

# Remembering John Olson—Our friend and family

By Devin Land

The L'Arche Clinton community was saddened by the passing of Johnny Olson on Sunday, February 11.

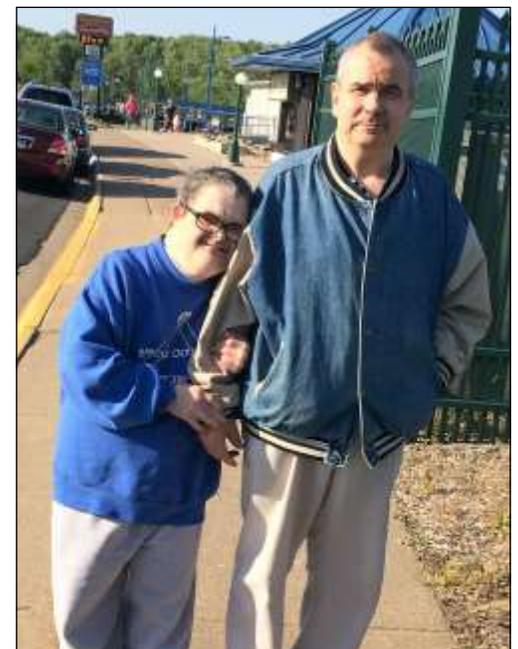
Johnny was born on December 8, 1957, in Clinton, Iowa. He was a 1979 graduate of Clinton High School's special education program. Johnny lived at home until joining the L'Arche Clinton community in 1993.

The L'Arche Clinton community is blessed to have known Johnny for the 25 years that he lived with us. Johnny loved to listen and dance to music by Elvis Presley and Johnny Cash. He was an avid Special Olympics participant in his younger years, winning many rib-



bons. "I love food I do" he would often say, and he always enjoyed a big piece of cake, especially with extra frosting! Johnny was very charming, and had a gift for making people smile and laugh. He loved everybody, and had a remarkable sense of empathy, sometimes offering prayers for people he didn't know but felt were in distress. He

had a gift for expressing himself directly and passionately, and possessed a wit that rarely failed to catch you off guard. Johnny leaves behind many friends and countless numbers of people whose lives he touched and charmed.



By Hilary Graham

*"You are my sunshine. My only sunshine. You make me happy, when skies are grey. You'll never know dear, how much I love you. Please, don't take my sunshine away."* This has been an ongoing theme in my heart since Johnny passed away on February 11<sup>th</sup>, 2018. Even though at times he was a tornado, Johnny was and continues to be a ray of sunshine on my hardest days. Many

*impersonator, ladies man, arm-wrestling champ, tambourine player, music lover, and a patient teacher. John lived his life free of the masks that most of us spend so much energy maintaining or struggling to remove. It is a powerful image that at the end of his life, John did not want to live with a ventilator or an oxygen mask over his face. John could not live with a mask on his thoughts and feelings either, which is something I truly admired about him. I have found peace with the image of Johnny shouting "Heaven my new home!" as he yelled "The Arch my new home!" back in 1993. I am so thankful to have loved John and more so to have been loved by him. It was a privilege to be his friend and an honor to be trusted as his guardian. I miss him every day.*



*stories, which are usually followed with laughter, have been shared these past three months to remember him. If you would like to hear one, just ask anyone who had the joy of sharing life with him. John was a charmer, comedic genius, wino, pastry connoisseur, flubber*

*Editor's note: These are memories and thoughts compiled by John's guardian, Hilary. Their relationship was blessed by God and he will always be the Fred to her Wilma.*



# Welcoming our three international volunteers

By Hilary Graham

**The Charter of L'Arche reads, "Bound together by solidarity and mutual commitment, L'Arche communities form a world-wide family." This is true. With 147 communities in 35 countries, it's safe to say that we have friends from all over the world! L'Arche Clinton has also gone international within itself by welcoming**

**three international volunteers to become live-in assistant's in our homes. We are so grateful that Lucas from Brazil, and Ulkar and Nigar from Azerbaijan have opened their minds and hearts to living ordinary moments together in community, experiencing something extraordinary and developing long lasting relationships.**



Nigar, our newest international volunteer trying Mexican food for the first time with Michaela.

## Lucas

*Note: Lucas has been with the L'Arche Clinton community since July of 2017.*

My name is Lucas, I'm Brazilian and I'm volunteering for one year as a live-in assistant in Arch II, one of the homes in the L'Arche Clinton Community, USA.

I will talk a little bit why I decided to volunteer for L'Arche and having this experience as a live-in assistant.

Three years ago I was volunteering in an organization in Michigan named IICD (Institute for International Coopera-



Lucas, with Becky and Kenney.

tion and Development). I was planning to live one year in USA and six months in Mozambique, Africa, where I would develop a social and environmental project, however for personal issues I had to come back to Brazil after the first six months in USA.

After returning to Brazil, some months later I was talking by skype with a Japanese friend I met at IICD and she told me about L'Arche.

I've never had heard nothing about L'Arche before.

This Japanese friend said to me she had a Korean friend, working in a French organization in Australia, and she decided to put me in contact with him.

I found him in my Facebook. He explained to me a little bit about his experience working for L'Arche Australia, and then I decided to search a little bit about this organization on google.

When my friend talked with me about

L'Arche I thought "wow, this is such a coincidence because my mother is a teacher and a psychologist and she worked for 20 years with children and teenagers with intellectual disabilities". Then I thought it could be a good idea to have this experience.

I applied to volunteer for L'Arche Canada for one year, however in L'Arche Canada it's forbidden to be a volunteer, and they asked me for at least three years of commitment to stay working there, and I wanted to have this experience for just 1 year. Then I decided to apply to L'Arche in other countries like New Zealand, Australia, and Ireland, however they didn't have positions in that moment.

Then I thought it could be much easier to apply to L'Arche USA because I already had my Visa.

Then I wrote an email to L'Arche USA, they wrote me back sending to me the form to fill out; I sent the completed form back, then I had two interviews by skype with the person in charge in USA to "hire" volunteers.

She gave to me three options: Cleveland (Ohio), Syracuse (New York), and Boston (Massachusetts), and then I decided it would be a good idea to go to Cleveland.

I had more three interviews by skype with the community leader from L'Arche Cleveland and then I did a commitment to stay there for one year.

It was a very rewarding experience. Then I decided to volunteer again for more six months in L'Arche Argentina because I also wanted to improve my Spanish (my mother tongue is Portuguese), and after that I decided to volunteer for one more year in USA.

Now I'm completing my commitment with L'Arche Clinton in June, I will return to Brazil to visit my family with plans to work in Central America or Europe in an environmental organization.

Thanks L'Arche for these last three years. It was an amazing and rewarding experience. I did many good friends here, and I will bring with me all these great experiences and memories forever.

## Ulkar

*Note: Ulkar joined L'Arche Clinton in March of 2018.*

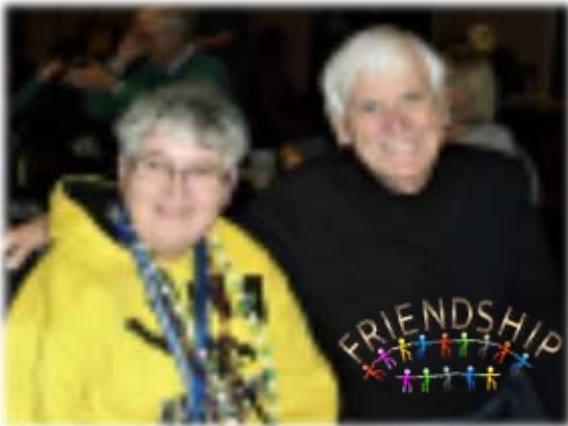
"Volunteering is something I was doing throughout my life, in addition to my actual job. However this is the first time I left my job for volunteer position, as I felt that I need to be here. Hope that one day I will get true understanding of why I came to Clinton."



Ulkar, with Sarah and Jeff.



# Highlights of the Central Regional Gathering in Mobile, January 2018





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## CAREER OPPORTUNITY

Become an Assistant. At L'Arche, individuals with Intellectual disabilities are known as "core members," and "assistants" are those who come to share life with them. Assistants accompany Core Members in their activities of daily life, such as creating homes and supporting them in sharing their gifts within the house and the larger community. Live-in and live-out positions available now.

Please email resume to  
[communityleader.larcheclinton@gmail.com](mailto:communityleader.larcheclinton@gmail.com)

or mail to L'Arche Clinton  
Attn: Devin Land, PO Box 278,  
Clinton, IA 52733-0278

## Why will you donate to L'Arche Clinton?

*L'Arche Clinton recently received a sizable donation from the David Hartmann Foundation. Thank you for your belief in our mission. His daughter, Sue Hartmann said, "I am happy to be able to help L'Arche. My father would have been proud to see how the foundation has helped so many."*

*Here are quotes from others who have donated to L'Arche Clinton.*

*"As a former long-term, live-out then live-in assistant I have an inside appreciation of the many aspects of the daily needs of an Arch Home. Fundraisers are just one avenue, add in the stark reality of decreased budgets (from the state) leaving a deficit directly and indirectly affecting the core members lives." **Peggy McClure.***

*"What makes "L'Arche different from the others agencies that serve people with differing abilities is that L'Arche believes that relationships matter and that assistants and core members learn from each other.*

*Jean Vanier declares that L'Arche won't solve the world's problems, but can be a light to show us the way to our loving and living together. Therefore I contribute." **Joyce Ollie.***

*"What a blessing for our daughter, Brenda, to have a wonder home. We are so thankful! Core members are not the only angels. Angels continue to come and go. All the people that work with love with our special people. We are blessed.!" **Al and Marion Connell***

*"Believe in L'Arche's mission. L'Arche is a piece of God's faith puzzle being put together through people helping people." **Steve and Cathy Eggers.***

*"I believe they provide a vital service to our community." **Marilyn Luebe.***

*"We donate because of our family values, the philosophy of L'Arche and we want to bless our core members and friends in Clinton. L'Arche is living the command-*

*ment, Love Thy Neighbor." **Margaret Mary and Greg Luzny.***

*"Knew they were top notch in their sincerity toward the people they work with. Visited Dave Miller many times at his Arche home and even ate several meals with them at night. I always brought the cheesecake. Donated because they left me with a feeling that what they were doing should be supported." **David Roling.***

*"Because of the good work you are doing for the residents. I want to make sure Gene and his friends have the opportunities to be happy and live the life they deserve." **John L. Shannon.***

*"They are a wonderful organization—our daughter enjoys her program there and all the outing and the staff. We feel they have a good program, good staff and hope to donate to keep good people staying in the program." **Sue Spalding.***