



'We have become a real community'

By Kim Buesking
CVV Volunteer

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s we finish out the first half of our CVV experience, many things have changed since we arrived in August. We came to Denver as a

group of strangers with the common desire to work with those who live on the margins of society, be in community, and explore our faith.

After five months of surviving together, we have all been changed for the better in some way. But the greatest transformation has been our growth as a community, from strangers to friends to a family. The shyness is gone. Real personalities are free to shine and opinions come out. The politeness reserved for strangers is long gone, replaced with our true selves. We have moved past the superficial niceties to recognizing the genuine qualities that each of us have.

We have become a real community.

If you ever stop by the CVV household on a Wednesday evening, you may just walk into one of our community meetings.

You would know it right away by all of us gathered around the dining room table, discussing everything from chores around the house to weekend activities and advocacy events.

Not as easy as it sounds

It sounds pretty straightforward in theory and, back in August, when we were all just getting to know each other, it seemed easy.

But have you ever tried to get 13 individuals to agree on something?

Not just any group of people, but 13 opinionated individuals with different backgrounds, beliefs and desires.

Well, let me just inform you, it is not a simple task. It is not just the major issues that merit a long discussion, but even the little things warrant a thorough conversation. We have spent 20 minutes discussing loading the dishwasher only to make no



CVV volunteer Kim Buesking, a registered nurse, works with Kathleen Daniels at Stout Street Clinic.

changes in how we were already doing it. Food is a common topic, from where we shop to what we buy to what to do with any extra money. Our meetings have changed over the months as we have learned what bothers some people and is normal for others. We all have different ways of doing daily tasks and everyone has unique likes and dislikes. As we have been realizing the importance of compromise we have come not only to recognize but also to appreciate our differences.

Community living has its ups and downs but sometimes it takes a break in the community to recognize all of these. With 13 people it would seem that one or two people missing would not make that big of a deal.

However, when one person is absent from our community it is obvious. When numerous people left over the holidays, it was just downright depressing.

I have grown accustomed to

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We have grown to depend on each other in the good and the bad times.

constantly having someone to talk with, a listening ear, or just people always around the house. Some of us have the same clients, but more than not, we share similar experiences dealing with related issues: poverty, illness, loneliness. We have grown to depend on each other in the good and the bad times. It has been through the growth of our community that we have been able to grow as individuals. ↑

Kim Buesking works at The Stout Street Clinic at Samaritan House.



CVV volunteer Seth Alkire at work at Mount St. Vincent.

once-unfathomable things and have been given an enduring drive to serve.

My work site is a residential treatment center for children with behavioral disorders. From the day I started work there, I knew I'd been assigned the right work site.

The staff was incredibly supportive; the kids were very welcoming and excited for me to be there. To put it simply, I felt home.


From there, I started developing relationships with the staff and with the children. I saw each child as capable of accomplishing anything they dreamed with their life. As I got to know them during the next five months, however, I learned what incredible obstacles they face as they move toward living on their own.

The abuse and trauma these children were exposed to have harmed them in very significant and, in some cases, irreparable ways. As I began to be bogged down by these obstacles, I started losing hope and enthusiasm for my work.

Fortunately, inspiration is in no short supply when working with kids.

Even with the tremendous task of learning to function "normally" in society (after being taught anything-but-normal coping skills), the children arrive at school almost every day with smiles on their faces and open minds.

Beyond that, I had my community to come home to and share my experiences with. The great thing about CVV is that I have an incredible support system built into where I live. Even on the toughest days, I can always rely on my community to help me see the brighter side and to find the courage to continue striving to meet the goals I laid out for myself at the beginning of the year.

Although we have found the "nitty-gritty" in our jobs, we have also found the reasons why people dedicate their lives to serving those living in poverty. 

Seth Alkire works at Mount St. Vincent Home.

Finding a reason to serve

By Seth Alkire
CVV Volunteer

It's hard to believe that our CVV year is almost half way over. It doesn't seem that long ago that all of us arrived in our new home on Pearl Street, ready to embark on the incredible journey that lay ahead.

The excitement was contagious. Every day we spent together built on the energy we had from the day before. We were thrilled to be living

in community, living for change and, ultimately, we were all excited about the year that lay ahead. I remember feelings of being able to change the world.

Five months in, the notions I came in with seem a little naïve. The reality of working day-in and day-out with under served populations long set in and has left me with far less energy and excitement than I started the year with.

In its place, however, I have found life-long relationships, have learned



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Greeley, Colo. is home for **Seth Alkire**, who graduated from the University of Denver with a degree in cognitive neuroscience. Seth is a great addition to the group. His searching spirit often leads the way to hearing new perspectives on various issues. He is reflective and engaging in his interactions. Mount St. Vincent Home, where Seth works with children who have great needs, is a great fit for him as he continues to learn about human nature.

Honesty is worth striving for because as long as we seek truth, we can be confident that all of our suffering is just and right.

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Stout Street Clinic is pleased to have registered nurse **Kim Buesking** working at the Samaritan House. She earned her bachelor's in nursing from Fairfield University in Connecticut. Kim is an enthusiastic and energetic leader dedicated to her ministry. She takes risks and doesn't buy in to the "in" thing. These gifts, along with her sense of joy, serve her well in her health-care work among those who are without health-care insurance.

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With a world that has a lot of work to do in terms of justice and equality, hope must remain strong so that we can work hard to achieve it.

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Jackie Lorens writes in her journal.

Seeing God around us

By Jackie Lorens
CVV Volunteer

*Señor me has mirado a los ojos,
Sonriendo has dicho mi nombre,
En la arena, he dejado mi barca,
Junto a ti, buscaré otro mar.*

I wake up every morning to read these hymn lyrics painted on my wall, reminding me not only of my immersion trip to El Salvador, but also my desire to seek out a deeper spirituality and a deeper relationship with God.

The refrain's last phrase translates as "At your side, I will seek other shores." Though it refers to God as our life companion, I often connect this sentiment to my house mates and the spiritual journey we are on as we experience this year together.

When our year began, we shared a bit about our spiritual paths that led us to CVV and it was apparent that our community had a diverse spiritual history

and had much to teach one another. These lessons come in forms of communal prayer (whether the rosary, silent meditation, scripture study or discussions on grief), spontaneous conversations, attending Mass together and even how we live out our faith in our daily lives.

Five months later, having returned from visits home and days spent with friends and family in the Denver area, we find ourselves back at work and back to community life but with a different mind set. We can more easily navigate our service sites and responsibilities and we certainly know each other on a more personal level. But more questions about finding hope, rejuvenation and a strong faith arise, especially after a challenging day.

What I have come to realize is that we must live out these questions. Whether it is the root causes of homelessness, the disparity between haves and have-nots or why a majority of society turns a blind eye to those

in need, it is necessary to seek the answers through personal relationships and genuine compassion. These questions build a sense of urgency and restlessness, but it is our restless state that forces us to search for God and discover our faith amidst the trying days and emotions.

Consequently, we are drawn closer to each other in community life and to those we work with at our service sites. We begin to see God in one another – by listening to a house mate who has a story of joy or sorrow to share. Or in a resident, guest or client with whom we work – by acknowledging his/her success and struggle to obtain employment, housing or even peace of mind. With each experience, we may find more questions than answers and we may be a bit more frustrated and restless, but we are closer to God because we have grown in relationship with one another.

A friend, whenever we embark on a more meaningful conversation, always prompts his comments with, "All right, it's time to bring out the shovel." I believe that is what our year as Vincentian Volunteers is about: Digging deep, getting to the root of our burning questions and sparking insight into new ways of viewing and understanding the world.

Society pushes us to find answers, make quick fixes and move on to the next item on our to-do lists. Thankfully, we volunteers are living counter culturally and can confirm there are no quick fixes and even fewer answers.

As volunteers living out the charism of St. Vincent de Paul, we can walk *with* the poor on their spiritual journeys. We may not find solutions to our world's injustices or eradicate homelessness but we will find Christ in one another and hold God at our side, embracing life's ambiguities, seeking companionship and radiating love. ✦

Jackie Lorens works at Sacred Heart House

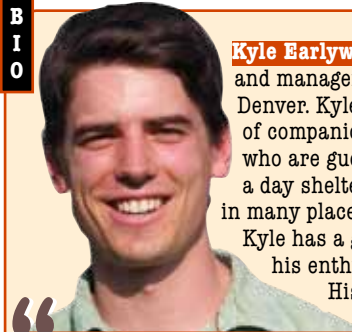
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Jackie Lorens is a great addition to the group. Her hunger for justice helps her at work and at home. Jackie is open and has a yearning to make a difference in the world. She does make a difference by sharing her compassion this year with the women and children at Sacred Heart House, a home for those without one. Jackie graduated with a degree in political science from DePaul University in Chicago and is from Des Plaines, Ill.

Having a Vincentian spirit means more than working for the justice of the poor – it means walking with the poor, in solidarity, and finding the face of Christ in each human being. ”

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Kyle Earlywine studied marketing and management at the University of Denver. Kyle has committed to a year of companionship those without a home who are guests at St. Francis Center, a day shelter. He has found his home in many places, most recently Denver. Kyle has a great sense of humor and his enthusiasm can be contagious. His uplifting and peaceful spirit pervades his interactions.

“Honesty means communicating with others in such a way that is not misleading and leads to full understanding. ”

Thank you!

You see a great deal of distress that you are unable to relieve. God sees it also. Bear the pains of the poor together with them, doing all you can to give them whatever help they need, and remain in peace. -- St. Vincent de Paul



These fine folks are the supervisors of our CVV volunteers -- and we thank them every day.

We are grateful ... Newsletter and Thanksgiving card: Julie Hutchinson, graphic design; Melanie Simonet, graphic design; Colleen Smith, writer; Liz Adams, Sir Speedy, 11th and Lincoln, printing; The Companions, stamps, Egan Printing.

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Food: Jean McMahon and Panera Bread; Jerry and Mary Ellen of Spinelli's Market; King Soopers Reclamation Center and many people who contributed to our Companions food drive.

Foundations: Kenny Foundation, Catholic Foundation, Colorado Health Foundation, Eliot Street Fund, Anschutz Family Foundation, SC Ministry Foundation
Priests who preside at our liturgy.
Supervisors of our volunteers.

✓ *Save these dates!*



Pancake Breakfast Fundraiser

Jan. 31, 2010
Queen of Peace Church
8 a.m. - 1 p.m.

*Annual CVV
Alumni Gathering*

Friday, March 26, 2010

CVV Conference

Saturday, March 27, Loyola Church



*Annual Heart and Soul
Benefit Concert*

Thursday, June 17
Newman Center,
University of Denver



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