

## 7. Role of a volunteer at L'Arche Bruxelles

We could summarize your roles in L'Arche like this:

- You are a "friend"
- You have a supporting/teaching or 'educational' role (from Latin "educere" = to draw out)
- You therefore also have "a listening role," without being a "psychologist."

In L'Arche, the person with a disability is at the heart of community life. This implies that the volunteer - along with others in the community- tries to meet the basic needs of the people welcomed with disabilities: to create a home life where each one feels at home, with stimulating work, enjoying the opportunity to learn and share life with people who enjoy his company. You will realize that people with disabilities are not patients in a hospital, and that volunteers are not like "staff". In L'Arche, what is vital is to aim for a reciprocal relationship. NB Reciprocity does not mean a denial of the differences between us! – just the opposite!

### **Teamwork**

In L'Arche, one of our values is teamwork because the community includes several groups of people: volunteers, friends, trained care workers, long-term assistants and other professionals. These different groups each brings something unique to our community life, whether in the Activity Centre, (Le Grain) or in the houses. L'Arche is also a school of life, where we learn how to live together ... For each person, professional qualified or not, the core competencies always include listening skills.

As part of a team, a volunteer shares responsibility for the running of the house or Activity Centre, by:

- Presence in the foyer,
- Support for disabled people in outdoor activities, according to their skills (work, medical, recreation)
- Concern for the day to day functioning: meals, shopping, dressing and the hygiene of the people with a disability, the home-coming from the Activity Centre at the end of the day, moments of celebration, welcome, tidying rooms.
- Assisting people in the activities of "Le Grain".

### **Building relationships with people with a disability:**

As already mentioned, relationships are the very fabric of our life together. But do not try to go too fast. It is a process of getting to know each other, gently. 'taming' each other and let ourselves 'be tamed' as well! A person with a disability has specific limitations, but first and foremost, a disabled person is a person like yourself, with his own aspirations, desires, suffering, sensitivity, and life experience. Respect this reality and accept it letting it touch you. This always implies a relationship of mutuality. Do not just try to model your behaviour on that of the longer term members, but take time to observe them none the less, asking them questions as the need arises. This can help you avoid misunderstandings. Ensures these relationships are lived honestly. Do not create too strong a bond, which risks becoming fusional: you're only there for a given time, so it makes sense to take this into

account, and build a balanced relationship with the right distance and right closeness!

### **Joining the community**

In order to build community, you will participate in and contribute to team meetings every week in the foyer, or the meeting with the head of the Grain, as well as meetings with other volunteers in the community (3 times per year), and other events and Community celebrations.

The first 3 months, you will learn about the values, the way of working and lifestyle specific to L'Arche. This is an opportunity for you and the community to find out if your choice to live in L'Arche fits with your own personal project. At an evaluation after the first 3 months, you decide with the community if you wish to deepen your experience at L'Arche. Similarly, if you want to extend your commitment beyond your initial commitment (average 10-12 months), you do it in dialogue with the community.

### Possible tasks of a volunteer in a home

These tasks are worked out with the house leader or work leader at the team meeting, depending on household needs, your schedule, your own wishes and skills.



<p><b>Running of the house</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Accounting for the money spent (receipts)</li> <li>➤ Shopping and cooking (healthy and balanced)</li> <li>➤ Hygiene : cleaning the house, the washing, the ironing, sewing, and mending, repairs and house functioning</li> <li>➤ Developing the life of the house</li> </ul>	<p><b>Support for the people welcomed</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ daily life : care, shower, bath, shaving, suitable clothes for the weather, medicines</li> <li>➤ supporting a person who is ill</li> <li>➤ leisure activities</li> <li>➤ tidying the room together</li> <li>➤ Liaison with the place of work</li> <li>➤ Contact with the family</li> <li>➤ Personal review meetings: reflexions, questions, thoughts.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Life of the house</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Meeting</li> <li>➤ Being attentive to each person</li> <li>➤ Organising activities/ projects together</li> <li>➤ Keeping the calendar up to date</li> <li>➤ Spiritual life</li> <li>➤ Relationships outside the house, (friends, society)</li> </ul>	<p><b>The life of the team</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Meeting</li> <li>➤ Delegation</li> <li>➤ dialogue, meeting</li> <li>➤ reflexion</li> <li>➤ Community life</li> <li>➤ Welcome of new assistants and friends of the house/foyer</li> </ul>

Daily life	Life in the community
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Waking people up - gently!</li><li>➤ Breakfast: being attentive to others.</li><li>➤ Making sure people are ready on time</li><li>➤ Ensuring that people take their medicine</li><li>➤ Washing up</li><li>➤ The evening meal (cooking and presence)</li><li>➤ Tea-time (welcoming people back home, listening, and being present)</li><li>➤ Bath /shower</li><li>➤ Sorting out clothes/ putting them away tidily</li><li>➤ Helping people to go to bed</li><li>➤ services</li><li>➤ Animation of the evening activities</li><li>➤ Journeys in the car</li><li>➤ Free time</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Inviting guests</li><li>➤ Creating links with the friends and the other foyers, as well as getting to know the neighbourhood</li><li>➤ Calling on others for help, or helping others</li><li>➤ Meetings, formations, community gatherings, and other events</li><li>➤ Weekend activities</li></ul>

## 9. A volunteer's typical day

### **In a foyer / L'Arche household ...**

- Get up between 6:00 and 8:00 – breakfast together;
- After the departure of persons with a disability to their work, you do housework and cleaning - depending on the day of the week, your French course and your commitment in the community or outside the community
- When the people with disability return at around 16.00, there is tea together
- Then personal care: toilets, showers, brushing teeth, etc..
- If you are preparing dinner you start around 18:00 with a person with a disability
- After supper, we spend the evening together until 21h00/ 22h00
- And then bedtime is between 21:00 and 22:00.

For each person with a disability, there is a variety of household tasks to do

For each volunteer the times when you are required to be present, include:

the house meeting, the team meeting (including weekly planning), the organisation of the weekends, and participation in other community events.

### **The Day activity Centre**

8:30: Walking together to Le Grain / transport + preparation Picnic if needed

- 9:00: Start of activities

- 10:30 to 11:00: Break
- 11:00 to 12:30: Activities
- 12h30-13h30: dinner
- 1:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.: activities
- 16.00: return home on foot or by minibus

**For each volunteer, times when you are required to be present include:**

The meeting (every two weeks) with the leader of Grain or participation in team meetings, preparation of workshops for the next day with the coordinator of the activity, participation in the Friday meeting for all members of the workshop, participation in language courses, presence in one of the foyers on the national holidays, (fériés) and either Saturday or Sunday in a month where there are 5 weekends (see Appendix 2).

**General conclusions for volunteers:**

Any project concerning will be organized with you, with the area leader and in consultation with the director of the volunteers.