



Testimonial

by Genesta Scissons

As a senior citizen living in rural Cape Breton for the past ten years, I had some spare time on my hands and had to decide what I was going to do to solve this matter. A quote of Mother Theresa's kept coming to me, which was, "look around in your own community and you will find people who need a helping hand."

In the spring of 2008 L'Arche Cape Breton had a series of lectures for seniors entitled "Isn't That What Friends Are For". I knew this was just what I needed to fill in some spare time. Little did I know the impact it would have on my life. It has given me the opportunity to reach out to others and assist them with the challenges they encounter each day.

I began my volunteering at The Hope Chest in November 2008. The first day, I was nervous, as everything and everyone was new to me. I ended up having to go to the hospital as I cut my finger while opening a can of tomatoes. A bad start, but I must say it's been an uphill ride ever since. The staff members, Monica, Judy, Paula and Josie are wonderful and very dedicated to their job. The core members are loved and respected which is what L'Arche is all about. It makes me feel good when I can help them out by making lunch, cleaning; doing whatever needs attention on that particular day.

The time spent with the core members (folks with developmental disabilities) is precious to me. For example, one morning after several weeks of spending time at The Hope Chest, Sandy gave me a big smile. That was a bonus! Now, when Amanda calls me "turkey" I don't get offended. Heather is always busy with her chores and we are getting pretty excited about her marriage to Angus in

July. Kim's artistic ability is quite amazing and when she asks me to come and sit beside her I'm happy to do so. When Sean reaches out for a hug I feel blessed, even though I have to be careful he doesn't get a handful of my hair! Sue has the most wonderful smile and the biggest appetite for someone her size and she never leaves a crumb on her plate. I have

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to be careful to not say the words “music or party” to her as she gets too excited. These people all have different needs and they receive the utmost of care from the staff.

I've also attended two birthday celebrations at Thomas House. Allan and Christiana are very dedicated to their management of this lovely home and they've made me feel so welcome. After the birthday meal, the custom is to pass around a candle to all in attendance and while holding the candle we get to say what we appreciate most about the honoree. This was a wonderful experience for me. The love and warmth felt at this moment was something I will never forget.

So now that summer is approaching I look forward to maybe going on a picnic, to the beach or having an ice cream treat and just enjoying the special moments with my new friends.

As I continue my journey in life I am so grateful to have found a place where I feel welcome every day and where mutual friendships are growing and flourishing. Thank you again L'Arche for welcoming me into your community, I'm enjoying every moment.