



L'Arche USA Fact Sheet

“The secret of L'Arche is relationship: meeting people, not through the filters of certitudes, ideologies, idealism or judgments, but heart to heart; listening to people with their pain, their joy, their hope, their history; listening to their heart beats.” (Jean Vanier, founder of L'Arche)

L'Arche USA is part of the international federation of L'Arche communities/organizations in which people with disabilities and assistants (volunteers and employees) choose to live and work together. The **Mission of L'Arche** is:

- ❖ To make known the gifts of people with developmental disabilities, revealed through mutually transforming relationships;
- ❖ To foster an environment in community that responds to the changing needs of our members, while being faithful to the core values of our founding story; and
- ❖ To engage in our diverse cultures, working together toward a more human society.

L'Arche began in France in 1964 when Jean Vanier, inspired by his friend and mentor Father Thomas Philippe, invited two men with developmental disabilities to share a small home with him in Trosly-Breuil, France. Having met them in an institution, Jean hoped that providing a warm and loving home would have a significant impact on the lives of these men. He soon learned that sharing their daily life together had a significant impact on each of them – a transformation of the heart.

From L'Arche's humble beginnings in a village north of Paris, L'Arche has now grown into an international network of communities. Today, there are 136 L'Arche communities in 36 countries throughout the world. There are 16 L'Arche communities and two formal projects (*) in the U.S.:

L'Arche Blue Ridge Mountains (VA) • L'Arche Chicago (IL) • L'Arche Cleveland (OH) •
L'Arche Clinton, The Arch (IA) • L'Arche Erie (PA) • L'Arche Greater Washington D.C. •
L'Arche Harbor House (FL) • L'Arche Heartland (KS) • L'Arche Irenicon (MA) • L'Arche
Mobile (AL) • L'Arche Nehalem (OR) • L'Arche Noah Sealth (WA) • L'Arche Spokane (WA)
• L'Arche Syracuse (NY) • L'Arche Tahoma Hope (WA) • L'Arche Wavcrest (CA) •
Friends of L'Arche - Atlanta (GA)* • Friends of L'Arche - St. Louis (MO)*

While its founding roots are in the Roman Catholic tradition, L'Arche has developed in many cultures and religious traditions throughout the world, and has been called one of the most significant lay ministries of our time. In 1997, Pope John Paul II granted Jean Vanier the International Paul VI Award. In recognizing Jean's work, Pope John Paul II stated, “On the path it has followed for more than 30 years...L'Arche has become a providential seed of the civilization of love.” Jean Vanier has received numerous other awards, including the French Legion of Honor, Companion of the Order of Canada, the Rabbi Gunther Plaut Humanitarian Award 2001, and the 2006 Chicago Catholic Theological Union's “Blessed are the Peace-Makers” Award.

L'Arche USA is part of the international structures that support L'Arche communities in living the mission of L'Arche at the local level. L'Arche USA and its regional offices support local L'Arche communities in recruitment of assistants and volunteers; trainings and retreats for L'Arche core members, assistants and leaders; and technical assistance to enhance the internal capacity and ensure quality of life in each community. L'Arche USA is incorporated as a non-profit, 501(c)(3) organization.

L'Arche USA and Our Communities

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9/24/09
(*) Emerging communities of L'Arche

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