

FALL 2024

HOME MATTERS



L'ARCHE®
Greater
Washington, D.C.

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

CREATING MORE SPACES OF BELONGING

STAY IN TOUCH

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GIVE

Create a more human
society by donating
through L'Arche GWDC.
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United Way: #8388
CFC: #73532



*Have you heard the incredible news?
We're opening a new home at the
historic Reeves Farmhouse in Arlington!*

Did you know that nearly 15,000 people with disabilities are on waiting lists for housing across Virginia?! We could not be more excited to build a space where more people with and without disabilities will create home together and expand belonging for all.

For 40 years now, we have worked with friends and partners like you to provide homes, care, employment, friendship, and spiritual nourishment through life-changing relationships. Together, we are modeling a more human way of being in the world.

Our **What's Next** capital campaign will help grow this way of being and open a new home alongside our amazing construction partners, Habitat DC-NOVA and HomeAid NCR.

Our campaign involves the significant task of establishing an assistant compensation fund, a sustainable funding source to help pay caregivers living wages. Our assistants provide meaningful care for and with core members every day and hour of the year. This fund, by multiplying donor impact through compound interest, will support everyone's well-being by enabling us to pay assistants the meaningful wages and benefits they deserve.

TOP: Initially purchased by William H. Torreyson, "Reevesland" was left to his daughter, Lucy, and her husband, George Reeves, in 1898. Their son, Nelson, was born and spent his life farming here until 1955. **"I know the residents of the L'Arche community will make Reevesland a home again in all its splendor."** -Cheryl Scannell, daughter of Nelson and Louise Reeves.

BOTTOM: Grace, Fritz, and Nadine celebrating our new L'Arche home at the Farmhouse.

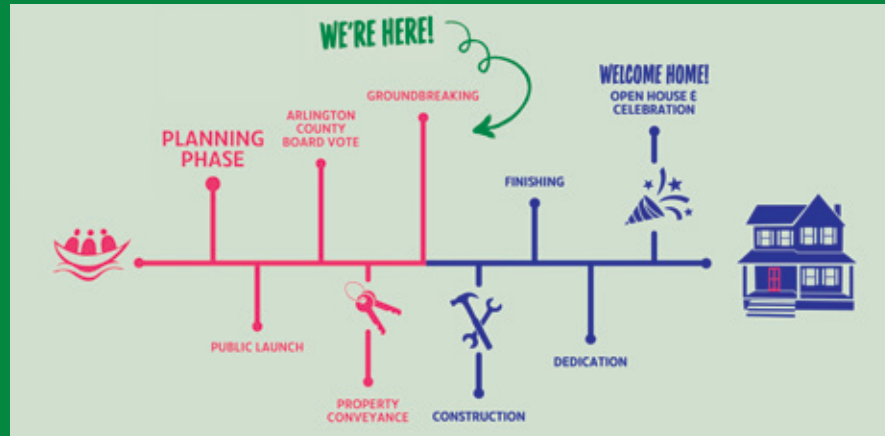


STORY CONTINUED ON THE NEXT PAGE→

COVER STORY, CONTINUED →

"Here at L'Arche, many people make you feel like a home. You put on the best slippers, and you feel like a home filled with love and joy of being with you-being all together," Laurie Pippenger, L'Arche GWDC Community Member and 6th Street House Core Family Member.

To learn more and stay up-to-date about What's Next and the Farmhouse project, go to larche-gwdc.org/whatsnext.



Our Timeline for What's Next...



Eileen and others go on a walk-through tour of Reeves Farmhouse before we start renovations.



Rendering of Farmhouse renovations.

40 YEARS OF FAITHFUL FRIENDSHIP

A CONVERSATION WITH FRIEND & DONOR, CONNIE RIDGWAY

In a culture that is growing more and more segmented and disconnected, L'Arche offers an alternate way of living. "It's just a very hopeful organization for me. I can see how it [L'Arche] has changed lives," Connie Ridgway shares.

Connie relaxes on her floral couch in her cozy D.C. home, balancing her lively stories of L'Arche from over the decades with her embrace of and excitement for who we are today. Arriving in the metro area over 40 years ago, Connie got to know the first core members of the community as a neighbor living across the street from Ontario House.

"Michael was first, and then Gene and Glen, and they were both from Forest Haven," Connie recalls. Forest Haven was a notorious institution for disabled people in Laurel, Maryland. It was eventually shut down, but only after years of abuse, medical incompetence, and preventable deaths. "Gene and Glenn, they were always together. One said, 'I'm not going to leave [Forest Haven] without the other.' So that's how they came [to L'Arche]."

The pair became four when Gene, Glen, Connie, and former Assistant Patty would all go out together to play pool and dance. Pool for Glen and dancing for Gene. "It was really a treat to be with them... [as] with many people who come to L'Arche, you find that they heal you, you know, you don't just help them. That's really one of the tenets of L'Arche that is so powerful. Because we all have wounds, and we all have gifts, and the core members aren't any different from that."

By the '90s, Connie had become a social worker and used her skills as a team accompaniment facilitator at Ontario House. "I would come once a month for the houses, and I felt like my gift was to help the helpers. So they would have some time to process things..." Having

retired a year ago, Connie now donates her resources and time as a team-accompanier to L'Arche

Q: What compels you to give to L'Arche in these different ways?

Connie: It's just a very hopeful organization for me. It's the individuals, but it's beyond. The principles of L'Arche just kind of keep going over time and I really value that. And I can see how it has changed lives—not just the core members' lives but assistants' lives too.

Q: What are some things you've learned through L'Arche?

Connie: The long-term care of people who are not able to fully care for themselves—they're the constant in this whole thing. [L'Arche] was not for everybody, but the people who it was for—they've been able to be there until they die. [There's] that sense [that] we have to build something bigger than the individuals who are part of L'Arche.

Q: Would you say L'Arche has impacted your experience with or how you conceptualize disability?

Connie: Yeah, I really didn't know people with intellectual disabilities when I was growing up... if you don't know something, you kind of isolate or marginalize it or make it more pathologized. And I think L'Arche really is a model for honoring each individual and their gifts and seeing how if you don't have a gift here, then you have a gift over here, and each person is encouraged. ...It's about spending time with somebody and just learning.

Q: How would you describe L'Arche to someone who knows nothing about it?

Connie: A family home environment that has a strong spiritual base. And it's much more stable than any other situation that a person can be in, like a group home—it's just different. It's that combination of community and a spiritual sort of knitting together that makes it strong.

It's not like you're required to be a person of a particular religion. But the prayer element kind of undergirds it. That you trust in something bigger than just the human capacity in this particular house or organization... the rituals and traditions—that's what a family has.

Q: What would you say are examples of L'Arche values?

Connie: Well, that commitment to a person until they die—I think that's really powerful. If you have a strong family unit with economic means, you can often do that, but people with disabilities just have a lot harder time.

The spiritual element of having gratitude. I think that's what those anniversary and birthday celebrations are—gratitude for who we are and that we're together. And just a strong commitment to that sense of community.

Q: Is there anything else you'd want to share with readers or people out there in the world?

Connie: Just to say that it really is a gift to connect with you all. It's worth connecting with L'Arche in any way you can... that's kind of a cliché, but you get back at least as much as you give. ●



SPOTLIGHTS

1. Prince and Francene, loving life!

2. Debora meandering through Brookside Gardens.

3. Eileen and Eric at L'Arche USA's National Assembly. The pair lead L'Arche USA's Inclusive Leadership Group, which helped facilitate the assembly in Chicago.

4. Alex and Johnny takin' in the sun and counting the perros (dogs).

5. Joseph on vacation at the Football Hall of Fame.



Above: Connie at home. Left: Among the family photos on Connie's wall, there's picture of founding core members Gene, Mo, and Glen (signing 'I love you').

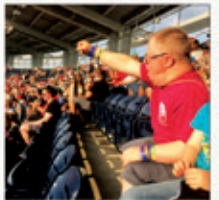
OUR FAVORITE PLACES



1 To the park!



2 drinks@PH



3 Let's go Nats!



4 When in doubt, kayak it out.



5 Silver Diner napkin club



6 #pugs4life



7 Movie snacks required



9 Relaxin' by the lake

- 1 Rock Creek Park (picnic area 181)
- 2 Potter's House (L'Arche used to run Potter's House one night a week, and Eileen used to work there)
- 3 Ace Hardware (Ricky and Crisely go here at least once a week)
- 4 Tryst (we like the nachos!)
- 5 Oohs and Aahs (really good soul food)
- 6 AMC Shirlington & Georgetown (Joseph liked seeing the Exorcist there, because it was filmed in Gtown!)

- 7 Bangkok 54 (try the pad see ew with extra sauce)
- 8 Arlington Library (books, computers, people watching!)
- 9 TJ park (gym, walking, lots of dogs)
- 10 Ruthie's All Day Cafe (try everything! the mac & cheese will change your life)



CCP participants standing in a line playing a game.



"I like CCP because people talk about singers, they talk with each other, and there's lots of arts and crafts."
RICKY MILLER



"Everybody is nice and caring. I like that everybody is helpful. I like all of it!" – TOVA WARDELL



"Community Connections gives me a chance to meet new people and get out in the community." – PAT THACKER

"Community Connections is the most consistently joyful and positive afternoon of my month—always different and always wonderful. People can just be who they are and enjoy each other. It's the safest and most accepting place."

BARBARA THACKER

"It's an easy way for our family to get involved with L'Arche and to meet core members and assistants. In a world and a culture—especially in Northern Virginia and DC—that's so rushed, competitive, and intense, it's nice to be in a space where we can slow down, be ourselves, ask questions, and get to know friends. It feels like a very peaceful, calm paradise in the midst of the chaos."

MEGAN WARDELL



"I like when we make things. I like to do the music and to dance."

MATTHEW BELEW



"I like to sing and paint!"

MIKE SMITH

IN THE RIGHT PLACE

Community Connections Program

Over the years, many have shared their desire for L'Arche to grow so that more people can have a place to connect and belong.

In January of this year, we launched a new program precisely for this reason. Community Connections Program (CCP) is designed by and for people with and without intellectual disabilities. At CCP, we gather to build friendships, grow in leadership skills, play and create together, and participate in L'Arche's mission.

In 2023, The U.S. Surgeon General declared an epidemic of loneliness and isolation. His report noted that lack of social connection is as harmful to a person's health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day. People with disabilities are at particular risk for social isolation.¹ CCP is one concrete and reliable way we can mitigate this risk.

Our CCP program is distinct in that it engages our wider community of disabled adults. In addition to L'Arche core members, over a dozen adults with disabilities have attended CCP at least once, with many joining regularly and taking on leadership roles.

It's powerful to know and feel like you belong.

Learn more about CCP, including how to join and ways to volunteer, at larche-gwdc.org/ccp.

1. <https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/surgeon-general-social-connection-advisory.pdf>

Telling People About L'Arche

When asked why outreach is important, Eileen, GWDC's Friendship Builder of 12 years, said, "Cause I can tell people about L'Arche." It's truly that simple. We love to tell our stories of celebration, growth, and love.

So, we hope to meet with your group soon. We can come into your church, classroom, or firm. Or we can welcome you here for a presentation and some time spent in our homes. We regularly welcome groups for half-day experiences or volunteer days. It is truly a joy to meet the amazing and diverse communities that visit us. Eileen says it best, "We work here, and you should come!"

GET IN TOUCH! Call us at 771-221-0476, or email outreach@larche-gwdc.org

Eileen Schofield | Friendship Builder

Alfonso 'Sito' Sasieta | Outreach & Engagement Coordinator



"Sixteen educators, activists, and leaders from youth and civil society organizations worldwide convened at the L'Arche GWDC home in Arlington as part of the U.S. Department of State's International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP).

Of all their engagements in Washington, the encounter with Laurie stood out as particularly memorable. Laurie's warmth and the personal, intimate glimpse into daily life at L'Arche offered a unique perspective on American life that other professional meetings simply could not. Forming valuable public-private connections with organizations like L'Arche is essential for building people-to-people connections that advance global citizen diplomacy and drive social progress."

SARAH AMIN, OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL VISITORS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE



"My visit to L'Arche was marked by a sense of deep friendship that was evident throughout our entire time with Alfonso and Laurie. Preparing a meal for the community brought me so much joy—it felt just like cooking in my own kitchen for close friends."

ANDREW BATARSEH, PINKSTON, PUBLIC RELATIONS FIRM IN ANNANDALE, VA



With Georgetown University students, Eileen and Luke teach about L'Arche's role in activism and social justice in the D.C. area.

We enjoy connecting with churches in different ways. Pictured here, we got to welcome Dulin United Methodist Church youth group to our home for dinner. At Seeker's church, we were invited to preach:

"Sito, together with one of L'Arche's core members, Fritz, brought us God's Word in a very profound way. In Fritz's prayers, and Sito's sermon, but most especially in their ways of connecting with each other, they opened us to truly seeing the myriad ways we are given as gifts to each other in community."

JEANNE MARCUSE



Sharing our mission while keeping the neighborhood clean with Pyxis Partners, a public affairs and social impact firm.





Eileen showing off her fashion show skills on the White House lawn.



Liddy and Kelly are all smiles on Highland's house vacation to Corolla, NC.



Michael blessing Cruz for his anniversary in L'Arche.



Catch Hazel at her happiest when she's listening to her favorite tunes.



Ricky and Santiago relaxing by the firepit during Euclid's house vacation to Reedville, VA.



Priya, Charles, Crisely, Joseph, and Ricky from Euclid House celebrating our annual Heart of L'Arche Fundraiser.



Deborah and Luisely embracing, as dear friends do.



Sarah, Bruce, and Sito joined others with the National Down Syndrome Society (NDSS), advocating for various disability rights issues on Capitol Hill.



GWDC's awesome team for the Arc of Northern Virginia's 5k walk.



Fritz and his sister Lisanne, together at their mom's celebration of life.



Welcome Carl Cooper — our newest core member who moved into 6th Street House this July! Carl shares, "I like it at L'Arche, and I like to travel!" We are so glad to be with you, Carl, and look forward to learning more from you and about you.



BECOMING FAMILY AT REGIONAL GATHERING

BY ALFONSO 'SITO' SASIETA

It's hard to forget Alex, wide-eyed and grinning, looking at me through his glasses, his spiked hair an embodiment of his enthusiasm. Along with the other three core members with whom he lives, he moved into a L'Arche home in Long Island just four months ago. This was his first L'Arche trip and his first exposure to all of the other communities on the East Coast. "I can't wait to come again," he told me on the last day.

In June, over ten L'Arche communities gathered in Scranton, Pennsylvania, to celebrate our common belonging. Burgeoning L'Arche communities from Frederick, Buffalo, and Southern Vermont joined long-standing communities like Boston, Erie, and GWDC. Not only were a wide spread of cities present, so too was the spectrum of people that make us uniquely L'Arche: core members, assistants, board members, volunteers, friends, admin, children, grandchildren.

By the end of the week, my 2-year-old daughter, Mariela, would exclaim, "Mi bebé! Mi bebé!" when she had again seen Asher, the grandson of Ontario assistant Cordelia. Her claiming of Asher as "her baby" provided a small mirror for what was happening on a larger scale. All these motley L'Arche communities were each saying, in their own way, these are my people.

With pride, joy, and grief, each community provided an update on how they had traversed the pandemic and all that had unfolded since we last saw each other in 2019. Our community offered words of remembrance for Charles, Andrew, and

Emmy Lu. Joseph and Ricky shared about being welcomed into Euclid House. We spoke about the incredible news of a 5th home, and we let people know that our friend, Lisa, was in hospice. Sharing these ups and downs, it felt like we were being true to our charter: "We mark and celebrate the events and cycles of life."

The simple moments of connection were many. Laurie tickles Grace. Ty and Eileen return to the shopping mall. Fritz rides on Mary Forbes's back like a horse. All of the night owls stay up late to watch the Copa America. The kids sprint around and make bracelets. Bruce, Sean, and Joey squeeze together for a picture. The power goes out!

If I had to pick one unifying moment, perhaps I'd choose the talent show. Every community brought their gifts to the stage—bagpipe players, wrestlers, singers, break-dancers, thumb pianists, comedians. The crowd was so encouraging and present, ready to make a raucous for the people they loved. The performers' courage to express themselves created a space where more and more people wanted to come forward. In this sense, performance was hospitality. People knew they could share themselves.

The wider L'Arche family continues to grow. Like a family tree, we lay claim to the other branches, and we root for the saplings. Former GWDC leader Megan Guzman brought a small, mighty team from L'Arche Frederick, eager to welcome their first core members this Fall. Perhaps we will meet them at the next regional gathering in two years' time. ●

From top to bottom: Sharing with other L'Arche communities in our region what's been happening at GWDC the past few years; Laurie and Grace enjoying the solidarity fair at Regional Gathering; Pony rides for everyone!; Eric and Ricky spreading peace and smiles!

HEY EVERYONE
MY NAME IS
JOSEPH BUTLER



I moved into Euclid House in Fall 2019. I like hanging out, and I love my family. I'm also a big football fan. Here are three reasons why the Commanders will win this year:

1. New Coach
2. New Runningback
3. New Quarterback

The way to break the Heisman curse is to WIN!

JOSEPH'S JAMS

I also love music, so I made this playlist just for you.



PAPA WAS A ROLLIN' STONE
THE TEMPTATIONS



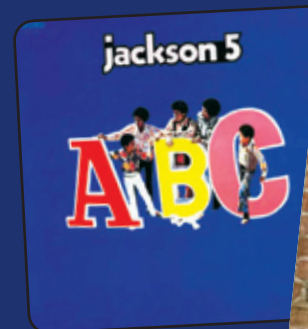
SAVE THE CHILDREN
MARVIN GAYE



HAPPY BIRTHDAY
STEVIE WONDER



PAPA'S GOT A BRAND NEW BAG
JAMES BROWN



ABC
THE JACKSON 5



DON'T STOP 'TIL YOU GET ENOUGH
MICHAEL JACKSON



P.Y.T. (PRETTY YOUNG THING)
MICHAEL JACKSON



Scan this QR Code to listen to my playlist on Spotify and play it at your next Commanders' watch party!



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what's next!

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