

## All the Way to Harmony Hill

by Jane MacNeil, Long Term Assistant

L'Arche has always recognized the value of retreats in nourishing the spiritual and physical well being of its members. Each year, the small band of Tahoma Hope long term assistants make a short retreat together. Coming from our various roles at the office, workshop, farm and homes, we gather to reflect and share on what we've lived both individually and communally over the past year. This is often the only time of year we manage this type of focused intimacy with each other minus competing caregiving needs.

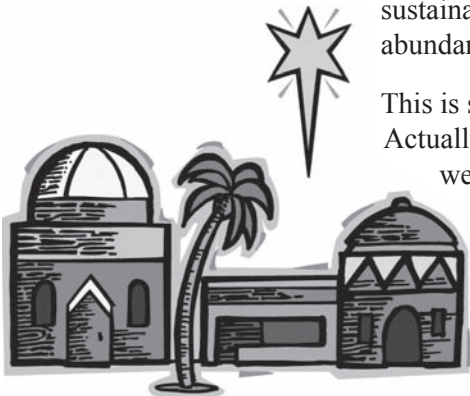
Assembling ourselves for take-off was a piece of logistic creativity, which we achieved using only two vehicles. Uh...make that three. Holly Hunt needed a whole car as she was packing her entire Tacoma life into it and would be leaving directly afterwards to travel across the country to her family and wedding preparations. As part of our retreat's mission we'd be sending her off with love, prayers and presents.

The trip was just underway when our trusty old blue van, in a moment of self doubt, developed a flat tire. Fortunately, we could roll into Les Schwab Tires nearby and have it attended to promptly. In fact, you'd almost think that they'd been expecting us! The coffee was on, fresh popcorn made, the daily newspaper and current magazines ready, and comfy seats for all nine of us. If THEY'd been on the road to Bethlehem, Jesus might not have been born in a stable! They were all about hospitality and service.

Soon we were safely on our way again and headed for Harmony Hill Retreat Centre on the Kitsap Peninsula. From the moment we arrived on site, we felt the friendly welcome and the grace of the setting, surrounded in beauty...trees, water, labyrinths, and trails. Cultivated organic vegetables and flowers proved to be the harbingers of delicious meals to come. There was a practiced attentiveness to details of

sustainability that permeated this place. The concept of abundance was totally believable here.

This is something to which we, as people who stay in community, need to be attuned. Actually, sustainability and abundance have the best chance to root more deeply when we can bring some stillness to our oft times frenzied souls. Being surrounded by nature helps with this. And never underestimate the restorative power of great poetry! We had both of these on our retreat. And of course, we had each other. Our stories shared had a transformative impact and we were grounded once again by gratitude. I am reminded of the old hymn that places trust in how "grace has brought us safe thus far and grace will lead us home".



# From Doing to Becoming

by Bill Hoskyn, Former L'Arche Assistant

I am a brown-nosing overachiever. In school I worked very, very hard to get good grades and to build up my resume with lots of extracurricular activities. This pattern continued in college—sleep was for suckers!—and then even in L'Arche: I spent many hours reformatting Negotiated Care Plans so that the font, margins, and bullet size were consistent throughout. All of this overly ambitious perfectionism shows that I am a doer: I define my self-worth by the things that I do. Consequently, I thought (and part of me still thinks) that I am loved for my achievements.

But anyone who has lived in L'Arche knows that's not true. I attended a conference at Duke University during my long road trip from Tacoma to my mom's house in Atlanta where Jean Vanier was one of the speakers. He said that in community, we undergo a change from doing to becoming. We recognize that we are God's beloved no matter what, which is the first step of becoming whole and holy children of God. In L'Arche, Bobby guided me through this transformation. Out of everyone I know, Bobby is the best at loving unconditionally. He is pure love. It does not matter what you do or do not do for him. He loves without "if's" or "unless'es, and he shows it with a smile, a laugh, or a finger exploration of your face. He taught me that we are loved because we are loved because we are loved. There is no reason why.

It's been difficult transitioning out of L'Arche. I feel guilty for leaving the community, but someone told me that I can honor the core members by living out what they have taught me, and one of those lessons is the fact that everyone is God's beloved, warts and all. My mission is to love myself and to love others without conditions, limitations, or expectations, just as the core members loved me. Of course this is a life lesson, but L'Arche has provided an excellent foundation for this lifelong pursuit.



## Memorial Contributions

We are grateful for the donations we have received in memory of the following people. They, along with their families and friends, are in our prayers.

Walter Bobko      Martha Mattes  
Patricia "TC" Boyle      Gladine McCarthy  
Gladys Uhacz

We are also thankful for the donations we received in honor of:

Mark Drangstveit      Patrick Toohey  
Marissa Manza      Patty White  
Megan Foody & Jordan Skarr  
Beranger Hoppenot & Joy Wotherspoon  
Elisa Stene & Ken Carrothers  
Jerry & Mary Ann Toohey

## Wish List

Thank you to all of the people who have gifted us with items from our wish list.....  
If you can help us out with any of these items (either new or gently used) we would be grateful!

- food processor, hand-held mixer
- towels, washcloths, hand towels
- twin size sheet sets
- laundry baskets, plastic clothes hangers
- tupperware sets, non stick pans
- working vacuum cleaner
- working lawn mowers, wheelbarrows
- leaf rakes, push brooms
- hand clippers, hoses, work gloves
- watercolor paper, colored cardstock
- glue sticks, acrylic paints
- picture frames, paint brushes
- plastic grocery bags
- chain link fencing material
- candles
- small, resettable dial combination locks

# The Magical Mystery Tour

by Sarah Thomson, Community Coordinator. Sarah was L'Arche Tahoma Hope's delegate at the International General Assembly of L'Arche this fall in Kolkata, India.

As Western US Regional delegates to the International General Assembly (IGA) of L'Arche, we arrived in Kolkata, India, in the midst of a torrential downpour. Careening through the flooded streets in a rickety old school bus, painted green, and decked out with beads and pictures of Hindu deity, I wondered if this was what the Beatles had in mind when they wrote "the magical mystery tour is coming to take you away, coming to take you away"? My week at the IGA, lived in the environs of Kolkata, was truly a magical and mysterious experience on many levels.

Kolkata, the City of Joy, home to thirteen million, a third of whom live in absolute poverty, was an intense, but hospitable locale for our week of meetings. It is the most vibrant, bewildering city I have ever been in; heaving with people, oppressively humid and very warm in its welcome.

The IGA took place during the week of Durga Puja, the largest Hindu festival in West Bengal. The city swells in size during this time, as people from all over the world pour into the streets to celebrate the beloved goddess Durga. So we were in the city at a time of festivities on a scale unlike anything else I've seen. My accommodation was in the girls' dormitory at the first boarding school Mother Teresa built in Kolkata. In the company of fifty roommates from all over the world, we slept under the watchful eye of a life-size statue of Mary. Falling asleep in the heat of the tropical night, I often thought about Dicko and how he would have loved the honor of sleeping under a mega Mary!

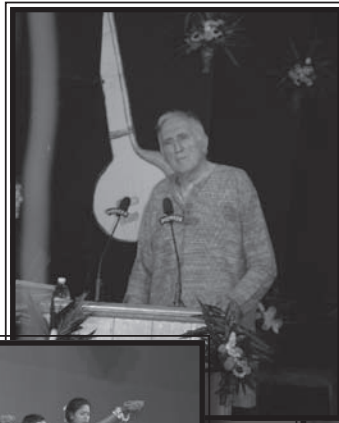
While participating in the opening ceremony of the IGA, (yes it was quite like a real-life L'Arche Olympics!) I was struck by the immense beauty that L'Arche brings to the world. The members of L'Arche Asha Niketan greeted us joyously in song and dance and showered us with flower petals. As delegates from the nine zones of L'Arche

worldwide, we greeted one another in joyful chaos. Here we were, in a slum neighborhood of Kolkata, gathering each day for prayer, reflection and dialog, believing that in our diversity, we were offering ourselves as a sign of unity and hope for the world. Indeed, each day, listening to the sessions in many languages and hearing communities' stories of struggle, grace and courage, was to witness to the gift and beauty that is L'Arche in Cote d'Ivoire, and Haiti, Sydney and Mobile. Our small groups were a wonderful swatch of religion, culture, opinions and experiences. I learned so much from being in the rich company of the L'Arche faithful, particularly the core member delegates. They brought candor, creativity and passion to each day.

True to form, they were quick to offer their impressions of the spicy food and squat toilets!

Towards the end of the IGA, Jean-Christophe Pascal, International Coordinator, spoke about the concept of L'Arche as our "landscape";

the ground from which we, as long-term members of L'Arche, move and grow in our lives. Ten years along in my journey with L'Arche Tahoma Hope, this resonated with me. I think about my relationships, my joys and losses, my commitments and dreams. The faces, values and spirituality of L'Arche have forever influenced my life. I am less judgmental, a little less ashamed of my challenges and daily grateful for knowing I am loved and gifted. I am thankful for the privilege of representing my community at the IGA. Six weeks later, I am still sifting through all that I experienced in Kolkata, for it was indeed a magical, mystery tour.



*The Kolkata '08 edition of the International Meeting Ground newsletter was published on a daily basis during the IGA. All of the newsletters are available for download at our website: [www.larchetahomahope.org](http://www.larchetahomahope.org) (go to Suggested Reading).*

## We're Still Running...

by Diana Busch, Community Coordinator

The 8th annual First Light Marathon is just around the corner. This January members of the L'Arche Western US Region are forming a relay team. We've been training but need your help to be successful! Please pray for our relay members Diana Busch, Erin Hahl, Danelle Harris and Leana Shiu, Ben Luginbuhl and Marilyn Petruzzelli (of L'Arche Nehalem), Patty McNally (Regional Coordinator) and our very own half marathon runner Meghan Dooley.



Diana & Jo at 2008  
First Light Marathon

Please consider sponsoring us financially as well to defray travel and registration expenses and help ensure a successful fundraiser for L'Arche Mobile. To make a tax-deductible donation, write a check to "LTHC" and mail it to our office by December 31st with "marathon" in the memo line. Together we can build a greater sense of solidarity!

For information on the 2008 marathon, visit our website: [www.larchetahomahope.org](http://www.larchetahomahope.org) (click on "Suggested Reading", then "Soundings" and select the "Spring 2008" newsletter.

SATURDAY, MARCH 7TH, 2009  
L'ARCHE ANNUAL AUCTION



Visit our website ([www.larchetahomahope.org](http://www.larchetahomahope.org)) to:

- *download a procurement form*
- *find out how to volunteer*
- *request an invitation*

If you prefer the phone, please call (253)535-3178.

## L'Arche Ambassador to Bellarmine....

Our very own Ricky Durham has recently been seen on the campus of Bellarmine Preparatory School. Junior, Marissa Manza, is the founder of the L'Arche Club that is made up of over 25 high schoolers who want to deepen in the values and spirituality of L'Arche.

Ricky was invited to campus in November to meet the group and share about his life in L'Arche. The club recently set up and decorated for our community Thanksgiving celebration. Plans for the future include Farm & Gardens coming to campus to share lunch with the club.

Ricky prayed for the group at the end of the meeting, and here's what he said: "Well, I'm just thinking about you kids...and I'm just thinking about God...and I'm thinking about how much God loves you for inviting me here today." We couldn't ask for a better ambassador!



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L'Arche Tahoma Hope is a nonprofit organization. Your donations are tax-deductible.

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of Pierce County