

## Thank You, Elizabeth, for a Life Well Lived

by Warren Pot

Elizabeth Buckley died peacefully in her apartment on July 24th. Her funeral took place on July 28th at our Lady Queen of the World Catholic Church in Richmond Hill. The L'Arche Daybreak community gathered together with her family to celebrate Elizabeth's life with moving ritual and endearing stories from throughout her eighty-four years.

Elizabeth was born and brought up on the North Shore of Boston. As a young woman she joined the religious order Our Sisters of Charity of Halifax. Elizabeth served as a school-teacher in Montreal and in the Boston area. She was part of the founding generation of L'Arche, joining the original community in Trosly, France in the late 1960s. Elizabeth went on to found L'Arche Inverness in Scotland and L'Arche Irenicon in Massachusetts where she served as Community Leader until 1989.



*Elizabeth had great rapport with core members who loved her sense of humour and her passion for story-telling. Here Gord Henry rests his head on Elizabeth's shoulder.*

Elizabeth came to L'Arche Daybreak in 1990 to serve as a member of the Dayspring team. For most of the last twenty years, she devoted herself to a life of prayer. Elizabeth had a cozy apartment at Daybreak's Big House which she called "Buckleyham Palace." Elizabeth had served as spiritual director to countless people over the years, and she remained an involved and much loved member

of L'Arche. Known, as the "Queen Mum" to many at Daybreak, Elizabeth had a royal stature in L'Arche.

George Strohmeier ended his eulogy for her with the following words: "For all her wisdom and affection, for her fine words and encouragement for us, we can do no more than to say 'Thank you Elizabeth. We love you. We are better for having been companions on the journey!'" ♣

## Ground is Broken for the Woodery Addition by Carl MacMillan

On September 23rd, the ground-breaking ceremony for the Woodery addition took place on land at the west end of the barn, exactly where the new structure will be built. Venus Bidley, the Program Leader at the Woodery, and Robin Steel and Tim Wright, long-time participants in the Woodery program, dug the ceremonial shovel into the ground surrounded by an excited crew of Woodery participants, assistants and volunteers. Construction will take place over the fall and into the early winter.

The addition will include a new lunch room and office, as well as a small deck. Designed by architect Joe Lobko, the addition follows the original lines of the barn with the added visual appeal of an inviting, contemporary cottage on its west face. The space will be bathed in light and will provide a bright and airy space for breaks, lunch and meetings, as well as an administrative centre for

the Woodery program.

The west interior of the barn will also undergo significant renovation, creating new activity stations for Woodery participants. The expansion will provide additional space for the welcome of new people to join the Woodery program.

The barn, built in the 1920s, was part of the original working farm on the site. The building that we now know as "the Big House" was constructed in 1926 as a sanatorium for members of the Sisters of St. Joseph suffering from tuberculosis. At that time, when TB was so widespread, many treatment facilities were developed across the country. The property was later sold to the Basilian order of priests who housed their novitiate there. It finally passed to Our Lady's Missionaries, the sisters who generously donated the property in 1968 for L'Arche to begin in Canada. Daybreak opened its doors in 1969. ♣



*Woodery Program Leader Venus Bidley handles the shovel with Woodery program participants Robin Steel and Tim Wright.*

# Solidarity Retreat Day Kicks Off Solidarity Month at Daybreak

by Liska Stefko

What does it mean to be one body with many members? This was the theme we explored in our Solidarity Community Retreat Day at Dayspring on Thursday September 1st. With the inspired leadership of our friend Hazel Bradley from L'Arche UK, we launched our new Daybreak year with a day of reflection, storytelling, creativity and worship.

As a large group, we danced, laughed, sang, and played through some gathering activities in our chapel. Then we broke into smaller groups, each tasked with learning about another L'Arche community somewhere in the world. We heard stories from Daybreak members who have visited that community. Together, we did research online. Where is that community? Who are some of their members? What do they eat? How do they celebrate? How do they say "thank you?" Some of our small groups made a card, or recorded a video greeting, to send to their community.

After lunch, we gathered back in the chapel to share our learnings with the rest of the group. Through songs and skits, it was evident that some elements of L'Arche



*Hazel Bradley, who has organized many international gatherings for L'Arche, facilitated Solidarity Retreat Day at the Dayspring on September 1st. The entire community participated.*

culture are similar throughout the world: celebration, welcome, and the gift of relationship. For example, at El Arca de Santo Domingo, you might start off washing dishes after a meal, but you're likely to end up dancing bachata or meringue instead! At Il Chicco in Rome, you can hum along to "Happy Birthday" even if you don't know the Italian words — it's the same tune we know. At L'Arche in Boston, favourite activities are bowling and hanging out at Dunkin' Donuts.

The L'Arche Poland group, led by Tomek Sewilski and Tom Krysiak, offered a delightful rendering of their community's founding story. We learned that L'Arche in Poland started off very

quietly, through the determination of a bishop (played by Robin Steel), who travelled to France to visit Jean Vanier (Michael Barrett) and ask for financial support. The "bishop" and his supporters then managed to smuggle the cash back into Poland, narrowly escaping the scrutiny of "border guard" Tom Krysiak.

In our closing prayer, we celebrated the distinctive gifts of each community, prayed for their needs, and gave thanks for the many ways we are connected to our brothers and sisters in L'Arche throughout the world. It was a marvelous start to a new season in the life of our community. The multi-cultural international theme continued at our annual Barn Dance for Solidarity on September 10<sup>th</sup>. ♣

## Community Notes



*Rebecca Drobog, the new Health Care Coordinator, and Judith Ludlow, retiring Health Care Coordinator, stand together by the Pond.*

**Judith Ludlow**, long-time Health Care Coordinator at Daybreak, will retire in October. Judith is an Associate Member of Daybreak and will remain connected to community life. She has carried the role with enormous skill and integrity, and the Daybreak community is very grateful.

**Rebecca Drobog** is the new Health Care Coordinator at Daybreak. Rebecca, a registered nurse, has come to know L'Arche Daybreak through the Spirit Movers. She has already begun the role, working closely with Judith to pick up the many responsibilities of the role.

**Wendy McGowan** is a new member of the Daybreak community who comes from Newmarket. Wendy lives at Brookwood House and participates in The Club and The Day Program.

**Luigi Cornacchia** is also a new member of the Daybreak community who lives at the Church Street home. He participates in The Club. Luigi is from Richmond Hill.

**Ralf Schmitz** celebrated a special liturgy on September 16th to mark the twentieth anniversary of Henri Nouwen's death. Ralf, a priest in Trier, Germany, was on a sabbatical year at Daybreak when Henri died in 1996. Ralf has become a dear friend of the community who has visited Daybreak almost every year since the early '90s. He has also welcomed countless Daybreak community members to visit him in Germany. Ralf currently serves as the Area Dean for a large group of parishes in the Diocese of Trier. He also continues to serve as the priest for the Deaf parish, the first of its kind in Germany. Ralf is also interim director at the Benedictine monastery in Trier.

*A Reflection by Henri Nouwen*

# The Secret Gift of Compassion

Downward mobility, moving toward those who suffer and sharing in their pain, seems close to being masochistic and even morbid. What joy can there be in solidarity with the poor, the sick, and the dying? What joy can there be in compassion?

People like Francis of Assisi, Charles de Foucauld, Mahatma Gandhi, Albert Schweitzer, Dorothy Day, and many others were far from masochistic or morbid. They all radiated with joy. This, obviously, is a joy largely unknown to our world. When we go by what the media tell us, joy should come from success, popularity, and power, even though those who have these things are often quite heavy of heart and even depressed.

*“The joy that compassion brings is one of the best-kept secrets of humanity.”*

The joy that compassion brings is one of the best-kept secrets of humanity. It is a secret known to only a very few people, a secret that has to be rediscovered over and over again.

I have had a few glimpses of it. When I came to Daybreak, a community with people who have mental disabilities, I was asked to spend a few hours with Adam, one of the



*The year's Orientation group, from top left: Tom Nguyen, Theo Verdier, Brittany Kennell, Kyley Werheid, Ashley Bae, Leny Sumiati, Andrew Park. Front row: Federico Soavi and Liam Amokrane.*

handicapped members of the community. Each morning I had to get him out of bed, give him a bath, shave him, brush his teeth, comb his hair, dress him, walk him to the kitchen, give him his breakfast, and bring him to the place where he spends his day. During the first few weeks, I was mostly afraid, always worrying that I would do something wrong or that he would have an epileptic seizure. But gradually I relaxed and started to enjoy our daily routine. As the weeks passed by, I discovered how I had come to look forward to my two hours with Adam. Whenever I thought of him during the day, I experienced gratitude for having him as my friend. Even though he couldn't speak

or even give a sign of recognition, there was real love between us. My time with Adam had become the most precious time of the day. When a visiting friend asked me one day: "Couldn't you spend your time better than working with this handicapped man. Was it for this type of work that you got all your education?" I realized that I couldn't explain to him the joy that Adam brought me. He had to discover that for himself.

Joy is the secret gift of compassion. We keep forgetting it and thoughtlessly look elsewhere. But each time we return to where there is pain, we get a new glimpse of the joy that is not of this world. ✦



*Members of the Daybreak community gather on the brand new Big House front porch.*

**The front porch** on the south side of the Big House was totally re-built this summer, including its wheelchair ramp. Over the years, the porch has been re-done several times. In 1999, when the Dayspring was built, the porch was completely replaced with an authentic wooden replica of the original verandah. Over the years, the wooden porch has taken a beating, especially during severe winters. This time, the porch has been replaced with a new composite material that we hope will ensure a very long life. It is a wonderfully welcoming piece of architecture!

**Who Was Henri Nouwen?** was the title of a community forum that took place on September 13th at the Dayspring. Sue Mosteller, Joe Egan and Chris Jarvis animated the three segments of the forum which introduced Henri to members of our community who had never met him.

## Community Wish List

Pillows.....	\$50
Pruning saw.....	\$60
Pruning shears.....	\$75
Blankets.....	\$100
Blue spruce tree.....	\$100
Tablecloths.....	\$200
Barbeque.....	\$650
iPad.....	\$800
Electric reclining armchair.....	\$1000
Chairs for the Club program.....	\$2000
Sectional sofa.....	\$4,000
Stairlift.....	\$7,000
Mini Van.....	\$25,000

*For more information, please call Warren Pot at L'Arche Daybreak's Development Office (905) 884-3454 ext. 285.*

# Remembering Henri *by Carl MacMillan*



*On September 13th, there was a community forum called "Who Was Henri Nouwen?" that introduced Henri to the many people at Daybreak today who never met him. Chris Jarvis gave one of the reflections.*

Like many assistants coming to L'Arche Daybreak in the late '80s, I had heard of Henri Nouwen. I had even read a couple of his books — but I was not exactly a Nouwen fan, and I had never thought of Henri as a key reason why I came to L'Arche. Still, when I completed my graduate studies, I decided to take a year to live in L'Arche. In September of 1988, I arrived at Daybreak to be an assistant in one of the homes. In that first month, Henri invited me and Anne Marie Pickard, one of the core members I lived with, to accompany him on a trip to a nearby university where he had agreed to give a lecture. The talk took place in a large auditorium that seated 1,000 people. It was a special anniversary for the school, and every seat was full.

Anne Marie and I had been seated to one side of the stage with Henri and the president of the university who welcomed Henri with a lofty introduction. Henri gave a very engaging lecture in three parts. Toward the end of the third part, Henri said, "And now I want to introduce Carl MacMillan, a member of the L'Arche Daybreak community, to share with you first-hand about day-to-day life in a L'Arche home." Henri had given me absolutely no warning. He welcomed me to the podium, sat down, and I talked. I cannot remember a word of what I said that night — but I absolutely remember feeling that Henri had more confidence in me than I had in myself. While he would sometimes drive me crazy, Henri also had a unique capac-

ity to pull out of me something that I didn't quite know was there.

Henri lived at Daybreak for what became the last decade of his life — from 1986 until his death in 1996. L'Arche is about welcoming difference, and while Daybreak has welcomed many people who might be described as "challenging," Henri brought new meaning to the word. Often people come to L'Arche to help as assistants when they are young adults, fresh from university. For any new assistant, L'Arche can mean a very big adjustment. For Henri, who came at the age of 54, it was a wildly courageous act. Henri was a very gifted priest, teacher, and writer — but he had very few practical skills. He did not know how to cook anything. The operation of a washing machine was, to Henri, an absolute mystery. When David Harmon, a long-time core member at Daybreak, was interviewed by Mary Hynes for the CBC Radio program *Tapestry*, she asked him excitedly, "What is it that you most remember about Henri Nouwen?" After a perfectly timed pause, David replied, "He was a crazy driver."

L'Arche is a place where many of Henri's inadequacies and vulnerabilities were utterly apparent, yet Henri found home at Daybreak — I believe in a way that was very good for him. At Daybreak, people came to love Henri not because he was Henri Nouwen, the famous spiritual writer, but simply because he was Henri. And while he may not have been the main reason I came to Daybreak, his friendship and encouragement are a big part of why I have stayed. Maybe I am a bit of a Nouwen fan after all. ♣

## L'ARCHE DAYBREAK

The first L'Arche community in North America, L'Arche Daybreak began in 1969 and now includes eight homes in Richmond Hill, as well as *The Woodery* wood-working shop, *The Craft Studio*, and the *Dayspring* spiritual centre. The L'Arche Daybreak community is a dynamic example of how people of different intellectual capacity, social origin, religion, and culture can live and learn together.

### WORSHIP SERVICES

**Monday, Wednesday and Friday**

mornings at 8:30 at Dayspring.

**Friday** evenings at 7:30 at Dayspring.

### DAYSPRING CLOSED

Friday, November 18, Community Day

Friday, December 23

Friday, December 30

### L'ARCHE

L'Arche is an international movement of nearly 150 communities around the world where people with intellectual disabilities and those who care for them share life together. Canadian Jean Vanier founded L'Arche in France in 1964.

*"Can we reasonably have a dream of a world where people, whatever their race, religion, culture, abilities or disabilities, whatever their education or economic situation, whatever their age or gender, can find a place and reveal their gifts?"*

-Jean Vanier



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