



# Happy 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary!

## L'Arche Homefires

Wolfville Summer 2006

## L'Arche Homefires: A Quarter Century of Celebrations!

### Celebration

*We must learn to celebrate. I say learn to celebrate, because celebration is not just a spontaneous event. We have to discover what celebration is. Our world doesn't know much about celebration. We know quite a bit about parties, where we are artificially stimulated with alcohol to have fun. We know what movies and distractions are. But do we know what celebration is? Do we know how to celebrate our togetherness, our being one body? Do we really know how to use all that is human and divine to celebrate together?*

*- Jean Vanier, From Brokenness to Community.*

Celebration is on our minds a lot these days. When I think back over the past 25 years, I wonder how many celebrations John and Keith have attended? It is definitely in the hundreds if not thousands. I had no idea when I came to L'Arche that I would learn so much about celebrations. I knew I would learn about other people, I guessed I would learn more about myself but I never thought I was enrolling in the School of Celebration. We always seem to be looking forward to something. Sometimes celebrations happen, but more often they are carefully planned, much thought is put into the event, there is often an air of secrecy especially if the intent is to surprise someone, people share all kinds of creative gifts. If you are lucky enough to have attended a L'Arche event you can feel the effort and thoughtfulness that is put into the planning.

Why is celebration so important to our community life? It is a way in which we announce that every person is important and that each life is worth celebrating. It is also a way of celebrating the gift of life, we are given each day. You know that cartoon where the person says "each day is a gift, which is why it's called the present?" In L'Arche we work hard physically each day, emotionally we often work even harder, so when we celebrate it is not done in a half hearted fashion. I remember once hearing that when a community has few celebrations, it is a

sign that all is not well. In that case as we enter our second quarter century of life, I can definitely say that L'Arche Homefires is HEALTHY! We invite you all to join us in celebrating our 25th anniversary at the end of July and we thank Keith, John, Jeff and Debbie for their vision in beginning this community. Hope to see many of you at our celebrations!

*Ingrid Blais*



Ingrid and Keith.

## The Launching of L'Arche Homefires

The starting and the growth of the community were never difficult. I believe it was because it always came directly

from the needs of the core members and the relationships that were formed around them. I approached Jean DeWolfe and Joanne Porter when we wanted to start the L'Arche community. I got to know Jean through my friendship with Linda and Joanne through my working with the Flower Cart. Their support and connections in the community helped make it happen. (Jean came up with the name of the community, "Homefires")

The connection with L'Arche Antigonish was very important in our beginning. They were like



John and Debbie.

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# The Office

In the beginning, Debbie, our first director, did all the office work out of the original Homefires House on 8 Gaspereau Lane. She wasn't only the director, but an assistant, mother of two small children, wife, friend... She wore many hats.

From 1984 to 1989, I was on the Board. A good many winter months the board members and I would go up that steep, icy driveway to have our board meeting. We would arrive at the house and be greeted by Keith and Liz. John, Granny Joe and Sarah and Susie would be clearing off the supper table so we could have our meeting around the big kitchen table.

After five years on the board, I stepped down and Jeff became the next director. Part of Jeff's agreement was that we would have a permanent place for the office and that we would hire someone to run it. That summer I accepted the position as the first live-out assistant whose role would be to

run the office. We had just bought Nineveh house in September and there was enough room to have a permanent office on the second floor. Christina Tanner and I will often talk about the office at Nineveh and how she would climb up the stairs and visit me. Christina will ask me, "Do you remember when we used to feed the chickens and goats?" It is so great to know that over the past sixteen years Christina and I have maintained an upstairs, downstairs relationship. For the office is still upstairs and Christina is downstairs at Applewicks. Every day I hear Christina's voice saying, "Beth, I know you are up there, I want to talk to you." Christina, along with all the other visits I have, really makes my day!

*Beth Wood*



Beth and Keith.

## Launching (From page 1)

a sister community and Alana who was the director so much wanted to see L'Arche grow in Nova Scotia. She gave money to Homefires each month to help with our expenses.

We held a public meeting and presented our idea of starting a L'Arche community. The response was positive and at the end of the meeting we formed our first board of directors. St. Andrew's United Church helped to get the community going by allowing us to use their facilities for our celebrations and involving many of the core members in the life of the church. For 5 years the student ministers from St. Andrew's did part of their placement with the community at no cost to us.

We really were one big family with Keith and John. Probably because our family lived in the first house, a tone was set for our life in community. Granny Joe was grandmother to us all, and our children provided constant entertainment. We celebrated the big things like birthdays, individual's anniversaries, joining the church, baptisms, the community events like vacations (I remember one celebration at the DeWolfe Cottage when we hung hundreds of fish on the ceiling and ate fish and brewis to celebrate a vacation to New-

foundland), Thanksgiving in Paradise, and the small things like yellow day.

Those first few years were about getting to know lots of people, developing relationships that would last our lifetime, discovering how community can be the most wonderful place in the world and the most scary, working together to create home/work with the core members and a chance for all of us to be accepted and valued for who we were.

On hard days I would just have to see Ron who would have his arms out saying Deb-bbbb-bie and I knew it was worth it, or Linda would come back from a dance put on by L'Arche with smiles from ear to ear, or I would see Keith coming back from John and Julie's house and think of the day I met Keith on a smelly ward at the Mountain View home and how much he was giving to the Murphy family, or seeing Jennifer come walking in the house with one of the assistants, both of them laughing and I would think of the day the nurse at the Waterville hospital told us Jennifer did not belong in the community.

Jean Vanier came to visit in the third year of our community. We had just bought Emmaus house and were all so excited to have Vanier come and meet us. It was such an affirmation for our community and a chance for our Board and community to

hear about L'Arche from the source.

Water fights seemed to dominate those early days. You would see Fred flying off the deck to avoid a bucket of water, Keith yelling No No No as the water splashed onto him and all he could do was laugh. Keith loved to mimic the assistants and one day there was Jeff reading the newspaper with Keith beside him very seriously reading the paper, the only problem was it was upside down.

Individuals' anniversary celebrations began with Jeff and Michelle planning her 1<sup>st</sup> anniversary and Jeff said you can have anything you want. Well Michelle saw an opportunity and asked for breakfast in bed. From that day to when we left, Jeff would deliver breakfast in bed to the core members on their anniversary. Linda's contribution to the tradition was butter on the nose on your birthday. For sure by the end of the day you would have butter on your nose, or in your nose, so that you could slip through the year smoothly.

As I look back I can be proud of the many accomplishments of the community, but it is in the day to day living together that I have the fondest memories. To be present in the dishwashing, doing the laundry, grocery shopping, and cooking the meals — this is what counts.

*Debbie Moore*

# Keep the Homefires Burning

The fire burns with a steady pace  
But sometimes blows up in your face  
The longer I stay the more the fire  
jumps and turns  
With stories I've lived and lessons  
I've learned  
I am a keeper of the flame, a bearer  
of the torch  
A faithful servant who keeps the  
light on over the porch  
Some give me so much love I think  
my heart will burst  
Other days couldn't get much worse.  
Heather says, "you, me, Anvil, beer"  
Ron says, "Sha sha sha sha, c'mere!"  
Machelle goes to the craft fair and buys  
everything she sees  
She names her dying plants after me  
Last night before I went to bed  
The lightbulb burnt out in my face instead  
Sometimes it is so hard not to explode and



Machelle and Sarah.

burn out  
But the living fires I can't do without.  
We all go up and down like the waves out  
on a boat  
But we'll keep moving forward for the next  
25; I have no doubt  
*Sarah*

## We Love Homefires!

L'Arche Homefires has many friends in the community. Betsy Baillie remembers being moved when hearing Henri Nouwen from L'Arche Daybreak talk at the United Church in Wolfville. Getting ready to leave she came face to face with Keith who welcomed her to the reception downstairs where she met Jeff Moore who asked her if she wanted to volunteer. A gentle tap on the shoulder from Keith gave her hope and secured many years of commitment. Through involvement as a board member and president, Betsy has seen the community grow and has enjoyed special friendships with Dorothy, Blaine, Christina, and the lovely Linda deWolfe. She believes that "L'Arche is special because of its gentleness and the warmth of its core members."

Judy Maxwell became a friend of L'Arche through her friendship with Betsy. Since 1993 she has volunteered at the day program where, "Krystle, Bob, Ron, Jenn P. and Terrie are an inspiration to us all and the assistants have my deepest respect. My husband, Frank, has a special buddy in Christina, who lives opposite us in Homefires House. They love to tease each other."



Maria and John Jacobs are great friends of the community. They have a friendship of nearly 30 years with John McNeil. John visits weekends and evenings where he enjoys "his room, his beer, his tea." They recall a surprise visit by John some years ago, "While washing dishes in our Berwick home we saw this figure walking up the road and into our driveway. It was John McNeil who had taken the bus from Wolfville and walked about 30 minutes to our house. No one had told us of his coming, but John knew the way and we welcomed 'our son' joyfully."

Keith, Maria, and John.



## My Crazy Life

I came to the L'Arche Homefires community in 1990 from Yellowknife. The first house that I lived in was Nineveh house. At the time there was only Emmaus, Nineveh, and the old Homefires house up on a steep hill so you had to put your car in first gear to get up there in the winter-time.

We had five goats and some chickens. I used to go and get the eggs. When one of the assistants woke up they could not find me anywhere in the house because I was out in the chicken coop collecting all the eggs. Then I would pick all the fruit off of the trees in the yard. I used to feed the goats in the morning and then I would let them out of the barn so that they can run around and play with each other and eat the fruit off of the trees. When we first got the goats they were little and we had to bottle feed them every couple of hours. The baby goats tried to get out of the pen when they were little.

Applewicks was not open when I first came. It started in 1990. We did baking, fed the animals and collected the eggs, did arts and crafts, writing, rug hooking, making birthday candles, and taking candles out of moulds. Applewicks is now located on Gasperau Avenue and the candles are located downstairs in the basement.

We never used to do any weaving but now we do a lot. I have two looms because I weave so fast and now no one can keep up with me. Maybe some people worked harder than others and sometimes people liked to goof off while they are working.

We did the dishes all by hand because we didn't have dishwashers like now. Now some of the houses even have cable TV.

Well the assistants come and go and we also get new ones every couple of months or so. Some even stay for a year or even for a long time.

*Christina Tanner*

# 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Fundraiser



## **JUST US! COFFEE**

**L'Arche Homefires Special Blend**

**Available in 12 oz bags**

**Ground or whole bean**

**\$9.00 a bag**

## **LARGE Canvas Tote Bags**

**Embroidered with the L'Arche Logo**

*(Not exactly as illustrated)*

**Great for grocery shopping, going to  
the library, your weekend away...**

**\$20.00 each**



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## **Support L'Arche Homefires**

- I would like to become a supporter of L'Arche Homefires through the monthly donor program.**

I commit to donating \$ \_\_\_\_\_ each month.

I have attached \_\_\_\_\_ postdated cheques.

- I would like to make a one-time donation.**

Here is my donation of \$ \_\_\_\_\_.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Please drop by L'Arche Homefires (Monday - Friday, 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.)

**10 Gaspereau Avenue, Wolfville**

Or mail it to us at:

**L'Arche Homefires  
10 Gaspereau Ave.  
Wolfville, NS B4P 2C2**

- *Tax receipts will be issued.*

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## **Wish List**

### **In good condition or new items:**

Basketball net & ball      Sewing machine  
BBQ      Knitting machine  
CD player      DVD player

**Donations in support of L'Arche  
Homefires are gratefully received.**

## **Web Page**

Please visit us at

**[www.larchehomefires.org](http://www.larchehomefires.org)**

## **Thank You!**

We rely on donations to supplement funding received from the Department of Community Services. We are a community of five homes, two day programs and a workshop. We support 20 people within our community as well as a number of people who are part of our programs. Your support makes a difference and we thank you.

## **Help cut costs!**

**Send us your email address and  
we'll send the newsletter to you  
electronically!**