

L'ARCHE ANTIGONISH SOCIAL

L'Arche Antigonish's Newsletter

April 2022



Wings of Change

- by *Beth Wolters, Community Leader*

I once had the privilege of witnessing a monarch caterpillar shed its skin and transform into a chrysalis.

The caterpillar had spent days eating the leaves of milkweed plants, growing bigger and bigger. Then, it climbed high and found a spot to anchor itself to hang safely upside down. Once set, there was a period of stillness with only very subtle changes.

Then the excitement began! There was vigorous wiggling and twisting as its yellow and brown bumpy outer layer rolled up to reveal a smooth, brilliant green chrysalis. Once again, all became still as the process of transformation continued, hidden within. I did not witness the monarch butterfly emerge from its chrysalis but was told it broke free and spread its wings to fly away.

At our community retreat, 'Wings of Change' we did not start with the caterpillar but went right to the butterflies! They were everywhere. There were big ones, little ones, sparkly ones, all filled with color and beauty as we explored the themes introduced by Valeria – Orienting (air), Grounding (earth), Nurturing (water) and Transforming (fire). As we explored these themes, both personally and in small groups, it was wonderful to see what emerged.

Orienting and deciding the way to go: Just as that caterpillar knew, it needed to climb high, so we were reminded to orient ourselves towards hope. Grounding ourselves in relationships and presence: Just as the caterpillar anchored itself to begin another phase, we were called to form connections and build unity. Nurturing gives us the sustenance to continue on our journey. That caterpillar knew that there was only this one plant in our garden that would give it the resources to grow. That milkweed seed needed someone to prepare the soil, plant it and, patiently and faithfully give it what it needed to grow. Nurturing takes work but leads to wonderful feasts that feed us at so many levels.

Transforming can be a surreal experience that leads into something new and unknown. I never imagined that under that yellow and black caterpillar was a green, the colour of which I had never seen before. We heard about that motivating inner fire calling us to an active change in how we act.

Our world needs us to have hope, build unity, be faithful and act from our inner fire. I am so grateful for this reminder from the big, little, sparkly, colourful and beautiful people of our community.

TUESDAY MORNINGS

- by Anne Moeller, Volunteer and friend of L'Arche Antigonish

I find joy and happiness with my L'Arche friends each Tuesday morning! After many years of working with my husband, David, in a very busy office, raising 4 active kids, and being engaged in other volunteer endeavors; I chose to have a new exciting adventure. I found it with my awesome friends at Cornerstone!

My Dad and Mom, Donald and Evelyn Gillis, had been very involved with CACL over many years. Dad was a great friend of Brian O'Connell and he helped Brian with many fundraisers. Mom loved her skating adventures with CACL folks! After Mom's passing, Dad put a symbol of "The Morning Star" ... the brightest star in the sky at dawn, which symbolizes "hope and guidance" on Mom's gravestone. After Dad's passing, my sisters and I donated our family home at 63 Highland Drive to L'Arche in their memory. Morning Star remains a busy L'Arche office.

Early and every Tuesday morning, I pray for beautiful sunshine, no rain or snow or high winds and great bare sidewalks; so, my L'Arche friends can accompany me on our treasured walks downtown Antigonish. It is such a pleasure to spend time walking arm and arm with Donny MacIntosh and Eileen Garvie! We often have an Assistant with us with Carol Ann Boyle or Elizabeth Boucher. We have a routine now which we all cherish.

We walk past the Town office, drop into Happenstance to check out shirts that Donny might buy someday and earrings that Eileen likes. We often chat with Joan MacLellan outside The Brownstone as she cleans up the patio there. We continue down the street to wave at our friends through Cheryl's Hair shop window. We cross the street, and we visit the 5 to \$1 Store to look at the new puzzles and visit with all our great friends there. I always find something to buy for my grandkids with the help and the amazing suggestions of my dear friends. Then, we have a much-needed coffee break at The Tea Room where we visit with Bonnie. We make our way back up Hawthorne to Cornerstone and a wonderful Tuesday adventure is completed!

Donny is always happy and ready to go, knows everyone in town and he is so very friendly. Eileen is a sweet, kind and caring person who loves to walk and be active. Carol Ann is always cheerful, loves to be busy and she has beautiful smiling eyes. Elizabeth Boucher loves to paint cards for Bonnie and call out and wave to big truckers who pass us on Hawthorne! Mary Anne MacKinnon's determination brings a smile to my face each week. And Joe MacPherson is a pure gentleman, always so well dressed and mannered.

Tuesdays with L'Arche have been challenging for all of us since Covid. I have been so lucky to have had patio visits, window visits, and sunroom visits when we were unable to enjoy our cherished walks. I so value my time each week with my awesome friends. They definitely give me hope and guidance.



Donny MacIntosh, Anne Moeller and Eileen Garvie enjoying their Tuesday morning walk.



MEET OUR ARTISTS

Eileen Garvie

Both my grandmother and mother loved to paint. I love painting too. It's in my family. I like to paint houses, barns, flowers. I do embroidery. When I paint and make art, I think about Mother Nature. There are so many things you can do. My artwork takes me somewhere, sometimes to the moon! My painting reminds me of Mother and our time together on the farm when we were little. I was an artist all along- I just didn't know it. I put my name in all my work for people to know and see. I am an artist.

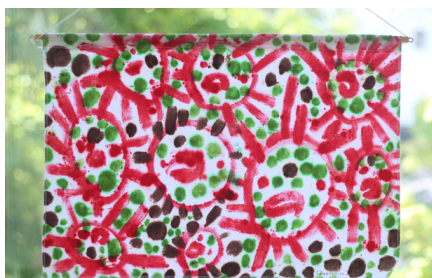
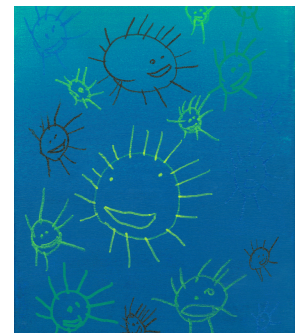
~Eileen~



Quentin Jordan

I love to paint.
It makes me happy.
I like to paint funny creatures
they make me laugh.
I like making people laugh.

- Quentin



The Beginning of the Journey

- by *David Sotelo, House Leader at Hope House*

My name is David, and I am a civil engineer, however, I have been at L'Arche much longer than I have ever worked as an engineer. Perhaps some wonder, how does someone with such a particular profession end up falling in love with their communities and decide to dedicate their life to serving others?

It all started long ago, way back in 2013, Valeria and I found out that there was something called L'Arche and that it was possible to go abroad to live a unique experience, "helping" people with special needs. Out of simple curiosity, we decided to apply, with the pleasant fortune of being accepted at L'Arche Cork, where we spent our first year as volunteers.

It was a wonderful experience, wherein a truly short time, I fell in love with the idea of community life, their traditions, and customs, the incredible connection that exists between people and nature, and especially with the Core Members of the two houses where I lived: An Teaghlach (The Hearth) and An Cuan (The Harbour).

From that moment, my life changed forever, and I never felt like I was "helping" people again, on the contrary, I understood that the ones who were helping me were them. They taught me to grow as a person and to live and see life from a different perspective, in a much more joyful and simple way. That joy did not last long, because in the blink of an eye, our year was over and we had to go home to finish our studies, at that moment we felt that our path in L'Arche had somehow ended.

For the next two years, I focused on my studies and work life, however, I always had a little voice in my head telling me that I should relive the experience, that's why after we got our professional degrees, we decided to go back to Ireland to spend two more years, this time as members of L'Arche Dublin, it is there, where I would end up convincing myself that doing "this" is what makes me happy and what I want to dedicate a large part of my life to.

In 2020 and part of 2021 and as we all know, Covid-19 knocked on our door and the world stopped for a while. Last May when everything began to take shape again. We were lucky enough to be able to come to Canada. And it has been here, in the community of L'Arche Antigonish, where I have learned unique and wonderful things every day.

Jarrold, Christian, and Kelly have taught me that regardless of the obstacles that life puts in front of them, they are capable of achieving what they set out to do and that the limits are only in our minds; Sachan and Kyle have shown me that a true friendship is forever and that no matter how difficult life can be, there is always time to laugh and enjoy a good company; Matthew and Tommy have taught me that a smile is worth a thousand words; and last but not least, I can say that over the years at L'Arche, I have learned the real meaning of gratitude, forgiveness, compassion, and love.

All this journey and those who have been part of it, have shaped me and helped me to be who I am today; now with immense joy, I will begin another stage in my life, being part of Hope House. Hoping that together with all the members of this home, I can learn more and more every day, giving my best to be able to continue doing what makes me happy.



Elizabeth, Carol Anne and David at Hope House



David, Matthew, Kelly, Heather and Christain at the beach!



David and Jarrod selling cards at the Farmers Market

Finding Joy in Helping Nature

- by *Arlynn McGrath, L'Arche Antigonish Board Member*

My name is Arlynn McGrath. I coordinate the St. Francis Xavier University Service Learning program. I am a mother, a David Suzuki Foundation Butterflyway Ranger, and more recently have joined the L'Arche Antigonish Foundation Board as Secretary.

Like many of us, I have experienced some dark moments in the last two years. Uncertainty, constant transitions between in person and remote learning and working, managing home schooling and a full-time job, not to mention my anxiety around climate change and the state of the world can be challenging to put it mildly. However, what I have learned over the last twenty years of my life is that for me, taking action is balm to my soul.

As humans, we are wired for connection, so staying apart has been difficult (but necessary). As an extrovert who is energized by interaction with other people, I was driven to find ways to connect with our Service Learning community partners within the pandemic restrictions.

Enter the Butterflyway Project. The David Suzuki Foundation Butterflyway Project is a resident-led movement creating habitat for local bees and butterflies in communities throughout Canada. In 2021 there were over 1000 Canadian Butterflyway rangers in over 400 communities across Canada working to restore vital insect habitat. I joined the rangers in February of 2021 and set a goal of planting twelve pollinator gardens in public and nonprofit spaces in Antigonish Town and County. Twelve gardens would qualify our community as an official "Butterflyway".

I love gardening, so this project brought me joy in many ways. I often feel powerless in the face of climate change and the loss of biodiversity, but planting a garden was something I could do, and see the impact of almost immediately. I secured a Community Sponsorship Grant from the East Coast Credit Union, and approached L'Arche about being a host for the pollinator gardens. The response was so enthusiastic, I could not wait to get started!

I was excited to learn that core members Jarrod and Michael were experienced and passionate gardeners, and that Eileen had grown up on a farm! House Leader Udesch started his own pollinator garden at home in addition to the one we planted together at Hope House.

Program Assistant Jenny Carter, also a passionate gardener responsible for many of the beautiful plants existing in the L'Arche house gardens, jumped on board and her teenage son (another passionate green thumb) pitched in, spending hours weeding a raised bed for me to use for the project. It was truly a community effort, with many small moments of joy.

Jarrod and I worked together, planting cone flower, coreopsis, and milkweed in the Emmaus House garden. Emmaus house was already stunning, but adding some additional indigenous plants boosted the food value for essential pollinating insects. Michael, Heather and I planted milkweed, cone flower, and oregano at Covenant House, and Michael proudly gave me a tour of his newly planted vegetable garden. Even the moments I spent alone planting some of the gardens were full of small moments of wonder, like the day I was planting at Jubilee house and witnessed a world of activity in the dry stems of last year's Hostas: Tiny sweat bees were moving in and out of the tubes like it was a superhighway.

Finding Joy in Helping Nature

Arlynn McGrath - L'Arche Antigonish Board Member

...continued

While all of this was happening, Community Leader Beth Wolters phoned me and asked if I would consider joining the L'Arche Foundation Board. My answer was a resounding and enthusiastic "Yes!" What a joyful thing to be able to join the L'Arche community in a more official role.

There is a saying that to plant a seed is to believe in tomorrow. For all the challenges we have experienced in the last two years, so much beauty has also come out of it. My appreciation of in person connection, the beauty of simple things, and a slower pace in general have given me a more grounded way of being in the world. Collaborating with the L'Arche Community to take concrete action to address the climate and biodiversity crisis by creating habitat for pollinating insects has shown me the power of grass roots action to change things and to empower us as individuals. Just ask the many Monarch caterpillars we saw around the gardens this summer about the impact a garden can make!

So much is out of our control in this world, but the L'Arche community has taught me to reach out and hold on to small moments of joy. I look forward to the days ahead when we can gather to have a meal. When we can sing together. And of course, do some more gardening together.

Check out the Antigonish Butterflyway Project here: www.facebook.com/antigonishbutterflyway



DONATION WISHLIST ITEMS

Vacuum Cleaner
Soda Stream
TV
Electric Mixer
Wheelbarrow
House Plants

Electric Pressure Cooker
Coffee Machine
Embroidery Floss
Garden Spade
Large Food Processor
Hammock with Stand

UPCOMING EVENTS

May 10 - 17:
Spring Online Auction

July 23:
Pickleball and Washer Toss
Fundraising Tournament

Community Retreat - Wings of Change

Valeria Montes - Spiritual Life Coordinator

The theme of our community retreat this year was our sacred relationship with Mother Nature. To find a topic that we all felt connected to, we thought about the current needs of humanity: the need of going back to the basics, to recognize our dependence on Mother Nature and our clear compromise with it.

Planning the retreat was not an easy task. However, with the support of our Spiritual Life Committee, we found a way to go through it together, and each obstacle we found on the way was an opportunity to find more inclusive ways and brought us closer as a team.

Our retreat was at the Royal Canadian Legion. We had different types of activities for both days. Starting our day with prayer, there was time for everything, laughter, relaxation, concentration, teamwork, and above all fun!

On the first day, I had the opportunity to share a presentation in Spiritual and Religious Ecology. I must say, it was a pleasure to be able to share about this subject, which brings together two of my greatest passions: Spirituality and Environment. We introduced the dimensions of orienting, grounding, nurturing, and transforming, topics that we would continue working around along the two days.

We also gathered in groups and wrote our commitments with Mother Nature in butterfly wings, that were cut from old pieces of art from our Core Members from Horizons and Studio Day programs, we decorated them and stuck them on big boards provided by Studio, creating a piece of art together. The butterfly wings were a comparison between our journey on the planet earth as humans and the long journey they must go through, from being a caterpillar, until they open their wings to fly away. I was delighted to see everyone working together and engaging so well with the theme.

In the afternoon, we did some planting of herbs that will grow and will be used at home and in our day programs. It was inspiring to see Carol Anne Boyle pressing the seeds into the soil and then water them with such delicacy and care!

On our second retreat day, I had the honor to host a short chair yoga session; it was very important to include as many modifications as possible, so everyone would enjoy it. I have to say, that one was my biggest challenge as a yoga instructor so far, I learned a lot and my heart jumped with joy thinking that it was here, in my L'Arche Antigonish community.

Ending our second-morning session, different groups presented one of the dimensions of the Spiritual and Religious Ecology presentation. We shared so many different art expressions.

For that afternoon session, we all enjoyed a wild competition during the online Scavenger Hunt hosted by Beth and Peter. Our retreat ended with a delicious dinner, thanks to Fresh Food Matters and dance at Candid Brewing Company.

To finish, I want to say that this retreat was such a beautiful and moving time together, and it would not have been possible without the great teamwork of our spiritual life committee: Tina, Karen, Natalie, Beth, and Kris. Jenny, who joined for extra (and big) help, our musicians Peter, Udesch, and Matthew as well as the Candid's crew.



Carol Anne planting her seeds



Chair yoga session



***Retreat theme:
Orienting, Transforming,
Nurturing, Grounding***

COMMUNITY HIGHLIGHTS

Work, Sports and Fun!

Christian Gerro and Karen Stewart

Karen- Tell me about your job, where do you work?

Christian- I work at Cleve's Source for Sports

Karen- When did you start this job?

Christian- I started in 2012.

Karen- What do you do?

Christian- I clean the display case windows and I sweep the floors. I help.

Karen- What do you like about this job?

Christian- I like to see the new sports clothing and shoes. I like my employee discount.

Karen- Tell me about the guys you work with.

Christian- Colin is my friend, he jokes with me, he drives a Chev truck. Brian drives a Dodge Ram.



Christian and Cleve's owner, Brian MacDonald



Please also visit our website at www.larcheantigonish.ca