



DOMINICAN VOLUNTEERS USA

Summer 2006

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THANK YOU CALDWELL DOMINICANS!

BY REGINA BOTTERILL

The 2005-06 Dominican Volunteers met in Caldwell, New Jersey, at the Caldwell Motherhouse for their final closing retreat the weekend of June 9th. It was a joyful time of sharing, laughing, reflection, and prayer. It was also a weekend of praise -- in recognition of their outstanding contributions in ministry, their participation in community, and the personal growth that they have each experienced.

Spencer Daniel, a second-year DV at St. Pius V Parish in the predominantly Mexican neighborhood of Pilsen in Chicago, reflected that his experience "helped [him] to see the concrete, living side of an important national issue -- immigration." Jennifer Errante, who worked at St. Francis Center in Redwood City, California, learned critical personal skills, including "how to see multiple perspectives of one situation, tolerance, forgiveness, giving someone the benefit of the doubt." She added, "we all have a piece of the truth and need to work together to realize it." Each reflection offered profound insights -- about service, community, and relationships -- born from a year (or two!) of deep commitment and experience.

The volunteers were led in discussion by Lucianne Siers, OP, a Grand Rapids Dominican who has rich experience assisting missionaries in understanding culture shock, and the cycles of mission work. In addition, we were blessed with the presence and support of the Caldwell Dominicans in shared meals, Saturday mass, and our commissioning service. Many thanks goes to all the sisters of the motherhouse, who welcomed us as full family, and gave us the run of the kitchen, the dining room, and their peace and justice library. One sister gave us her entire key ring! And special thanks goes to Kathleen Tuite, OP, and Mary John, OP, who gave us rides, took us to lunch when we arrived, and helped us to feel very much at home. Thanks also to LaVise McCray, a 2003 Dominican Volunteer (and pictured at right in the Spanish ad on the last page), who helped us celebrate the end of the year with an ice cream cake and baby-sat for Donielle's daughter, Sophia.

The camaraderie among the DV's was exciting and touching, and the farewells were heartfelt. We are so grateful for you, and will miss you! We look forward to welcoming you as alumni!



Pictured above: The 2005-06 DV's and staff. Back row: Regina Botterill, Spencer Daniel, Brenda Weigand, Jennifer Errante, Alyssa Yaklin, Donielle Dodde Xu, Sophia Xu. Front row: Pam Ray, Brian Desmarais, Tony Butler, Megan Decker. Morgan Kallus, who volunteered at the International Community School and lived with the Penn Community in Atlanta, had prior commitments related to her sister's wedding and was unable to join us on the retreat.

Pictured at left: Spencer Daniel listens as Lucianne Siers, OP leads the group in reflection.



**“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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ON JONAH AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION.

by Brian Desmarais, San Juan Diego Middle School, Racine, WI

Now the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, “Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me.” But Jonah rose up to flee from the presence of the LORD. Jonah 1: 1-3

I can still vividly recall the moment I was asked to take over an eighth grade religion class after the unexpected departure of one of the sisters from our school. So many things raced in my mind: was I qualified to teach the Faith, could I adequately address the student’s questions and doubts, could I control a class on my own? I suddenly understood Jonah’s reluctance to go to Nineveh. But like Jonah, God was calling me to face this challenge and wouldn’t have let me settle without taking it on. What a ride it was! At times it was a real treat to receive piercing questions on such mysteries of the Faith as the Trinity, the Eucharist and the problem of evil. Of course there were times I felt completely ill-equipped to answer their questions, but I discovered that we are all on a journey in Faith that lasts for the duration of our lives. In addition, there was the challenge of teaching them moral responsibility and non-violence in a very immoral and violent world. The children at our school today face many obstacles to a good Catholic education. Negative peer pressures are competing for their attention. Sometimes kids come from broken families and are simply looking for attention and love. They bring their “issues” with them into the class. At times, I found myself speechless in the face of their stories and pain. I won’t lie, it wasn’t easy, and there were many bumps in the road, but it was a wonderful dose of humility and a very rewarding Faith experience. Now I am off to get a Masters in Theology, partially because of my experience at San Juan Diego.

And the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the second time, saying, “Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee.” So Jonah arose, and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Jonah 3:1-3

JOYFUL MYSTERIES

by Megan Decker

San Juan Diego Middle School, Racine, WI

As my year as a Dominican Volunteer draws to a close and I reflect upon the many relationships that I have formed and the work I have accomplished this year, I feel a sense of joy and satisfaction with my decision to be a volunteer.

However, I remain mindful that my joy is the outcome of a year that in many ways has been one of the most challenging, frustrating and

confusing years of my life. I recently became aware of and at peace with this paradox as I considered how beautifully it aligned with the Five Joyful Mysteries of the Rosary. The uneasy feelings the Holy Family must have felt are overshadowed by the joyful outcome of each situation, but the uneasiness was nonetheless very real. Their feelings seem to be a perfect parallel to many of the feelings that I experienced as a Dominican Volunteer. Now that the challenges and difficulties of being a volunteer have passed, I realize what a joyful opportunity it has been to devote a year to service.

I imagine Mary in the annunciation being confused and uncertain about what was happening to her and Joseph must have struggled with faith and trust. As Mary visited Elizabeth, I am sure she at least felt a little uncomfortable or insecure sharing her news. The nativity could not have possibly been so gentle and peaceful as most images portray it, but rather it must have been a humiliating and painful experience. In the presentation, Mary is warned that sorrow will pierce her heart like a sword. And finally the finding of the Christ Child in the temple was only joyful after many moments of stress and panic for Mary and Joseph. I was very connected with every one of these feelings as I served as a middle school music teacher and lived in a community. The entire volunteer experience was not easy, but it was only through the trying situations that I found myself to be stretched beyond my comfort and able to grow and become more at peace with what it means to serve God and others.



Megan is teaching a piano lesson to Maurice Smith, an eighth-grader and one of the first graduates of San Juan Diego Middle School. Megan worked with 50 students, giving them individual piano or violin lessons during the year.

LEARNING THEOLOGY THROUGH RELATIONSHIP

by Brenda Weigand

I wrote my first reflection as a Dominican Volunteer about the ways my ministry at Little Brothers in Chicago fit the motto "At the heart of ministry is relationship." I now have only 4 weeks until I bid farewell to those relationships, and I have many lessons that I will carry with me. One in particular that I realized only a short time ago is that, similar to my *ministry*, at the heart of my *theology* is also relationship.

Before, I thought theological learning to include primarily readings of theologians and discussions of historical texts in which the topic is explicitly identified and named. After pouring myself into the ministry of being through relationship, I can argue that great theological learning and growth happens also when it is not clearly identified. It happens through relationships.

I have been engaging in this intense study of theology for almost a year, how Dominican! I have become very close to 26 elders through consistent home visits. I have said good-bye to 4 as they left this world for the next. I came to know countless other seniors through meetings, parties, outings, and vacations. We have laughed, cried, shared, gotten into and out of trouble, simply sat in silence, and so much more.

I see them differently now. For example, I love Evelyn*. The first time I stepped into her home I literally almost lost my lunch. Bugs, dirt, odors, food. She was crazy and unsafe and her cat scared me to death. But something happens when you allow yourself to really enter into a relationship, particularly when it is with someone who has very few. Something happens when you connect and look past the filth, that same sweater, and that crazy cat. You open the window to let in some air, and you make a connection. Yes, the sink is a little dirty, but you will tend to that later. Then, you are just two women sitting in the front window chatting, smiling, and enjoying the company. This time when you leave and you answer her "I love you darling," with "I love you too," you discover that you mean it.

I see God differently now. God is in all people. We can't just believe this statement, we have to actually *look* and actually *see*. Through the filth and through the crabbiness, God does great things in our midst. We learn about God by learning about other people. Real compassion, wisdom, love, trust, and strength – they are there.

God is present as beauty, and I have come to know and love some very beautiful individuals through my ministry at Little Brothers Friends of the Elderly. For me, being Catholic and living faith is allowing that discovery of love and embracing the dignity of others through genuine relationship.

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 "Old Friends" and will go on to study Occupational Therapy in the fall at UIC. She will continue to live in community with Sinsinawa OPs.



FORMER

by Donielle Dodde Xu

AV
DV

VOLUNTEER UPDATES

In each summer edition of our newsletter, we highlight former volunteers. This edition will highlight the 2002-03 DV's. At our closing retreat this year, I invited one of the 02-03 DV's, LaVise McCray, to join us in New Jersey. Being with LaVise reminded me of the journey I have taken on staff with Dominican Volunteers USA. In four years I have been privileged to accompany many volunteers along this journey. And this is where some of the 2002-03 volunteers are, four years later:

LaVise McCray is finishing a year of teaching special education to high school students in Jersey City. She will move on to elementary school next year as she pursues a Masters degree in Educational Leadership.

Lynn Streefland received her Masters in Divinity from Notre Dame in May. She will be going back to Dominican High School in Whitefish Bay, WI where she will work in Campus Ministry.

Marcello Lippiello and **Paula Sims** were recently engaged and are both living in North Carolina. Marcello is pursuing a PhD in Classics while Paula is currently an Elder Care Consultant and will be pursuing a Masters in Social Work in the fall.

Krissie Koll is working as a youth minister at St. Ben's parish in Fontana, WI.

Kate Lapinski is still living on the south side of Chicago where she works as the Work and Travel Placement Coordinator for the Center for Cultural Interchange.

Nicole Brochmann is leading pilgrimages to the Holy Land and sites of Marian apparitions with Totally Yours Pilgrimages in Illinois.

Maggie Meier has just finished five years of work at Tolton Literacy Center and will begin graduate work in the fall at Fordham University.

Sybil Sullivan is currently enrolled in a PhD program for School Psychology.

If you are a former DV or AV and would like your update published in next summer's newsletter, please send it to us at dvusa@dom.edu. We love to hear from you!



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.

New Spanish Advertisement!

The following ad will run in the next issue of Oye! Magazine. Margaret McGuirk, OP, DVUSA board member, is working closely with our office to provide opportunities for Latinas to experience a volunteer year in Minneapolis, MN. Margaret can be reached at the number in the ad.

Sea del servicio con
Voluntarios Dominicanos USA

www.dvusa.org

Para la información en español,
la llamada 651-228-1169 Ext. 13

Dominican Volunteers USA

Gearing up for Orientation 2006

A new group of volunteers will join us August 7-13, 2006 in Grand Rapids, MI for our Orientation. Many thanks to the Grand Rapids Dominicans who will host our group!

Summer Staff Update

Welcome to Veronica Rodriguez and Jessie John (DV 03-04) who will join us in the office this summer as we prepare for Orientation. We are grateful for the energy and skills that they bring! Feel free to welcome them at 708-524-5985 or dvusa@dom.edu.

Farewell Donielle (and Sophia)!

As we closed the 2005-06 retreat in Caldwell, we also closed a very special chapter in the history of DVUSA. This June, after four years as Marketing and Recruiting Director, Donielle Dodde Xu, the longest employee of DVUSA, ended her time on staff with us. She has been a stable, loving, and dedicated presence, and has sustained relationships with alumni, with campus ministers, with potential applicants who are questioning a path of service, and with the brothers and sisters in our Dominican network.

Her competence and proficiency with communications led her to create our first (and subsequent) newsletter, brochures, banners, and a website! She has been a jet-setter and ground-builder for the organization, and a personal friend to everyone on staff and on Dominican Alley. Her talents and insights and skills for this important work will be greatly missed. We wish you many blessings as you move on to be with your daughter, Sophia, and to your next great adventure! If you would like to contact Donielle, you may reach her at donielledodde@hotmail.com.