



# SOUNDINGS

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## The Gift of Relationship

by Stacy Cates-Carney, Community Leader

"Relationships are all there is.  
Everything in the universe only exists  
because it is in relationship to everything else.  
Nothing exists in isolation.  
We have to stop pretending we are individuals who can go it alone."

~ from Margaret Wheatley's  
"What I believe..." Turning to One Another



In October Sharilynn, one of our core members, was in the hospital for two weeks. I am still marveling at the incredible network of relationships that sustained her. Friends and community members took turns being by her side day and night - sleeping on the floor, or by her bed, quietly holding her hand, and helping her eat little by little. During her weeks in the hospital I carried with me an prayer flag she created at a community day in August. It reflects a web of connections that are part of what I believe is Sharilynn's core belief about life...that's its all about relationships. I think it's fair to say she is literally sustained by her friendships. And really...aren't we all?

At the heart of our identity as L'Arche is mutual relationships and trust in God. Sharilynn gives powerful witness to this ... ultimately, relationships are all there is. At L'Arche our lives are rooted in relationships and this is both a grace and a challenge. We are called to be available to each other in ways that give one both a sense of belonging and connectedness and at times stretch us and call us to greater growth.

At a recent Wednesday morning assistant meeting we considered our own willingness to share some of our personal resources and be in solidarity with those in need in our local community and with the L'Arche communities in Latin America. Solidarity is an important value in L'Arche. Solidarity refers to relationships of care, commitment and mutuality, where we express our interdependence as persons sharing a common humanity. Solidarity calls us to cross social, cultural and religious frontiers to deepen our understanding and experience of the human family. In many parts of the world it is easy to live in the illusion that one can go it alone. L'Arche exists in response to a call to 'be with' and to share the journey.

In this Advent and Christmas season we celebrate Emmanuel ~ God with us. We rejoice in a God who chose to enter into a relationship of solidarity with humanity not in power and self-sufficiency but through a journey that began in vulnerability and dependency.

This is the season to remember that ultimately, no one goes it alone and that we all thrive when connected and supported in relationships. The greatest gift we give and receive from each other is authentic and mutual relationship.

On behalf of the L'Arche Tahoma Hope community, I extend great gratitude to our families and friends who share with us the gift of relationship and solidarity. We are here...thriving...because of all of you.

# Take Time to Taste the Tangerines

by Teresa Hershberger, House Leader at Hopespring

**H**anging in my room is a tangerine peel, arranged like a flower, and shellacked to some shiny silver paper. On the paper is written the phrase, "Be Present." As odd as this little wall-hanging is, it has become an important reminder of what my life in L'Arche is about.

I created this tangerine picture at the annual Team Leader's Circle in October, where emerging leaders gathered from across the western region of L'Arche USA (Tacoma, Seattle, Spokane, Portland, and Orange, CA). We gathered to fill up our basket with new skills, to set goals for the coming year, and to simply be together as a larger L'Arche body.

Throughout the week, the theme of presence called for my attention incessantly. The tangerine craft project jump-started my musings on presence and was inspired by an exercise led by Stacy Cates-Carney on a day of retreat. For the exercise, we sat with a tangerine for thirty minutes, using all our senses to take it in. The look, the feel, the smell, the taste... And OH does a tangerine taste good when I take the time to taste it!

Being a task oriented person, I began thinking of how hard it is for me to slow down when the to-do list in front of me seems to grow exponentially with each passing minute. But I also wondered what sweet fruit would grow in the life of my community if we all allowed ourselves to stop and really take in the moments and especially the people we encounter each day.

On the second day of the formation we focused on listening to the wisdom of our bodies and various aspects of what it means to lead. Again, the importance of presence called to me and challenged me. How can I be present with my team, my community, and core members in a way that will call out their gifts and hold them with honor in the community life? How can I be present with my own body in order to hear it saying "you're stressed out/take care of me/relax and have some fun..."

On day three the phrase, "be present!" echoed in my heart again – this time focused on the core members. We talked about communicating with core members, honoring their stories, holding their vulnerability, and empowering them in their gifts. These things, I decided, can only happen if I stop long enough to be present.

At the end of the week I was overwhelmed with the amount of life calling me to be present! Be present with

yourself and your inner workings, be present with the members of your team and your community, be present with your body, be present with the core members... there sure is a lot to be present to. But it was clear when the final day of the formation rolled around (goal setting day!) what theme I wanted to hold for the year. **BE PRESENT!**



*Teresa hangin' with Carie Halle*

In the last month that I have been working on this goal I have found it to be very...hard. But I am inspired by people like Brother Lawrence who wrote about turning even the most mundane tasks, like washing dishes, into a time of giving God prayerful praise. I am inspired by the people of my community who delight in each other and seek to see the beauty in each member. I am learning from the core members who have a mystifying gift of presence. And every time I see that shellacked tangerine flower on my wall I am reminded of my call to really taste the tangerine.



**Please support the following businesses  
who have been a great support  
to L'Arche Tahoma Hope:  
Green Mountain Coffee Company,  
Sonja's and  
Dwell.**

# Community Happenings

by Erin Hahl, Community Coordinator

This fall, we welcomed nine new assistants into our community. They've come from all corners of the country and are finding their way in our homes and programs as each day and month unfolds. In addition to the new assistants, we also welcomed Doug Creek, a new core member, to the Farmhouse. He is settling in to the rhythm of life and is finding his place at home. The Farm and Gardens is also full of new faces. Within the last year, the Farm crew has welcomed three new core members to join them in work each day.



Since September, we've been faithfully sending various community members off to different retreats and formations. We started in September when all of us gathered at Sebeck for our annual community retreat. We introduced our theme for the year, "Rooted in Relationships," which we will carry throughout our year. We heard from various community members as they shared stories and reflections on the theme. The weekend was a great chance for all of us to relax together in the sun, eat some good food, and play together through song and dance. In October, the four house leaders headed off to Pilgrim Firs for a week of formation with other house leaders in the region. Two weeks later, the long term assistants traveled over the mountains for a two-day retreat at the home of Betty and Larry Cates. The group, which consisted of nine community members, spent the two days feasting on beautiful meals, praying, reflecting on the past year, and playing together. In mid-November, five assistants participated in Assistants Enrichment with other assistants from the region. It was a great opportunity to connect with others through stories and conversation. Finally, during the first week of December, a group of assistants and core members journeyed down to the Trappist Abbey in Lafayette, Oregon for our Advent Abbey retreat. The group prayed together with the monks and enjoyed the invitation to slow down and rest.

Our community has continued with some of our annual traditions. In October, we had our annual chili cook-off and costume contest. This year Anawim took home the trophy for best chili despite a stiff competition from the other homes. Farmhouse, dressed as the Ghostbusters, took home the prize for best overall house costume, and Sonja was honored as best individual costume for dressing as Stacie Swanson. Roland and Nathan were awarded the prize of best pair in their costumes of professional wrestlers, and Shann and Pat were presented with the title of sweetest costumes, dressed respectively as an apple and a clown. In November, our community gathered at Farmhouse for an afternoon tea to celebrate the Feast of All Souls. We had a prayer service, followed by tea, afternoon treats, and a joyful sing-a-long. Our annual Thanksgiving Liturgy was held at a new location this year. We gathered at St. Mark's Lutheran by the Narrows for a Eucharistic service led by our Spiritual Life Committee and Pastor Jan Ruud. Our service was complete with skits and gratitudes and an opportunity to celebrate anniversaries for many of our community members.



Finally, our community has been gathering each week as we journey in the season of Advent. Each week a home or program hosts the community for prayer and a simple meal of soup and bread. It's good to gather together each week as the days grow shorter and darker. Activity on the Farm has slowed just slightly as they spend more time crafting together inside and preparing wreaths for the community. It's been a peaceful time as we sit, wait, and pray together in joyful and hopeful anticipation of what's to come.





Watch your mailbox for an invitation!\*

**Saturday, March 5th, 2011 at 5pm**

Come join L'Arche Tahoma Hope at our 17th Annual Auction as we celebrate in the spirit of Mardi Gras! This dinner and auction will take place at the Landmark Temple Theater in the heart of Tacoma's Stadium District.

At the heart of L'Arche Tahoma Hope are the Core Members whose smiles are contagious, and whose gifts are celebrated each day. The funds raised at our Mardi Gras party can make a real difference in the continued life and growth of L'Arche Tahoma Hope. Mark your calendars now! Join the party! Come and be a part of the mission of L'Arche!

Want to help make this year's auction our best ever?

- Make a donation of an item, a basket, or maybe a special experience
- Contribute towards our underwriting expenses, ensuring that all proceeds from the event are able to come directly back to L'Arche.
- Help send a core member to the party, because it's really not a party at all without them there!
- There are hundreds of ways to get involved....check out our website: [www.larchetahomahope.org](http://www.larchetahomahope.org).

To find out more, contact Mary or Rachel at (253) 535-3178, e-mail: [auction@larchetahomahope.org](mailto:auction@larchetahomahope.org).

\* If you've never attended our auction, but are interested in an invitation, contact Mary in our main office to be added to the invitation list.

### 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.

- Joe Appleyard
- Molly McNertney-Ross
- J. T. Talbot

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

- Ben Davies
- Mark Drangstveit
- Zach Hovland
- David Rothrock

**Love Community?** Enjoy Development? Want to Share your L'Arche Story? Over 18 and under 118? Use your gifts by **joining the L'Arche Tahoma Board of Directors.**

We are looking for board members with about 8 hours a month to devote to enhancing our community by development, fund raising and sharing the great message the mission of L'Arche with concern for the those with developmentable disabilities.

Send Board President Kevin King a letter of interest care of our Administrative Office (below) with your contact information and we'll take it from there.



Young adults and retired individuals are especially welcome.



Soundings is published three times a year, Spring, Summer and Christmas. L'Arche Tahoma Hope is a non-profit organization. Your donations are tax-deductible.

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