



SERVING FLORIDA FAITHFULLY

Volume 28 Number 2

Spring 2012

www.cvif.org

TRIBUTE TO A LIFETIME OF SERVICE



Our community of Catholic Volunteers in Florida has a new guardian angel. Our alumna and family member Mary Lea Zamora passed away on April 17, 2012 in St. Augustine. She held a rather unique title with the Catholic Volunteers in Florida: she was number 100.

Among many other activities, she was active in Pax Christi Florida for many years and enjoyed membership in the lay associates of the Sisters of St. Joseph of St. Augustine, a sponsoring group of the Catholic Volunteers in Florida.

Mary Lea's service with the Catholic Volunteers in Florida was based at the Second Harvest Food Bank in Orlando from September 1999 through December 2000. She lived life to the fullest and everyone who met her witnessed her faith journey of "service in action" through the Catholic Volunteers in Florida and beyond.

Continued on page 2

Inside This Issue:

Volunteer Class Moments

Volunteer Reflections

New CVIF Volunteers

Goodbye Sr. Florence

Orientation Memories

Alumni Updates

VOLUNTEER IMPACT STORY: NICHOLAS WOLAK

For as long as I can remember the deepest desire in my heart was to one day be a father. Yet, as I ventured into young adulthood fatherhood seemed like the furthest possibility imaginable. I could barely take care of myself, how I was ever supposed to take care of another human being?

I was skeptical going into my year of service. CVIF placed me as a resident assistant at Bishop Grady Villas, a community for adults with disabilities. A part of me thought my gifts would be better served at a different service site. I felt trapped. The residents were constantly getting into arguments which led to problems. My dream of a big Catholic family began to seem crazy in my eyes. But what I found, is that part of me couldn't have been more wrong.

Bishop Grady has been a great place for honing my fatherly skills. When I am there I drive residents around, assist them with their medications and make sure they don't kill each other (as well as many other tasks). I have become very comfortable doing these things, but it was not always easy.

Many talk about how service needs to be centered upon working within the community, and not above it. We can sometimes fall into the trap of having a savior complex, but luckily there's this carpenter dude named Jesus who is all the savior we'll ever need. When I dealt with residents, I found myself thinking about what He said in Matthew 18: 3-4, "Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever becomes humble like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven."

Continued on Page 2



YOU CAN NOW DONATE ONLINE at www.cvif.org

TRIBUTE TO A LIFETIME OF SERVICE, continued



We remember her smile and diversity of interests that includes peace-making, service, dancing, and canoeing. These played no small role in meeting her husband Ron, whom she met in 1999 at a Catholic Volunteer retreat.

We were so thankful that Mary Lea selected the Catholic Volunteers in Florida. As a mid-life volunteer, she had many skills and balanced maturity to offer through the program as well as experience in youth ministry and having raised a family and a deep faith life to sustain and guide her in many situations. We were thankfully the recipients of her multitude of gifts and endless joyful, humorous, and analytical spirit and will be forever blessed by her relationship with us.

Mary Lea had a unique talent for leaving you with a feeling of “being lifted up” and wondering, “How did she do that?” So now, it is fitting that we lift up Mary Lea, and join Ron and the entire community in prayer as we remember the remarkable life she lived and reflect on the wonderful impact she left for us. ~ *By John Geiger, Former Executive Director of Catholic Volunteers in Florida*



Above: CVIF Class of 2000 with Mary Lea and Liz Geiger, John Geiger's mother (on left) who also recently was called back to the Father. She gave her time and talent endlessly to help CVIF and will be missed greatly.

IMPACT STORY: NICHOLAS WOLAK, continued

While most of my residents were older than me in years, they were much younger at heart. I had always thought of myself as having a child-like heart, but I was not close to their level. If anything I was moving in the opposite direction. I had become all about getting tasks done, and trying to maintain order.

I began to play basketball every evening with several of the more rambunctious residents. Through teaching the residents about the game I love, they began to listen to me more. I didn't let them win if they didn't play as a team or with sportsmanship. But if they hustled they were likely to get the rebound, and if they passed they were likely to get an open shot. If the score was tied 2-2, I would dance around like a ballerina (get it? 2-2 = tutu). Some of my proudest moments this year have been when my residents beat me; those were the times when their game embodied the hard work, discipline and teamwork I was trying to teach them.



Being childlike opened up doors for me to be more responsible and thrive. The time it took for me to run programs and deal with behaviors lessened. My positive relationship with residents gave me a swagger in other areas of my service. A year ago I would not have believed hearing that I would be comfortable assisting with medications and driving a huge van in rush hour Orlando traffic. I do it every day now, and I cherish that goofy bonding time I have with the resident during these times. I love them and am better prepared for fatherhood than ever because of them; they reminded me I need to be a kid to be a man of God.

Above: Nich and other CVIF volunteers at the Service Day at Bishop Grady Villas

2011-2012 VOLUNTEER CLASS MOMENTS



Group service project: Healthy Kids Day at Sulphur Springs School



Birthdays! Nich and Candace



Tampa roomies Candace & Cristina



CVIF Christmas Party



Serving at the Harvest Ball at Bishop Grady Villas

"Faith is the realization of what is hoped for and the evidence of things not seen."

-Heb. 11:1

VOLUNTEER REFLECTIONS

Candice Harris

This year has been an experience like no other, one I feel truly fortunate and honored to have been chosen to be a part of. My life has been forever changed and blessed.

My service experience working with St. Joseph's Children's Hospital and Children's Advocacy Center has furthered my understanding of the true value of public health. As a health professional graduate, the opportunity to work in my field of interest has been amazing. I have gained valuable training and education in the field of health and advocacy serving as a Children's Safety Advocate and Critical Care Patient Advocate. From helping to provide low income families with the car seats and safety education to listening to the stories of chronically ill patients in critical care, I have seen from birth to the end of life the impact education and prevention can have on an individual's quality of life.



The training I have received, including CPR instructor certification and Child Passenger Safety Technician Certification, has increased my knowledge of the health care field and how I can personally impact the world I live in. My experiences here have shown me other ways health education and the implementation of data-driven interventions can improve the health status of different sectors of the population.

During the year, I have been able to meditate on my vocational calling and strengthen my relationship with my Heavenly Father at my service site and the various engagements at our retreats. In addition, the friendships I have made within my CVIF family and service community will forever keep me connected to Florida and people from all across the country no matter where I go from here.

Above: Marissa Mowat and Candace at Children's Advocacy Center

Flora Tano

My year with Catholic Volunteers in Florida has been positive. Through this experience, I am able to reflect and analyze various aspects of my life: spiritual, professional or personal. My service site, Guadalupe Social Services, has been more than rewarding because, even though, I am Education Coordinator, I have allowed myself the flexibility to learn every aspect of the organization. My daily tasks vary from administrative, logistics, to the far end unpredictable and unexpected events.



Now, in the last stage of my year of service, I am reflecting on the meaningful relationships and partnerships I have made, while slowly planning and preparing the ground for the next CVIF volunteer in Immokalee. Like many things in life, my year of service will end in July, but I know its impact will be indelible in my life.

INTRODUCING CVIF'S NEWEST VOLUNTEERS



Gregory Somers is serving for Catholic Charities as a case manager. He graduated from Schiller University of Heidelberg, Germany with a major in International Business and a minor in International Relations & Diplomacy. Gregory spends his free time meditating, surfing, jogging, composing music, and attending mass at Our Lady of Lourdes. He was previously a Veterinary Technician and a bartender.



Margaret Msangi is serving as a Resident Assistant at Bishop Grady Villas where she contributes in the daily lives of the residents by offering emotional and physical support. She has a Masters in Public Health from Georgia State University. She travels often within and out of the country, including Africa and Europe. She has an extensive amount of experience in volunteering, including in hospitals, homeless shelters, Boys and Girls clubs, orphanages, and health centers.

SR. FLORENCE—YOU WILL BE MISSED!



Dear CVIF Family,

For the past nine years I have had the privilege to serve on the staff of CVIF. I thank all those who enabled this to happen --- the Board, all those who have served on staff with me, the 150 volunteers who have served at our various service sites during these years, our partner sites, and the many people who have graciously assisted with our retreat program. There are so many of you! May God pay my indebtedness with the gifts of grace that only God can give.

I move on with all my CVIF-acquired technological skills to new challenges in parish ministry at St. Edward Parish in Palm Beach. There I hope to engage with young and older adults in their ongoing spiritual formation as well as my own. "Eye has not seen, ear has not heard what God has ready for those who love him." I move on in faith.

~ Gratefully, Sr. Florence

RETREAT MEMORIES

Miami Retreat

Below: The volunteers and staff show their inspired pottery creations!



Right: Flora being inspired during the pottery segment of the guided day of silence



**Right: Joining us for dinner, alumni Precious Peoples
Back row: Lauren, Flora Ebony, Precious, Sr. Kathleen,
Valarie.**

Front row: Patricia, Candace, Sr. Florence



CV Retreat Service project at Camillus House getting ready to serve lunch



Margaret, Flora, and Patricia perform a beautiful African dance for the talent show and teach it to Sr. Kathleen!



Candace, Nich, Ebony, Amanda, and Flora posing "family portrait" style!



Closing prayer service in the chapel to end our time together in Miami

RETREAT MEMORIES

Ft. Myers Retreat



The volunteers met in Ft. Myers Beach to rejuvenate, relax, pray, and celebrate together



Roommates Patricia and Amanda showing us how not to do the drum circle!



The retreat highlighted the Coalition of Migrant Farm workers in Immokalee



Lauren taking some quiet time to meditate on her year of service so far



The group ready for the retreat!

ALUMNI UPDATES: WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Doug Baron is now living in Nashville working for FedEx in customer service. After he left Jacksonville, he did some work with Big Brothers Big Sisters in Memphis. He is also training for his first half marathon.

Joyce Merritt received a calling of faith to apply to the Peace Corps and has been offered a placement in 2013. The assignment will be for Eastern Europe in the area of community service and development. Her son married in September. He and his lovely wife are both PHD scientists in Indianapolis.

Daleta Christiansen '89



Deleta left Miami and moved back to Cedar Rapids, Iowa where she grew up. She continues to work in nonprofit. Very recently she married a childhood friend of the family near Cedar Rapids. (pictured)

Michael and Rebecca Staub

Rebecca is working hard in her second year of medical school, and she is preparing for step one of the Boards. Michael got a promotion to Senior Account Manager at Cardlytics where he is staying on top of working with a startup company. The two recently adopted a beautiful dark red golden retriever named Samson.



Catholic Volunteers
in Florida

BECOME
WHO YOU ARE

NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
ORLANDO, FL
PERMIT #3298

PO BOX 536476

Orlando, FL 32853-6476

(P) 407-426-7771 (F) 407-426-7774

volunteer@cvif.org

CVIF Staff:

Elaine Fowler, Executive Director

Valarie Amica, Program Director

***Florence Bryan, SSJ, Formation
Director***

Carrie Wenger, Program

Coordinator

***Martin Fisher, Accounting Intern,
Newsletter Editor***

Special Thanks to Our Co-Sponsors!

Archdiocese of Miami * Diocese of St. Augustine * Diocese of St. Petersburg * Diocese of Orlando * Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee * Diocese of Palm Beach * Diocese of Venice * New Hope Charities * Sisters of St. Joseph of St. Augustine in FL * Our Sunday Visitor * Fund for Theological Education* Allegany Franciscan Ministries

Special Thanks to our Board Members!

Bishop John Noonan, *Episcopal Liaison*– Bishop of Diocese of Orlando

Robert Winslow, *Board Chair*– President of Global Building and Construction

Rev. Dr. Patrick O'Neill, *Founder*– Special Projects for the Archdiocese of Miami

Gerard F. Glynn, JD, *Secretary*– Director of Clinical Programs at Barry Law School

Dr. Michael McCarron– Executive Director of the Florida Catholic Conference

Alfreda M. Ellis– Lake Orienta Elementary School

Michael Cooper– Development Director of The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society

Kevin Johnson– Executive Director of Bishop Grady Villas

Kay Garner– Professor of Psychology at Valencia Community College

YOU CAN DONATE ONLINE AT
www.cvif.org

Like us on Facebook!

