

## **FACILITATING A GROUP DISCUSSION**

In addition to providing an opportunity for individual reflection, *The Collector of Bedford Street* can serve as a springboard to increase and deepen communities' awareness of people with disabilities. By prompting dialogue, the film can also inspire action.

The questions offered here can help with preparation, act as sparks to get a dialogue started, or to help people deepen their thinking. The questions are designed for varied audiences and situations. Skip over any that are inappropriate for your use. You can use the questions in any particular order. Let the interests and concerns of your group dictate the flow of the discussion.

### **USING A FACILITATOR**

The facilitator's primary job is to establish an encouraging tone that allows people to explore sensitive issues. The facilitator's responsibilities include remaining calm and neutral, keeping the discussion on track, helping the group move forward, and modeling appropriate interaction. Remember these guidelines if you are going to facilitate your discussion group.

### **AT THE EVENT**

These strategies can help create an atmosphere that encourages people to share their insights and experiences. If yours is a small group in your home, you may not need to make formal rules.

- Set ground rules by asking the group to come up with how they would feel most comfortable.
- How will you take turns so one or two people don't dominate? How should people express themselves? (i.e. no yelling, no generalizing, give everyone the chance to speak before a person speaks for the second time)
- Remind participants about the difference between dialogue and debate. This conversation is a dialogue where we try to understand each other and expand our thinking by sharing viewpoints and actively listening.
- Set a time limit for the event.
- If there seems to be interest in taking action, ask what the next step might look like?
- Be sure and thank everyone for coming.

## **SUGGESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

### **GENERAL QUESTIONS:**

- What insights or new knowledge did you get from this film? What messages or lessons would you hope that others learn?
- Immediately after viewing: Think of one or two words that describe what you feel. Did any particular scene, person, or bit of dialogue stand out in your mind? Why that one?
- Although Larry did not have a job in the film, he contributed to his community. How did Larry's volunteer fundraising effect his community? How might Larry's life have been different if he were employed?

### **ASSESSING YOUR COMMUNITY AND TAKING ACTION**

One of the main themes in *The Collector of Bedford Street* is community. Before discussing the questions below, take a few moments to define "community." Any definition the group finds appropriate will work. It can be a city, neighborhood, ethnic, religious, or racial group. You don't need to tackle all the questions in this section, so select those that will stimulate discussion and relate to any current issues that your community faces.

- How would you describe your community? Possibly go around the group and give one or two word descriptions. How is it like or unlike Bedford Street? Through the course of the film different neighbors express varied opinions of Larry. What is your opinion of him? Did it change during the film? Can you imagine how you might respond to Larry if he were your neighbor?
- When you know someone it's harder to stereotype them. How do we get to know people who are different from us? Are there ways you can help people from different groups meet and spend time with one another?
- Is there someone like Larry in your community? Does that person seem to be receiving the services and supports they need? If they aren't, what resources might be available for them?
- If you had it in your power to require *The Collector of Bedford Street* to be viewing for some people, who would be on your list? How might you arrange a screening for the people on your list?
- In the film, did you see evidence of Larry's spirituality? If you define your community as a spiritual one, do you have people with disabilities attending services? What might be the spiritual needs of people with disabilities? Is your place of worship accessible to wheelchairs?