



Jen laying brick in Villa Maria de Triunfo.

AUTHOR: JEN BAILLE

As we reflect on our time in Peru and the extraordinary experience we are so grateful to have had it is hard to summarize what the trip really meant to us in a few short words. As a foreigner coming into this community Villa Maria de Triunfo it is evident the level of poverty present in their community where 70% of the children are malnourished and 40% are chronically malnourished you would expect to find a sense of misery amongst them, however, it was quite opposite. We were

Our volunteer trip to Peru

welcomed with open arms and greeted each day by smiling faces, warm hugs and a willingness from them to be involved in creating the change they want to see happen in their community. As we worked alongside the children, teachers, and the work crew mixing cement, building columns from rebar, carrying rocks and sand, and building walls we immersed ourselves in their community and their culture and became a part of an experience much bigger than ourselves. Each day we were inspired by their love of life and their desire to improve their futures and create opportunities for themselves. Although they are faced with challenges that many of us will never have to experience in our lifetime they showed up everyday. They taught us what strength, resilience and perseverance looks like in the face of adversity. In our short two weeks in this community we were able to overcome barriers of communication and build lasting friendships with some of the most

remarkable, generous, motivated and amazing people we have ever met.

This trip has provided us with more insights and experiences than we could have ever imagined and we gained far more than we were able to give. The people we have met have provided us with fresh perspectives about life and opened our eyes to how much we really have to appreciate in our daily lives. Peru has left a permanent mark in our minds and hearts and we are eternally grateful for this experience.

The opportunity to volunteer in Lima was with a Canadian organization called DWC (Developing World Connections) is a British Columbia registered society, Canadian Charitable Organization and a volunteer grass roots movement. While in Lima, we worked directly with IFEJANT, the organization that helps build the schools for children. IFEJANT is a Spanish acronym for The Training Institute for the Educators of Youth, Adolescent and Child Works.

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L'ARCHE GREATER VANCOUVER

AUTHOR: KELINA KWAN

"The mission of a community is to give life to others, that is to say, to transmit new hope and new meaning to them. Mission is revealing to others their fundamental beauty, value and importance in the universe, their capacity to love, to grow and to do beautiful things and to meet God."

This is the mission that Jean Vanier envisioned when he founded L'Arche, an international federation with 130 communities around the world, and 29 communities in Canada. I recently talked to Denise Haskett, executive director of L'Arche Greater Vancouver to see how this mission is carried out in their community in Burnaby.

L'Arche is an intentional, ecumenical Christian Community which welcomes people from a rich diversity of religions, races and cultural backgrounds. "We believe that people with developmental disabilities have a special gift to offer society, and our mission is to share this, and also to welcome people in to our community," Haskett said. L'Arche Greater Vancouver has two day programs, and six homes where people with and without developmental disabilities share life together. To celebrate the unique value of every person, the day programs provide opportunities for people with developmental disabilities not only to go out and enjoy different recreational activities, but also to help others. Their "Neighbours Helping Neighbours" program offers basic yard work and maintenance for seniors to help them stay longer in their homes. The program also helps deliver meals for Meals On Wheels, do recycling, help sort donations in the Salvation Army, and more.

Not only do L'Arche's programs highlight the unique gifts of people with developmental disabilities, but it also reaches out to the community and builds relationships. One such program involves baking cookies in their Day Program location, Emmaus Centre, and taking the cookies to a hospitality project where people are waiting at the food bank. "They go and mingle with people and bring their cookies



Ken and Rola baking to share. They really have a sense of doing something meaningful and bringing a little bit of joy and fellowship to people." Haskett said. "They really take pride in their work." And this pride translates to a real sense of caring that is felt. Haskett recently received a call from a senior who had her yard maintained by the L'Arche crew and said "I just can't thank you enough for what they have done, they are such wonderful people! ...they are just fantastic!"

L'Arche Greater Vancouver is entering an exciting phase of growth, and they are going to welcome all 29 L'Arche communities in Canada to the first National General Assembly held in BC next May in UBC. Amongst the activities will be a public talk by Ruth Patterson from Ireland who worked with L'Arche founder Jean Vanier in relation to peacemaking.

If you are interested in supporting and working with L'Arche Greater Vancouver and share in their pride, you can arrange a visit or tour, join their Friday community prayer (beginning in September after the summer break), or apply to be a board member. L'Arche is currently looking for board members with financial background and previous board experience. For more information on L'Arche Greater Vancouver, to arrange a visit, and to learn more about the upcoming General National Assembly, please call 604-435-9544, or visit their website at www.larchevancouver.org. L'Arche Greater Vancouver is a CARF accredited organization.

BE THE CHANGE

To volunteer in a developing country, visit www.developingworldconnections.org for more information. A group will be travelling to Rwanda in October 2012 from the 13th-27th led by Jen Baillie and it is not too late to sign up for this amazing experience!

Volunteer

...you'll be glad you did



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Volunteer of the Month...

Corina Hojan

"I strongly believe that volunteerism is the simplest and most impactful and effective way for youth to get involved and become vital members of their communities. There exist hundreds of volunteer opportunities available to young people and it is easy to find something that interests you, which is why I am so passionate about doing volunteer work: it's fun! Not only are you doing something good for others, but you can have fun at the same time."

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