

Innisfree

VILLAGE VOICE
SUMMER 2015

Defining Community

by Rorie Hutter

I have been fortunate to have many teachers and mentors over the years who have shaped different aspects of the adult I have become. One of my earliest mentors was my preschool teacher, Liz.

Liz was an energetic 26-year-old when I began at Greenbelt Cooperative Nursery School and from my first days, she taught me the power of kindness, friendship, a good laugh, and especially a big hug! She taught me not simply to accept, but to celebrate people's differences and unique talents, to honor what each person brought to our little community.

Long after I left preschool, and as recently as last fall when I returned for my hometown's annual Labor Day Festival, I would see Liz and be greeted with that same warm smile and hug I had looked forward to so many days as a young child. Of course, by now she was a true celebrity in Greenbelt, having been honored with the Greenbelt Outstanding Citizen Award upon retiring after 34 years



with the Nursery School, and I could say I knew her when.

That Liz had Down syndrome was something I only later understood made her story much more remarkable. The larger community of Greenbelt held the same values Liz taught, and all I knew and cared about was that Liz was an adult whom I trusted. I looked up to her. I learned of Liz's death only a couple of weeks after I learned I had been selected to become Innisfree's new director and I realized how deeply she influenced me and my view of community.

It is a great honor for me to be invited to join the Innisfree community. Innisfree's culture is one that truly celebrates everyone and seeks to help each person find the ways she or he can contribute and at the same time find personal fulfillment. What is more, it is a culture that

accomplishes this important task without taking itself too seriously. The value of a dance

continued on next page



Rorie joins Directors Phyllis and Carolyn at Mayfair 2015.

Continued from page 1

party, a good joke, or a big hug cannot be overstated in meeting that mission.

It is this culture and the individuals I know from Sojourners congregation that drew me to Innisfree. I knew the job would be a big one, but I knew there would be no lack of support, cheerleading, or fun along the way. It is an honor and a challenge to attempt to fill the shoes of Carolyn and the other directors who guided the community before me, but I promise to do my best to carry that torch.

Thank you to all who have helped guide me to this new home. And a special hug to you Liz for teaching me the value of community.



Work began in early May building a new house. It will be named Meadow, replacing the very first house built at Innisfree.

Longtime member of the Meadow Family, Jim is first to pick up the shovel and start the digging. Willie built the model of the house we hope will be completed before the end of 2015.



Mayfair Memories



Innisfree families gather for Mayfair and Craft Sale on a beautiful Spring day.



Hidden Treasures

by Emily Vanderlinden

The fine arts are sort of a hidden treasure here at Innisfree. You'll find delightful murals in hidden nooks and art from years past hanging on Community Center and office walls as well



as in houses; but there is also a more active art scene going on. Brett will draw you the most beautiful double-rainbow birthday card you've ever seen and Jean has a great eye for painting those gorgeous Innisfree views. Stephen

never gives up the opportunity to cover some paper with colorful crayon words of all his favorite things and Corinne can decide without a blink just what incredible character she wants to bring to life through painting or drawing. The amount of imagination that abounds at Innisfree is unfathomable and every time we come together and create it's like uncovering buried treasure.

Similar to how each person that passes through the weavery and woodshop brings their own style and skill to the handmade goods, art class is a space to come and experiment as a "new" artist to find our favorite mediums and to cultivate our own unique set of images. Each person that participates in one of the four art classes during the week has an incredible willingness to express themselves and there is so much potential to share what we create with the community. The growing art program at Innisfree has become a great way to tie together all of the creative opportunities inside and outside the village whether it's decorations for special events,



Elizabeth and Kim never miss a chance to express their artistic creativity.

sharing our art with a local radio station, participating in Very Special Arts (a yearly art show that is hung at Charlottesville High School), and even bringing in outside groups to participate in arts-related activities.

Don't be surprised to see work by Innisfree artists hanging in coffee shops, county buildings, or your neighbor's walls, and certainly don't be shy to come create with us. As time goes on, we are excited to learn and share new skills from printmaking to sewing to sculpting and we hope that you're just as excited to see what comes out of our colorful world.

Remembering Vinh

Our dear friend, Vinh Nguyen died on Tuesday, May 5, 2015 at the age of 33. His devoted sister, Thuy-Anh learned of Innisfree when she was a medical student at UVA and knew it would be the perfect place for her brother to thrive. Vinh came to live in a house

continued on next page



"We think of you as a very cool cat. You loved to dance. Vinh, thank you for filling our lives with love. Thank you for being a part of the Innisfree and Sunflower family. Thank you for ALL your wonderful gifts... and your smile." —Bridget

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Innisfree Village Voice
a newsletter of
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Please see our web site at www.innisfreevillage.org

Vinh continued

named Sunflower at Innisfree in September 2008. Thrive he did!

Vinh developed a wonderful flare for self expression, joining a dance group as well as performing in the village. He enlivened musical events, updating our song selections to assure we included numbers from Justin Bieber and One Direction. His solo dance to the song "Baby, Baby" was especially memorable and cheered by our whole community. Vinh loved dressing for a dance, a movie premiere or a prom. He had loving friends with whom he walked daily, those he helped at meal time, and Sunflower friends with whom he played Wii and board games each evening. An eager cook, Vinh loved trying to recreate Vietnamese recipes from his childhood. Vinh was also an active baker, a precise weaver and an occasional gardener. His infectious smile will be keenly remembered.

The following words are excerpts from a touching message shared by his good friend, Rhonda.

"Vinh showed empathy with others and concern for their needs.

He was a natural fit in our Innisfree community and showed kindness and affection easily. Vinh faced a lot of challenges in his short life—challenges he met with his characteristic sunny nature. Mostly, I will remember Vinh's love of music and dance, a love that we shared. He was probably the most enthusiastic participant of Nia, and the first



one on the dance floor at celebrations. We put together playlists for dance parties and special events like the 5K walk. We would often play music in Meadow kitchen when he came over for dinner and have impromptu dance parties with Kim,

Katie, and Elizabeth. Vinh was the first to reassure Jim that yes, Britney Spears was 'just like Bach.' Vinh was a happy man, who belonged to our Innisfree community and to his family, who loved and was loved—truly, the measure of a successful human life."