At L’Arche, adults with and without intellectual disabilities share life and friendships in community.

We reveal the truth that people with intellectual disabilities have value and, when given

the opportunity, contribute to the growth of compassionate love in others.

**FUNDRAISING**

Our decision to work with the Suddes Group to inject new vision, resources and strategy into our fundraising has been fruitful:

* The visual aid/engagement tool that emerged from this process has been well received. It is expected that it will be adapted in various ways as it is used in different situations.
* The Board’s decision to reactivate our national foundation is being implemented. We intend to bring together the pieces of this process by July 2018 when it is hoped that the foundation will be formally re-activated. More information on this in the time to come. Marty and Tina are leading this at the staff level.
* The recent conversations between each local community and the fundraising working group (Tina, Marty and Nathan) allowed for the sharing of information about what is happening today, on the ground, across the country. There was open and robust conversation about the hopes and questions regarding a closer fundraising partnership between communities and L’Arche USA.
* Nathan Ball has now started his role as Director of Development for L’Arche USA, focusing on major donors (individuals and foundations). One of his priorities will be to work with a small group of local L’Arche communities, one by one, who have a readiness to explore a stronger collaboration with L’Arche USA. We will talk more about this in St. Louis.

Here are some of the themes that came from the recent fundraising conversations with each community:

1. Fact: Collectively our current annual fundraising is close to $5 million.
2. No surprise: No two communities are in the same place in terms of their fundraising experience, their developmental stage, or their current fundraising capacity
3. Lack of clarity: about what “One L’Arche” means, but there is a strong affirmation of the current focus to learn how to better collaborate for the benefit of all.
4. Learning: There is a general awareness that although events can be great for community building, they are not cost effective in terms of fundraising. There are some isolated exceptions.
5. Consensus: There are many signs that leaders and boards want to be effective fundraisers and are open to more collaboration.
6. It’s a lot: There are several important growth streams within L’Arche USA and life is very full at home. How do I hold it all together?
7. How? Lots of questions about how, practically, we will work together to raise the fundraising water-level for all. (Editorial Comment: We have all heard the challenging question: “How do you eat an elephant?”. The answer, “One bite at a time” is also our answer to how we will learn to work together in new and creative ways.)
8. Pressure: Communities that have strong government funding are less motivated / inclined to fundraise.
9. Request: Appreciation for the work of L’Arche USA and need to better understand the budget, investments, funding needs and funding plan of L’Arche USA.

We will live with and through these questions and learning in the time to come. For now, the work of the Suddes Group has come to an end. We have funding targets at the local, national and international levels and are committed to undertake our fundraising from a more collaborative perspective going forward. Partnership is both energizing and challenging. We want to find the ways to integrate our fundraising targets in ways that we have not done before. We are on a good path.

**Prep for the St Louis Meeting: Read This Too!**

In preparation for St. Louis please read and reflect on the following. Our 90 minutes fundraising session will focus on exploring our expectations of ourselves, of our leadership peers, and of L’Arche USA, in the effort to increase fundraising skills and success through partnership.

Here are three scenarios that imperfectly capture the range of fundraising experience and capacity across L’Arche USA:

**Community #1: The “Entrepreneurial” Stage**

This community has a lot to gain and not much to lose by starting to think about fundraising in a more deliberate way but they are not sure about the value proposition of a more organized approach to fundraising other than the fact that more money is needed or would be good. They raise a small percentage of their budget without too much stress. The Board is not comfortable with fundraising; they don’t sense it is important and certainly don’t have a sense of urgency. At a recent board meeting, in a side conversation, one of the directors said that one of the things she was happy about was that L’Arche was different than a lot of not for profits in that money took second or third place to just being together. As Community Leader, you sense that if anything is going to change, the leadership will probably need to come from you. On the other hand, you did not sign up for this so you feel caught. It is hard not to notice that other communities are raising money, some quite a bit, and are energized by fundraising. You liked reading Henri Nouwen’s little book “A Spirituality of Fundraising” and you would like to open yourself and to help the community to take some next steps, but where to begin? It feels overwhelming and it’s not clear where or how help can be found. What could be the catalyst for change? A consultant was hired a while back. One of things they told us was to get a better data base but it did not feel right to spend the money. Ultimately, that did not work out very well; in the end, nothing really changed.

**Community #2: The “Emergent” Stage**

This community has had some success and certainly has the taste for fundraising. They are raising up to $150K/year, some through direct mail, several larger gifts, and an annual event that brings in $30K, and there have been a few, beautiful, unexpected legacy gifts. Not everyone on the board (as in life!) is comfortable with fundraising, but they all see it as important. Most of them give financially to L’Arche. There is a lot more that could be done, but there is no time and you don’t have enough feet on the ground. The part time fundraising person can’t do any more than she is doing. Hiring a full time Director of Development seems like the next step, but there are questions about how to pay for the role, how to supervise the person, where would they work etc. The Community Leader is willing to learn more and prioritize fundraising, but again, where does the time come from in an already full, full schedule? And the thing is, we could use more money, and we know that L’Arche in the developing world is underfunded, and yes, L’Arche USA has financial needs, but we are doing OK. Things will work out. We were excited by a couple of fundraising workshops that we attended but the passion we felt at the time has faded. We know we could do a lot more and we have seen how asking for money builds relationship and commitment from others, but we are just not sure how to take the next step.

**Community #3: The “Capacity” Stage**

This community prides itself on ways in which fundraising has been integrated into its mission. Challenges exist, but there are no questions about the purpose and priority of fundraising. It is a significant responsibility of the community leader. Others are involved either as fundraising staff or volunteers. The board is “on board” with fundraising and the community has a strong base of committed donors. They raise well over 200K each year. This community is likely, but not necessarily, in a major metropolitan area so there is an unlimited number of potential partners close at hand. From time to time people from other L’Arche communities come to see “how we do things” and it is always cool to share with them what we have learned and how we have developed competence and confidence in this area. This community and its leader hear the call to work with L’Arche USA and to have a stronger engagement with L’Arche International, but don’t know what this could mean practically. “It is true that on a percentage basis we don’t raise very much money for solidarity. Some of our donors could give more if we could figure out how to engage them. We have the capacity to do more. We could not do what we do without dedicated staff. The challenge, perhaps, is to think bigger than we do today. Certainly, there are some people close by who have a lot of capacity and who know about L’Arche. We don’t know how we could introduce them to the larger L’Arche without putting their current financial commitment to us at risk. We also would have to rethink our message to them. But we know that partnership is the way forward. Our capacity and the area where we are in calls us to think bigger for the benefit of all. We really want to be fully collaborative and just need to live into it to learn how to do it.”

**Questions to consider**

As Community Leader, where do you see your community? What do you need to be doing (what are your priorities and actions) so that your community is developing in fundraising? What support do you need and from where will it come? What do you consider to be legitimate expectations of L’Arche USA? What do you see as your responsibility in this area? What expectations does L’Arche USA as a body have of you and your community? What do you see happening in the time to come?