

L'ARCHE ANTIGONISH SOCIAL

L'ARCHE ANTIGONISH NEWSLETTER

THE HEART OF A CHAMPION

– by Christian Gerro



During his interview, Christian confidently shared his inspiring experience at the Special Olympics World Games using his tablet. He was ecstatic to share his story with everyone.

Q. Can you tell us about your journey leading up to participating in the Special Olympics World Games in Berlin, Germany?

A. I would run 100m races locally and was the fastest in my set. It motivated me to move further in my track journey and my passions.

Q. What inspired you to get involved in the Special Olympics and pursue your passion for sports?

A. I have been running for a while and because I was good at it, I was asked to go to be involved with the Special Olympics.

Q. How did you prepare both physically and mentally for such a significant event as the World Games?

A. I would exercise a lot; I would go to the gym and maintain a great physique in preparation for the Special Olympics World Games.

Q. Could you share a memorable moment or experience from your time at the Special Olympics World Games in Berlin?

A. My most memorable experiences were winning the gold medal and making new friends.

Q. What advice would you give to other athletes with intellectual disabilities who aspire to participate in events like the Special Olympics?

A. Practice will make perfect. Lots of practice and training.

Q. Were there any specific role models or individuals who inspired you to pursue sports at a competitive level?

A. Joanne Doiron helped me to see my potential and pursue a competitive level.

Q. What message or impact do you hope to leave on others through your participation in the Special Olympics?

A. I want to thank everyone for supporting me on this journey to Berlin. I was so happy that everyone tuned in to watch me on TV. It made me feel like a star!

BERLIN 2023: WORLD SPECIAL OLYMPIC GAMES

~ By Kris Woods, Community Support Assistant



Exciting... magical... exhilarating... thrilling... proud! These are all words I would use to describe Angus' and my trip to Berlin this summer to cheer on Christian at the 2023 World Special Olympic Games. I'm not sure what I expected, but the sheer magnitude of the event - nations from across the world gathering in one location to celebrate diversity and inclusion. This, combined with the energy, commitment, and passion from so many athletes, coaches, volunteers, friends and family members, and all the cheering from back home, made for an incredibly emotional and memorable week.

Angus and I had many highlights throughout our trip - first and foremost was watching Christian compete on the World Stage. Christian trained for many months leading up to the event, and in many ways has prepared and trained since childhood as a lifelong athlete and sportsman. Angus and I had the tremendous privilege of watching him compete for Team Canada! Christian won a Gold Medal in the Standing Long Jump and a Bronze Medal in the 4x100m Relay Race.

We also met up with past assistants who had spent time in our community and were living back in Germany. Across the week, we met Hannes, Luci, Steffi, Sophie, Carla, Marieke, and Lars, and were even joined by Wendy who was vacationing in Berlin. I honestly believe Christian had one of the largest cheerleading groups for an international athlete at the games.

When not watching the games, Angus and I spent some downtime exploring the beautiful city of Berlin. Some sights included the Berlin Zoo, the Brandenburger Tor, the TV Tower, the Holocaust Memorial, and the Berlin Wall, as well as some great food stops along the way (if you haven't had a döner kebab in Germany you should!).

I keep my event access pass hanging up beside my desk as a reminder of how fun and joyful the event was and to tell those who ask about it. On the pass is written #UnbeatableTogether, the game's motto. Together, with Angus and Christian, we send a massive thank you to all our donors and fundraisers who helped make this such a wonderful experience for us all of us.





MEET OUR ARTISTS

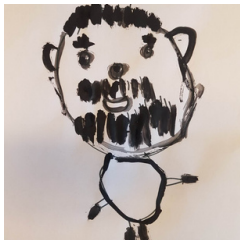
Heather MacGillivray

I like art. I like painting and colouring. I like drawing sunflowers. I like this piece because I think it's beautiful and colourful.



Nicole Roberts

I like to draw and paint people. I like people to look at the pictures I did. I feel really good. I feel happy. So happy when people like my art or better, buy it! I like that I can help others draw pictures too.



L'Arche Antigonish Summer Camp

– by Julia MacDonald- Summer camp leader

The L'Arche Summer Camp is a wonderful experience for children with disabilities, providing them with a unique opportunity to flourish in an inclusive and supportive environment. Throughout this summer camp, the children had a blast engaging in a wide range of activities that not only brought them joy but also fostered their growth and learning.

One of the standout features of this year's camp was the diversity of activities offered. From chemistry experiments to exploring the wonders of the Shubenacadie Wildlife Park, the children were always engaged. One of the most cherished memories was Snow Queen Lesure World where the campers enjoyed various activities such as mini golf and Go carts for fun, bringing out smiles and laughter.



A particularly heartwarming event was the relaxed performance, at the Bauer Theatre which catered to the children's needs and sensitivities, ensuring that everyone could participate and enjoy. Crafts, walks, and dancing were experiences the camp offered. The dance sessions became a platform

For both campers and leaders alike, L'Arche camp was a source of joy and growth. The children had the opportunity to engage with friends, forming bonds and creating lasting memories. Leaders cherished the chance to understand and connect with each child on a deeper level, witnessing their progress and supporting their journey. The camp achieved its goal of fostering a space where children with disabilities could have fun, learn, grow, and celebrate their unique strengths. It was a summer of inclusivity, laughter, and excitement that will continue to resonate with everyone involved with L'Arche summer camp for years to come.



Community Gallery!



Through a Lens of Belonging

– by Ashley Hilling and L'Arche Antigonish Core Members
in partial fulfillment of a Masters in Social Justice at Lakehead University

"Empowerment should be understood not as something that can be given to others but rather, as the way we stop taking power away and help people to regain their own power."

- Povee et al., 2014, p. 900

The core members of L'Arche Antigonish have created an opportunity to catch a glimpse of life through their own perspectives. Using Photovoice, the core members have engaged in a collaborative project to share with others what is important to them. This project was done with the intention of creating a guide for program development that would contribute to understanding what the core members want to do with their days. Photovoice is a research methodology that takes a creative approach to traditional research where participants are honoured as experts in their own experiences. Cameras are provided to underrepresented groups of people and a 'voice' is created through the photos with the intention of gathering viewpoints from those who are often not afforded opportunities to share their experiences and perspectives without the influence of others.



Photovoice creates space for empowerment and self-actualization by fostering meaningful participation. In this sense, a photo becomes a person's voice.

Based on the photos taken by the core members, and subsequent interviews that provided insight into the reasons behind their photos, the following themes were identified: the self, activities (leisure activities and physical activities), community membership and significant locations, work, and relationships. These themes helped to inform what may be implemented into the day programs such as incorporating sensory stimulation, community teaching opportunities, peer-to-peer learning, and photography groups. Of central importance to this project was honouring the knowledge held in the perspectives and lived experiences of core members. Doing so through a relational lens that valued the importance of our inherent interdependence allowed for notions of mutual belonging and respect to be reflected in their work.

DONATION WISHLIST ITEMS

- Picture frames all shapes and sizes
- Canvasses
- Air Fryer
- Yarn and yarning needles
- DVD's (Hogans Heroes, Beverly Hillbillies, Bonanza)
- Desk
- Office Chair



DID YOU KNOW...?

Did you know that you can donate directly on our website and be issued an immediate tax receipt to your e-mail?

Donating online is easy, and you can set up recurring monthly donations! This type of dependable income can help tremendously towards our sustainability and growth!

Community Visits From L'Arche London!



Please also visit our website at www.larcheantigonish.ca



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