I’m so inspired by my days with our Creative Club. The spirit of joyful inclusion that we find when we create together is, for me, proof that we’re really onto something special. The transformation that happens as people encounter art is contagious. Our regular safaris through the galleries of the Saint John Arts Centre have helped us to connect with the tremendous talent of our local/maritime artists. As we take time to explore the collections, excited shouts and thoughtful questions come from every direction. “What’s this one about?” asks Krista of an exquisite quilt. Standing beside a seascape Stéphane says, “I think the artist felt peaceful, because she was near the ocean.” ”It looks windy, the grass is blowing.” notices someone else.

Mission Statement

L’Arche Saint John belongs to an international federation of over 156 faith-based communities creating homes and day programmes with people with developmental disabilities in nearly 40 different countries.

Identity Statement: We are people with and without intellectual disabilities, sharing life in communities belonging to an International Federation. Mutual relationships and trust in God are at the heart of our journey together. We celebrate the unique value of every person and recognize our need of one another.

Our Mission: To make known the gifts of people with intellectual disabilities, revealed through mutually transforming relationships. Foster an environment in community that responds to the changing needs of our members, whilst being faithful to the core values of our founding story. Engage in our diverse cultures, working together toward a more human society.
Joyful Inclusion cont’d...

Kathryn looks thoughtfully at a painting of two empty chairs, “I don’t know, it’s a conversation.” Art has the power to push past our boundaries to inspire us to see differently, to really notice what we’re seeing and to experiment and take risks of our own.

Through the generosity of local artists and friends we’ve been exposed to and created in many styles and media: clay, paint, paper craft, printmaking, creative writing, dance and movement, collage, encaustic art, papier-mâché and culinary arts just to name a few! With each new experience, the confidence and artistic vocabulary of our artists grows. Art can be deeply empowering.

There is a great sense of pride as our artists share their work, whether at an art sale or show or just at the end of the day at Creative Club as we give each other feedback and encouragement. Creating Art can change the way we see ourselves and the way others see us.


Creative Club is the growing edge of our community today. We are producing beautiful art—but more importantly perhaps, we are creating meaningful, joyful, transformative, relationships. We have strengthened our friendships and welcomed so many new friends!

One of our young friends came in with his mother this past winter and said quietly, “I am welcome at L’Arche.” And he is. Before he arrives, Krista asks if we can play his favourite music; Patrick reminds us to skip that song he doesn’t like. When he says goodbye for the day, Debbie gets to work drawing a portrait of him. Art gives us a bridge to connect.

In the midst of creating and experiencing art, we are doing what we are best at: we are building a place where everyone regardless of ability, age, gender, or social status can belong and share their gifts. We are creating community.

-Alison Gayton leads a clay workshop for the Creative Club

- Gray Gillies
“Positively scattered,” one of our members recently described his state as we began a meeting. A not unusual phrase, but we joked about it throughout the morning: it’s all about where you place the emphasis. Are you positively scattered, or positively scattered? At L’Arche, we seek to do so very much. Our days are incredibly full. And it’s all too easy to let go of one of the threads. And yet – our communities’ determination to choose joy, and live in joy, wherever possible, makes a tremendous difference to the landscape.

Last fall, L’Arche Saint John made application to become a Confirmed Community of L’Arche International. This involved the creative participation of community members, reflective and practical input from the Board of Directors, and “letters of reference” from a wider circle who have been impacted by our L’Arche community. This spring, our International Leaders confirmed that our application has been approved, and we are now a permanent member community of the International Federation of L’Arche! Patrick Fontaine and Eileen Glass write: “We want especially to give thanks at this time: Thanks for your faithfulness to the journey so far, for the relationships that have been developed within the community and beyond. Thanks for your desire to continue to deepen in your understanding and in the living out of the mission of L’Arche in our world today.” A cause for celebration!

Despite the funding obstacles in New Brunswick, our community continues its path of deepening and growth. With the financial support of L’Arche Canada and the Sisters of Charity, we were able this year to hire a Development Coordinator to assist us in this work, and we are so grateful to Kristofer Woods, who has joined us from L’Arche Antigonish, for his willingness to take on this challenge.

Our “Some Kind of Creative Club” has expanded from one morning a month to one and a half days a week, through the volunteer artists, and the support of the Saint John Arts Centre and All Saints East Anglican Church. The spirit of joyful inclusion that characterizes McKim House is equally present at the Creative Club – along with a vibrant creativity that shines forth as participants discover their gifts in a new way.

The recent L’Arche Atlantic Regional Gathering, held in Halifax, left us brimming with stories, laughter, and gratitude for the many friends with whom we were able to renew contact – through music, dance, art, conversation, and play. We find so much joy in belonging, both here in our local community, and across the different levels of L’Arche. Though we came home tired, we agreed it was worth it!

Joy is a wonderful sign of what we’re about: people enjoying one another’s company and friendship. And, as we continue our faithfulness to the journey, we recall Pierre Teilhard de Chardin’s observation that, “Joy is the most infallible sign of the presence of God.”

-Jocelyn Worster, Community Leader
My first encounter with L’Arche Saint John was memorable and continues to shape my experience of life in this community today. Last year I was living in L’Arche Halifax (a great place!) and a small group of us came for L’Arche Saint John’s 10th Anniversary celebrations. McKim House was gracious enough to host breakfast for us and others from the region and this was when I fell in love with this community.

The first thing I noticed was the house itself, modest and not newly built for L’Arche, yet filled with a joyful spirit; colorful artwork that lines the walls and all the friendly faces that call this place home.

The next thing that stood out was the abundance of food and drink! What an incredible spread – enough for everyone to eat and drink their fill! It was the generous spirit of hospitality that really made a lasting impression. I can now say that this is indeed the norm, each person here loves one another deeply and is committed to community life in a way that allows them to welcome visitors with joy.

Finally, I was completely charmed by Patrick’s incredible repertoire of piano music that he was so delighted to share! It was not just the music itself but the freedom for Patrick to be able to share one of his gifts and shine his light that was so charming. This is also true to life here; each person blesses the others around them with their special gifts they are so willing and able to share.

L’Arche Saint John is a joyful, generous and blessed place to call home!

- Jacqueline Scott, House Assistant

This Purpose of Helping Others

I came to L’Arche because of my sister, Jill, who had Down Syndrome. When she passed away last year at the age of 62 having lived a very healthy and happy life, I knew I wanted people with intellectual disabilities in my life. I needed this purpose of helping others because it helped me with the process of grieving over Jill.

The opportunity to go to Creative Arts gives me a great feeling of contentment and peace. The family at L’Arche are very attached to one another. Each one does their special thing yet they watch out for each other and show great kindness and comfort when it is needed. By going to Creative Club and watching them there, I see a different side of them then I would see dropping in at McKim House.

Stéphane always comes to inform me of my schedule changes and to be sure I know about Hope Springs and the Art Show we had earlier this year. He came to me at Hope Springs to see if I was enjoying the show. He is very considerate this way and I appreciate him.

Patrick keeps me entertained during Creative Club with his many puns and with his piano playing. He paints beautiful flowers and is also a great help getting his friends in and out of the van.

Krista keeps track of the songs that are played. She is great with her painting, blending the colours beautifully. She is also a great help in the kitchen.

Debbie makes sure there are lots of strips for papier-mâché. She is quick to welcome new ones and makes sure that they know they can come back. She tells them that we are very glad they came.

Kristina makes us happy as soon as she walks in the door. She has a great time making different pictures. Sometimes she needs a little help and other times she helps her friends with their work.

I have a sample of art that they have done at the Creative Club and I will save them and always have them to look at.

- Anne Merrithew

Perhaps the essential quality for anyone who lives in community is patience; a recognition that we, others and the whole community must take time to grow. Nothing is achieved in a day. If we are to live in community, we need to be friends of time.”

- Jean Vanier, Community & Growth
Hope does indeed spring!

I write in thanksgiving to everyone who joined our community on April 30th for a night of wonderful performances, great laughs, and terrific company!

As a fundraiser aimed to support our mission and growth, Hope Springs highlighted the importance of inclusiveness by providing an intimate experience of community – that we can come together to support a small community in West Saint John with a vision and mission that people with disabilities have a gift to share and a message to spread to the wider community of Saint John.

Andrea Gauthier, vice president and event chair writes: “...we work all year to fundraise to fulfill our mission at L’Arche. Seeing the community support at events such as Hope Springs is such a wonderful encouragement that our greater community so enthusiastically supports this mission at L’Arche Saint John. The funds raised at this event will allow us to continue to grow in our mission, and to expand our Creative Arts initiative in the community”.

On behalf of all of us at L’Arche Saint John, I extend my gratitude to our performers: The Grateful Teds, Interaction School of Performing Arts, Mike Peters, L’Arche Antigonish, Port City Dance Academy, James Mullinger, Tomato/Tomato, and Brent Mason. We also recognize the generous support of our event sponsors whom without our event would not have been a success: Sisters of Charity, Acadia Broadcasting, TD Canada Trust, UCT Jack Kidd Council No. 755, Sun Life Financial Brad Stanley Financial Services Inc., and Sun Life Financial Fundy Insurance & Investment Solutions Inc.

- Kristofer Woods

The Blooming of Kristina

It is a joy to watch Kristina’s creativity unfold through the Creative Club. Here, Kristina is able to express herself and reveal her gifts to the world. From the selection of colours and mediums, to seeing them transform into a work of art. With each creation, I see growth in Kristina. Not only is she expressing her creative side, she is communicating more. A more playful side, interacting with others, creating a bond with all she encounters. I am delighted to have some of her artwork on display at home.

Creative people are, at their cores, people watchers. It inspires creative expression. Kristina has always been a keen observer of people. She is very compassionate and can feel the emotions of others, and is quick to offer a touch, hug, or head on your shoulder, or a full blown snuggle, the best! It is most welcoming. She watches how those around her interact, having fun, communicating and worshiping. She watches how things are done and wants to be involved, especially in the kitchen. Kristina likes watching creative activities. She enjoys watching Debbie and Stéphane knitting, watching a country music DVD with Krista. And of course, she loves watching and listening to Patrick playing guitar and piano. I believe all this energy resulted in Kristina beginning to sing!

In short, Kristina has indeed blossomed since coming to L’Arche. It has been an awesome adventure for her and for me. I am glad to be a part of this wonderful organization. We are family with all of the L’Arche communities near and far. A great place to be, to be loved and nurtured. A place called home, where we are accepted as we are. It doesn’t get any better than that!

- Karen Cooper (Kristina’s mom)
Upcoming Events

L’Arche Saint John Annual General Meeting will take place Saturday May 28 from 2-4pm, at our Chapel in the Woods in Black River.

Recent Events

• In January, our Creative Club expanded from a monthly event to 1.5 days per week. We look forward to continued growth!
• For the Love of Art, our first art show and sale, took place Saturday February 13th at the Saint John Arts Centre. We were delighted to welcome our Lieutenant-Governor, the Honourable Jocelyne Roy Vienneau, as well as many friends and guests.
• This year’s Irish Breakfast fundraiser at O’Leary’s was the liveliest yet! Thank you to all who came out to support L’Arche Saint John!

Thank You

• Kia Canada, for our two great years as a Drive Change vehicle winner!
• Dobson Chrysler, for your generous support towards our new van
• MindCare NB, for your work in support of mental health initiatives in our Province, including a grant towards our growing Creative Club
• Sobeys, for another generous donation towards the grocery needs of McKim House
• Our Hope Springs sponsors!

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I would like to make a contribution. I am sending a cheque for:
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Please mail to: L’Arche Saint John, 623 Lancaster Ave, Saint John, NB E2M 2M3

L’Arche Saint John is a registered charity which fundraises for operating costs and special projects. We are always grateful for donations of time, money, and other resources. Thank you for your support!