

# International Disability Rights Affirmation Conference (IDRAC)

Friday November 18, 2016 - 8:00am- 3:00pm

Saturday, November 19, 2016 - 8:00am - 1:30pm

Sojourner Auditorium, Virtual Ability Island in Second Life®

[http://maps.secondlife.com/secondlife/Virtual Ability/54/170/23](http://maps.secondlife.com/secondlife/Virtual%20Ability/54/170/23)



Speaker: Melanie Saxon

Title: "The L'Arche Story"

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[08:00 AM] LV (lorivonne.lustre): Hello everyone.

Today's presentation is being transcribed so those without audio or who require text only can participate in real time.

A little explanation about this service.

Voice-to-text transcriptionists provide a translation of the key ideas discussed, NOT a word for word transcription.

Voice-to-text services provide an in-the-moment snapshot of ideas and concepts, so that those who are unable to hear or to understand the audio program are able to participate in real-time.

You will see the transcription in Nearby Chat.  
Transcription is provided by Virtual Ability, Inc.

The transcriptionist is:  
LoriVonne Lustre

The following initials in the transcription record will identify the speakers:  
MS = Melanie Saxon

[08:00 AM] Gentle Heron: IDRAC is an opportunity for our community of persons with disabilities to celebrate the rights we have and those we continue strive for. The theme of our 2016 IDRAC conference is "We're part of the community." Good morning everyone and welcome to the second day of Virtual Ability community's 2016 International Disability Rights Affirmation Conference, also known as IDRAC. In that other world I am Alice Krueger. I'm proud to serve Virtual Ability, Inc., the nonprofit which supports the Virtual Ability community in virtual worlds. You will meet many Virtual Ability (VAI) community members today. Some are presenters, others are greeters at the entrance to the auditorium. Still others have the honor of introducing our esteemed presenters for every session.

IDRAC is an opportunity for our community of persons with disabilities to celebrate the rights we have and those we continue strive for. The theme of our 2016 IDRAC conference is "We're part of the community." The presentations yesterday and today interpret that theme widely. Some presenters explain the needs of persons with disabilities to be part of a community, and the value to the community of including them. Other presenters explain how persons with disabilities use technology, including social media and virtual worlds, to participate in community activities. From our varied presenters our audience will gain a better understanding of the importance and significance of recognizing and supporting persons with disabilities as well as other minority groups. Those of us with disabilities make up the largest minority group of all!

Before we begin, a few housekeeping reminders:

1. If you have trouble hearing voice or seeing the slides, please IM the greeters who are standing at the back of the auditorium at the top the aisles. They are there to assist you.
2. To be as fully accessible as possible, Virtual Ability does all presentations in voice+text. Some presenters will use a text teleprompter when they speak. Others will rely on our transcribers to type what they say. To allow our Deaf audience members to follow the flow of the presentation, we ask that everyone please hold your comments and questions until the end of the presentation. You may want to open a notecard and type your thoughts there to save for the Q&A portion of the presentation.
3. Please click the "Welcome to Virtual Ability Island" poster up front here to get information about our schedule and exhibits for today and tomorrow. Please pick up a commemorative T shirt outside the auditorium. Since our first presentation includes videos, Mook has provided text transcripts. Those are in the little box by the podium. Now please welcome Orange, who will introduce our first presenter.

[08:05 AM] Orange Planer: Good morning, good day, good evening, everyone! Welcome to Day 2 of the International Disability Rights Affirmation Conference!

My name in Second Life is Orange Planer. I've been in this joint since August 2007 and have been providing support to Virtual Ability nearly that long (or since the day I offered Gentle a couple thousand free outfits for the store here).

In the outside world, my identity is kept secret by my wife, Callie Blackburn, or I'd never stop helping people with computers, which is both my hobby and my profession.

This morning we are here to celebrate and learn about L'Arche, an organization dedicated to the mission of:

Make known the gifts of people who have intellectual disabilities, revealed through mutually transforming relationships;

Foster an environment in community that responds to the changing needs of their members while being faithful to the core values of their founding story; and

Engage in our diverse cultures, working together toward a more humane society.

L'Arche's identity is equally impressive: they are people, with and without intellectual disabilities, sharing life in communities belonging to an International Federation.

Mutual relationships and trust in God are at the heart of their journey together. They celebrate the unique value of every person and recognize our need of one another.

L'Arche was originally started in France. Its Founder, Jean Vanier, in 1964 invited two men who were living in asylums to come live with him in an effort to

do something for them. From those humble beginnings, the core ideas of L'Arche were created and the organization formed.

L'Arche communities exist worldwide. In the United States they provide homes and workplaces where people with and without intellectual disabilities live and work together as peers, create inclusive communities of faith and friendship, and transform society through relationships that cross social boundaries.

What an amazing organization!

Folks, L'Arche deserves a round of support so break out the applause gestures, and let's give such a great organization the cheers it deserves!

This morning we are graced with having Melanie Saxon, Community Leader / Executive Director of L'Arche Jacksonville, Florida, USA.

<http://www.larchejacksonville.org>

Ms. Saxon's previous roles include Executive Director of the North Central Florida Chapter of the American Red Cross, Development Director of University of Florida Performing Arts, Executive Director of Voices for Kids of Southwest Florida and Executive Director of the North Central Florida AIDS Network.

In addition, Ms. Saxon has raised funds for United Way, the Alzheimer's Association and the Juvenile Diabetes Foundation.

She served as Executive Producer of the Florida Film Festival and has coordinated numerous arts in education programs in K-12 schools, along with teaching third grade.

Her additional volunteer experience includes serving as a Rotarian, a Stephen Minister, and a Big Sister.

So, once again, please put your hands together for L'Arche and Melanie Saxon!

[08:09 AM] LV (lorivonne.lustre): MS = Melanie Saxon

[08:10 AM] LV (lorivonne.lustre): MS: thank you

Good morning. I am an aunt of a nephew with Down's syndrome, so I have 30 years experience living with a person with a disability, however I have only been with l'Arche one year

[08:11 AM] Gentle Heron: MS: l'Arche was founded by Jean Vanier

[08:11 AM] LV (lorivonne.lustre): MS: Jean Vanier was born on September 10th 1928, in Geneva, Switzerland, where his father, General Georges Vanier was a diplomat. He was educated for the most part in England. At the beginning of the Second World War, the whole family including Jean, his sister and three brothers moved back to Canada.

After two years, Jean, aged only 13, decided to enter the Royal Naval College in England. Aged just 16, while helping his mother in her work with the Red Cross, he witnessed the return of former concentration camp victims to Paris. In 1945, Jean began his career as an officer in the Royal Navy. But despite a promising career in the Navy, Jean found himself spending more and more time in prayer, reflecting on God's call. Eventually, In 1950, he resigned from the Navy in order to study philosophy and theology at the Institut Catholique university in Paris.

Jean returned to Canada to teach at the University of Toronto. While visiting his spiritual mentor, Père Thomas Philippe, who was a priest in an institution in Trosly-Breuil in France, he was deeply moved by his first encounter with men with intellectual disabilities.

In 1964, Jean took the decision to move to Trosly and, buying a small house, invited three people with an intellectual disability to join him. One of the men, Dany, left quickly, but Raphael Simi and Philippe Seux decided to stay. Jean named their house L'Arche, a reference to Noah's Ark – a symbol both of security and of renewal.

Jean responded to the "cry" of those living in institutions. He said, for them it did not matter that he was successful and educated, but they only wanted to know, "Am I loved? Do I matter? Will you be my friend? Will you come back?"

Jean thought he was doing the Christian thing, the right thing for these people but what he discovered is that our relationships with the intellectually disabled transform us.

He also discovered that good intentions were not enough, that knowledge and experience was needed so he began to bring people into the community who could help. Such as mental health professionals, etc.

And, though he himself was a Catholic, he knew from the beginning that L'Arche would be an ecumenical organization where all faiths were welcomed.

The community grew.

Very involved in the rapid growth of L'Arche at Trosly, Jean also began giving lectures and holding retreats around the world.

Jean Vanier has received numerous awards including the French Légion d'Honneur, the Companion of the Order of Canada, the Rabbi Gunther Plaut Humanitarian Award in 2001 and the Prize of the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, as well as Blessed are the peace makers in 2006, the Pacem in Terris award in 2013 and the Templeton Prize in 2015.

Jean Vanier continues to give lectures and conduct retreats, mainly in his home community in Trosly. His books have been translated into 29 languages.

[08:15 AM] Gentle Heron: If you have media enabled in Preferences, you can click the left screen to see the video. If you prefer to watch in your browser outside SL, please click this link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Eldz3uNsmv4>

It will take about 7.5 minutes. If you need text transcripts, please click the small box by the podium to get notecards.

Please type "back" in Nearby Chat when you finish watching.

[08:20 AM] LV (lorivonne.lustre): MS: Type BACK in nearby chat when you are finished watching the video

[08:22 AM] ÎsabeĽ (alysabelle): I read it all, very difficult at some points, very emotional very beautiful

[08:22 AM] Gentle Heron: Yes Isabel

[08:23 AM] Gentle Heron: Both beautiful and emotional

[08:23 AM] ÎsabeĽ (alysabelle): I never been so moved in the last 2 days

[08:23 AM] Orange Planer: back

[08:23 AM] Sister (sister.abeyante): back

[08:23 AM] Jos (jos.ling): back

[08:23 AM] Ruby Vandyke: back

[08:23 AM] Fidget (fidgetswidgets): back from the youtube video link

[08:23 AM] iSkye Silverweb: back

[08:23 AM] Mook (mook.wheeler): back

[08:23 AM] Tredi Felisimo: back

[08:23 AM] Gentle Heron: back

[08:24 AM] Gloriejoy (joycie.string): fantastic video---very touching!

[08:24 AM] Vendar Beika: back

[08:24 AM] Eeyore Monday: back

[08:24 AM] Eme Capalini: back

[08:25 AM] Gloriejoy (joycie.string): very very much like what I do in RL!

[08:28 AM] LV (lorivonne.lustre): MS: As the community grew, Jean Vanier was invited to come to countries and start L'Arche communities. Likewise he sent people to start communities.

A worldwide movement was sparked and L'Arche became an international federation of 145 member communities, established as independent entities in 35 countries on six continents. The communities include more than 5,000 people with and without an intellectual disability, who share their lives in homes, workshops and day programs.

35 Countries:

Australia, Japan, Syria, India, all over Europe, Canada, Kenya, Ukraine, Egypt, and many others, including the US

What is in common with all these communities?

1. Communities of faith—Each community member is encouraged to discover and deepen his or her spiritual life and live it according to his or her particular faith and tradition. Those

who have no religious affiliation are also welcomed and respected in their freedom of conscience.

2. Called to unity— Unity is founded on the covenant of love to which God calls all the community members. This implies welcome and respect for differences.

3. Called to growth— L'Arche communities are places of hope. Each person, according to his or her own vocation, is encouraged to grow in love, self giving and wholeness, as well as in independence, competence and the ability to make choices.

4. Integrated in society— L'Arche communities are open and welcoming to the world around them. They form an integral part of life in their localities and seek to foster relationships with neighbors and friends.

L'Arche believes:

1. Whatever their gifts or their limitations, people are all bound together in a common humanity. Everyone is of unique and sacred value, and everyone has the same dignity and the same rights.

2. If human beings are to develop their abilities and talents to the full, realizing all their potential as individuals, they need an environment that fosters personal growth. They need to form relationships with others within families and communities.

They need to live in an atmosphere of trust, security and mutual affection. They need to be valued, accepted and supported in real and warm relationships.

3. People who have intellectual disabilities often possess qualities of welcome, wonderment, spontaneity, and directness. They are able to touch hearts and to call others to unity through their simplicity and vulnerability.

In this way they are a living reminder to the wider world of the essential values of the heart without which knowledge, power and action lose their meaning and purpose.

4. Weakness and vulnerability in a person, far from being an obstacle to union with God, can foster it. It is often through weakness, recognized and accepted, that the liberating love of God is revealed.

5. In order to develop the inner freedom to which all people are called, and to grow in union with God, each person needs to have the opportunity of being rooted and nourished in a religious tradition.

L'Arche is deeply concerned by the distress of people who suffer injustice and rejection because they have a disability.

This concern should impel the communities of L'Arche to do all they can to defend the rights of people who have intellectual disabilities, to support the creation of places of welcome for them and to call our society to become more just and respectful towards them.

The communities of L'Arche want to be in solidarity with the poor of the world, and with all those who take part in the struggle for justice.

[08:33 AM] Gentle Heron: If you have media enabled in Preferences, you can click the central screen to see the video. If you prefer to watch in your browser outside SL, please click this link:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M\\_eeKey2wdc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M_eeKey2wdc)

It will take about 5 minutes. Please type "back" in Nearby Chat when you finish watching.

[08:33 AM] LV (lorivonne.lustre): There are transcripts for the videos available in the box up front

[08:38 AM] Fidget (fidgetswidgets): back from the youtube url

[08:38 AM] Ruby Vandyke: back

[08:38 AM] Sister (sister.abeyante): back

[08:38 AM] Gentle Heron: back, with Kleenex

[08:38 AM] Eeyore Monday: back

[08:38 AM] Jos (jos.ling): back

[08:38 AM] Dhira Giha: finished

[08:38 AM] LV (lorivonne.lustre): (((hugs everyone)))

[08:38 AM] Îsaḃeḃ (alysabelle): I'll never forget this

[08:38 AM] Gloriejoy (joycie.string): Wow. Totally touching

[08:38 AM] Gentle Heron: There are a whole series of these movies from all over the world. Check them out later!

[08:39 AM] Mook (mook.wheeler): back

[08:39 AM] Svea Morane: back

[08:39 AM] Orange Planer: back

[08:40 AM] Îsaḃeḃ (alysabelle): We all have troubles it reminds you that some have had it worse than you

[08:40 AM] Eme Capalini: back

[08:40 AM] Îsaḃeḃ (alysabelle): And you see beauty

[08:42 AM] Sister (sister.abeyante): I'm good

[08:42 AM] Mook (mook.wheeler): done with the video

[08:42 AM] DeafLegacy: I'm done.

[08:43 AM] iSkye Silverweb: back, done

[08:43 AM] LV (lorivonne.lustre): MS: Here in the US people who live at l'arche are called Core people

Every community is different

It depends on the interests and abilities of the core members and those who support them

L'Arche USA includes 19 communities:

Atlanta

Chicago

Cleveland

Clinton, The Arch (Iowa)

Erie (PA)

Greater Washington, D.C.

Jacksonville

Heartland (Overland Park, KS)

Irenicon (MA)

Long Island \*(Anticipated in 2016!)

Metro Richmond \*(Anticipated in 2017!)

Mobile

Noah Sealth (Seattle, WA)

Portland  
St. Louis  
Spokane  
Syracuse (NY)  
Tahoma Hope (Tacoma, WA)  
Wavecrest (Orange, CA)

Each community is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation, and is governed by its own board of directors and managed by caring and professional staff. L'Arche communities are united through their membership in the International Federation of L'Arche.

Each community pays dues to L'Arche USA and receives services from L'Arche USA.

l'arche USA is a member of the global federation

International Federation of l'Arche

[08:45 AM] Gentle Heron: If you have media enabled in Preferences, you can click the right screen to see the video. If you prefer to watch in your browser outside SL, please click this link:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2lec4\\_6ty68](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2lec4_6ty68)

It will take about 8 minutes. Please type "back" in Nearby Chat when you finish watching.

[08:53 AM] Ruby Vandyke: back  
[08:54 AM] Gloriejoy (joycie.string): oh my gosh how awesome  
[08:54 AM] Jos (jos.ling): back  
[08:54 AM] Sister (sister.abeyante): back  
[08:54 AM] Gentle Heron: back  
[08:54 AM] Dhira Giha: finished  
[08:54 AM] Svea Morane: back  
[08:54 AM] Fidget (fidgetswidgets): back from YouTube url  
[08:54 AM] iSkye Silverweb: done  
[08:54 AM] Zip Zlatkis: done  
[08:54 AM] Tredi Felisimo: back  
[08:54 AM] Matt Lardieri (msl005): back  
[08:54 AM] Îsabelle (alysabelle): back.....  
[08:54 AM] Mook (mook.wheeler): back  
[08:55 AM] Eeyore Monday: done  
[08:55 AM] Eme Capalini: back  
[08:55 AM] Orange Planer: back  
[08:56 AM] Gloriejoy (joycie.string): need more kleenex!

[08:56 AM] LV (lorivonne.lustre): MS: I love that video

it gives a good feeling about the atmosphere we have at L'arche Jacksonville

3 of the core members have passed away since the video was made

Currently, we have 4 houses.

Each house operates just like a family home. Members of the house meet to plan meals and activities, share chores, and go to church together.

We have 19 Core Members.



Core members come to us often at the request of their family members, as their parents age  
Some come from institutions at the behest of families  
"Can you welcome my son or daughter to live at l'arche?"  
We have 21 full time Assistants, 14 who live in.  
We have 4 part time Assistants  
There is always someone awake on the overnight  
Some of our Assistants have been with us for 15-20 years. Others are recent college grads who wanted to do a year or two of service, much as people who enter the Peace Corps.  
We ask for a 1 year commitment.  
While their wages are low, we do provide health insurance, paid vacation and holidays and the opportunities to go to trainings and retreats.  
We provide extensive training with the assistants  
We have a day program called the Rainbow Workshop where most of our Core Members work at art each day. We have rooms for clay and ceramics, painting, mosaics and jewelry.  
We set up at art shows and community events.  
We have 3 CM who hold competitive employment – McDonalds, Pizza Hut and Publix  
We have 3 CM who attend other Day Programs in the Community.  
One core member studied for a year to be able to drive a forklift at his day program. We are very proud of him.  
We have an administrative staff of 7.  
We also have a part time Registered Nurse and a part time driver for our vehicles.  
We have a Board of Directors and many volunteers.  
Our Core Members are mostly aged 45 to 65.  
Some have early Alzheimer's or other dementias.  
Two are blind  
Two use wheelchairs  
Their intellectual disabilities are varied, some have Down's syndrome  
As a Community, we gather frequently for celebrations and to share meals.  
We celebrate the anniversaries of when core members came to live with us  
We hold community suppers  
Our core members work with the board and decision making process  
Indeed, they all had a big say in hiring me  
We empower them to take a big part in decision-making  
We ask each core member: what is it that you would most like to do? And then we help each to meet their dreams  
There is a strong emphasis on personal choice  
I am open for your questions now. Thank you for listening.

[09:06 AM] Gloriejoy (joycie.string): COMMENT: I do this on private duty basis and provide talk therapy and a calming home atmosphere which makes it comfortable for my clients to open up which in turn creates a sense of calmness and self-ease. We have a nature area in back with a water garden and all have enjoyed our critters who live there. Our inside nature area, art and music activities have made them happy as well. Happiness causes a sense of being at ease and causes them to share. Some activities are bible-based. Very rewarding work. They also work.

[09:06 AM] Gentle Heron: Thank you Melanie. What a wonderful person you are, and what an amazing organization you represent.

We already had a question posted.

[08:56] Dhira Giha: QUESTION: How do you handle members who are angry, violent, destructive, abusive?

[09:07 AM] LV (lorivonne.lustre): MS: It happens. We have had several core members who came to our community and were not happy to be there.

Remember, when a family asks us to have their loved one join our community it is a long process. Sometimes it happens that a match is not successful.

Sometimes even after someone joins us, it can be a bit rocky. We do our best to find a way to make this work and help the core member adapt.

This seems to be a successful approach.

We have mental health professionals who visit and will monitor medications that someone may be taking

We teach our assistants to handle outburst in the most gentle way.

I have only seen 1 incident like this in my time there.

It is particularly stressful around the holiday.

[09:10 AM] Gentle Heron: [09:06] Sister Abeyante: QUESTION: Has the L'Arche model been used inclusive of people with other types of disabilities? In other words, not just people with intellectual disabilities, but all types.

[09:11 AM] LV (lorivonne.lustre): MS: I really don't know.

I do know that in the very early days of l'arche, Vanier's mentor wanted the community to be open to everyone. Vanier thought that the needs of those with intellectual disabilities were so great, that he focused there.

Certainly we find that we get more requests than we can fill.

We do have 1 core member who has been with us for many years. She did not have an intellectual disability for the first half of her life, then had a brain injury.

[09:14 AM] Gentle Heron: [09:10] Dhira Giha: QUESTION: Do you encourage sexual expression?

[09:14 AM] LV (lorivonne.lustre): MS: Good question

I asked the assistants this when I first came to the organization. What I was told was that in our community as our core members are older their sex drive has diminished.

However, when many came to us they were much younger. We have not denied sexuality and sexual expression.

We do want to ensure that everyone is safe and that sexual expression is consensual.

I will find out more and share with Gentle.

Every core member has their own bedroom and can lock the door.

There are strict rules about when assistants can enter a room.

[09:17 AM] Gentle Heron: Here is a thought from Jean Vanier: "Integration of Sexuality"

It is not easy for human beings to live their sexuality. In marriage, more than anywhere else, the integration of sexuality is achieved with the greatest harmony. In marriage, the body, spirit and heart, passion,

tenderness and kindness, the ecstasy of the present moment, and security and faithfulness for the future, intimacy, communion and desire to give life all come together.

Jean Vanier, Our Journey Home, p.195

[09:18 AM] Gentle Heron: Thank you Melanie.

[09:18 AM] LV (lorivonne.lustre): MS: Thank you for that Gentle

[09:18 AM] LV (lorivonne.lustre): GH: I wish we could stay and talk

[09:19 AM] LV (lorivonne.lustre): MS: thank you all for the support in helping me to prepare for this talk, and I am in awe of all you do at Virtual Ability

[09:19 AM] iSkye Silverweb: Thank you so much Melanie!

[09:19 AM] Gentle Heron: YAY Melanie. You did an amazing job for your first days in SL

[09:19 AM] LV (lorivonne.lustre): GH: You are welcome to stay and hear the next presentations as well.

[09:19 AM] Sister (sister.abeyante) wonders if some of the CM at your place might want to come into SL...

[09:20 AM] Dhira Giha: Thank you. Very progressive environment.

[09:20 AM] Gentle Heron: IM me with questions for Melanie and I will email them to her.

[09:19 AM] LV (lorivonne.lustre): <transcription ends>