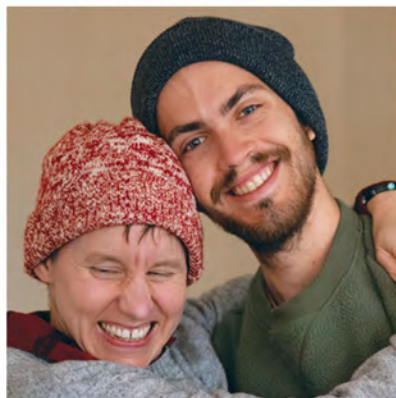
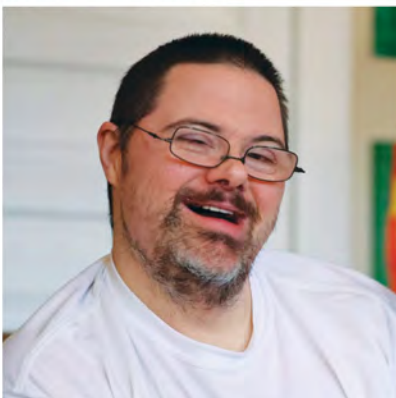
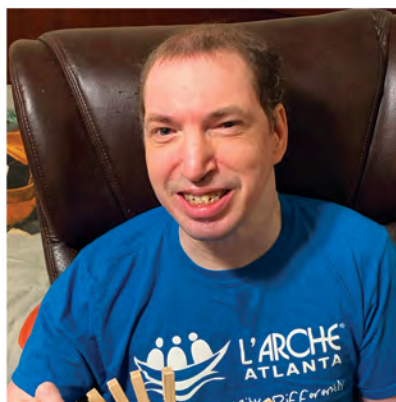




A YEAR OF
creative
RESILIENCE

Gratitude
Report
2020





Dear Friends of L'Arche Atlanta,

When we began 2020, we never could have imagined where it would end. A global pandemic has transformed how we live and challenged us in immeasurable ways. Our culture entered a period of massive reinvention, leaving us to wonder which of these changes will remain as permanent cultural norms. For most of us, the social isolation we experienced in 2020 was a dramatic departure from our previous reality.

However, **for many people with intellectual disabilities, social isolation was not a new experience.** Since L'Arche Atlanta began hosting community events in 2010, we have been working to combat the isolation that people with disabilities face and normalize friendships among people with and without disabilities.

With the outbreak of the pandemic, our community had to find new ways to build connections and community. Through our community's creative resilience, **we not only survived the past year, but reached more people with disabilities than ever before.** In 2019, 37 people with disabilities attended our community events; in 2020, 77 people with disabilities joined us for Zoom meet-ups. This report tells the stories of how our community faced the challenges of the pandemic with creative resilience.

None of this would have been possible without the generosity of so many people. Thank you to our donors, who supported us through one of the hardest years in memory. Thank you to our volunteers, who embraced creativity to make connections, like delivering tote bags all over

metro Atlanta filled with craft and game items so people could have supplies for our virtual meet-ups.

Perhaps my favorite memory from 2020 was Terry's 60th birthday. Keeping our number one commitment to the safety of our Core Members, we had to think of a special way to celebrate this major occasion, but celebrate we did! Over 70 people decorated their cars and drove by holding signs for an epic birthday parade. Terry's smile said it all: at L'Arche he knows he is loved.

Due to vaccinations and herd immunity, most of us will have the privilege of choosing to end our social isolation this year. But let's remain conscious that there are many for whom social isolation will be a continued and harmful reality. How can we continue to build community among people with and without disabilities? What steps can we take to ensure that the privilege of choosing to end social distancing is also available to people with disabilities? In short, **how can we continue to Imagine Community Differently for people of all abilities?**

Your generosity has already brought us so far. I look forward to continuing our work of creating a more compassionate and inclusive world together.

Abundantly grateful,

Tim Moore
Executive Director | Community Leader



6,000 Waiting follows three people with IDD in Georgia through their journey to obtain a Medicaid waiver, while examining how the state's waiting list for the waiver ballooned to more than 6,000 people.

Programs That Make a Difference

Home-Based Professional Services

Community life at L'Arche Atlanta is centered around our home (soon to be two!) where people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), known as Core Members, are at the center, the heart (*coeur* in French) of this community and organization. **Core Members and assistants learn, grow, and deepen in mutual relationships, defining success as an attitude of inclusion.** We are committed to providing high-quality living environments, individualized healthcare coordination, and authentic mutual relationships so that each Core Member can thrive as a vital member of the community.

Community Events

Through our events, we bring the celebration, spirituality, and connection found in the L'Arche home into the broader community. **In 2020, we celebrated 10 years of L'Arche Atlanta community events**, where people with disabilities, their families, and the wider community come to celebrate by sharing our gifts. In response to the pandemic, **we launched a virtual CONNEXIONS program** to connect with our larger community of people with and without disabilities, and the feedback was tremendous! We meet on Tuesdays for multiple-choice trivia and monthly for a range of activities. The highlight of our virtual CONNEXIONS program happened in November when we delivered tote bags filled with craft and game supplies for virtual events to over 70 people across metro Atlanta.

Advocacy

L'Arche Atlanta advocates for people with disabilities to have the right to decide where they live, the resources to do so, and the support they need to thrive in the community of their choice. To advocate at the state level, we partner with the Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities through the *Storytelling Advocacy Project*. The *Storytelling Project* is a state-wide initiative to educate and motivate state legislators to act on issues that affect Georgians with disabilities by giving them a voice to share their stories. In 2020, the *Storytelling Project* entered production for the second season of the *Hidden Voices* podcast, created a screening and marketing plan for our **6,000 Waiting** film (www.6000waiting.com), and had an active marketing campaign with Georgia Public Broadcasting to advertise the *Storytelling Project* across Georgia.

1 Our Assistant Team

While we always think our assistant team is amazing, **the team really shone in 2020 as true frontline essential workers during a pandemic.** Overnight the house routines changed when community access services were suspended and the virus made it unsafe to participate in previous activities. Our assistants rose to the occasion, putting our Core Members' health and safety at the center, meaning they missed out on time with their own families. Their diligence paid off: our community did not have any COVID cases.

2 Senate Resolution at the Georgia State Capitol

On February 20, **the Georgia Senate recognized L'Arche Atlanta Day at the Capitol**, and commended L'Arche for its pioneering status as a community where people with disabilities find true belonging. The resolution, sponsored by Senator Elena Parent, commends L'Arche for being a shining example of a community of adults with and without disabilities where the gifts of each person are valued.

2020 HIGHLIGHTS

10 stories of creative resilience

3 L'Arche Madness

In March L'Arche Atlanta hosted our second **L'Arche Madness**, where people with and without disabilities shot baskets to raise money for L'Arche! We turned it into a virtual event, and we loved seeing how creative people got with their video submissions! Our community responded so well and gave over \$20,000 to support our mission.

4 Battle of the Fans

In December we participated in another virtual fundraiser, **Battle of the Fans**, an international lip sync competition for people with disabilities. L'Arche Atlanta's fans made our lip sync videos win four consecutive rounds to get us to the finals. It was a rich shared experience for our community, and we are grateful to our fans who made us the top-performing team in the U.S.!

5 Terry Turned 60!

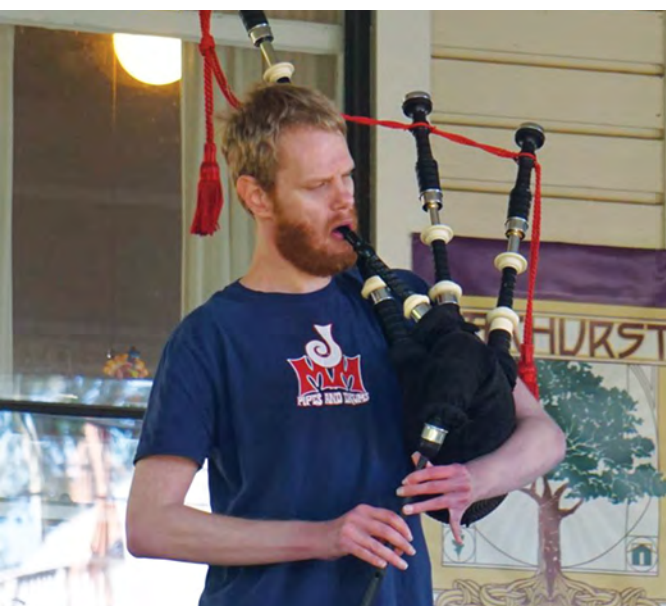
In May, one of our Core Members, **Terry, turned 60, and we surprised him with a birthday car parade for such a big milestone!** Over 70 people showed up to wish Terry a happy birthday! It was a really special day and a clear testament to the friendships Terry has developed through L'Arche.





6 Amazing Community Support

In 2020, a group of 20 people served on L'Arche Atlanta's community council. **This group made a huge difference in our community** — from being the enthusiasm behind L'Arche Madness, to planning our CONNEXIONS Weekend, to behind-the-scenes work for our auction, and finding fun ways to support our assistant team during Direct Support Professionals week and for Christmas stockings! **Even more volunteers stepped forward in the midst of the pandemic to relieve our house assistant team by bringing dinners,** which was so helpful.



7 CONNEXIONS!

When we launched CONNEXIONS, our new program to connect people with and without disabilities via common interest groups, we had no idea what 2020 would hold! But we were able to re-imagine a virtual CONNEXIONS community where people gathered for trivia, crafts, and games. Starting in April, we began hosting weekly trivia meet-ups and monthly community e-gatherings. In November we hosted a CONNEXIONS Weekend: volunteers **delivered tote bags filled with craft and game supplies for virtual events to over 70 people across metro Atlanta!**

8 8th Birthday Benefit & Auction

In September we celebrated **L'Arche Atlanta's 8th birthday** with our annual auction event, held virtually for the first time. Thanks to our generous community, over 80 items were donated and purchased during the auction. Through creative storytelling videos, we were able to portray community life in the midst of the pandemic. Thanks to our generous sponsors and donors, **we raised \$150,000 — the most our benefit auction has ever raised** — to support our mission! It was a wonderful day with almost 200 people celebrating the difference L'Arche makes in the community.

9 Large-Scale Participation

L'Arche followed all safety protocols released by public health officials and the CDC, meaning that all events were virtual, in small numbers, or no-contact outdoor visits. Even so, between monthly virtual community events, birthday celebrations via Zoom (and, in one case, a birthday parade), our weekly trivia games, volunteers dropping off meals at the Mead Road house or tote bags to community members, and much more, **we connected with over 400 people in 2020.**

10 Purchasing a Second L'Arche Home

In May we purchased the second L'Arche home at 915 Clairemont Avenue and began renovations to make it accessible for people with disabilities. In mid-August, **we launched the Core Member admissions process,** and began interviewing potential residents. We have also begun the assistant recruitment process. In 2021, after we receive a permit from the Georgia Department of Behavior Health and Developmental Disabilities (DBHDD), four new Core Members will have a place to belong in community!



Trivial Questions, MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIPS

Since April 2020, our extended community of people with and without intellectual disabilities has gathered weekly through our virtual CONNEXIONS program, meeting on Tuesdays for an hour of trivia. “Tuesday Trivia” began with fewer than 10 participants. As time passed and word got out, the group grew, and these virtual meet-ups are now a mainstay of community life for almost 30 people, an important weekly touchpoint in the midst of a challenging season.

Becca, our Home Life Leader & Community Events Coordinator, puts together 24 multiple-choice trivia questions each week, on topics ranging from Harry Potter to Atlanta sports heroes; if there is a holiday approaching, the questions may include seasonal trivia, like ‘what Halloween candy is the most popular?’ Participants guess the answer by holding up an index card that says A, B, C, or D. When Becca announces the correct answer there are cheers and good-natured “darn-its.”

For many of our “regulars,” Tuesday Trivia has been their first point of contact with L’Arche. Some have attended an in-person community event in the past, but distance and transportation challenges made it difficult to come regularly. In these cases, virtual gatherings have made it easier to build relationships. Take Brian, who has only met his trivia friends online

and now knows each person by name. We call him the “trivia doorman,” because he is always one of the first to log in and welcomes each person as they join our Zoom room. We’ve also gotten to know Robert, who never says a word during the game, but calmly picks his response to each question and holds a perfect poker face, whether correct or not. We are used to Nicole cheering “I’m going to win today,” challenging her friends with jubilant smack talk. (Despite such banter, there are no sore losers, only cheers and “great job” in the chat box for the winners.)

Mark is such a regular, that we wonder where he is if he misses a week. We celebrate upcoming birthdays, ask Libby about her Etsy shop, and check in with Martha about her college classes. **In a pandemic that has created isolation, Tuesday Trivia has provided a space where people are known.**

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Ricardo is a weekly participant who connected with L'Arche for the first time during our virtual CONNEXIONS programming.

He says, "My favorite part of coming to trivia is the connections I didn't think I would make. For one thing, now Becca and I are friends and Patrick likes to chat with me whenever I'm at trivia. It's so fun to hear him call out to me over and over again. I love it!"

Ricardo, like many others in the group, is also reconnecting with old friends. "I was on one of the trivia calls and Martha popped up. It just so happens that, believe it or not, we know each other from Camp Infinity. It was so cool to connect with her again," Ricardo said.

The virtual experience has also created anticipation for future engagement. "I can't wait to be able to come to the L'Arche house in person when it's safe, so I can meet everyone in person," Ricardo said.

It's a feeling many in the group articulate — **a readiness to see these friends in person, to share time together in real space.** We can't wait for Brian to act as a real community event doorman, greeting each friend by name and his common refrain, "How are you today?" While this community formed online, guessing answers to questions about distant planets and Disney characters, the friendships created have been real and meaningful. **They buoyed us throughout 2020, reminding us that it's possible to grow closer together, even when we're apart.**



More CONNEXIONS!

Trivia wasn't the only way we hung out online in 2020 — we also met to make crafts, play games, have an open mic concert, and enjoy other fun opportunities to **share community online.** Check out these photos from our virtual group meet-ups!



our second home A PLACE TO BELONG

In response to the urgent need across the state of Georgia to improve services and build community for people with disabilities, and with the support of our incredibly generous donors, on May 8, 2020, L'Arche Atlanta **purchased a 3,800 sq. ft. seven-bedroom house from Woodlands Garden in Decatur.** We received a construction permit quickly, and our construction contractor, Summers & Sons, began the remodel process following plans created by our architecture firm, Anne Architecture, to add two bedrooms and make the downstairs wheelchair accessible.



2021 Update!

House renovations continued into 2021 and as of April are now complete! We have started the permit application process with the Georgia Department of Behavioral Health & Developmental Disabilities (DBHDD) to obtain approval to become a Community-Based Housing option. We will do everything in our power to expedite the process, but we don't expect to receive permit approval until Fall 2021.

In August 2020, we launched the Core Member admissions process. We **received applications from 37 eligible candidates** (applicants must have a Medicaid COMP waiver). To determine who would be interviewed, preference was given to applicants who would bring racial, ethnic, socio-economic, and/or religious diversity, have participated in L'Arche activities, and have expressed a desire to live in community. During the months of November and December we narrowed the field of 37 applicants down to six, and are currently in the process of scheduling second interviews to choose the final group of four new Core Members.

We also started the **assistant recruitment process** in October 2020, with the goal of hiring five assistants to staff the second house prior to welcoming new Core Members.

The new home will serve as a hub for our extended community, which brings together people with and without disabilities to re-imagine what true inclusion can be. L'Arche homes provide an environment that nurtures mutually-transforming relationships for Core Members, assistants, volunteers, and friends.

THANK YOU *for your support!*

Our rich community life would not be possible without the generosity of our donors. **Thank you** to each person who supported our community in 2020. While our Core Members are the heartbeat of the community, our donors are its lifeblood.

In 2020...

L'Arche Atlanta donors gave

\$552,000

a **33% increase** from 2019

14

individuals & families joined the Heart of L'Arche Society

(Welcome!)



22

volunteers helped solicit auction item donations

649

households, businesses, & faith communities donated to L'Arche Atlanta

Thank you all so much for your generosity!

Your kindness is recognized each day by the members of the L'Arche Atlanta community.

Thank You to the Sponsors of Our 8th Birthday Benefit & Auction!

We are so grateful to the individuals and businesses that supported our 8th Birthday Benefit & Auction, an amazing event that **raised more than \$150,000 for our community!**

Gold



Shayla & Chip Rumely
Ann & Steve Rushing

Silver



Marilyn & Dean Hammond



Bronze

Organizations

Andersen, Tate & Carr
Atlanta Braves
Audi Atlanta
City3Sixty
Columbia Theological Seminary
Kristen M. Lewis, Esq.
St. Thomas More Catholic Church
Pine Street Market
Summers & Sons
Trinity Anglican Church

Individuals

Beth Allgood-Justice
MacKensie & Andrew Brandt
Ann Glendinning & Dale Kelly
Gué & Bill Hudson
Elisabeth Marchant & David Jensen
Bill McKinnon
Mary Margaret Oliver
Gail & Matt Schaffer
Steve & Julie Siler
Mary Anona Stoops & Trace Haythorn





Help us create a place of welcome!

L'Arche Atlanta is grateful to all our donors who create places of welcome. Consider making an ongoing commitment to further our mission by joining the Heart of L'Arche Society or our monthly donor program. Both options offer an **easy way to make regular donations that support and sustain our community.**



By joining the Heart of L'Arche Society, you help fund our most vital initiatives.

These beloved donors pledge \$1,000 or more per year for three consecutive years, gifts that fund our long-term goals. By committing to the Heart of L'Arche Society, you are helping to ensure the future of L'Arche.

The L'Arche Luminaries are a special community of people dedicated to creating a place of belonging for people with disabilities. Your gift of \$30, \$50, or \$100 each month helps adults with disabilities become appreciated and valued members of our local community and beyond.



To join one of our donor communities, please contact Megan Denton, Director of Development & Communications, at megan@larcheatlanta.org.



2020 Board of Directors

Officers

- **Chair:** Jim Swartz – Seyfarth Shaw LLP
- **Vice Chair:** Shayla Rumely – Community Volunteer
- **Treasurer:** Ann Rushing – Rushing CPA
- **Secretary:** MacKensie Brandt* – Coxie Curry & Associates

Members at Large

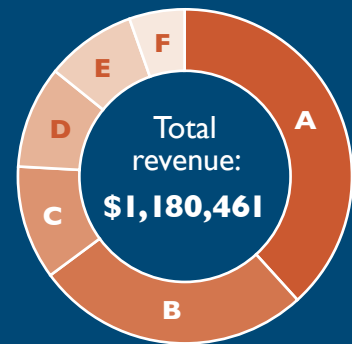
- Haqiqa Bolling – Retired Counselor
- Marilyn Hammond – Communications Consultant
- Robbie Harris – Robbie Harris ATL Realtor
- Brandon Maxwell – Columbia Theological Seminary
- Jasmine Terry Okafor – Assoc. for Clinical Pastoral Education
- Gail Schaffer – Lueder, Larkin, & Hunt LLC
- Steve Siler – Mercy Care Foundation
- Matthew Smith – Anderson, Tate, & Carter
- Mary Anona Stoops – North Decatur Presbyterian Church
- Khalia Williams – Candler School of Theology
- Alan Yorker – Retired Psychologist & Teacher

* MacKensie Brandt completed her board service in 2020, and we are incredibly grateful for her contributions to strengthen L'Arche Atlanta.

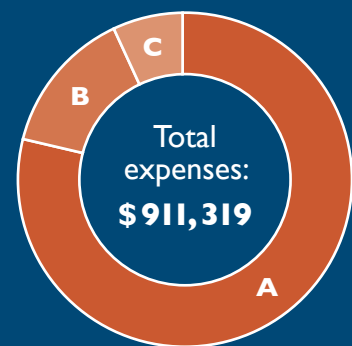
2020 Advisory Council

- Gué Hudson – Retired Dean of Students, Agnes Scott College
- Elisabeth Marchant – Dale Carnegie
- Mary Margaret Oliver – Georgia House of Representatives
- Elizabeth Pearce – The Lovett School
- Shannon Powell – City3Sixty
- Lizanne Stephenson – Community Volunteer

2020 Financials



- A** → Contributions: **38%**
(Individuals, Foundations, Businesses)
- B** → Medicaid Agency Funding: **27%**
- C** → 8th Birthday Benefit & Auction: **12%**
- D** → Government Grants: **11%**
- E** → GCDD Storytelling Project Contract: **8%**
- F** → Other: **4%**



- A** → Program Services: **78%**
- B** → Fundraising: **14%**
- C** → Management & General: **8%**





 LArcheAtlanta.org

 facebook.com/larcheATL

 instagram.com/larcheatlanta



L'Arche Atlanta

is a member organization of the International Federation of L'Arche, founded in France in 1964. L'Arche is French for "the ark," signifying a *welcoming place of refuge where people are nurtured with love,* creating a space for mutually transformative friendships.

Today, there are 154 L'Arche communities in 38 countries. These communities are united in the mission to reveal the *gifts of adults with disabilities* and build relationships among people with and without intellectual and developmental disabilities.

L'Arche Atlanta | P.O. Box 2359 | Decatur, GA 30031 | 470/582-0008
We are a 501(c)(3) charitable organization (EIN 20-3091620)

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