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A SUCCESSFUL SPRINGFIELD ORIENTATION

We are delighted to welcome our newest batch of Dominican Volunteers! The 2005-06 group kicked off the year with Orientation at the Springfield Dominican Motherhouse in Springfield, Illinois. This year's group will be headed to California, Georgia, Illinois, Wisconsin and New York, working in a variety of ministries and living with several Dominican congregations. With two returning volunteers and nine newcomers, our fifth group of DV's definitely has much energy and many gifts to share with the people they will serve in the coming year.

Orientation provided the volunteers with many tools to help them during their experience. Throughout the week of August 2-8, we participated in informative sessions on topics such as Dominican spirituality, preaching, social justice and anti-racism, and community. We had a retreat day and did a service project at Jubilee Farm, a center for ecology and spirituality sponsored by the Springfield Dominicans, and we made a visit to the new Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum. Most of all, the group bonded together and had a lot of fun! We shared stories, exchanged jokes, played games (including some lively matches of ultimate Frisbee!), and had many laughs together.

The 2005-06 DV's are blessed with gifts that they shared with us during the week, and that will surely be of service to their new ministries and communities. Their talents and tricks range from musical gifts and leading beautiful prayer sessions, to breaking apples in half, skills in "Mad Gab," and extraordinary imitations of whales. But most of all, each volunteer approaches this experience with an open heart, deep faith, passion for justice, and genuine desire to serve. We warmly welcome them into the Dominican family and look forward to the stories and reflections they will share with us throughout the year.

A special thank-you to the Springfield Dominicans for their wonderful hospitality, and to all of our presenters during Orientation! And of course, a big thank-you and welcome to our new volunteers. May this year of service be a special "pulpit of your life" in preaching the Gospel to those whom you meet.



Volunteers and staff gather in Springfield. Back: Marie Cassidy (Executive Director), Megan Decker, Spencer Daniel, Pam Ray, Tony Butler. Middle: Kim Zamastil, Brenda Weigand, Mike Marquard. Front: Alyssa Yaklin, Jennifer Errante, Morgan Kallus, Kathryn Reyes (staff).



We can't be close enough!

The volunteers participate in an activity at Orientation. The week was filled with chances to bond with each other and learn about what makes a great Dominican Volunteer year.

“Be of service wherever you are.”

-St. Catherine of Siena

- Adrian Dominicans
- Akron Dominicans
- Amityville Dominicans
- Blauvelt Dominicans
- Caldwell Dominicans
- Columbus Dominicans
- Dominican Sisters of Hope
- Grand Rapids Dominicans
- Great Bend Dominicans
- Kenosha Dominicans
- Province of St. Albert the Great
- Racine Dominicans
- St. Catharine Kentucky Dominicans
- Sinsinawa Dominicans
- Southern Dominican Communities
- Sparkill Dominicans
- Springfield Dominicans

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TOGETHER WITH MY NEW “OLD FRIENDS”

By Brenda Weigand, Little Brothers - Friends of the Elderly, Chicago, IL

When I visited Chicago and the Dominican Community at the House of Connections last April I asked the pretty standard question, “So, what makes Dominican Volunteers different from other volunteer programs?” The first thing one of the volunteers mentioned was a Dominican motto “At the heart of ministry is relationships.” Now, as a Dominican Volunteer myself, I am experiencing the centrality and importance of that phrase and am finding true meaning in the value of relationships as ministry. I feel blessed and am grateful that I can embrace this daily with my placement at the Chicago Chapter of Little Brothers – Friends of the Elderly. Every day I spend at work reinforces that life is not to be traversed alone, but rather together, in relationship.



Little Brothers is a non-profit organization that reaches out to relieve the loneliness and isolation of the elderly population. Our motto *flowers before bread* emphasizes that in addition to poverty of material goods, there is also a deeper poverty of love and companionship from which many suffer, particularly the elderly. In my position I have 30 “old friends” and I visit each one twice a month. In short, the mean age of my social circle recently quadrupled, and I am loving it.

My old friends teach me about how life used to be, about moving up from the South, about raising children, and about losing parents and siblings. Caroline teaches me how to fry fresh catfish and Paul takes me on scenic cruises around his neighborhood alongside his motorized wheelchair. I lend an ear, an arm, and a smile. I bring Cheryl her favorite kind of ice-cream (strawberry) when she isn’t feeling well, I take Lisa out for coffee and try to explain a bit about “kids these days,” I ask Ellen how her pet bird Chetty is doing, I help Nancy read her mail, and I explore other housing options for Anne whose life is quickly falling under the grasp of Alzheimer’s. Together we play games, watch television, walk, and share photo albums. We discuss the news, faith, and aging. We laugh and we cry. Together.

At the heart of my ministry is certainly relationships. I look forward with an open heart and blank journal pages to the lessons, joys, and challenges that these relationships will continue to bring over the coming year.

Note: All names have been changed to honor confidentiality. Little Brothers – Friends of the Elderly has nine chapters across the United States and seven internationally. For more information visit www.littlebrothers.org. Brenda is pictured above with one of her new “Old Friends.”

Executive Director Search

Dominican Volunteers USA is in search of a new Executive Director. The Executive Director supervises one other staff person, and manages a program that seeks to place 20 volunteers annually. The office is located in River Forest, IL. Salary range \$38,000 - \$45,000.

TO APPLY: Please submit a letter of intent, along with a resume and the names of at least three current references. Must be willing to submit to a criminal background check. Please respond via email to: Sr. Joan Harnett, OP at JHarnettOP@optonline.net. Position open until filled.

A Farewell from Marie

With my recent marriage and move to my husband’s house in Cary, my commute to the DVUSA office has become extremely difficult. Even with no traffic, the commute takes over an hour; during rush hour, it takes closer to 2 hours. Anticipating that winter weather will make the commute even worse, I have realized that I cannot keep it up and keep my sanity. It was with a heavy heart that I submitted my letter of resignation to our Board of Trustees on September 22. My last day will be November 17.

Serving as Executive Director has been a pleasure and a privilege. The gifts, faith, and commitment that our volunteers bring to their journey with the Dominican family are truly amazing. The collaboration of 18 Dominican congregations and provinces that brought Dominican Volunteers USA to birth in 2001 was truly visionary. The volunteer movement is a sign of hope for our Church and surely represents Christ’s hands and feet at work in our society. Thank you for supporting our mission. I will miss working with the volunteers and all of you connected to the program. God bless you.

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS NEAR

By Bridget Frese, DV 2004-05

The kingdom of Heaven is near.
 it's just around the corner
 just under the veil
 Oh, if I could just identify
 that corner that I might turn it.
 Oh, see the veil that I might lift it.
 If only I could see past my own perceptions
 to reach the freedom of the kingdom of Heaven.
 How long must Truth be elusive?
 Like chasing my own Shadow.
 As real as it is, I can never catch it.
 The harder I try, the more frustrated I become
 And yet—it remains.
 That elusive shadow of Truth—
 as close and as clear as it ever has been;
 for one and for all.
 So, I will give up the struggle and learn to play with my Shadow;
 learn to listen and appreciate such truth.
 Some days, I will ignore it.
 knowing full well that my acknowledgement or lack there of
 has minimal effect on the existence of such an elusive
 Shadow
 The kingdom of Heaven is at hand.
 And the Ancestors, who have left us many clues,
 but even more questions,
 These Ancestors laugh joyously at our human foolishness;
 Our very human limitation that prevents us—keeps us from entering
 The kingdom more fully.
 So I will put on my white dress,
 and I will dance barefoot in the grass.
 Dance, I will.
 Yes!
 Dance to the beat of life itself.
 Children will laugh more than they cry
 And all around hope blossoms
 like wild flowers whispering of winters past.
 Dance to the rhythm of the radiant sun that casts all Shadows
 Reminders of what lies just out of reach.
 There will be times to console, time to cook, to cry, to consume;
 All the while Dancing
 That I might take my elusive Shadow through the Pearly Gates.
 Dancing all the way.



Morgan Kallus takes a minute to relax during Orientation week in Springfield. Morgan is volunteering at the International Community School in Atlanta, Georgia. Read Morgan's reflection on her first days in Atlanta at www.dvusa.org.

LIFE IN THE BIG APPLE

by Kim Zamastil, Highbridge Community Life Center

If I had just one word to sum up my time volunteering here in New York City so far, it would be *loud*.

Moving to the Big Apple from Rochelle, Illinois, a town of 10,000 people, I find the city very chaotic. People here are just plain louder than people in the Midwest.

I work in the Storefront at Highbridge Community Life Center in the Bronx. It's a place where people from the community can come in for help with just about anything and be connected to services. I have never worked in a louder place in my life.

The people in the Storefront are wonderful, kind-hearted and warm. They also shout across the place to get each other's attention and become so passionate about the things they're discussing that they end up yelling at each other. It took me a few days to figure out it's all good-natured; otherwise this would be one angry place.

Outside the building the traffic is loud, the music is loud, the people are loud. Going home the subway roars down the tracks and the mariachi bands play loudly inside the cars before walking around with their hats upside down.

I do live in a relatively quiet neighborhood (which is apparently protected by the Mafia, something I find far more exciting than my mom does.) My housemates Sr. Pat, Sr. Ellenrita and Sr. Didi are lovely, quiet women...until the Yankees come on.

I have had some quiet moments: a walk in Central Park, a Mass in St. Patrick's Cathedral, a chat with a senior with a lot of wisdom to share. These have been moments to recharge, times when things seemed less foreign.

It may be loud, but the noise is well worth it. I'm being challenged daily and learning a lot. I know I will leave this experience a better person. I just hope I still have my hearing.



Kim is pictured outside Highbridge Community Life Center.



DOMINICAN VOLUNTEERS USA

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DOMINICAN VOLUNTEERS USA NEWSLETTER is published tri-annually for friends and fans of Dominican volunteering. It is printed in black and white for easier recycling. Please recycle this newsletter or pass it on to a friend.

Annual Appeal

Each year, we appeal to you, our DVUSA friends and family to support the work that we do. It takes a tremendous amount of sacrifice to embark on a year of service and we are grateful to our volunteers who have made this commitment.

We at DVUSA are equally committed to providing them with an experience that encourages their growth and rewards their sacrifice. In order to do this, we depend on our friends and family to financially support us.

Our Dominican Sponsors provide 72 % of our funding. Please consider helping us to raise our goal of \$30,000 from our alumni and the wider community. Your contribution ensures that volunteers will continue to experience dynamic retreats, be exposed to Dominican traditions, and receive support from the DVUSA staff. It is not too early to contribute to our annual appeal. Simply send your donation in the enclosed envelope today. The volunteers thank you for your generosity.

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR STAFF!

We congratulate our Marketing and Recruitment Coordinator Donielle Dodde Xu and her husband Peter on the arrival of their first baby. Sophia Olivia Xu was born on August 9, 2005 at 12:19 AM (just shy of St. Dominic's Day!).

We congratulate our out-going Executive Director Marie Cassidy and her new husband Bill Colbert. Marie and Bill were married on August 27, 2005.

Prayers for our Friends

Our heartfelt prayers go out to our Dominican sisters and brothers in New Orleans, LA. DVUSA volunteers and staff have had the privilege of experiencing their southern hospitality while on retreat in the city and feel deeply for their losses. Most recently, we were on our Midyear retreat last February at the Dominican Conference Center. We cherish the memories we have of our New Orleans visits and hope for the day when we can visit again.

For updates on the situation regarding our Dominican friends in New Orleans and information on where to send donations on their behalf, please visit www.domlife.org.