

# History of L'Arche Syracuse

## Wolf Wolfensberger

L'Arche Syracuse began with a vision and a call from Dr. Wolf Wolfensberger, a professor in the department of Special Education at Syracuse University. Dr. Wolfensberger was an internationally noted proponent of the theory of normalization and the theory of social role valorization. The Principle of Normalization states that society needs to accept people with disabilities and offer them the same conditions and opportunities as are offered to other citizens. It involves an awareness of the normal rhythm of life – including the normal rhythm of a day, a week, a year, and the life-cycle itself (e.g., celebration of holidays; workday and weekends). It involves the normal conditions of life – housing, schooling, employment, exercise, recreation and freedom of choice, all of which were previously denied to individuals with severe, profound, or significant disabilities.

The principle of normalization was developed in Scandinavia during the 1960s and Wolfensberger popularized it in North America. In 1972, as a well-known scholar and advocate, Wolfensberger authored the first textbook on normalization, *The Principle of Normalization In Human Services*.<sup>1</sup>

Wolfensberger argued that when you take a person with disabilities and place him or her in an institution 30 miles from town with 1,000 other such individuals, he or she does not have access to the “normal” routines and rhythms of everyday day life in American culture. Such disparate treatment labels, segregates, stigmatizes and excludes such fellow humans from everyday life.

Wolfensberger was the pioneer who showed Americans that there should and can be a very different way of supporting people, and that way is based on their common humanity. At the core, the needs and wants of people with disabilities are the same as those of the rest of us. This was the beginning of a revolution. Wolfensberger and the principle of normalization could not tolerate the idea of institutional segregation. So beginning in the 1970s and following exposes and scandals at the large institutions housing people with developmental disabilities, such as New York's Willowbrook scandal<sup>2</sup>, an era of litigation began based on

---

<sup>1</sup> Wolfensberger, Wolf P.; Nirje, Bengt; Olshansky, Simon; Perske, Robert; and Roos, Philip, "The Principle of Normalization In Human Services" (1972).

<sup>2</sup> A watershed case in the evolution of the legal rights of people with disabilities to live in dignity arose out of public awareness of the horrific conditions under which children and adults with disabilities were living at the Willowbrook State Developmental Center in New York. This case set important precedents for the humane and ethical treatment of people with developmental disabilities living in institutions. This, in turn, served as the impetus for accelerating the pace of community placements for people with developmental disabilities, expanding community services, increasing the quality and availability of day programs, and establishing the right of children with disabilities to a public education.

Willowbrook was a complex of buildings on Staten Island housing children and adults with developmental disabilities. At its highest population, in 1969, 6,200 residents were living in buildings meant to house 4,000. Understaffed, overcrowded and underfunded, Willowbrook was little more than a “human warehouse,” according to William Bronston, a physician at Willowbrook. The institution's overcrowding fostered abuse, dehumanization, and a public health crisis. Hepatitis was so rampant that several researchers took advantage of the situation to use residents as participants in a controversial medical study in which residents were intentionally exposed to the deadly virus, without their consent, in order to test the effectiveness of various vaccines.

---

In 1965, Senator Robert Kennedy paid an unannounced visit to Willowbrook. He found thousands of residents “living in filth and dirt, their clothing in rags, in rooms less comfortable and cheerful than the cages in which we put animals in a zoo.” Kennedy went on to describe the institution as a “snake pit.”<sup>[1]</sup> The visit put conditions at Willowbrook into the national spotlight and the state of New York responded by developing a five-year improvement plan. However, after making minor adjustments, conditions at the institution quickly reverted to the inhumane conditions that had thrust it into public consciousness.

In 1972, ABC News investigative reporter Geraldo Rivera again drew national attention to Willowbrook with a television exposé that was watched by millions. *Willowbrook: The Last Disgrace*, exposed the institution’s serious overcrowding, dehumanizing practices, dangerous conditions and regular abuse of residents. The public was again outraged. However, this time, the outrage served to spur parent advocacy groups to take action in federal court.

### **The Willowbrook Lawsuit**

Following the Rivera exposé, parents of Willowbrook residents filed a class action suit in U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of New York on March 17, 1972. The lawsuit alleged that conditions at Willowbrook violated the constitutional rights of the residents. Parents outlined multiple violations, including:

- Confining residents for indefinite periods;
- Failing to release residents eligible for release;
- Failing to conduct periodic evaluations of residents to assess progress and refine goals and programming;
- Failing to provide habilitation for residents;
- Not providing adequate educational programs, or services such as speech, occupational, or physical therapy;
- Overcrowding;
- Lack of privacy;
- Failure to provide protection from theft of personal property, assault, or injury;
- Inadequate clothing, meals, and facilities, including toilet facilities;
- Confining residents to beds or chairs, or to solitude;
- Lack of compensation for work performed;
- Inadequate medical facilities; and
- Understaffing and incompetence in professional staff.

The lawsuit sought immediate injunctive relief to improve conditions at Willowbrook, including hiring more staff, providing adequate medical care, prohibiting the use of seclusion and improper physical and chemical restraints, and providing adequate and appropriate clothing and physical conditions for residents. The plaintiffs alleged that the existing conditions violated the residents’ constitutional right to treatment under the Due Process Clause of the [Fourteenth Amendment](#), and that their denial of a public education violated the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment.

In April 1973, U.S. District Court Judge Orrin G. Judd rejected the plaintiffs’ arguments that the Due Process Clause guaranteed a right to treatment and that the denial of public education violated the Equal Protection Clause. However, he did find that the conditions in Willowbrook violated the constitutional right of persons living in state custodial institutions to be protected from harm. According to Judge Judd, the plaintiffs’ constitutional right to protection from harm in a state institution meant that the residents of Willowbrook were “entitled to at least the same living conditions as prisoners.”<sup>[2]</sup> This right, he continued, “may rest on the Eight Amendment, the due process clause of the Fourteenth Amendment or the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment (based on irrational discrimination between prisoners and innocent mentally retarded persons).”<sup>[3]</sup> Accordingly, Judge Judd granted much of the requested injunctive relief, including prohibiting the use of seclusions and restraints, increasing medical, therapeutic and recreational staffing, requiring maintenance, and requiring regular progress reports.

With this injunctive order in place, the case proceeded to trial on October 1, 1974, with the parties continuing negotiations for months afterwards. The case was settled on April 30, 1975, when Judge Judd signed the Willowbrook Consent Judgment: [New York State Association For Retarded Children](#), Inc., et al., v. Hugh L. Carey, 393 F. Supp. 715 (1975).

### **The Willowbrook Consent Judgment**

The [Willowbrook Consent Judgment](#) set forth guidelines and requirements for operating the institution and established new standards of care for all Willowbrook residents at the time of the settlement. These standards of care were “not optimal or ideal standards, nor... just custodial standards.” They were based on the recognition that people with developmental disabilities, “regardless of the degree of handicapping conditions, are capable of physical, intellectual, emotional and social growth, and upon the further recognition that a certain level of

the due process and equal protection clauses of the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. By 1975, the study of normalization was rampant around the country. People were learning and training and reeducating themselves about the value of a human life. At the same time, children with disabilities were for the first time, by law, allowed to go to public schools in America.

Another of Dr. Wolfensberger's contributions was the concept of Social Role Valorization, often abbreviated SRV. The term first came into print in 1983. It evolved out of the principle of normalization.

As the word on normalization spread and as the idea of normalization got implemented, many problems also arose. People thought that because the term was simple, so was the idea, and that it meant just making people normal or making their lives normal; or that if people were so significantly impaired that they could never be "normal," then segregated and institutional services were still good enough for them. Another perversion of normalization was to merely dress up a large, segregated institution so that it looked more normal, but not to address anything beyond the veneer, so that the people in it still received no beneficial programming, still were cut off from participation in the larger society, and still languished. Dr. Wolfensberger felt these and other perversions of normalization as a constant goad to improve the teaching and definition of normalization. Also, the very name "normalization" proved to be a problem: it was so simple that people assumed automatically that they knew what it meant, and might not even expose themselves to teaching on it, or read the literature on it.

One of the things that contributed to the non-normalizing life conditions of devalued people was the social roles in which they were cast. If a group of people, like those with IDD were seen, consciously or unconsciously, as sub-human, "vegetables", menaces, objects of pity and charity, or as eternal children, normalization would not occur. These role perceptions of them were held largely unconsciously by most of society, and even by the people who worked in services to them. Naturally, these perceptions impacted the conditions of service and of life

---

affirmative intervention and programming is necessary if that capacity for growth and development is to be preserved, and regression prevented."<sup>[4]</sup>

The Consent Judgment outlined specific procedures and instructions for treatment of residents, covering issues such as resident living, the environment, programming and evaluation, hiring of personnel, education, recreation, food and nutrition, dental and medical care, therapy services, use of restraints, conditions for residents to provide labor to the facility, and conditions for research and experimental treatment.

Significantly, the Consent Judgment also declared as the primary goal of the institution and the New York Department of Mental Hygiene to "ready each resident...for life in the community at large"<sup>[5]</sup> and called for the placement of Willowbrook residents in less restrictive settings. The Consent Judgment set a goal of reducing the number of residents living at Willowbrook to no more than 250 by 1981<sup>[6]</sup> although this did not prove feasible. Although the parties ended up in Court many more times in disputes over the ongoing implementation of the Consent Decree, it was, in a sense, fully implemented in 1987, when the Willowbrook State School and Hospital officially closed.

#### **What Happened Next?**

The political reaction to this case led to the enactment of legislation such as:

- The Protection and Advocacy (P&A) System in the [Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act](#) (1975);
- [The Education For All Handicapped Children Act](#), P.L. 94-142 (1975); and
- The Civil Rights of Institutionalized Persons Act (CRIPA)(1980).

The Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act and CRIPA were the first federal civil rights laws protecting people with disabilities, leading to the enactment of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

See: <https://disabilityjustice.org/the-closing-of-willowbrook/#:~:text=The%20Willowbrook%20Lawsuit,constitutional%20rights%20of%20the%20residents.>

that would be provided to them. For instance, if an adult was viewed as an eternal child, then a service setting for that person would look like a setting for children, the activities that were provided for the person would be children's activities, the person would be dressed in childish clothes and spoken to as if a child—all things that both reflected the eternal child role and made the person's life not culturally normative. And, because people tend to live up or down to what is expected of them, adults who were subjected to these kinds of settings, activities, dress, and language would end up looking and acting as if they were indeed children; in other words, they would fill the eternal child role. Thus, one of the implications of normalization was to make the role expectations more culturally normative and appropriate.

Eventually, in the early 1980s, as a result of meditating on the problems associated with the term and concept of normalization, and on the power of social roles, Dr. Wolfensberger came up with a new idea that he proposed as the successor to the principle of normalization. In order to make sure that its name would not give the impression that it was very simple, he called it Social Role Valorization, or SRV. SRV was defined as “the enablement, establishment, enhancement, maintenance, and/or defense of valued social roles for people—particularly for people at value-risk—by using, as much as possible, culturally valued means.” The importance of culturally valued means maintained the connection to normalization, and social roles were posited to be the key determinant of whether people would likely be accorded the good things or the bad things of life. In other words, people who hold valued social roles, and are seen by others to hold valued roles, are more likely to enjoy normative settings, activities, and routines, to be respected by others, to have positive relationships with others, etc. – all the good things of life.

But people who are seen to hold social roles that are devalued are more likely to get settings, activities, and so forth that valued people in society would not want, to be kept apart rather than welcomed into societal participation, to be subjected to non-normalizing conditions altogether. Thus, the key to procuring normative and even valued conditions of life for people is to try to procure for them valued social roles, and to help them to carry out such roles. The two main avenues for achieving and maintaining positively valued social roles are personal competency enhancement, because many valued roles require certain competencies; and positive social image, because imagery both shapes and reflects a person's social roles, and conveys to observers what social roles a perceived party holds.

As Dr. Wolfensberger was teaching, publishing, and advocating the principles of normalization and social role valorisation, he also became the driving force in founding L'Arche Syracuse as a community based model of creating homes for people with and without intellectual disabilities. Dr. Wolfensberger first learned of L'Arche in 1971 (only seven years after L'Arche started in France) while serving as a visiting scholar at the National Institute on Mental Retardation in Toronto, Canada. He also had a personal acquaintance with Jean Vanier, a co-founder of L'Arche.

In 1973, while teaching at Syracuse University, Wolf initiated steps to facilitate the implementation of a L'Arche community in Syracuse. Enough interest was generated by the spring of 1974 that Jean Vanier was invited to lead a three-day retreat in Syracuse. After the retreat, a core group began to meet regularly to explore starting a L'Arche community in Syracuse. By October of 1974, Doug and Perry Mouncey, a married couple with experience of living in L'Arche in both France and Canada, had agreed to join the group in setting up the

first residence of L'Arche in Syracuse. Doug was named as the first Community Leader/Executive Director.

During Vanier's Syracuse retreat, some individual residents of the Syracuse Developmental Center were in attendance who later became core members in L'Arche Syracuse.

### **Core Members**

The first three core members welcomed to L'Arche Syracuse, Pat Felt, Bernie Remington, and Eugene Plowe, were from the Developmental Center and had attended Vanier's retreat.

L'Arche Syracuse has also been blessed to have Ted Fox, Mary Wilson, Jeff Hale, Ted Durgee, Arthur Roth, Harold Brunet, David Wittkowski, Geneviève Szczepanek, Mike Baker, Tim Baker, Frannie Hart, Eric Schwartzlander, Annalise Erlanson, Chris Giegengack, Peter Wiggins, Helen Murlin, Sarah Farr, Amy Grealish, Pat Stapleton, Danielle Bouvia, Tony LoBello, Nicole Spinner, Paola Murgia, Kristen Salisbury, Brad Smith, Ian Nordmark, Sarah Halstead, Brian Powers, Jimmy Aneshansley, Wayne Brown and Chris Lynch as core members.

Placement in one of L'Arche Syracuse's homes is highly sought after. A month does not go by without a family or friend of a person with intellectual or developmental disability contacting the community seeking a placement. The community has less than one opening a year so L'Arche Syracuse cannot come close to meeting the demand for its services. The reason for the few vacancies is the low turnover and the shortage of homes. We have a low turnover of core members because once a core member is welcomed into the community, the vast majority of them stay with us for the rest of their lives even though they are free to move to other providers. We see this ongoing choice by core members as an affirmation of our mission, our staff, board and supporters, and how we build a family-like setting and live community.

To be able to welcome more core members into L'Arche, L'Arche Syracuse would like to grow the number of Individual Retirement Alternatives (IRA) homes it runs. However NY's Office of Persons with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD), the state agency which licenses these homes, has been reducing the number of IRAs in the state for many years so it will not license new homes or even allow us to expand the occupancy of our current homes. The primary reason for this reduction in IRAs is cost. Funding IRAs is not a financial priority of the state legislature or OPWDD. Instead they seek to keep core members in family or friends homes or in semi-independent living quarters. Although those are wonderful options for those who have family members or friends who can take care of them, or for core members who can live semi independently in an apartment where someone checks in on them each day, these options are not possible for many persons with developmental disabilities. As a result of these policies, the waiting list for entry into an IRA is very long.

As the ACLU of New York reports: "State officials have refused to provide the funding necessary to adequately care for people with IDD. Instead, the state has increasingly looked for economies of scale, putting more and more people into larger institutional settings with fewer staff members to provide any enrichments. OPWDD also allows children with behavioral needs to be abandoned into hospitals or psychiatric emergency rooms. And when

people with IDD grow old, they are regularly shunted off into nursing homes that often lack the resources or know-how to adequately care for them.”<sup>3</sup>

## **Assistants**

L’Arche Syracuse has been blessed with many caring and competent Assistants (known as direct support professional (DSP) in our field) over the years. Of course our longterm Assistants (those who worked with us for more than five years) have been the bedrock of our community providing stability, wisdom, and longterm relationships for our core members. They, with the core members, have created the deepest sense of family. However it is important to note that those who came for shorter periods of one or two years were also invaluable to our homes and our mission. They often brought fresh energy, new perspectives and much love to our core people and to the community. We give thanks for all of our Assistants. Our records and space do not enable us to list all Assistants who worked for L’Arche Syracuse, but all are remembered with a deep sense of gratitude.

Doug and Perry Mouncey: As founders Doug and Perry are first on the list. They both served for many years and were truly a partnership both in their own home and in the community. They lived in for a number of years and began a tradition in L’Arche Syracuse of welcoming married couples. They set a tone and will forever be our founders.

Michael Crinnin: The first Assistant! He and his family have been supportive of L’Arche from the beginning.

Tracy Radion and Bill Remby: Tracy and Bill were among the earliest Assistants welcomed. Tracy served as the Head of House at our Butternut St. home for many years. She also worked at James St. and Highland Ave, and was the Day Hab coordinator for a few years. Bill worked part time for the community and played several roles, but he was beloved by members of the community and a very important part of the early years of our Butternut St. home. Bill also attend our Day Hab Movie Club with our core members of years. They both spent over 30 years in service to our community.

Anne Murphy: Anne lived in at Butternut and was a full time nurse at St. Joseph’s Hospital. She was a perfect example of the “old school” Assistant. She lived in and shared life while earning her money at another job.

Pam Walker: Pam was an Assistant in the 70’s and continues as a friend and to do work in advocacy for persons with disabilities.

Jane Tretler: As Assistant in the 70’s who maintained contact and support over the years. She remained in the Syracuse area.

Cindy Antrim and Matt Cashin, were early Assistants who eventually married each other.

Hugh Chaplin: Hugh came to us from Uganda and was a faithful Assistant for a number of years.

---

<sup>3</sup> See <https://www.nyclu.org/commentary/50-years-after-landmark-lawsuit-how-does-ny-treat-people-developmental-disabilities>

Debbie Wolke: Debbie was a long term Assistant and was the interim Community Leader for six months. Even after leaving her role she remained friends with some of the core people for many years.

Sr. Jane Ruoff: Sr. Jane was with us for about ten years. She acted as an Assistant and then a Head of House at James St. home. She always taught that a Head of House must be competent in their tasks and hold everyone in the home in her heart.

Sr. Mary Jo Logan: Mary Jo was with us for about ten years. She was an Assistant at James St. home, a part time Assistant Director, and the resource person at our Butternut home. She left us to go help the L'Arche Community in Victoria, BC. She remains in touch with both communities.

Sr. Lenore McCallister: Sr. Lenore was with us for about five years. She was a live-in Assistant at our Teall Ave. home. She eventually moved to her Sister's retirement home in Scranton, PA.

JoAnn Keltos: JoAnn was our first Francis Corps Volunteer. She also was a Head of House and was sent by us for a six-month period to L'Arche Honduras.

Donna and David Lacy: Donna spent a couple of years at James St. before going to Trosly for a year. Upon her return she met and married David. David was Head of House at Butternut St. for about five years. Donna shared time at three different homes and did a short stint as a Head of House when we needed her. They continue to be friends to this day.

Kevin and Emily Frank: Kevin and Emily came to us from Cornell University. They shared time in our homes for a few years. Emily was our music leader for a number of years. They are still friends, help occasionally with prayer and music, and currently have found ministry at Brady Faith Center. They still help with prayer occasionally.

Dan Connors: Dan shared life at both James St. and Butternut homes. He was the Head of House at Butternut for a couple of years. He left to become an EMT and eventually a fire fighter for the City of Syracuse. He remains a supporter of our community.

Aron Myers: Aron learned of us from Dan and also came from Canisius College. He was with us for three years and then was sent to our sister community in Cleveland, OH. He acted as a head of house and as an Assistant Director there for a number of years.

Dan Boardman: Dan learned of us from the Spiritual Renewal Center. He started sharing time in 1994, serving in three different homes. Many of those years Dan has shared life as a live in Assistant.

Nat Mouncey: Nat was born into the community and lived in as a child. Doug and Perry's son shared life in Syracuse, Boston and Cleveland L'Arche communities. He met his wife in L'Arche.

Rachel Remby and Emily Remby: Rachel and Emily are twin daughters of Bill Remby and Tracy Radion. As such they were literally born into the community. They have participated in community from the beginning of their life. At 18 both chose to become Assistants.

Emily was with us for many years and is now a chef. Rachel served as an Assistant, resource coordinator and Head of House at our Cleveland Rd. Home.

Tom Luke and Teasa Luke: Tom spent several years with us both as an Assistant and as a case manager. He eventually became the Director of a TLS program called the Dave Clark Learning Center. Teasa was introduced to us by Tom. Teasa started working for us in 1996 and was a Head of House and the Assistant Director twice. Their daughter, Madalyn, also joined the community when she was 18 and spent several years as an Assistant before becoming an RN.

Eithne Pattwell: Eithne came to us from Cork, Ireland. She was an Assistant, a Head of House, and the Assistant Director. Eithne met Mike Stover at a Tuesday prayer and they eventually married.

Stephanie Bower: Stephanie lived for about five years as an Assistant at our Butternut St. home. She also served in L'Arche Honduras. She was also a representative on the L'Arche USA Board. Her husband, Rev. Richard Bower was the first Pastoral Minister for L'Arche USA and a good friend of L'Arche Syracuse.

Rick Hatem: Rick was referred to us by Jean Vanier. Rick had helped to start a L'Arche community in Bethany, Israel. He acted as an Assistant, a Head of House and as the Assistant Director before leaving to be the Community Leader in Stratford, Ontario. Years later Rick was named the Regional Leader for the Eastern communities of L'Arche USA. He later was part of the retreat team at La Ferme in Trosly. He then moved to the Ukraine and married Ulyana Roy, a leader of Faith and Light communities in Ukraine. He serves on the L'Arche International Safeguarding Response Team.

Amy Aubrecht Rowan: Amy first came to us as a Francis Corps Volunteer. After a year she moved to L'Arche Portland. She came back to us a couple more times after that including when a student studying for her Master of Divinity. She has lived roles as an Assistant and as a Resource Coordinator over her years with us. She is also a Yoga instructor.

Sue Chasse: Sue is an RN. She was our nurse and then a Head of House at our Butternut and Cleveland Rd. homes. She then returned to the nursing role. Sue was a member of the community for almost 20 years and was a valued member of every home and the Support Team.

Lauren Gilhooly Falcone: Lauren has been an Assistant and a Head of House at our Croyden home. She once took a year away to pursue a different career track, but came back because she recognized the value of our core members and our mission.

Matt Barnett: Matt has been with us since 2005 and is a long-term Assistant who has shared life in three different homes and been the Head of House at Galster, Croyden and Cleveland homes. His parents, Jim and Cynthia, were members of the early Board of L'Arche, so he grew up knowing the people of L'Arche. After getting his bachelor's degree in psychology in 2002, he joined the community.

Joel Barnett: Joel is Matt's brother. He also grew up around the community. He served as an Assistant, a Head of House, and as Day Hab and Quality Assurance Coordinator before moving on to work for the State of New York.

The Gai family: Gop, Deng, and Abiei are siblings who all contributed to and shared life with L'Arche Syracuse. They shared time while attending college and did some full time periods as well. Besides being caring Assistants, Abiei also coordinated our Day Hab and Quality Assurance program for a period of time. Deng, who became an accountant, served on the board for several years.

Zach Holloway: Zach has been a dedicated overnight longterm Assistant.

John Johnston: John was a dedicated overnight Assistant for many years before joining the staff at the Post Office.

Charlina Davis: Charlina was with us as an Assistant for over 15 years. She was a Day Hab Assistant and a house Assistant in two homes. She showed incredible caring and patience working one on one with a couple of people dealing with Alzheimer's.

Connie Napolitano: Connie has been an Assistant since 1997. She is known as Mama Connie and has developed deep relationships with many young Assistants and with the core members of her home. Her husband, Leo, helped remodel our home on Highland Ave. Many Assistants return to check in with Connie.

Tom Soule: Tom has been an Assistant since 1997. He has shared time in three different homes. He is much beloved by core members and is known for his humour. He also did a year of sharing time in a L'Arche community in Ireland.

Sandy Tarson: Sandy began as a secretary in the office. She then moved to a home and became an Assistant. She was an Assistant for many years at our Highland home until her health prevented her from sharing life in the homes.

Emily Ball: Emily is the daughter of Sue Chasse. She shared time while attending college and then was an Assistant before becoming the Head of House at our Cleveland Rd. home. She was with us for 7 years before going on to become a CPA.

Devin Powell: Devin came to us as a Jesuit Volunteer. She stayed two years after her initial year as a volunteer. She lived in and shared life in two different homes.

Shirley Hill: Shirley came to us after retiring from work in social services. She was a natural. She shared life at our James St. home for three years before she and her family relocated to the Baltimore area.

Katherine Polhamus: Katherine shared time for 7 years. She was an Assistant and a head of House. She and her family participated in many L'Arche events. Two of her daughters spent some time sharing life in L'Arche Communities. Katherine left us to become a Service Coordinator. Her family remains connected to our community.

Ben Cunningham: Ben's dad (Tom) was an Assistant as was his sister. Ben served as both as an evening Assistant and doing overnights. He was faithful to the core members at our Cleveland Rd. Home.

## **International Volunteers**

We have had “International Volunteers” in the community from a very early period. Our founders came to us from Canada. You might say it was one of our values and became a part of our identity. In the early years it was often one volunteer at a time coming on a B-1 Visa for a year. As the years progressed this process of welcoming people from other countries became more formalized especially with connections to two social service groups in Germany. At times we would have as many as 4 young Germans from these programs with us for a year at a time. We have welcomed Assistants from Canada, Kenya, Sudan, Egypt, Democratic Republic of the Congo, India, Japan, South Korea, Australia, Spain, France, Germany, England, Ireland, Sweden, Netherlands, Mexico, Ecuador, Costa Rica, Brazil, and probably some places I have failed to mention.

## **Volunteer Programs**

Sometime around 2005 we developed a connection with the Jesuit Volunteer Corps. We have had a “JVC” with us every year until they close the Syracuse JVC house in 2023.

Shortly after we began welcoming people from the JVC, we developed a relationship with the Francis Corps of Syracuse. Because it is a much smaller program, we have not had a Francis Corps Volunteer every year but we have had many. In many cases the volunteer from either program would commit to a second year and join L’Arche after their year of voluntary service. The volunteers and their programs have been a great gift to L’Arche Syracuse for many years.

## **AmeriCorps**

For a number of years, along with L’Arche USA, L’Arche Syracuse became a part of AmeriCorps. Through AmeriCorps we were able to offer Educational Awards as an incentive for Assistants. This program ended around 2013.

## **Bruderhof Community**

The Bruderhof is an intentional Christian community of more than 3,000 people living in twenty-nine settlements on five continents. They are a fellowship of families and singles, practicing radical discipleship in the spirit of the first church in Jerusalem.

L’Arche Syracuse has been blessed to have a friendship and connection with the Bruderhof communities that dates back decades. A number of young people have chosen to come from the Bruderhof Community to spend time at L’Arche for a year or more. Some have come to share life at L’Arche while discerning their next steps in life. Some have come to share life at L’Arche and attend local colleges and universities. Recent members who joined us were Sean Burnett, Verina Waldner, Marlyn Keiderling, and Jessica Barth.

## **Homes**

L’Arche Syracuse’ first home was owned by Catholic Charities and located at 1611 Court St. The home was secured in December of 1974 and licensed as a Family Care Home in January 1975. Pat Felt was the first core member to move into the home.

In 1978 a home at 1701 James St. was established. Soon after, the home on Court St. was closed and a home at 1226 Butternut St. was purchased. In 1993 a home was purchased at 1232 Teall Ave. In 2001 the Highland home was purchased. The home at Highland Ave. became a certified residence in 2004. In 2005, the community closed the James St. home and opened the home on Galster Ave. Although all homes went through a number of renovations, the Galster home is the only home designed and built by L'Arche. In 2007 the home on Butternut St. was sold and the home on Cleveland road purchased. In 2009, the home on Teall Ave. was sold and the home on Croyden road bought. All of these moves made the homes more accessible, a necessity for our aging population.

### **Community Leaders and Members of the Support Team**

We have had seven Community Leaders. Doug Mouncey was the founding Community Leader and was in the role for 13 years. Debbie Wolke was named as an interim Leader for 6 months. Bob Sackel was Community Leader for 10 years. Sr. Michelle Lister was then Community Leader for 3 years. Frank Woolever lived the role for 5 years. Peggy Harper spent 15 years as Community Leader. John Knechtle began serving in the role in August of 2020.

Doug Mouncey served as Community Leader from 1974 until 1987. During this period homes were established on both James St. and Butternut St. Doug brought with him experience of L'Arche from both France and Canada. Because of our small size at this point his office was in the home and he and Perry were involved deeply in the daily life. They lived in the home with their children for the first few years. Doug also served as the Regional Coordinator for the region. The region then included communities in Canada as well as the USA.

When Doug stepped down, an interim Debbie Wolke was named as the interim Community Leader. This lasted about six months.

In June of 1988 Bob Sackel started his first mandate as Community Leader. Bob served three mandates during the next 10 years. During this time a home was established on Teall Ave and the offices moved from the home on James St. to the appendix of the Reformed Church. Thanks to a close relationship with the Pastor of the Reformed Church, L'Arche Syracuse began holding their once a month potluck suppers and prayers in the hall of the Reformed Church. The Teall Ave. home was the first time L'Arche Syracuse had a home with ISS funding. Jeff, Tim and Eugene were chosen as the first core members of this new home. At this time our James St. home went from seven core members to four.

L'Arche Syracuse then secured funding for a full time Assistant Director. This role was first held by Rick Hatem, then Eithne Pattwell, and eventually Teasa Luke.

During this ten-year period Fr. Ray McVey of Unity Acres gave L'Arche Syracuse two other homes. After much discussion about the home in Manlius becoming another residence for L'Arche, the home was eventually sold to Bill Remby and Tracy Radion, founding Assistants of L'Arche Syracuse, and established as their personal home. The other home, in DeWitt, was sold to Kevin and Emily Frank. L'Arche was able to secure volunteer help to renovate that home which included an apartment for Mary Wilson and her husband Arthur. Kevin and

Emily and their children shared life with Mary and Arthur for seven years until Mary moved back into a L'Arche home.

During the last year of Bob's mandate, the first part-time nursing role was begun and the first "art therapy group" was established.

When, in 1998, Bob was named as Regional Coordinator for the Eastern USA, Sr. Michelle Lister was named as the next Community Leader. She served one three-year mandate. During her mandate the home on Highland Ave was purchased and renovated. During her mandate there was a brief experiment with Jeff and an Assistant living in an apartment across the street from the Teall Home. After a year Jeff moved back into the Teall Ave. Home.

From 2000 to 2005, Frank Woolever was Community Leader. In 2001 Sue (Ball) Chasse was invited to be the L'Arche Nurse. In 2002 Bob Sackel came back as the Assistant Director and Teasa Luke graciously moved to a Head of House role. Frank's wife Mimi was on the founding Board of L'Arche Syracuse. Frank was a peacemaker, a counsellor, and a truly gentle man. He brought a sense of stability, healing and reconciliation to the community. During Frank's mandate the role of Pastoral Minister was created and Brother Jim was named to this role. During Frank's last years, a capital campaign helped raise money to build a home on Galster Ave. This allowed L'Arche to leave the 4 story home on James St. and move people into a fully accessible home.

In 2005 Peggy Harper was named as the Community Leader. Peggy brought efficiency, good administrative and financial skills, and a social work background to the role. Sue became the Head of House at Butternut in 2006. Linda G. was hired as the nurse at this point as the nurse for L'Arche. During her three five-year mandates Peggy moved the Butternut home to Cleveland Rd. This created our third accessible home. Soon after the Teall Ave home was moved to Croyden Rd. This established our fourth accessible home. We also moved the office from the Reformed Church to 920 Spenser Ave during this time.

Day programing funding was secured during Peggy's time as Community Leader. She and Teasa were able to expand the Art group and Tracy was named as the first Coordinator of Day programing.

In 2008 Bob took a role with L'Arche USA and Teasa once again became the Assistant Director. In 2010 Peggy named Pastor Beth of the Presbyterian Church as the Pastoral Minister. In 2010 Sue came back to the role of full time nurse for L'Arche Syracuse. In 2014 Bob was named the Pastoral Minister to L'Arche Syracuse.

Near the end of her time as Community Leader (2020) Peggy negotiated a partnership arrangement with AccessCNY. AccessCNY was created in 2015 by a merger of two agencies that served individuals with disabilities: Enable and Transitional Living Services (TLS). In 2018, AccessCNY expanded again with the merger of Spaulding Support Services. Onondaga CASA, a program that supports abused and neglected children in foster care, became part of AccessCNY in 2019. Peggy negotiated a purchase services agreement with Access CNY in which L'Arche relinquished its licenses for its Individualized Residential Alternatives (IRAs) to ACCESS, and ACCESS entered into an agreement with L'Arche to purchase services to run and manage those IRAs.

In August 2020 John Knechtle was named as the seventh Community Leader of L'Arche Syracuse after working for 23 years as a law professor. John brings a long history of relationship with L'Arche including serving as the treasurer of the board of L'Arche Greater Washington, D.C., board president of L'Arche USA and the L'Arche USA Foundation, and board member of L'Arche International where he served on the Legal Affairs Committee. He was one of the drafters of the 1999 L'Arche International Constitution and the 2000 L'Arche USA Constitution.

**Assistant Community Leaders:** Sr. Mary Jo Logan, Rick Hatem, Eithne Pattwell, Teasa Luke, Bob Sackel, Teasa Luke

**Nurses:** Sue Chasse, Linda Grady, Luda Kuts, Madalyn Luke. Volunteer Nurses included: Donna Norris, Pat Schwarzlander, and Geri Hall

**Day Hab Coordinators:** Tracy Radion, Abei Gai, Joel Barnett, Jamie Proper, Shawn Burnett, Liz Whelan, Jamie Proper (again), Allee Eber

**Pastoral Ministers:** Br. Jim Doyle, Pastor Beth Dubois, Bob Sackel

**Office Managers and Admin Personnel:** Perry Mouncey, Cheryl Anne DuCharme, Sandy Lacey, Kathie Deaver, Dottie DeSimone, Sandy Tarson, Lynn Nicklaw, Beata Lisandrelli, Jamie Proper, Donna Popp.

### **Board of Directors and Supporters of the Community**

The Board of Directors has been a significant player and a vital partner to the Community Leader and the people of the community. They provide oversight and guidance. They carry legal and financial responsibilities, links with various Government authorities, and L'Arche bodies. They are responsible for hiring and walking with the Community Leader, and ensure we are faithful to our vision and our mission. The Board of Directors meets regularly and establishes a number of working committees to ensure responsible planning, budgeting, personnel policies, public relations and corporate compliance. The board for L'Arche also has a sense of relationship with the homes and with people in the homes. The Board holds many of its meetings in the homes and some Board members attend prayer or potlucks or visit the homes occasionally.

It would be impossible to name every person who has served on our Board, but we are so thankful for all the Board Members over the years. A few who we would like to name include: Fran Cuomo, Jack Clinton, Carroll Grant, Guy Caruso, Jim Barnett, Pat Schwarzlander, Keith Patrick, John Ondrako, Bob Ciota, Kate Artessa, Elly Pearlman, Kay Scharoun, Werner Buckman, Paul Joslyn, Nancy Barnett, Mary Beth DiMarco, Beth Scanlon, Alice Nowark, Tom Buckel, Barney Molldrem, Dottie DeSimone, Annette Peters, Stanley Fear, Brian DeJoseph, Jeff Eades, Mark Nicotra, Buster (Edward) Melvin, William J. Dolan, SJ, Ellen Powers, Darlene Arena, and Dave Lasda.

A number of individuals and organizations helped L'Arche Syracuse on its journey. The people of the Unity Kitchen/Jail Ministry Community were involved and supportive of L'Arche coming to Syracuse from the beginning. Members of the Unity Kitchen Community, including Mimi Woolever and Barbara Major, served on the founding Board of Directors.

St. Lucy's Church was one of the primary movers behind L'Arche Syracuse's founding and continues to be heavily involved as a source of leadership and a house of worship for the members of the community. Our relationship with the Reformed Church started in the 1990s and continues to this day. The administrative offices were located there for several years and it hosts our monthly potluck dinners. All Saints Church, St. Ann's Church, and St. Pauls Episcopal Church have also been supportive and blessed relationships with L'Arche Syracuse. Park Central Presbyterian Church has just welcomed our Day Hab program into its space and hosted an Advent Celebration and dinner.

### **L'Arche Syracuse's Leadership with L'Arche in the Region, Nation, and Globe**

L'Arche Syracuse has strongly supported L'Arche communities in the region, country and internationally. The community has sent Assistants to L'Arche communities in Boston, Cleveland, Iowa, and Honduras when those communities were in crisis mode. It has provided leadership at the regional and national level and continues to be a strong supporter of Solidarity, our relationship with communities in the global south.

Dr. Wolfensberger, Doug and Perry Mouncey, Pat, Eugene and Bernie laid the foundation for the community. Bill Remby and Tracy Radion were welcomed as Assistants early on and spent over thirty years serving the members of L'Arche Syracuse. Inspired by Jean Vanier's vision, the founders established the mission and set a tone and atmosphere that laid a solid foundation for those who followed. As Jean writes, "To exercise authority is to feel truly responsible for the others and their growth." The seeds of compassion and growth were planted by our founders and continue to grow to this day.