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VOLUNTEERS GATHER FOR MIDYEAR RETREAT

By Donielle Dodde, Marketing and Recruitment Coordinator

"I'm anxious and excited to go back to my community and ministry with new energy."

"I feel like I have some things to think about and different strategies to try in my ministry and community. I truly enjoyed it and had a great time."

These were some of the comments made by Dominican Volunteers after the weekend retreat spent in New Orleans, LA, January 16-19, 2003. With half of the volunteer year behind us, and half of the year in the future, the weekend was a good chance to reflect on the experience and to gather the volunteers together to share their stories. Sr. Jeanne Moore, OP, Eucharistic Missionaries, prepared a slate of speakers from each of the Southern Dominican communities represented in New Orleans to speak on "Preaching the Just Word".

Sr. Robin Richard, OP, St. Mary's Dominican, addressed the Just Word of Ministry, sharing with the volunteers her story of finding her way to the ministry she is at today. Sr. Mary Daniel, OP, St. Mary's Dominican, preached on the Just Word of Prayer. Br. Herman Johnson, OP, Southern Province, gave an inspiring talk on what it looks like to live the Just Word of Community. Sr. Liliane Flavin, OP, Cabra Dominican, shared stories of people she's known and influential authors in her talk on the Just Word of Study. To round out the four pillars, Sr. Dot Trosclair, OP, Eucharistic Missionaries, gave the volunteers a hands-on, interactive approach to looking at the Just Word of Balance, and the retreat closed with Kevin Cahalan, Associate of the Eucharistic Missionaries, sharing his life story and addressing the theme, Preaching the Just Word.

There were several opportunities during the weekend for personal reflection as well as socializing with Dominicans and each other. The volunteers got to experience the sights and the smells of New Orleans with a night out on the town. Many thanks to Sr. Liz Ferguson, OP, Cabra Dominican for organizing the social and inviting dozens of Dominicans to come and meet the volunteers! At the social, Sr. Mary Jeanne Girshefski, OP, St. Mary's Dominican, gave a rousing explanation of the customs of Mardi gras, and several of the traditions of New Orleans found their way into the experience. The volunteers gathered for Mass at Xavier University to close the weekend. It was a weekend that energized us all and will fuel the next few months of Dominican Volunteer ministry, community and spirituality.



Left: Sr. Mary Jeanne Girshefski, OP and Paula Sims meet during the social. Right: Br. Herman Johnson, OP and Marcello Lippiello talk following his presentation on the Just Word of Community.

"If you are what you should be, you will set the world on fire."

-St. Catherine of Siena

Adrian Dominicans

Akron Dominicans

Amityville Dominicans

Blauvelt Dominicans

Caldwell Dominicans

Columbus Dominicans

Dighton 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

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THROUGH THE EYES OF A CHILD YOU WILL SEE THE FACE OF CHRIST

By Nicole Brochmann, International Community School, Atlanta, GA

Someone once asked me what it is like to hear the children I serve say, "Ms. Nikki, Ms. Nikki, I love you!" I told her it's as if Jesus is telling me Himself. It melts my heart to hear them utter those words. Their smiling faces, sweet embraces, and kisses galore are what set my heart on fire yearning to give the Lord my all. It's an amazing feeling to see David from Vietnam, Atong from Sudan, or Lana from Kurdistan faces light up when they see me and run out of line to leap into my arms, hugging and kissing me. It is what Jesus must feel like when we reach out to Him and call on Him.

These refugee children who come from all over the world, experienced all kinds of pain, are different races and religions, have taught me what is important in this life. It is to love, with your whole heart, mind and soul. It's the simplest thing that money can't buy, that greed, selfishness, power, alcohol, drugs, and lust have robbed the human race from doing and from experiencing God's love. I have neverfully experienced the love of God until I started to volunteer at the International Community School. My soul is overflowing with so much love for each and every one of these children. Just when I think it's impossible to feel anymore, I do because of such instances where I walk into the same classroom everyday and see smiling faces that are so happy and delighted because of my presence and shout, "Ms. Nikki!" All they want is for me to stay close to them and be reassured I'm not going to leave them. They like to hold on to me, lay a hand on my knee, or to play with my hair, just to touch me and know that I'm there. It's like the touch of Christ.

Each of these children is so close to my heart.

I feel like I'm in Heaven and looking at the face of Christ when I look at them. If you've never seen the face of Christ or experienced God's love, come to the International Community School where you will experience Heaven on Earth. And it will change your life forever. My experience at ICS has drastically impacted my life. These little children love so purely and unconditionally, and offer their love for everyone, just as Christ does. I have experienced God's love and I must show that love to others. I never imagined feeling such utter joy! "Eye has not seen, ear has not heard, what God has ready for those who love Him."



Nichole Brochmann helps a student at the International Community School in Atlanta.

SPOTLIGHT ON MINISTRY: Tolton Adult Literacy Center, Chicago, IL

By Maggie Meier, Tolton Literacy Center, Chicago, IL

"Everyone teaches and everyone learns." It was this motto that convinced me that teaching adult literacy at the Tolton Center was the service placement I wanted. I liked the idea that I would be sharing my college education with those learning basic literacy and preparing for the GED. As a teacher, I would also be required to approach the students with respect and to view my own role as educator with humility. A year and a half later, I continue to be a student to my students!

I work at the second of two Tolton sites, located on the west side of Chicago in one of the poorest neighborhoods in the country. "Everyone here has a story," Tolton staff members counseled me, meaning every one of our clients has been and continues to be touched by the violence and poverty that pervade the inner city.

But it is also in this context of prevalent chaos that I been honored to witness astounding heroism and courage. Everyday in class, students surprise me with their desire to learn. In the past six months, GED's were earned by three students. With the Chicago's Westside providing the chaotic backdrop, my new heroes have emerged. The more stories I hear, the more impressed I am by my students' ability to smile and laugh, much less come to school on a regular basis.

At the Tolton Center, "where everyone teaches and everyone learns," I have taught the basics of math, social studies and science from my college-educated base of knowledge. The students have taught me in turn, not from books, but from the example of their lives. In this give-and-take of wisdom, I find myself deeply indebted to these, my new heroes.

SCENES FROM THE RETREAT



From top: Sr. Dot gives a lesson on balance with Pat Burke, Sr. Jeanne, Lynn Streefland, Maggie Meier, Paula Sims and Garth Rose.

Paula Sims, Krissie Koll, and Nicole Brochmann share photo albums and stories of their volunteer year so far. They are all Dominican University, River Forest, IL, graduates.

Pat Burke joins a group of St. Mary's Dominicans at lunch at the motherhouse in New Orleans, LA.

WELCOME TO THE MARRIAGE, HON!

By Lynn Streefland, Campus Minister, Dominican High School, Whitefish Bay, WI

Laughter in the halls. Shouts and screams on the emotional roller coaster of life. Stories of sadness. Excuses and apologies for missed meetings or disrespectful behavior. Lies in the lunch line. Wow, has this been an experience!

The age difference between myself and the students is only between four and eight years, but acclimating myself in a high school, not being a student, has been a challenge. I'm seeing high school and its rhythms with new eyes. The struggle of knowing oneself, establishing one's identity, maintaining healthy friendships, and learning time management skills are just some of the constant issues the students deal with day in and day out. Their struggles remind me that we never quit growing and developing, and the list of struggles above are life long struggles we encounter.

I was told over and over again that the students are beautiful and wonderful people by the teachers and staff at DHS. But I honestly wondered, how wonderful can these students be? Would they be able to look past color of skin and different economic backgrounds to mix as one student body? The answer was a surprising yes! I realized they are beautiful people on a journey of self discovery. They develop and grow as I do. I'm fortunate that they have welcomed me on their journey of growth, and in turn, they are also walking with me on my journey. So now that the honeymoon phase is over, I have to face reality and enjoy the ups and downs of marriage.

GARTH RECAPS

By Garth Rose, Casa Juan Diego, Chicago, IL

My time here in Chicago has been both very rewarding and very difficult at times. I anticipated challenges and difficulties when I started, good times and bad and above all opportunities for growth, but oftentimes I anticipated the wrong ones!

The neighborhood and the city I live in are in my native country, but they might as well not be! I have lived the great bulk of my life in medium-sized towns in Oregon - not towns so small that everybody knows everybody, but still small enough to be comfortable. A place full of trees and fresh air; a place where Portland is "the big city", a place with its own traditions and assumptions. Now I'm living in a truly "big city" for the first time, with air quality that assaults my allergies and nary a tree in sight for miles; and in a heavily Mexican neighborhood where Spanish is more common than English.

I would not trade the experience of these last five months, as hard as it's been at times, for something easier but less fulfilling. I have grown through more barriers, made a tangible difference in more people's lives, and learned more about love - real love for real people - in these months more than from anything else I can readily imagine myself having done instead. Certainly more than I've experienced in the last several years left to my own devices! I have no regrets, and I'd gladly do it again.

The first time I visited Ester in her apartment she cried the entire visit. Her grandson was killed in the past year and she thinks about him often. She says she just wants another hug from him and she seemed to go over the story of his death in her mind every day. That day I first visited her was about 5 months ago.

Ester came to our Christmas party on Christmas day. I was glad to see her at the party and like always, she embraced me like she would never let me go. The day of the party I was quite busy running around making sure everything was going well, but there was a magical 10 minutes between dinner and desert when we got some of the elderly to dance to the music that our entertainment was playing.

I saw Ester at her table smiling and I took her hand and asked if she wanted to dance with me. We danced to "Twist and Shout" with people snapping pictures the whole time! She sat down at the end of the song to rest, but she had a smile so big that seemed to come from her heart.

I called her the next day and she said she had a great time at the party. She said, "Paula, all morning I have been thinking about us dancing and I just keep smiling and laughing about it!"

Fire. My journey.

A poem by Krissie Koll, Transitional Living Center
Educare, Spokane, WA

Fire. Ever changing, ever being changed.
 Fire taken away. Fire added. Still fire.
 Fire. Warmth-giving and relaxing, life-taking and overwhelming.
 Fire. So simple and bright, so complex and opaque.
 Fire. So universal, so personal.
 Fire. Old stories told, new memories created.
 Fire. So beautiful, so frightening.
 Fire. So dependant, so controlling.
 Fire. So form-filling, so limitless.
 Fire. So new, so old.
 My journey. Ever moving, ever still.



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