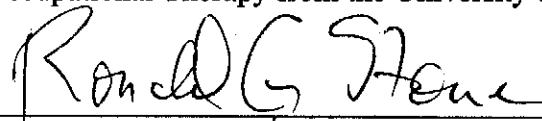


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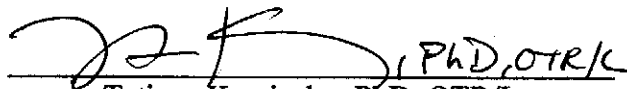
A Model on How to Improve Communication in Adults with Developmental Disabilities

May, 2013

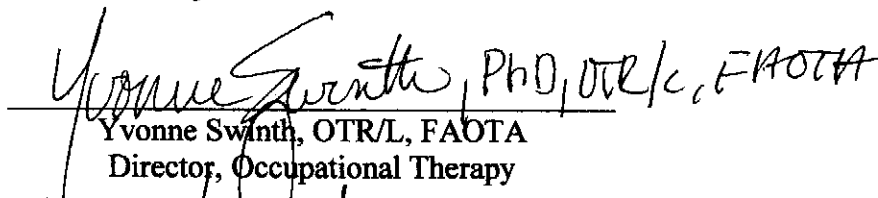
This project, submitted by Meghan Blake, has been approved and accepted  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Occupational Therapy from the University of Puget Sound.



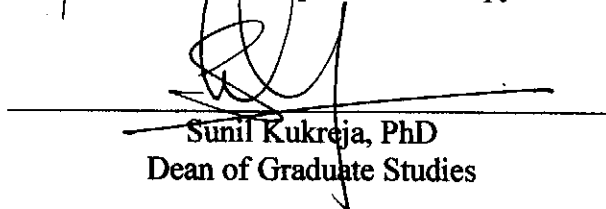
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**Abstract**

Twenty-eight percent of adults with developmental disabilities living in the United States are employed (United States Census, 2005). Lack of communication skills among adults with developmental disabilities can have a major impact on their ability to find and maintain employment. Those who are employed often have a hard time socializing with other co-workers due to a lack of social skills (Mueller et al., 2003). In an effort to increase social communication skills among their employees with developmental disabilities, L'Arche Tahoma Hope Home, with the help of an occupational therapy graduate student from the University of Puget Sound, provided an opportunity for four of their employees to individually teach local residents about their jobs at the L'Arche Tahoma Farm and Gardens. By having their employees teach a familiar task, the employees were able to practice communicating with others while in the comfort of a safe environment with the support of their employers and co-workers.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this project event was to improve social communication skills among core members with intellectual and developmental disabilities living at L'Arche Tahoma Hope, by teaching a familiar task, such as farming skills, gardening, paper making, and chicken rearing, to Tacoma residents during a community event.

### **Background Information/ Literature Review**

#### **A History of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities**

In the early 1900s, children and adults with disabilities living in the United States were not accorded the same rights as typical citizens (United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (U.S. EEOC), 2012). It wasn't until the implementation of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 that people with disabilities were finally given the rights that they were entitled to. Specifically, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act required that equal employment opportunities be provided for adults with disabilities (U.S. EEOC, 2012). According to the 2005 United States Census, there are 10,526,000 adults aged 21 to 64 with mental disabilities. Among those adults, 984,000 are adults with mental retardation or developmental disabilities. Of the 984,000 adults with mental retardation or developmental disabilities, 269,000 or 28.4% are employed. The median monthly earnings of an adult aged 21-64 with mental disabilities or developmental disabilities are approximately \$600 (United States Census, 2005).

Currently, due to the limited income of adults with disabilities working in the United States, living with family members or in residential group homes is very common

(Reinke, 2009). Due to financial or emotional constraints, family or friends may not be able to take care of an adult with disabilities. When family members or friends are not in a position to house these adults with disabilities, alternate means are necessary (Reinke, 2009). Group housing is a common option for adults who are not able to live with family members but also want to be partially independent (Reinke, 2009). The concept of grouping people with disabilities together in living environments was not always an option for adults with disabilities. In recent years, people with developmental disabilities have transitioned from living in institutions to living in community-based housing or with family members.

According to Reinke (2009), the national number of people with developmental disabilities living in institutions, or large, state-run housing facilities, has decreased from 111,147 in 1988 to 56,525 in 2007. On the other hand, Reinke (2009) also states that there has been a significant increase in the national number of people with disabilities receiving community-based services from 39,838 in 1990 to 501,489 in 2007.

Community-based services help keep adults with disabilities out of institutions (Reinke, 2009) and improve personal growth and independence. With the decrease of adults with disabilities living in institutions there was an increased need for residential group homes. According to Prouty, Smith, and Lakin (2006), the national number of residential group homes increased from 11,006 in 1977 to 152,322 in 2005.

Transitioning adults with disabilities from institutions to group homes brought many benefits, according to Emerson et al. (2000); who also stated that residential group homes in the United Kingdom offer the proper support required by adults with disabilities as well as provide the adults with an opportunity to support peers living with them. They

also found residential group homes to be significantly more cost effective than traditional institutionalization. One main benefit of deinstitutionalization of adults with disabilities is the increased quality of life and positive outcomes associated with living in group homes. Some of these outcomes include increased independence in choosing daily activities, participation in activities in the community, support from staff, increased socialization among peers and vocational opportunities (Emerson et al., 2000).

### **Activity Programs**

While many residential group homes have activity programs in place, not all are sufficient to meet all the needs of resident adults with disabilities. Employees, such as recreation and activity coordinators, are hired to plan outings and events for the residents. However, planning events that interest each resident is a difficult task. Even after an array of activities is planned, there are still adults who do not wish to participate. According to Patrick Touhey of L'Arche Tahoma Hope Home, there can always be improvement in this area at L'Arche Tahoma. Time and effort goes into planning activities, but there is always more that can be done to help influence the core members to be active and participate in activities outside of the residential group home (Patrick Touhey, Personal Communication, February 17<sup>th</sup>, 2012).

### **Employment and Developmental Disabilities**

While equal employment opportunities are available for adults with disabilities, according to Mueller, et al. (2003), there are still many barriers to productive employment. For instance, adults with Asperger Syndrome or autism spectrum disorders may have difficulty understanding normal social cues or interpreting facial expressions and expressing their own emotions. They often become rigid and inflexible when

uncomfortable, and have difficulty adapting to new environments and people. As a result of these performance deficits, adults with Asperger Syndrome and autism spectrum disabilities often have a hard time finding and maintaining gainful employment. The adults who are able to find and maintain jobs often have a hard time socializing with other co-workers due to a lack of social skills (Muller et al. 2003).

### **Deficits in Communication Skills**

According to Gear, Bobzien, Judge and Raver (2011), poor verbal skills including lack of or inappropriate eye contact, social withdrawal, flat affect or lack of appropriate facial expression and limited language are all barriers to productivity in a working environment. Interventions such as job coaching and workplace support methods have been used to help adults with disabilities learn or improve upon basic work-related behaviors. While some work places are able to provide opportunities for job coaching and support methods, many are not. Lack of funding for such services has proven to be a major obstacle. Many work places may also not be adequately set up for job coaching or support methods (Gear et al. 2011).

### **Utilizing Occupational Therapy**

“Occupational therapy practitioners recognize that health is supported and maintained when clients are able to engage in occupations and activities that allow desired or needed participation in home, school, workplace and community life” (AOTA, 2008, p. 629). One role of an occupational therapist (OT) is to aid in developing skills that facilitate healthy social participation, as well as helping an individual gain independence by teaching them skills and strategies.

According to the Occupational Therapy Practice Framework (OTPF), there are eight areas of occupation; activities of daily living (ADL), instrumental activities of daily living (IADL), rest and sleep, education, work, play, leisure and social participation. Work includes activities needed for “remunerative employment or volunteer activities” (AOTA, 2008, p. 632). More specifically, the definition of work includes job performance, which is comprised of skills and patterns related to completing a job. Some of these skills and patterns include social communication skills and appropriate work-related behaviors, ability to fulfill necessary tasks to complete a job, interaction with co-workers and customers, and the ability to maintain gainful employment (AOTA, 2008).

### **Finding a Need**

Lack of socialization, sedentary lifestyles, poor emotional support and decreased health are common issues among people with developmental disabilities (Havercamp, Scandlin, & Roth 2004). L'Arche, a community-housing program, has worked hard to eliminate these issues, evident by their mission statement: “The aim of L'Arche is to create communities, which welcome people with a mental handicap. By this means, L'Arche seeks to respond to the distress of those who are often rejected, and to give them a valid place in society” (L'Arche Tahoma Hope, 2012).

L'Arche is an internationally run organization, which originated in Trosly-Breuil, France. The organization was founded in 1964 by Jean Vanier, who lived with two individuals with intellectual disabilities in a house, which he named “L'Arche”, French for “The Ark”. These two individuals with disabilities were affectionately called ‘core members’ as they were seen as the heart or “the core” of the household. Shortly after the

development of the first L'Arche house, other communities began to see the benefit of typically developed people living together with people with disabilities. Others who had visited L'Arche brought the idea back to their communities and by 1970 other L'Arche homes had been built in France (La Merci), Canada (Daybreak) and India (Bangalore) (L'Arche Tahoma Hope, 2012). Within five years, L'Arche had grown to 35 houses in locations from Africa to Haiti. Today, nearly 50 years since the first L'Arche house, there are 137 L'Arche communities in over 30 countries (L'Arche Tahoma Hope, 2012).

### **L'Arche Tahoma Hope Home**

Located in South Tacoma, Washington is a small farm and garden community known as the L'Arche Tahoma Hope Home. One of the opportunities L'Arche Tahoma Hope provides for their residents, or 'core members', is working on their land. L'Arche Tahoma Hope is unique in that it is the only L'Arche community in the United States that features a farm and gardens program. The mission statement of L'Arche Tahoma Hope is as follows:

“To make known the gifts of people with developmental disabilities, revealed through mutually transforming relationships, to foster an environment in community that responds to the changing needs of our members, while being faithful to the core values of our founding story, and to engage in our diverse cultures, working together toward a more human society” (L'Arche Tahoma Hope, 2012).

The core members range in age from young adult to late adulthood and have a plethora of developmental disabilities including autism, down syndrome and various



developmental delays. Each core member has a unique set of skills and each one shares his or her own gifts with the farm and gardens program and anyone who visits the farm. Many of the core members are verbal while a few are nonverbal or use gestures to communicate.

### **Lack of Social Skills Among the Core Members**

Patrick Toohey, Farm Coordinator at L'Arche Tahoma Hope Farm and Gardens, has been working at the farm for the past 15 years. According to Touhey, lack of social communication skills limits the core members' work performance at the farm (Patrick Touhey, Personal Communication, February 17<sup>th</sup>, 2012). The core members are regularly in environments that require social communication with others, including working at the farmers' markets and interacting with farm volunteers that come for the day. Creating a workshop at L'Arche Tahoma in which core members will be encouraged to teach the others skills that they are comfortable with will provide an opportunity to practice social communication skill development.

Currently, the core members working at the L'Arche Tahoma Hope Farm and Gardens are not participating socially as much as they could be. Many of the core members work quietly on their own without interacting with members of staff or volunteers at the farm (Patrick Touhey, Personal Communication, February 17<sup>th</sup>, 2012). Patrick Touhey also explained that the core members are often withdrawn or shy while working at the farmers' markets.

While L'Arche Tahoma has programs in place that encourage core members to be active in their daily lives, none exist that focus specifically on increasing social skills (Patrick Touhey, personal communication, February 17, 2012). Research has shown that

inclusion of people with disabilities in environments with people without disabilities can create positive social relationships (Odom & Diamond, 1998). It is Patrick Touhey's hope that the core members develop skills that will ultimately help them in both their personal and professional lives by including them in an environment where they are encouraged to interact with the public (Patrick Touhey, personal communication, February 17, 2012).

### **Others on the Farm**

The Farm and Gardens receives two interns each year who volunteer one year of their lives to work full-time on the farm. These volunteers come from all over the country and many have little to no experience working with people with disabilities. The core members occasionally have difficulty with this yearly transition as they say goodbye to one set of interns and hello to another. The farm interns regularly develop a bond with the core members who rely greatly on them for assistance, motivation and friendship. The farm interns will also be directly involved making them a direct population of the project.

L'Arche Tahoma Hope Farm and Gardens relies greatly on the generosity of volunteers who visit the farm and volunteer their time to do various tasks to keep the farm running. Volunteer groups range from student field trips, religious retreats and company team building trips. The core members are very used to groups volunteering at the farm, but many core members still have difficulty communicating with them.

### **Procedure**

Before meeting with any core members, I met with the L'Arche Tahoma staff to review the components of the project. At that time we discussed the role of the staff during the training sessions and community event and paired them with a core member. With the staff input, core members who were interested in participating were selected.

Before the sessions, core members worked on identifying one or two individual limitations that they think hinder their ability to participate socially with others by completing a short survey. Assistance from the staff was given to any core member who needed help in identifying limitations. In order to support the staff, we discussed ways they could work with the core members to address each barrier to social communication including encouraging the core member to practice certain skills they were working on throughout their workday. Educating the staff on how to work on improving social communication skills with the core members eliminated the need for me to be present during each training session. Each core member has at least one farm job that he or she is particularly good at completing. Between the core member, Patrick Touhey, the farm staff and myself, we selected the best task for each core member to teach.

The sessions were held at the L'Arche Tahoma Hope Farm and Gardens and each session ranged from 15-45 minutes depending on the core members' schedules and needs. The focus of the training sessions included strategies, such as role-playing, which helped encourage the core member to work on different skills. Skills that were worked on included eye contact, voice projection, speaking in full sentences, annunciating words, using communication cards and collaborating with others. The training sessions were mainly private, one-on-one sessions, when schedules allowed. No group sessions were necessary, as the core members' schedules allowed for individual sessions.

Laminated verbal cue cards were offered to one core member who identified as having difficulty producing sound when talking. On the cue cards were phrases describing the step he was doing. Some cards included a small picture as a visual aid. Staff worked with core members to hold the cards up at appropriate times during their

teaching session to convey what step he was at. The verbal cue cards will be left at L'Arche Tahoma for future training sessions and community teaching events.

During the first training session, I worked with the core members and staff in a variety of settings including the green houses, craft room and chicken coop. As each core member's needs are different, the number of training sessions required varied. Some core members benefited from only one training session while others required three or four training sessions. A maximum of four training sessions per core member were offered, but no more than three were needed.

A pilot community event was held after the core members finished their training sessions. Six occupational therapy students from the University of Puget Sound attended a small event at L'Arche Tahoma Farm and Gardens to allow the core members to practice the teaching skills they had learned. The core members were also given an opportunity, during a second pilot, to demonstrate their workshops with a group of about 20 University of Montana students. This gave me an opportunity to see if any core members needed more training while also giving them a chance to experience what it is like teaching a small crowd before the main community event.

Based on the results from the pilot event the main community event will be held at the L'Arche Tahoma Farm and Gardens and will be open to the public of Tacoma. Members of the public who are interested in participating in the free-of-charge community event will sign up prior to the event through local churches, community centers and L'Arche Tahoma. During the event, core members will be instructing the public on how to perform a specific task they have learned while working at the Farm and Gardens, with the help of a staff member. These tasks will be pre-assigned to the core

member and will include, but are not limited to, how to plant and raise seeds, how to prepare the garden for the season, how to harvest crops, what garden tools/equipment to use for certain tasks, how to raise chickens, how to build a beehive to keep bees, how to make homemade paper and how to use the homemade paper to make journals, greeting cards and Christmas ornaments.

The community event will be hosted at the L'Arche Tahoma Farm and Gardens and will provide the core members an opportunity to improve social communication skills while engaging with the Tacoma public. It is my hope that the event will naturally increase the public's awareness of the L'Arche Tahoma community and will encourage future interactions with people with disabilities.

Once the community event is over, a scrapbook will be compiled of pictures taken during the training sessions, pilot event and main community event. This scrapbook, along with the instruction manual, will be left with L'Arche Tahoma Farm and Gardens to be used as a reference for future community teaching events. Having the scrapbook will allow L'Arche Tahoma staff to look back on past events and understand how they were set up. The pictures in the book will also act to remind core members of what they learned during the training sessions and main community event. Also, the scrapbook can be used to motivate the core members to participate in future events at L'Arche Tahoma.

The goal of the community event, which will be held on April 20<sup>th</sup>, 2013, will be that the core member to do the majority of the teaching with guided assistance from the staff member. The staff member will be responsible for determining how much assistance is needed based on the individual core member's needs. Some core members will need more assistance than others. Overall, by participating in the training session and

workshop, the core members will improve social communication skills in both their personal and professional lives.

### **Product**

A scrapbook, made online and printed in book format, was made and left at L'Arche Tahoma Hope Home Farm and Gardens. The scrapbook was broken up into four sections for each of the sessions taught by the core members and included pictures, a list of necessary materials and text boxes that explained how to set up the stations and assist the core members during the session. Pictures of the core members during the pilot events were also featured. A DVD will be given to L'Arche Tahoma featuring recordings of each of the four sessions. This book and DVD will be used as a resource for future teaching workshops held at L'Arche Tahoma.

### **Project Goals and Objectives**

*Goal # 1:* Prior to the workshop at L'Arche Tahoma Farm and Gardens, core members will be able to identify, with the help of staff, individual challenges that they encounter when communicating with others.

*Objective 1:* After participating in a training session prior to the workshop at L'Arche Tahoma Farm and Gardens, core members will be able to identify one behavior that may inhibit appropriate communication skills during work by filling out a personal survey of their performance with or without the help of staff.

*Objective 2:* After participating in a training session prior to the workshop at L'Arche Tahoma Farm and Gardens, core members will be able to list one strategy that they will use to promote appropriate social communication skills while at work with or without the help of staff.

*Outcome:* This goal and following objectives were met as identified through personal communication with the L'Arche Tahoma staff.

*Goal # 2:* Prior to the workshop at L'Arche Tahoma Farm and Gardens, the staff at L'Arche Tahoma will be able to identify challenges that core members encounter when communicating with others.

*Objective 1:* After participating in a training session prior to the workshop at L'Arche Tahoma Farm and Gardens, staff members will be able to identify one behavior that may inhibit appropriate communication skills at work by filling out a personal survey regarding the core members' progress.

*Objective 2:* After participating in a training session prior to the workshop at L'Arche Tahoma Farm and Gardens, staff members will be able to implement one strategy that will assist the core members in developing behaviors that will promote appropriate communication skills at work.

*Outcome:* This goal and objectives was met as identified through personal communication with the L'Arche Tahoma staff.

*Goal # 3:* Upon teaching various farming skills to community participants, during the pilot events, at L'Arche Tahoma Farm and Gardens, the core members will be able to demonstrate appropriate social communication skills during the community event.

*Objective 1:* While teaching a skill in the workshop at L'Arche Tahoma Farm and Gardens, the core members will demonstrate active listening, evident by listening to a question asked of them and responding with an appropriate answer with up to three cues from staff.

*Objective 2:* While teaching a skill in the workshop at L'Arche Tahoma Farm and Gardens, the core members will demonstrate appropriate body language towards the person by facing the person talking to them with up to three cues from staff.

*Outcome:* This goal and following objectives were partially met. The core members were successful in demonstrating active listening by answering questions and demonstrating appropriate body language towards the workshop participants, but all four core members required more than three verbal cues from the person assisting them.

### **Desired Outcome**

After the workshop is held a survey will be handed out to the L'Arche Tahoma staff and to each core member who participated. The survey will ask each core member in what way, if any, their communication skills have improved. If the core member needs assistance filling out the survey, someone will be provided to help. The survey given to the staff will ask them about the behavior of the core member they assisted. It will specifically address limitations identified earlier by the staff and/or core member. The survey will also ask the staff to identify examples, if any, of how the core member's communication skills improved.

Upon completion of this project, the core members of L'Arche Tahoma Farm and Gardens will be able to identify personal challenges with social communication skills they encounter while at work. They will also be able to list and implement at least two strategies that they can use to promote appropriate social communication skills at work. These strategies will include, but are not limited to, active listening, appropriate body language and an appropriate voice level.



These outcomes will be measured by a personal survey given to the core members and the staff member assisting them during the event. The survey given to the core member will be written in terms that they understand and will ask them if they think they were able to accomplish their goals. They will answer with a simple 'Yes' or 'No'. If they have difficulty reading or answering, assistance will be provided to them. The survey given to the staff member will ask them to assess the performance of the core member in the three goal areas. The survey will also include questions regarding feedback to the training sessions and main event by both the core members and staff.

### **Implications for Occupational Therapy**

“All people need to be able or enabled to engage in the occupations of their need and choice, to grow through what they do, and to experience independence or interdependence, equality, participation, security, health and well-being” (Wilcock & Townsend, 2008, p.198). This statement is an ethos of which occupational therapists practice by. Occupational therapists work with clients to improve their abilities to participate in meaningful occupations, including work-related activities. As an occupational therapy student I worked with the adults with developmental disabilities working at L'Arche Tahoma and taught them strategies to improve their communication skills. While there are many contributing factors that impact the lives of adults with developmental disabilities, a lack of interpersonal skills is one of the most significant issues (Elliot & MacKay, 1971; McDaniels, 1960). Research has shown that poor verbal skills including lack of or inappropriate eye contact, social withdrawal, flat affect or lack of appropriate facial expression and limited language are all barriers to productivity in a working environment (Gear, Bobzien, Judge & Raver, 2011). The main goal of this

project is to have the adults with disabilities independently interact with members of the community that visit L'Arche Tahoma on a regular basis. Communication skills taught by an occupational therapist can or will enable core members to be more comfortable interacting with members of the community while also fulfilling their role as a core member at L'Arche Tahoma. By using meaningful occupations that the adults at L'Arche Tahoma encounter on a regular basis, they will be able to generalize the skills taught to them to their work place.

### **Theoretical Model and Application to the Framework**

The Model of Human Occupation, also known as MOHO, is a client-centered model derived from the occupational behavior frame of reference and is the most commonly used model amongst occupational therapists in practice (Kielhofner, Forsyth, Kramer, Melton & Dobson, 2009). MOHO focuses on three subsystems: volition, habituation and performance capacity of the client. According to Kielhofner, the volition subsystem is driven by a person's interests, values and personal causation (Bruce & Borg, 2002). An occupational therapist works with a client to identify these interests, values and personal causations to locate their motivation for accomplishing tasks. The habituation subsystem includes the "process of learning new habits and taking on new roles within the context of one's growth and maturation through the life span" (Bruce & Borg, p. 218, 2002). These habits and internalized roles influence the client's ability to engage in their chosen activities. MOHO works to include habits and internalized roles into therapy. Performance capacity encompasses the physical and mental components of the client including values, beliefs, and spirituality as well as body functions and structures. Evaluating performance capacity helps aid the occupational therapist in

recognizing what the client is capable of accomplishing and what skills could be expanded to enable better activity engagement. Together, these three subsystems help the occupational therapist to evaluate the client's occupational performance. The occupational therapist can then work with the client to make the necessary changes to improve performance of a meaningful occupation (Bruce & Borg, 2002). During the process, the occupational therapist may take on the responsibility of "role model, teacher, mentor, counselor, supervisor, environmental manager, and consultant" (Bruce & Borg, 2002, p 223).

### **Application of Theoretical Model**

In the present project, the MOHO model will be utilized at L'Arche Tahoma Farm and Gardens to assist the employees with developmental disabilities in improving their social and communication skills. MOHO specifically involves the evaluation of a client's roles and habits as well as their motivation. By evaluating these specific aspects the occupational therapy practitioner can note deficits of the occupational performance and create an intervention based on the needs of each individual client working there. Many of the adults working at L'Arche Tahoma have specific goals they would like to work on while being employed at the Farm and Gardens. Many of those goals center around interacting with the volunteers that visit the Farm and Gardens. While applying the MOHO model, the occupational therapy student will be able to use the client's motivation to meet those goals when addressing changes in habits that may need to happen to fill the needs of the client (Kielhofner, Forsyth, Kramer, Melton, Dobson, 2009).

### **Application of the OT Practice Framework**

“Occupational Therapy practitioners recognize that health is supported and maintained when clients are able to engage in occupations and activities that allow desired or needed participation in home, school, workplace and community life” (AOTA, 2008, p. 629). According to the Occupational Therapy Practice Framework (OTPF), there are eight areas of occupation; activities of daily living (ADL), instrumental activities of daily living (IADL), rest and sleep, education, work, play, leisure and social participation. Among those areas of occupation is the occupation of work as well as the occupation of social participation. One role of an occupational therapist is to aid clients in developing skills that facilitate healthy social participation, especially in the workplace (AOTA, 2008).

While L'Arche Tahoma does provide a form of employment for the adults with developmental disabilities working there, the farm and gardens are more than just a means to earn money. L'Arche Tahoma is a community of four homes where people with and without disabilities live in unison. When looking at the areas of occupation within the OTPF, one could argue that L'Arche Tahoma impacts almost every area. Even though this project is looking specifically at work-related behaviors, many other areas of occupation are being fulfilled while spending time at the Farm and Gardens. Many of the clients consider their time at L'Arche Tahoma to be that of play and leisure. A typical workday includes laughing and joking, as well as education and social participation amongst each other. The L'Arche Tahoma staff also takes note if an employee arrives to work tired or appears to be lacking in sleep. They take the time to ask the core member how they have been sleeping or if something has been keeping them up at night. The L'Arche Tahoma Farm and Gardens motto is “Growing plants, growing people”,

showing that while it is a place of work it is also a place for individuals to enjoy themselves and develop new skills for life. Many client factors within the OTPF are also addressed when working at L'Arche Tahoma. Values, beliefs and spirituality are all respected at L'Arche Tahoma and core members are free to talk about their own beliefs and values during work-related conversations. Body functions or physiological functions are considered with each core member while working. Occasionally, core members are encouraged to take a seat while working. Habits, routines and roles are all evident at the L'Arche Tahoma Farm and Gardens as each core member has their own roles and rituals they perform each day. There are many deeply laid habits that are also very evident with each core member, which occasionally hinder their ability to work successfully.

However, there are some habits or rituals that are beneficial to work, such as a habit of always feeding the chickens. Spatial demands are sometimes difficult to accommodate at the Farm and Gardens as the greenhouses are generally quite crowded, but most of the core members have learned to be understanding of the limited space that sometimes occurs. Sequencing and timing is a major concern when working at the Farm and Gardens as many of the work activities have a specific order that needs to be followed in order for it to be successful as well as a specific time that is allotted. A good example of this is the time sensitive nature of soaking seeding trays. If the trays are not soaked long enough, the seeds will not germinate or grow into a plant, but if the trays are soaked too long they become over saturated with water and will be too wet for germination.

### **Limitations**

While most of the core members work at the L'Arche Tahoma Farm and Gardens full-time, many of them have personal lives that occasionally interfere with their work

schedule. More consideration could have been made when scheduling the pilot events. Unfortunately, the first pilot event was scheduled when one of the core members was out of town. While three core members were able to participate in the pilot event with the University of Puget Sound students, the fourth core member was not. In order to have him participate in the project a second pilot event was scheduled with students visiting the farm from the University of Montana. To prevent this happening in the future, more consideration needs to be made to keep in mind the core members' schedules when scheduling events.

Due to the nature of the semester schedule at the University of Puget Sound, the immensely busy schedule of the L'Arche Tahoma Hope Farm and Gardens and the natural growing season of many of the plants the main event could not be scheduled before this project was required to be turned in. The project's final survey will not be handed out and subsequent results cannot be reported in this thesis paper.

### **Sustainability of this Project**

This project is sustainable in that it does not require L'Arche Tahoma to spend any money to repeat the community event in the future. Once the skills are taught to the core members and the staff, the staff can follow up by holding other community events that would provide the core members with more opportunities to work on their social communication skills. The scrapbook, DVD and cue cards have already been made and will be left at the Farm and Gardens and available for use in the future. The scrapbook with pictures and information about the event will be helpful for future events as it has instructions on how to set up the workshops and cue the adults. It will also be a good physical reminder to the core members of what they accomplished during their sessions.

The staff can also use the scrapbook as motivation to help core members who may get discouraged during future teaching sessions.

This project is also very helpful for new core members who may come to work at L'Arche Tahoma because the staff will have already been taught how to address communication limitations that are common among adults with developmental disabilities. The training sessions and community event were also inexpensive to complete, mainly because L'Arche Tahoma has many of the necessary materials and equipment already at the Farm and Gardens and the core members are already very familiar with them. This project can be done almost any time of the year, by using different themes of the season as material for teaching the community, including growing/planting in spring and wreath making in the winter. Leaving all of these materials at L'Arche Tahoma ensures that the new staff each year will have a tool to use for training.

### Resources

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### **Human Resources**

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