

‘Winter’s Heart Is Warm’

By Alyson Hankwitz *who works at Lutheran Family Services*

I was born and raised in the Midwest, with Wisconsin and Chicago providing my homes for the longest periods of time. During my first weeks in Denver this fall, countless people assured me that, having survived Wisconsin blizzards and Chicago ice, Denver would provide a haven of wonderful winter weather.

When the cold snap came at the beginning of December and I not-so-quietly voiced my doubts, those same people reassured me that it never gets this cold in Denver. And sure enough, as the sun-filled skies and milder temperatures returned to the city and began to thaw the snow and ice, I had the hope again for the weather Denver had promised me. Do not get me wrong, I love the snow, but I did not pack my snow boots.

My time with Colorado Vincentian Volunteers thus far has taken me on a rather similar journey. Having lived in intentional community and volunteered in non-profits while at DePaul University, so many people assured me that doing it all for another year would be a breeze. And although I had lived the struggles of it all before, I even assured myself a few times that good weather was on the way.

During my first weeks in Denver, the seeming ease of transitioning into a position at a refugee resettlement agency and beginning to know nine new community members seemed to indicate fair weather. However, as the freshness of my new job and the amiability of my new housemates wore off into winter, the struggles began to settle into a snowy coldness that was not going to go away on its own. I encountered clients unable to gain employment, the impending need to have difficult conversations within community, constant miscommunications due to language and cultural barriers, a chronically messy kitchen, and personal grappling with spirituality. In this cold snap, as the snowy struggles seemed to continue piling up, I began to question



Alyson (with Packers hat) and her community

“As the reality of the challenges became apparent, so did the opportunities for growth and renewal.”

my place in CVV, whether I had really made the right decision for my first post-grad year.

But as the reality of the challenges became apparent, so did the opportunities for growth and renewal despite the cold. At work, conversations with co-workers began to melt the snow of frustration and give me glimmers of hope for the newly started lives of our refugee clients. Laughs shared with the student I tutor brought a little more sun. At home, spirituality

nights shared by all ten housemates brought opportunities for intentional conversations that warmed our home. House outings of ice-skating and Christmas caroling made us confront the cold and keep warm together. And personally the joyful anticipation of Advent kept me hopeful for sunny days. While I am still braving the winter, living the struggles of a year of intentional community and service, the cooing of a new baby Jesus is a sound I needed to hear. Spring is just around the corner. ✦



Beth Kirsti and Alyson

Settling and Unsettling

By Michael Knabel

Michael works at Guardian Angels School

Watching the entire student body of Guardian Angels School rehearse for their Christmas show caused me to reflect on my position at Guardian Angels. Over that week of preparation for the performance, I was afforded ample time to reflect on how lucky I am to be here with these students and in Denver as a member of CVV. By this time of the year, most of the CVV community, myself included, has settled into a certain niche within our worksites. Over the past few months, these sites have done well to recognize their volunteers' strengths and utilize them accordingly. The organizations we work for, as well as the specific jobs we perform, are as diverse as the members that make up our community. Shared experiences about hurdles we are forced to deal with at work raise new and otherwise unrevealed insights that challenge former views.

Each day at work brings new challenges, new perspective, and new opportunities for discernment. The good days we experience are accompanied by the challenging, just as victories and blessings are at times substituted for setbacks and struggles. I have experienced a share of both sides presented

over my short time at Guardian Angels. I am blessed to work with children who can so simply yet so purely warm my heart, whether it be witnessing a student's excitement after an academic success or playing with a child at recess. I am also blessed to work with children who can, at times, thoroughly challenge my patience and resolve as a result of limited attention spans and lack of self-control or blatant disobedience and aggressive behavior. These are the times when I am forced to dig deep within myself to find the strength to be patient, understanding, and compassionate. These are the encounters that I learn most from through reflection.

Recent conversation within my community and staff has led many of us to question why we are here. Are we really here to help the poor, homeless, and marginalized that outsiders so often praise us for doing? Or are there other, somewhat self-serving reasons? Not one of us will deny that we are here to grow and be changed by the individuals we come face to face with this year. Although the staff has stressed this from the beginning, many of us are now beginning to grasp how much more we will take away from our worksites and the full experience of the CVV community than we are able to give to those we encounter on our journey. I owe much more to the children at Guardian Angels than I will ever be able to repay. They have taught me compassion, patience, and understanding; but they have also educated me on issues such



"Turkey Trotting" Michael bringing joy to children at Guardian Angels School

as immigration, poverty, and educational inequality. The students of Guardian Angels put a face to these issues that feel so distant and intangible to some, yet are so very real to those who are most affected. The faces of these children will be etched in my memory for years to come as I move onward to new experiences beyond CVV. 🙏

Breaking the Ice

By Kelsey Thornton

who works at Aurora Community Connection

The ice has been broken. While some patches of ice still remain, many areas are completely thawed. After living in Denver for a few months, we are past the beginning stages of coming to know and love our community. Relationships have been formed and continue to grow and deepen as time passes. Yes, the ice is broken. We have all transitioned from the communities we were part of in the past to our new CVV community. For each of us that transition was unique. For some that meant acclimating to being farther from home than they had ever been and finding a new home on Pearl Street. For others the transition forced them to leave high school and college friends to develop a whole new support system. For me that transition meant leaving my college softball team to be part of a new kind of team. With that transition, I have found that many of my old daily activities have been swapped for new ones. Team huddles have been replaced by spirituality nights with my housemates. Workouts with my teammates have been exchanged for weekly mass with our community. My coaches are now Bill, Mary Frances, Katie Lacz and Katie



Kelsey Teaching Soccer

Cassady. And, of course, the team is filled with all new faces. Even the team name, Irish, has been traded in for our house name, WoHo or Woody's House. (The other house is affectionately called CoHo or Colfax House.)

At first those changes were challenging to adjust to. The daily tasks that I grew so accustomed to over four years were now entirely different. But the tasks had to change because the goals have changed. Instead of focusing on winning a National Championship and ensuring solid team dynamics, as CVVers we work toward social justice and serving as St. Vincent DePaul has taught us. We work together to help each other reflect on the world that we see at our work sites and the world that exists for those who are marginalized. On the softball team, we push our teammates to be the best student-athletes that we can be. At CVV, we push our roommates to be the best companions to those that we serve. I was initially drawn to CVV because I knew graduating and leaving my team behind would leave a hole in my heart. I hoped that this new community could begin to fill that hole. My softball team always will be part of my family. We grew into more than teammates. I am happy to say that CVV has also become my family. These individuals push me to question my faith and reach new depths with Christ. They allow me to delve deeper into the systems that cause the injustice we witness on a daily basis. We have thawed the patches of ice to serve each other as companions on our journeys. 🙏

Catholic Volunteer Network National Survey Results

CVV recently participated in a groundbreaking survey of more than 60 volunteer organizations operating around the world, commissioned by the Catholic Volunteer Network (CVN) with the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) at Georgetown University. The “Survey of Former Volunteers of the Catholic Volunteer Network” interviewed more than 5,000 former volunteers from CVN’s 50-year history. With 79 CVV alumni – or more than one-third of our total alumni – responding, CVV was among the top ten organizations with the highest response rate in the country.

As we read these and other results from the survey, the words that we have heard from many alumni about their time with CVV echo in our hearts. We share some of them with you now, to put some names and stories to the numbers that show the impact of volunteering.



CVV Alumni

CVV has always firmly rooted itself in the belief that a year (or more!) of service changes not only the people served, but the ones doing the serving. This belief bore out in the national survey results, which showed:

- Most former volunteers (8 in 10) are still involved in volunteer work and charitable giving.
- Nearly half (46 percent) are involved in their faith communities by attending religious services once a week.
- More than two thirds of former volunteers (67 percent) said their volunteer year had an influence on their choice of career.

“There is not a day that goes by that I do not think of how grateful I am for CVV, or that I am not astounded at how deeply my experience with you all has shaped the eyes with which I view the world...But suffice it to say, you have equipped me with a new vision and a commitment not merely to words and ideas, but to action and community.”

Matthew Nickoloff (CVV 11, 2005-06)
- Lutheran pastor, Rochester, NY.

“I can’t even tell you how I lived before, because every day since I’ve gotten back from Denver the word “intentional” follows me EVERYWHERE. I am considered the weird girl in my cohort for becoming a member with a CSA, reusing/re-purposing so I’m not wasteful, and being very conscious about the types of places/products I support and knowing more about them. My friends here regularly tell me if they thought the way I do they would be EXHAUSTED, and I say, “I am!!!” but that doesn’t mean it will stop.” I knew that I wouldn’t be able to understand the extent to which I was impacted by my year in Denver, and seeing the change I have so far lets me know that there’s only more to follow!”

Anna Urbanski (CVV 16, 2010-11)
- Finishing her M.S. in Applied Behavior Analysis, focusing on the needs of children with autism, at St. Cloud State University, St. Cloud, MN.

“I think I just realized what this year is all about. Going back home I saw my old life, my old ways, and what seemed most important to me a year ago. Now that I’ve spent a year doing this program, I’ve realized that I have changed, and I can never go back to the way things used to be. I’ve realized that my own life is not about me but more about the common good. Hopefully in years to come, I can put my knowledge and gift to use for others so that this world will be at least a little better for a few other people.”

Jeff Lewis (CVV 11, 2005-06)
- Administrator at Mother Cabrini Shrine, Denver.

“I find myself without fail sensing an extra dose of compassion for my homeless, addicted, mentally ill, and marginalized patients. It’s almost as if I step back in time a bit to my year at Samaritan House, seeing in my patients’ eyes the same frustrations, hopes, and anxieties that I saw in my homeless clients in the past. There is something so transformative, so intimate, and so special which occurs in one short year of service with CVV which manages to pervade a person’s story for a lifetime; and I continue to be grateful for the opportunity, and for the people who made CVV such a formative experience.”

Abby Parsons (CVV 9, 2003-04)
- OB/GYN, Portland, OR.

“I thought I would share with you something I think is really great from my classroom... We are celebrating All Saints day next week and we all had to pick a classroom saint. I chose St. Vincent de Paul. We also will be having lunch after Mass with our students that can be food from the saint’s country. I decided to make the meal be in honor of St. Vincent by having the parents provide a simple meal of soup, bread and water to teach the students about Vincent’s mission. Please remember that all that I learned during my year at CVV will stay with me forever.”

Matt Bovenzi (CVV 5, 1999-2000)
- Catholic school teacher, Ventura, CA.

Some other results from the CVN survey include:

- Almost 6 in 10 respondents have a Master’s degree or higher.
- Just under 1 in 10 of married former participants have ever divorced (9 percent), significantly lower than the percentage in the general U.S. population (31 percent).

The survey didn’t ask whether former volunteers are also exceptionally good-looking and have excellent teeth, but we suspect this to be true as well.

To find out more, check out the full results of the survey on the Catholic Volunteer Network Web site at www.catholicvolunteernetwork.org. The survey was distributed online earlier this year to former volunteers at CVV and 59 additional Catholic Volunteer Network member organizations around the globe. Survey respondents provided demographic and background information as well as answering questions related to their experience with their volunteer program and lives following their volunteer service. The survey compared these results with the national averages, where applicable. ♣

“Blessed are they who spend their lives for the service of God and neighbor.” – St. Vincent de Paul



CVV Board of Directors
 Paul Burson, Mike Dixon, Carla Frenzel, Paul Golden, C.M., Annie Green, Chris Lane, Melissa Randall, Steve Saul, Josh Wise

Check us out!
www.covivo.org
cvv@covivo.org

CVV Staff:
 Katie Cassady
 Fred Eyerman
 Bill Jaster
 Mary Frances Jaster
 Katie Lacz
 Tom Nelson, CM

A few needs at CVV...

Cloth shopping bags
 Purple recycle bin
 CD player (Boom-box)
 Leaf Rake



Colorado EST. 1994
Vincentian Volunteers
 1732 Pearl St. * Denver, CO 80203

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

**Non-Profit Org.
 U.S. Postage
 PAID
 Denver, CO
 Permit #3171**



Thank you!

We are deeply grateful for the CVV...

Online monthly donors-14
 Fall newsletter donors-29
 Colorado Gives Day donors-71
 Thanksgiving Card donors-145
 Monthly donors using envelopes-6
 Anonymous donors and foundations
 Eagan Printing
 Sir Speedy @ 11th and Lincoln
 Woody Creek Bakery & Café
 The staff and parishioners from:
 St. Elizabeth of Hungary
 Most Precious Blood
 The Cathedral
 The CVV volunteer's Spiritual Directors
 Lynch Family Foundation
 Virginia W. Hill Foundation
 Mathias Lock and Key
 Nittler and Company
 Superior Services Plumbing Company
 Knights of Columbus Council 539
 George and Suzie Atencio
 The Conflict Center
 Tony P's 17th Ave. Restaurant
 Café Sanora
 The priests who preside at our liturgies

"There is no act of charity that is not accompanied by justice or that permits us to do more than we reasonably can."

- St. Vincent de Paul



Ways to support CVV

Give online, go to www.covivo.org and click on the "Get Involved" button at the top of the page or make a contribution with the enclosed envelope.

Volunteer your time at one of our CVV placement sites, just call us.

Attend the 19th annual Heart & Soul Concert, Monday, June 16, 2014 Consider including CVV in your Planned Giving considerations <http://www.covivo.org/ways-to-give>