



DOMINICAN VOLUNTEERS USA

Summer 2005

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A HOME IN MINISTRY

BY MARY HORNSCHEMEIER

"Mary in the House!" whooped a stadium scream from the other side of the chow hall. Pat Taylor, from whom the scream had come, leapt up from her dish of corned beef and dashed across the room. She hugged me so forcefully I worried that I had broken her glasses.

Her reaction seemed, at first glance, totally ridiculous. I'd only been gone from St. Leonard's for a few weeks, it's not worth disrupting everyone's dinner. But the declaration of my being "in the house" was a bit more significant than my physical presence in the room.

When I left in May - with the school year finished, transcripts completed and my office tidied up- it was with a heavy sense of uncertainty. St. Leonard's had applied for a grant from the United Way that could possibly fund a full-time position for me to work at this agency I've come to love. If we didn't get the funding, though, my clean office would stay clean, and I would have to look elsewhere for work, leaving my ten months as the high school coordinator to be a sweet memory.

The idea of working somewhere else felt like betrayal to me. To leave now, after two semesters at the school, would be forsaking my own brothers. On my last day, when I was offering cookies to anyone who stopped by my office, I was reluctant to say "goodbye". We kept it at "see you later" or "I'm sure you'll be back here". Cautious optimism was the word for the day, and our parting was less sweet than just plain awkward.

I was digging in a flower bed in Ohio on the morning of June first when I got the call. I threw down my gardening gloves and bolted for the phone, and the voice on the other line was that of Bob, St. Leonard's Executive Director. As he spoke, I worried that my heart would explode. We got the grant. I have a job, if I want it.

On August 15, I'll be "in the house" for good, working as the very first Education Coordinator for St. Leonard's Ministries. Our educational programs will start expanding this summer to include non-high school offerings, and I'm hoping to start an on-site literacy program. I'm sure the high school will always be my baby, and I think I might just look back at my year as a DV with nostalgia - back when running the high school was all I did. I'm so grateful that I can stay, though. I suspect that in August, I'll be the one whooping and hollering, giving everyone hugs. I'll be home to stay then.



Thank you Mariandale Center!

The DVUSA crowd of 2004-05 sends a heartfelt thank you to the Mariandale Center in Ossining, NY and to our HOPE Dominican sponsors for hosting our final retreat. We gathered on a hot weekend in New York from June 10-12 for the opportunity to reflect, share memories and soak in a final dose of Dominican hospitality. Thank you to all those who made our weekend great! Join us in congratulating our newest group of DVUSA alumni!

At left: DVUSA volunteers from 2004-05 and staff pose for a picture at the closing celebration and commissioning. (Taken by Donna Brunell, OP)

**“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

7200 W. Division St.
River Forest, IL 60305
Fax 708-714-9002

www.dvusa.org

Marie Cassidy,
Executive Director
mcassidy@dom.edu
708.524.5984

Donielle Dodde Xu,
Marketing and
Recruitment
Coordinator
ddodde@dom.edu
708.524.5985

A Year of Storytelling

by Carla Johnson, Redwood City, CA

Within a week of arriving at St. Francis Center, I wrote in my journal, “Everyone has a story to tell and that inspires me, humbles me, and gives me courage.” During my nearly two years of service as a Dominican Volunteer, the gift I treasure most is the time I have listened to twelve extraordinary women share the stories of their lives. As the mothers of our third graders in Holy Family School, these women and I meet weekly to pray and explore our faith. I began with lesson plans for Catechesis and would get frustrated when the discussion went so far from what I had intended to discuss. Thankfully, in time, I realized that the real work of the Holy Spirit is not teaching, but listening. These moms are truly women of hope. Into the tapestry of their lives is woven the pain of abuse, addiction, and domestic violence; the fear of crossing the border from Mexico into a life with more opportunities for their children; the struggles of parenting, the challenges of becoming financially stable, and the frustrations of learning English as a second language; the pain of losing loved ones; the joy of sacred celebrations and the hope of fulfilling dreams they harbor in their hearts. The unfolding of their stories reveal families broken apart and families reunited. I have come to know their stories so well in my heart that they have become a part of my own life story. Aware of the phrase “your liberation is bound up with mine,” I have come to believe that I need their stories to live with humility and courage.

A Year of Light

by Bridget Frese, Holy Family Birthing Center,
Weslaco, TX

In Spanish, there are several ways to say “to give birth.” My favorite is, “dar a la luz.” The exact translation is “to give to the light” or “to give light.” I am blessed to have experienced that light time after time this year. The process of labor and birth is radiantly beautiful. The mother may be exhausted, groaning/moaning, sweaty, and sometimes in despair, but she is beautiful every moment of it. At birth, the child may be covered in post uterine debris, but pure beauty shines through. In our culture’s narrow definition of beauty, that may sound counterintuitive to believe. One must see it to believe it. There is so much energy in the room that the best way to describe it is light. I am blessed to be a handmaid of such a blessed event, to be energized by the light of “dar a la luz.” *(Bridget holds ‘baby Bridgette’, born during her year at Holy Family)*



A Year of Discernment

by Natalee Reese, Grand Rapids, MI

I entered into the Dominican Volunteer program with a personal agenda of sorts. I saw it as a way to discern more deeply whether or not religious life was for me. I was so excited to get to live at the Grand Rapids Dominicans’ Motherhouse, a.k.a. Marywood.

Early in the year, however, I decided that, “Nope, I’m not gonna be a Sister, no way, no how.” I spent the next several months justifying to myself why religious life could not possibly be for me. I wrestled with my narrow understanding of the vows of Poverty, Chastity and Obedience, arguing that I was just not cut out to live under such constrictions of my personal freedom. I could not possibly be happy unless I could one day attain all the trappings of a comfortable American middle-class existence, kids included; to have the freedom to go where I pleased and to do what I want, answering to no one, save maybe my partner. And while I still wasn’t sure to what or where I was being called, I was sure that it wasn’t a call “to the convent.”

And now, coming into the home stretch, I’m finding myself back at square one with the question of “could religious life be for me?” Instead of asserting, “Definitely not,” I’m now hearing myself say, “I won’t rule it out someday, just not now.” In my year as a Dominican volunteer, I came to be in a very healthy and well-balanced place, both physically and emotionally. And I’m grateful for really recognizing how good I’ve had it here at Marywood this year.

Commissioning our Newest Alumni

The following is an excerpt from the closing reflection given at our final retreat at the Mariandale Center by Marie Cassidy and Donielle Dodde Xu.

“Our Gospel this weekend, Matthew 9:36-10:8, is filled with themes that are particularly appropriate for our gathering today. “The harvest is abundant, but the workers are few.” “Ask the master of the harvest to send more workers.” “Jesus sent **these** twelve on mission with instructions.” But the theme that strikes me most in reflecting on this group of young men and women, our 2004-05 Dominican Volunteers, is the instruction that Jesus gives his disciples to “Go and proclaim this message: the Kingdom of heaven is near.”

Each of our volunteers have spent a year bringing the Kingdom of heaven closer to those they ministered and lived with. Each of them have proclaimed a message of God’s love. Through their work in agencies and schools, they have brought alive the words that Jesus spoke so many years ago. If Jesus were speaking to us today, he might have this praise for each of them: “You have gone out and proclaimed that the Kingdom of heaven is near.”

Jesus gave his disciples authority to proclaim the message that the Kingdom was near. Living a year dedicated to ministry, community, and spirituality as members of the Dominican family has been a source of your authority to proclaim this message, too. The disciples had been called forth by Jesus to join him in ministry and community. The Dominicans called you forth, validating your gifts and fitness to serve others by inviting you to join them on their mission to proclaim and build the kingdom of God.

As we’ve just heard, you have served as witnesses and signs of God’s kingdom. It is often said that the indicator of a healthy spirituality is the fruit that it bears. You were drawn to do a volunteer year because of your spirituality – your desire to integrate your faith in God into your everyday way of life. Your year has born much fruit and the world has been blessed. The Dominican family is grateful for your service. May you continue to find ways to live out your faith on the different paths on which you now embark. Continue to proclaim the Kingdom of God.”

The Greatest Part of the Year

From Volunteer Evaluations

“Laughing with my community.”

“My whole ministry experience. Words can’t even describe it.”

“Loving both where I live and where I work. That’s unusual and refreshing, and it made my year so rich.”

“A split: my community and the ladies I served. My community was a warm, stable center that really became home, and the ladies at my ministry site have a special place in my heart.”

“My community was great. They were wonderful support and companions.”

“The chance to live up close and personal with Dominicans. Many connections were made to lots of different facets of the Dominican family.”

FORMER



VOLUNTEER UPDATES

In each summer edition of our newsletter, we highlight former volunteers. Starting with this summer, we are excited to bring you updates collected from former Apostolic Volunteers and Dominican Volunteers. We hope you’ll enjoy catching up with volunteers from years past.

From **Theresa (Schierer) Stuart** (AV 81-83):

“After I was an AV in Chicago at Queen of Peace High School, I moved to Nebraska to work in two parishes. I’ve been here ever since! My husband Bruce and I farm and feed cattle. We have two boys, Rob who is 14, and Aidan who is 5. Last spring (2004) I graduated with a Certificate in Pastoral Ministry and Parish Administration from Loyola University in New Orleans. I still volunteer my time as the Coordinator of Confirmation in my parish and serving on the parish Liturgy Committee.”

Daniel McVay and **Siobhan (LeFebvre) McVay** (AV’s 96-97) are currently living in Philadelphia. Dan is working with 18-21 year olds as the education/vocation specialist at Covenant House Pennsylvania. Siobhan continues to teach high school chemistry in New Jersey. From them: “We have recently expanded our family to three. We have been serving as foster parents through a local agency. We currently have our second foster child living with us. Deanna is 8 months old and we expect her to stay with us until her biological family is able to care for her. She is teaching us so many new things. We are lucky to have her (even if only for a short time)!”

From **Nick Bigelow** (AV 96-97):

“Sarah and I moved to West Des Moines, Iowa last summer and love it here. We are closer to her family, I have the best job of my career (teaching math at an all-freshman school a mile away), and we are in a strong community. Sarah and I are expecting our first child this August! She will take some time off when he/she is born, I’ll teach for another year, and then we’ll probably switch places.”

Claire Noonan (AV 92-93) and **Anthony Schmitz** (AV 86-87) recently announced their engagement. They are planning an October, 2005 wedding.

Erin Kass (AV 00-01) graduated from Aquinas Institute of Theology in May and is now working as a Campus Minister at St. Thomas Aquinas Church and Catholic Student Center in Ames, Iowa.

Ann (Malinoski) McCarthy (DV 01-02) is living in Pittsburgh, PA with her husband John. She is enjoying her work at a free-standing birth center.

Elizabeth (Jordan) Dooley (AV 95-96) and her husband Brett welcomed a baby boy, Matthew Christopher, on April 19, 2005



**DOMINICAN
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USA**

7200 WEST DIVISION STREET
RIVER FOREST, IL 60305-1222

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DOMINICAN VOLUNTEERS USA NEWSLETTER

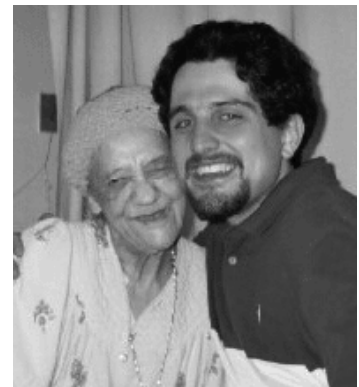
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Gearing up for Orientation 2005

A new group of volunteers will join us August 2-8, 2005 in Springfield, Illinois for our Orientation. Many thanks to the Springfield Dominicans who will host our group! Joining us as volunteers next year include Spencer Daniel (volunteering a second year at St. Pius V, Chicago), Brian Desmarais (volunteering a second year at San Juan Diego Middle School, Racine), and several other new volunteers who will place their mark on DVUSA history.

Welcome Kathryn Reyes!

Kathryn Reyes (AV '00-01) joins our staff for the summer. She will be accompanying Marie and the new volunteers on Orientation while Donielle is away on maternity leave. Join us in thanking her for the work she will do in helping our new volunteers start their year off. Welcome!



DVUSA

has a new brochure

Our new brochure came out this spring and is updated with information, pictures and stories. If you know of a place to circulate more brochures, please let us know in the office!