celebrate.. we pause to remember.. we pause to share stories.. we pause to grieve..**

And since our founding, we have paused for rest and time away together. It's such an important aspect of our way of life, especially in today's fast-paced world. ●

*doee.dc.gov/service/greenhouse-gas-inventories



Debora, Crisely, Mariela, and Eileen



Alice and Fritz on a bike ride



Eric and Liddy in the sunshine



Our Brother Charles

MARCH 25, 1936 - SEPTEMBER 18, 2023

Charles was the best brother anyone could ask for. He vowed to protect his family and friends throughout his life and planned to do so in heaven as well. Charles was generous with his love, and claimed the title of brother to almost everyone he ever met. When asked how Charles was able to hold so many people in his heart, he would reply, "I just do it!"

Charles, throughout his 87 years, has repeatedly, passionately, loudly, and quietly, but always prayerfully and intentionally, systematically broken down the barriers that restrict people from being able to imagine themselves in places of belonging.

"I trust God in every way I can. He takes care of people. He takes care of me. He takes care of you. He takes care of my health. He sends doctors. God holds hands with us, and he never lets go. If you trust God and love Him, He'll be by your side. He sees that we have plenty to eat and lots of love. Trusting in Jesus is important to me too. God never will stop loving us."

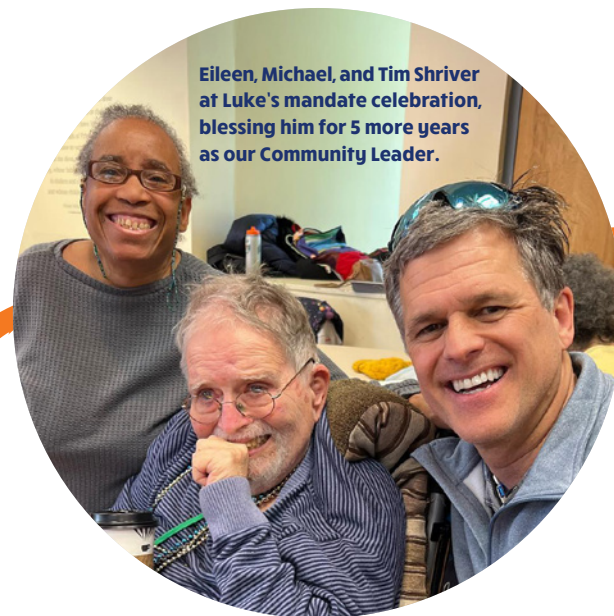
— Charles William Clark



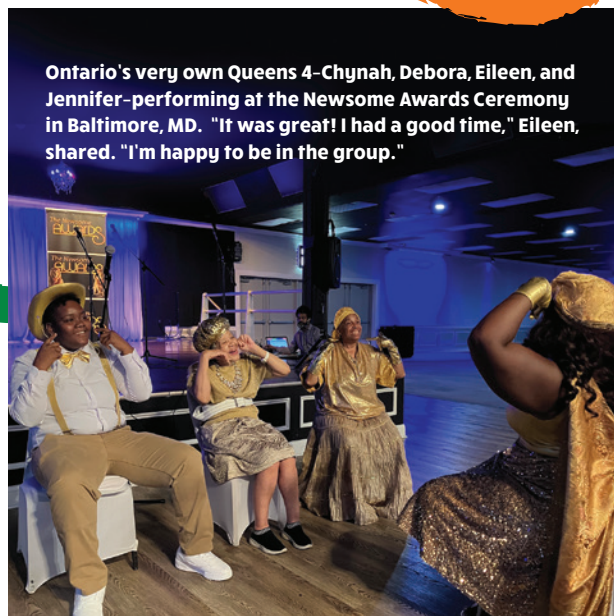
Bruce and Sref enjoying s'mores



Ricky and Eileen, advocating with the National Down Syndrome Society, at Representative's Norton's office.



Eileen, Michael, and Tim Shriver at Luke's mandate celebration, blessing him for 5 more years as our Community Leader.



Ontario's very own Queens 4-Chynah, Debora, Eileen, and Jennifer—performing at the Newsome Awards Ceremony in Baltimore, MD. "It was great! I had a good time," Eileen, shared. "I'm happy to be in the group."



Kelly visiting the Brandywine River Museum in Chadds Ford, PA



Meredith, Joseph, and Charles (Rachel Schrock Photography)

CARRYING OUR STORY FORWARD

REFLECTIONS ON THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION ASSEMBLY WITH GWDC'S DELEGATES



Meeting new friends, reconnecting with old ones, having a voice in decision making... all that and more is what we get to do through L'Arche's International Federation Assembly (IFA).

There are L'Arche communities all over the world. Together, we make up the federation of L'Arche, led by L'Arche International. Every 5 years, L'Arche International hosts the IFA where those same L'Arche communities from across the globe gather to be together and make decisions on matters impacting the direction of L'Arche. Our most recent IFA was June 2023—our first virtual one. This year, Joseph Butler, Jeremiah Yoder, and Mary Ruppert represented GWDC as our international delegates!

"I think it's interesting that we have this process in L'Arche where people get the chance to have a say about decisions that affect all of us. This assembly is the way we make sure that the people who are living L'Arche locally have a say in the direction we're taking," Mary shared in reflecting on the IFA.

Our delegates were part of a small group that met regularly (late at night for the USA east coasters!) to share about our lives and prepare for the assembly. GWDC gathered with other delegates from L'Arche communities in California; Ontario, Canada; and the Philippines.

One of the most important things for Joseph about the assembly was connecting with these other delegates—he even joined a delegate meeting from his hotel room while on vacation!

When asked how he felt about the other parts of the assembly, Joseph spoke to the importance of the voting. Often at the IFA, there are critical documents and decisions we vote on for approval as an entire federation. For example, we voted on our new Charter this year, which passed with 97% approval.

As part of the IFA, our delegates organized a time for us as a community to reflect on our story... It's our story to tell after all!

We pulled out a lot of our old photo albums and shared what surfaced. A lot of us didn't know much about our oldest scrapbooks and needed core members to tell us those stories... We swapped stories of "clowning around" and dressing up... We found some things that were the same and some that had changed. We named what our story looked, smelled, felt, and tasted like... hospitals, Eric's shampoo, getting knocked down in the waves, and hot dogs, to name a few.

It was a gift to reflect on our inheritance and recognize how we're all part of carrying this story forward—including you!

An integral part of our story is welcoming more people into it! In being asked what he hopes for L'Arche around the world Joseph shared, "Invite people to come here!" As Mary highlighted, we don't have to wait for the IFA to do that.

Inviting more people into our story is exactly the spirit of welcome and hospitality we're about. We hope to cultivate relationships with new and long-term friends in the years ahead! ●



From top to bottom: An IFA Delegates small group with members from L'Arche Kenya, Croatia, Ukraine, Québec, and France; Looking at our photo albums from over the years and sharing stories. Right: Japanese calligraphy with L'Arche Kana no ie during the IFA Closing Ceremony.

HISTORY CORNER WITH MIKE!

If you've met Michael Schaff even briefly, you know his presidential-themed and general history knowledge runs deep! Test your skills below. See if you can answer these questions about some of Mike's favorite political moments and people.



1.

Who served as the 39th governor of Texas? (Hint: He began his political career as a Democrat and later became a Republican. He also served as the US Secretary of the Treasury.)



Answer: John Connally



2.

A fluent speaker of four languages, fashion icon, and in Mike's opinion, one of the prettiest first ladies, this person fostered cross-cultural understanding and appreciation through her historical restoration and preservation work.

Answer: Jackie Kennedy

3.

What scene in history is being depicted in the large painting behind Mike and Mary Ellen?



Answer: Siege of Yorktown