



Dominican
Volunteers
USA

Sharing the Charism

Winter 2011

Vol. 9, No.2

Snowmageddon!

All volunteers arrive safely (and on-time) for Midyear Retreat in Chicago just one day after the blizzard.



By Stefanie Flax, Assistant Director



Volunteers learn a bit of history and a comparative charism in the Passionist Heritage Room from Fr. Arthur Carrillo, C.P.

With the more than half of the country nearing an extreme level of cabin fever from the “Snowmageddon of 2011”, Dominican Volunteers USA went forth with a frontier spirit and arrived safely in Chicago—the Mecca of the storm, (unless you ask a New Yorker). We did not decide to go to Chicago the first week of February to build snow people, make sure the alleys were plowed, or to simply challenge our public transportation skills, but rather to come together as a unit to reflect on the past few months, share stories, and eat deep dish pizza. Some call this the annual Midyear Retreat, but most call it fun, rejuvenating, and much needed.

The seven young women began the retreat by sharing a letter they wrote to their past/pre-volunteer selves from their current standpoint. They were to include tips and suggestions on how to live and thrive in community, ministry, prayer, study, and their new city. The perspectives and experiences slightly overlapped in the broad sense, but were individual to each person. This sharing had all DVs realiz-

ing how connected each was to one another despite the miles. This activity led into generating more thoughts and tips for yet another letter, but this time to their future volunteer selves from their current standpoint. The ending thought was a call to remember that “At the heart of ministry is relationship.” Well said, ladies.

Other sessions included a discussion on the issue of immigration reform led by Fr. Brendan Curran, OP (Central Province) and Sr. Bernadine Karge, OP (Sinsinawa). Br. Joe Kilikevics, OP (Central Province) shared a riveting inter-faith prayer and dance lesson that connects Christianity to our Jewish and Muslim brothers and sisters. Lastly, volunteers enjoyed an opportunity to visit the House of Connections and learn about the community’s long history.

The Midyear festivities were held at the Passionist Monastery and allowed for a wonderful opportunity to learn about the order and their charism. The priests were very generous in sharing their space. Thanks to all who helped make the weekend such a great success, especially the volunteers and their willingness to reconnect and openly share their experiences thus far in ministry.



Michelle Calvert with her class at the International Community School.

Dominican Volunteers USA searches for new frontiers for the faith by inviting men and women to walk with us in mission as volunteers. Together, we respond to the needs of our sisters and brothers, especially those who are poor and marginalized. We live out the Dominican mission of proclaiming the gospel through our ministry, common life, prayer and study within a diverse, intergenerational community.

What it Means to Be a DV

By Kelly Allen

St. Agatha's/Blessed Sacrament Youth Center—Chicago, IL

If I had to sum up my volunteer experience in one word this far it would be Adventure. According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, the word adventure is defined as an undertaking usually involving danger and unknown risks.

The danger is falling in love with being a Dominican Volunteer, your ministry, your community, or your faith. The risks in being a Dominican Volunteer are unknown. First off Chicago is 282.79 miles from the where I grew up. The area where I now live at first was completely unknown to me. Also, as of two weeks before orientation I did not know my placement. To me an adventure is doing something you have never done before and the excitement of doing that new thing. Trying something new was exactly what I wanted to do in my volunteer year.

Some of the best advice I have been given in my volunteer year thus far has been from the children at the Blessed Sacrament Youth Center. For example, to cure a cold all you need is extra sleep, water, and to eat a whole bag of pretzels. There is also nothing more exciting than a good “roll on the floor”. The more paint that is on the paper the “prettier” the picture is. The more soap you use the cleaner your hands are.

“Winner, winner, House of Connections dinner” is a phrase commonly heard on community nights where we



Sr. Mary O'Donnell, OP (Sinsinawa), Kelly Allen (DV), and Sr. Marilyn Derr, OP (Sinsinawa) at a pumpkin patch outside Chicago.

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eat and pray together. It is great being able to share recipes with one another. At the house this year we have tried lots of new recipes and we will say we have not had a bad meal together yet (or it could just be because of the wonderful company). Being a volunteer, I feel I have been welcomed into the Dominican Family though the House of Connections.

One of the great benefits of the House of Connections is it is right next to the “EL”—you can literally see the train coming from the window—which is great for both transportation and people-watching. Coming from Michigan where there is virtually no public transportation, I have found the “EL” completely fascinating. For example on some of the platforms there are heat lamps for the winter so when you are waiting for the train you can keep warm by just pressing the button.

Throughout the adventure you are not without companionship, prayers, and coffee. Being a Dominican Volunteer I have been blessed to have many amazing adventures and wonderful stories to tell.

Being Present

By Rachel DeBruin

Immaculate Conception Academy—San Francisco, CA

Have you ever gotten to that place in your life or career that you looked at it and said, “I know what’s going on here! Look at me, I can call myself successful because I know what I am doing and I am doing it well!”?

And not to say that I am not successful, but it has definitely been a learning experience this last year with Dominican Volunteers. There was a time around spring of last year where I could start my day at Immaculate Conception Academy that I finally felt like “I know what I am doing! I am not lost and I could be called an ‘expert.’ Well, at least I would no longer be qualified as a ‘novice.’” I remember that day—it was actually quite a boring day. The next day, my supervisor, feeling our contentment at reaching non-novice status decided to mix things up again. We went out to play ring-around-the-rosie for our mid-morning meeting. Since that day I can look back at my time with Dominican Volunteers and say that I have never had full control over how each day would go, that I didn’t exactly know what was going on 100% of the time.

I have loved my time with ICA in their Corporate Work Study Program both last year and this year. I think this year I am more aware of this necessity to live in the present moment because I have found that I never know “what’s going on and who’s in control.” DV has taught me humility. Before I was a college-grad who knew everything. I was an expert. I could do no wrong. These years I have made mistakes, I have given over control, and I have stood in front of a classroom full of students trying to catch me telling inaccuracies.

Living with the sisters has shown me to accept this humility that no one really knows what’s going on, but we can turn to our faith and trust that God is Good, All the Time.



Kristin Johnson, Rachel DeBruin, and Lisa Hayes during the Christmas season at the Immaculate Conception Priory in San Francisco, CA. These ladies share community with eleven sisters from Mission San Jose.

Editor’s Note: Rachel, a second-year volunteer, showed true leadership and a strong dedication to prayer by creating and coordinating a daily reflection program on the DV blog this Advent, utilizing readings from Watch for the Light (Plough Publishing). We thank her for not only the initiative, but her generous spirit to build up all those around her.

Our Collective Story

It has become a DVUSA tradition for the volunteers (under extreme time constraints!) to combine themes that they heard in each individual’s shared story at Midyear Retreat into one larger “Collective Story”. The idea this year was for volunteers to write lessons to volunteers of the future:

Dear DV’s in the future,

We just had an EXTREME Mid-year Retreat. Here are some things you can work on:

Be present.

Don’t forget that prayer can do wonderful things.

Stay focused.

LAUGH.

Approach conflict and stress with a "Darshan" attitude.

Forgive.

Be thankful and live simply.

Find commonalities rather than differences.

Remember why you are a Dominican Volunteer.

And remember, "At the Heart of Ministry is Relationship."

And last of all, LOVIES, Hearts, and Blessies,
US



The volunteers gather at Midyear Retreat in Chicago with the objects they chose to represent their year of service so far.

Alumni Impact

The DVUSA program lasts for a year, sometimes two years, but the impact is immeasurable. Combined with the Apostolic Volunteer program from 1974-1999, there are 462 alumni involved in ministries across the nation and the world. Former volunteers have often been heard to say that at the end of their service, they realized true service is never complete. In December of this year, we will release the first ever Alumni Edition of the DVUSA newsletter "Sharing the Charism" to share some of their stories. The Alumni Edition will annually highlight where alumni are today and how their program experience helped shape their lives. In anticipation, we offer a brief glimpse of some stories here:

Donna Wallis (AV 1974-75 – St. Brendan School in Chicago) – After teaching Catholic school for over 30 years in inner-city Tucson, AZ and raising two wonderful daughters adopted from Korea (now 23 and 26, let's sign them up for DVUSA!), Donna "retired" to stuff UNICEF boxes, be a Eucharistic minister, serve homeless meals three times a month, make blankets for nursing homes, and home-school. Her fondest memory as an AV in Chicago was when her boyfriend—a police officer—visited her and proposed in the middle of the convent of sisters! They were married the next year on 11/22/75.

Fr. Brendan Curran, OP (AV 1993-94) – This year Father Brendan celebrates his 10th anniversary of ordination as a Dominican priest of the Central Province. He currently serves as the pastor of St. Pius V in Chicago's Pilsen neighborhood, and is well known as a fervent advocate for immigration reform. Oddly enough, he is also DVUSA's current landlord. Thanks, Father!

Carla D'Rozario (DV 2002-03 - Redwood City, CA/St. Francis Center) – Carla just completed her Master's degree in Pastoral Theology, with a concentration in Spiritual Direction, from Loyola Marymount University (Los Angeles), and she ministers as a retreat facilitator. Congratulations also to her and her husband who just had their first baby in late 2010. What did they name him? Let's just say St. "Dominic" would be very proud.

Paul Wratkowski (DV 2006-07 Our Lady of Good Counsel/Little Brothers Chicago) – Congratulations to Paul who just graduated from medical school, and let us keep him in our prayers as he applies for residency programs. He said that before volunteering, he was interested in being a radiologist for the good pay and good hours. After serving, he is now pursuing a career as a pediatric oncologist (i.e., a doctor for kids with cancer), because his experience taught him to view a career as a ministry.

Audrey George (AV 1990-92) – Audrey is currently the Executive Director of Horizons for Youth (www.horizons-for-youth.org) in Chicago. This organization provides scholarships and mentors to children from low-resource areas of Chicago. With hundreds served, 99% of Horizons alumni have graduated high school and 80% went on to attend college. Audrey has even made Horizons a ministry site for DV's like Joe Loeffler ('09-10).

Dawn Stary (DV 2001-02 – Bronx Community/St. Luke's School) – After serving and living with the Dominican Sisters of Blauvelt in New York through the 9/11 attack, Dawn went on to earn her Master's degree in Pastoral Counseling from the University of San Diego. She lives in California and her work specializes in care for refugees and people seeking asylum. On top of that, she manages to find time to be the President of Fair Trade San Diego, a nonprofit association dedicated to fair wage practices.

Kevin Kingdon (DV 2008-09 Bronx Community/St. Luke's School) – Previously an art major, Kevin taught in a Catholic school in the Bronx and directed the first ever school play for the 7th and 8th graders. His experience inspired him to pursue teaching, where he received certification from Louisiana State University and currently teaches in inner-city Shreveport, LA. As a former community mate of the outgoing Kevin Kingdon, let me just say perhaps if we're lucky he will emcee our new annual benefit in April of 2012.

Lauren Vater (DV 2007-08) served with Sr. Eileen Gannon, OP (Sparkill) at the United Nations headquarters in New York City (well, technically it's international soil). Three years after her year stay in the Bronx community, she is serving as a Maryknoll Lay Missioner in Bolivia. She said she joined the Maryknoll program because her ministry at the United Nations made her want to see firsthand the challenges faced in developing countries. We pray for her health, safety, and that she receives a lot of care packages now that she's in her third year overseas!



St. Jean Dorcy, O.P.

Lynn Domina (AV 1986-87 – Blessed Sacrament Convent/Literacy Program in Cook County Jails System) – Lynn now teaches English at SUNY-Delhi and writes poetry. She will be beginning a M. Div. program at the Earlham School of Religion this summer. A collection of her poems was previously published under the title *Corporal Works* and she edited *Poets on the Psalms*. Her latest collection of poems—*Framed in Silence*, published by Main Street Rag Publishing Company—was just made available for sale as of March 1st this year! Visit www.mainstreetrag.com/LDomina.html for more info and support her great talent! To the right is an excerpt from the latest compilation...

Paula Sims (DV 2002-03 – House of Connections/Little Brothers Friends of the Elderly) – After living with former AVs Julia and Hud Hobday and Sinsinawa sisters in the House of Connections, Paula went on to serve with Little Brothers Friends of the Elderly in Ireland, earned her Master's degree in Social Work from the University of North Carolina, and now is the Social Services Coordinator with Lutheran Social Services in Moline, IL. She said her volunteer year helped develop forming belief that emotional and spiritual wellness are just as important as physical wellness.

Watch out for the following stories in coming issues of the December Alumni Edition:

Theologians - At least six alumni went on to earn doctoral degrees in ministry or theology and are now inspiring minds at prestigious universities across the country including Fordham, Notre Dame, and Creighton. We'll share with you their research, teaching, and (of course) their preaching.

Vowed religious - More than 10 former AV's and DV's have either taken final vows or are in formation, many in the Order of Preachers! Find out how their experience of community and ministry as a volunteer helped inspire them to take this wonderful step in faith.

International Missions -Numerous volunteers have taken the mission overseas, and are now serving the economically poor and marginalized in developing countries around the globe. After reading these stories, feel free to send a care package!

More! – Hundreds of former volunteers have gone on to minister as teachers, counselors, social workers, spiritual directors, nurses, midwives, doctors, nonprofit social service providers, and more professions dedicated to the apostolic works of Matthew 25. Every alumnus/a so far interviewed is also involved in their community in a myriad of ways. Find out about their efforts in soup kitchens, prisons, schools, legal clinics, and more.

Get involved! *If you are an alumnus/a and want to share your story, let us know (mchapuran@dvusa.org). Alumni surveys are being conducted over the course of this year to provide content for the newsletter, help us document our long-term program impact for funders, and also to evaluate how the program can best re-connect and engage alumni to the Dominican Family and vice versa. These phone surveys are done every five years, and we need your help because statistics are only as good as the sample size...*

Gift by Lynn Domina (AV 1986-87)

*Suppose grace does fall
like snow—no, not like the snow
sweeping across your bare yard today,
sliding from branch to stem, grazing
the single dead oak leaf
that must fall but won't, the snow
adhering to pine needles with such delicate
fervency you gasp at the contrast, green
underlying white, white pyramids
insulating the roofs of rustic bird feeders
heaped with suet and sunflower seed, black bulls dropped
onto drifts, overlaid with cardinal prints,
snow that softens
even prickly raspberry canes, that soaks your collar,
slips under your scarf as you bend to shovel,
no, not like this snow*

*but like the string of flakes you cut
from green construction paper forty years ago,
then dusted with silver glitter as a gift
for your mother who hangs it still at Christmas,
green faded to gray,
beside the pine whose top
brushes her ceiling, its slight cones
left on as if to attract
ornamental cardinals, glass chickadees,
the round owl and rounder papier-mâché partridge,
their feathers reflected by icicles and tinsel,
glitter wafting toward dusky light,
its faint compelling shimmer.*

"More than a Year"



DV Pat Burke (2002-03) at Link Community School in Newark, NJ who shared community with Sisters of Caldwell.

DVUSA



Lenten Appeal



DV Heather Lovewell (2004-05) to the right of Sr. Maureen O'Connell, OP (Adrian) at Angela House in Houston, TX.

Dear Family and Friends of the Program,

As we are asked these 40 days of Lent to remember both in prayer and alms those who are suffering, we offer an opportunity to honor the volunteers, sisters, friars, or ministry colleagues in your life who make these struggles their own everyday. In preparation for **National Volunteer Week** (April 10-16, 2011), DVUSA would like to recognize all the people (past and present) who have lived the Gospel in our lives. Please show your support today and make a donation in honor of their service. An acknowledgment of your kindness and the honoree's dedication will be posted on our website during National Volunteer Week. We will also send the honoree a tribute card letting him or her know of their recognition.

There is no minimum/maximum limit to either the amount contributed to honor someone in service nor the number of people you may recognize. However, in a time of great financial need for nonprofits everywhere, please consider:

- \$25 allows a volunteer to receive a prayer binder, a candle, and T-shirt at Orientation.
- \$120 covers a volunteer's lodging/meals for Closing Retreat.
- \$500 can pay for all the marketing materials (e.g., brochures, posters) needed for one recruiting year to expand our program to meet rising demand from nonprofit agencies for DVs.

Please consider submitting a message on the enclosed envelope even if you are unable to contribute financially at this time, and we are extremely grateful for support of any kind. All donations to Dominican Volunteers USA are tax deductible. Thank you.



Erica Martell (DV 2001-02 who served at Crown Point Ecology Center in Akron, OH) reflecting in the labyrinth while on retreat in the Hamptons, NY.



2008-09 DVs Michael Conner, Sara Brabec, Sarah Zaprzal, and Kevin Kingdon on Lake Erie while at Orientation in Racine, WI.

With fond memories, I bid adieu

By Stefanie Flax

Assistant Director 2008-2011 and Dominican Volunteer 2007-2008

The time has come for me to officially leave my post as the Assistant Director of Dominican Volunteers USA. It is with fond memories, blessed experiences, and professional, personal, and spiritual growth that I depart. It has been an honor and privilege to be in the presence (and work alongside) those who actively work to make the change they want to see. I have enjoyed my duties and association with the Dominican Family and know this will help shape my future path. I have been touched, molded, and blessed by so many of you and want to use this opportunity to reflect on those lessons and formally thank you—although you will remain nameless as this newsletter is only 8 pages! I hold the organization and its supporters in prayer and ask for God's blessings on all of our future endeavors. I have truly come to know the truth in our motto which states that "At the heart of ministry is relationship" and know I leave with many wonderful relationships in various forms. Peace.

Editor's Note: Stefanie will be beginning a position with the Muscular Dystrophy Association in her home of Wichita, Kansas where she bought her first house! She has set the bar high by utilizing regional alumni to expand recruiting visits, creating new marketing posters that were sent to over 60 campuses nationwide, and not to mention uplifting and supporting more than 20 volunteers through their peaks and valleys and [occasional] late night phone calls. May God take her intense passion for DVUSA and helping others and use it in all her future endeavors.



Stefanie (front right) with the House of Connections during her volunteer year in 2007-2008. She served at Deborah's Place in Chicago.

Fundraising Appeals Update

The Alumni Advent Appeal raised \$6,228. We are both tremendously grateful for the increased support from last year, and yet still short of our needed goal of \$10,00 to meet our budget. If you missed the appeal but still want to help us achieve our goal, please use the included envelope (for checks) or donate online (for credit cards) at www.dvusa.org.

We could not continue this mission without you, so please know your support is deeply valued.

Staff Corner

By Michael Chapuran, Executive Director

First, we'd like to humbly thank the Sieben Foundation and the Sinsinawa Ministry Fund for awarding generous grants of \$2,500 and \$5,000 respectively to support our mission in 2011-12! Please pray for another round of grant proposals we have submitted, especially one for \$207,000 to AmeriCorps that would help us cut volunteer costs to ministry sites *in half* and increase recruiting numbers by providing volunteers with \$5,000 education awards. At the time I write this, AmeriCorps is at risk of being eliminated completely by Congress. Visit www.saveservice.org to get involved with a petition, a phone call, or a picket sign.

Second, as you read about the staff transition from Stefanie above, DVUSA is actively looking for a new Assistant Director of Recruiting and Marketing. If you find the job description and details on our homepage (www.dvusa.org), it means we are still accepting applications, but don't delay as the search has already begun.

Third, we are beginning now to plan the DVUSA benefit—to be held in Chicago in April 2012 (next year). If you are in the Chicago area, perhaps you'd consider being on the Coordinating Committee? If not in the area, perhaps you could donate a painting, a printer, use of a time-share, a gift card, or a kidney for the silent auction at this event? Be creative! We'll email save-the-date announcements in May.

Last, the Closing Retreat will be held in Grand Rapids, Michigan from June 2nd-5th, 2011 thanks to the hospitality of the Dominican Sisters there. If you are in the area, we'd love you to join us, and email me (mchapuran@dvusa.org) for more details. You really can be a great resource of experience for the current volunteers who are in the process of discerning life after the volunteer year (not to mention desperate to network!). We will be welcoming alumni, Dominican Laity, Associates, and a vocation director to the retreat to present ideas on how to stay connected to the Dominican Family. After all, "at the heart of ministry is relationship," and part of those great relationships are with each other. God bless, and thanks for all you do to support the mission around the nation.



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Ministry Site Highlight: WomanCraft



*Need wedding invitations, baby announcements, graduation announcements, thank you cards?
A DVUSA partner can help you while helping women with barriers to employment gain job skills at the same time!*

Current DV Annie volunteers at WomanCraft in the North Lawndale neighborhood of Chicago, IL. WomanCraft, a social enterprise of Heartland Human Care Services, uses recycled office paper and reclaimed flowers to create unique, sustainable, handmade paper products, such as wildflower seed notecards, memory books, gift tags, frames and custom wedding invitations. WomanCraft provides artisan positions and transitional jobs to women facing barriers to employment, so that they may earn income, improve job skills, build a work history and increase economic self-sufficiency. In fact, the organization is a winner of Mayor Daley's GreenWorks Award for environmentally responsible products in Chicago! It's not often a nonprofit organization allows you to support their social justice ministry while also shopping for needed items, so visit www.womancraft.net and place an order. Both the quality of the products and the mission are amazing.



Annie marketing WomanCraft materials to support the ministry.

www.womancraft.net