

The mission of the Colorado Vincentian Volunteers is to invite young adults into a process of companionship with those who are poor in the spirit of St. Vincent de Paul

A seed planted bears fruit

By Kirsti Klaverkamp
CVV Volunteer

A

seed was planted in me when I studied abroad in Guatemala during college. It was the experience of living among the people -- poor in materialistic goods but rich in spirit -- that germinated the seed, the call

to do service.

With a passion for health and for senior citizens, and my desire to be in a community founded in faithful tradition, the wind blew me and I landed at Colorado Vincentian Volunteers in Denver.

I settled myself into this new environment, earnest to grow in my role as a client advocate at HealthSET, a community health promotion clinic for low-income seniors. My main responsibility is to address the clients' social needs related to their health. I most commonly attend to vision and dental needs, transportation issues and mental health.

Satisfying these needs calls for strong communication with providers and collaboration with community resources and funding agencies. I honestly had no idea what I was getting myself into, but with the support of my supervisor, coworkers and community members, I dug in and pushed on.

There are numerous barriers that senior citizens face in accessing quality healthcare. The healthcare system can be confusing and complicated, and even more challenging when one has a low income. These were the challenges.

Amid the harsh realities, there was light: A handwritten thank-you note from a client grateful to be seeing clearly again with new eyeglasses. The light in a smile of a client with fitted dentures. A tearful embrace from a client who just appreciated someone taking notice,

listening to his story and concerns.

In this light I began to grow. I grew taller, bearing the fruits that come from new experiences, from successes of challenges overcome. I grew more assured that I was



CVV volunteer Kirsti Klaverkamp with Terry, a client with whom she works as a health advocate at Health SET.

“ THE MEMORIES I CARRY WILL BE THE CLIENTS’ STORIES . . . ”

planted in the right place.

These were the people I wanted to be with this year. I came to serve and what an opportunity HealthSET has given me to do that. And yet, my clients have offered me something far greater.

They have given me the chance to be served as well. They open their hearts and lives to me and allow me to walk with them as we work to address one of their most basic needs and rights: their health.

Sure, there are stormy days with clients and days when I am weathered by unmet demands and ongoing needs of so many.

But, those aren't the days that will color my memory. The memories I carry will be the clients' stories -- their trying and difficult childhoods, successful business and teaching careers, big families, lost friends and cherished grandchildren.

They carry all of this with them and have offered me not just a glimpse into

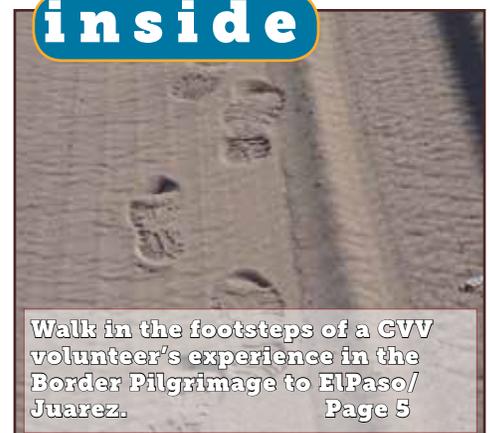
it all, but companionship in it as we work together.

I can't take their places, bear their loads or completely understand what it's like to be in their place, but I no longer feel like I'm comfortably indoors looking out into their world.

I'm outside now, too. I'm in the rain with them, more determined than ever to continue working and serving.

Because, there is light and good to find - my clients show me that every day. 🌱

inside



Walk in the footsteps of a CVV volunteer's experience in the Border Pilgrimage to El Paso/Juarez. Page 5

Running toward a new understanding

By Colin McDonald
CVV Volunteer

When I was seven, I discovered the simple joy of running and have never stopped this seemingly simple exercise. Each run is not only a lesson in perseverance but also a moment of insight.

But the rigors of work, resourceful cooking obligations, community meetings and a series of nagging injuries have reduced the amount of time I have been able to run this year.

Despite these physical limitations, I have come to identify my CVV experience as a spiritual run.

This spirituality is captured in the spirit of community. These are companions I have come to trust as we have run together since August. They have pushed me to understand my living patterns (everything from my food-eating tendencies to my definition of cleanliness) and helped me examine my own world views.

We have grown as a community as we have faced trials and tribulations and laughed often along the way.

At work, this run looks a little different. Each day working the front desk of Stout Street Clinic or West End Health Center is another arduous hill to climb or a revered downhill to embrace.

The homeless patients who walk through the door seeking medical or mental healthcare have taught me what the spirit of determination and simplicity is.



CVV volunteers Colin McDonald, second from left, and Christa Merrion, fourth from left, with some of the other members of CVV Group 19.

Some of the patients' stories have opened my heart to the pain, bitterness, and suffering in this world while others, like Cheryl and Miguel (these are the names I'll use to protect their privacy) reminded me what humility and generosity look like.

One of the most treasured parts of running is when I feel the greatest communion with God. This year-long spiritual run has been just that: A celebration of intimacy with the Divine Creator.

The many reflections, Masses and free time to read Scripture-inspired literature have helped me see God in my daily life. I have found him in the service of the poor and in my own heart.

Yet with the arrival of spring my spiritual run is starting to near its end. The finish line is drawing near and I have started to consider how I want to continue to run with the lessons and relationships I have built and deepened this year.

Questions like these plague my mind as I race forward: Where will I find that communal spirit as I say goodbye to my community? How can I follow in the example of my co-workers, CVV alumni and leaders to live for and with the poor? How can I continue to seek and find God in my vocational calling?

I'm not sure when I will know the answers, but I do know that my community and I vowed in our beginning-of-the-year covenant to "move forward, [with] our eyes fixed on the horizon with zeal, vowing to hold fast to our ideals so that we may carry them out during our CVV year and beyond."

The "beyond" is drawing ever closer and as it looms, I find solace in Rainer Rilke's notion of "living out the questions" this year has posed.

These questions are something I pray that I can hold fast to as the start of a new run begins and another run ends. 🙏

Living in community and learning

By Cassie Kienbaum
CVV Volunteer

As the temperature continues to rise and the days become longer, the sign of spring becomes more apparent. Small flowers are growing in the cracks of sidewalks and in gardens.

As in waking up from slumber, the trees are beginning to thaw, stretch and grow buds.

Hailing from the great state of Wisconsin, I can't compare winters here to the winters in the Midwest. But what was once frozen and seemingly dead here is beginning to experience another year of glorious life.

I can identify greatly with a tree in terms of my own life and my life in community. Just as the trees here go through

the four seasons, I too have experienced seasons in community.

I remember the first few weeks of CVV -- meeting nine new people who were going to be my house mates for 11 months, all of us excited to be in Denver and see where the year would take us.

Those first few weeks were like our spring: We were in what some call the honeymoon stage. As the next few months rolled around we stood like trees in August with leaves full grown, revealing to one another who we really were (or thought we were).

Then, of course we've had our season of fall and winter when community life began to get tough and we wondered how we were going to make it.

The reality is, community life can be tough. Once you've been living in one house with nine people for seven

months, all of the little things can start to bug you.

Maybe it's the way he always forgets to turn off the lights when he leaves the kitchen or the way she leaves her finger nail clippings on the bathroom counter.

Regardless, at some point while living in community you will encounter storms -- but that is just part of life.

One of my favorite quotes is "Storms make trees take deeper roots." I believe that. For every time I've been frustrated in community I've had the opportunity to allow that experience to grow me. It's all part of the process. There is seldom beauty without pain.

I am so excited for this next season.

With only a few months left to go in

See **Seasons**, next page ▶

A case of the teacher being taught

By Elizabeth Lent
CVV Volunteer

Seven months ago I met "Sam," a preteen boy without a family. He had been placed in several foster homes and was even adopted by one. But eventually the family terminated rights with him but kept his siblings.

Sam stayed at Mount Saint Vincent Home, a residential treatment center for child victims of abuse and neglect, for over a year waiting to find another family. The rest of the world seemed to forget he existed.

The tragedy results in children moved from home to home -- on average every two years until they emancipate from the system.

Homeless and alone, 25 percent become incarcerated within two years; 50 percent never graduate from high school, perpetuating the cycle of poverty and all its vices.

Instead of changing these vices, we choose to ignore those on the fringes of society: those who are homeless and mentally handicapped, addicted, imprisoned, immigrants, unemployed.

But that is not justice.

We are called by God to love every person: *"I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me"* (Mt. 25:36).

The Colorado Vincentian Volunteer community describes justice as the right order of relationships, allowing life to flourish. Treating children as possessions is not the right order of relationship. A child is a gift; all persons are gifts.



Elizabeth Lent, who works at Mt. St. Vincent's, works with a student.

Whether we ignore a homeless man on the street or gossip about a community member, we are not acting justly and not acknowledging their human dignity.

In my time with CVV at Mount Saint Vincent Home, I've experienced first hand the potential of recognizing human dignity.

The first time Sam asked me for a hug was after a game of tag. It was also the first time I began to feel at home at Mount Saint Vincent. Sam had recognized my humanity and I returned that belonging with the gift of a hug.

Eventually Sam and I began reading together daily. Initially it was clear that an aversion to reading was preventing academic progress. But I brought him one of my favorite childhood series and we developed a relationship around the story. Sam soon eagerly awaited the opportunity to read together and asked, "Are you reading with me today?"

This child so innocently craved the love not received from his parents and I

feel so blessed to have provided him a space to be nurtured.

We don't have to do anything to be loved by God. We don't have to prove our worth in order to be treated justly. We must only give every person the opportunity to grow.

I can happily say that Sam has been given that opportunity and is prospering in a foster-adopt family.

Sam has been treated as a possession his entire life, and now he is being treated with human dignity. As Sam has been nurtured, he has also nurtured me. He has given me hope for a more just society, a society filled with people who love and don't use.

That's how we make change.

I believe that the strength of faith we have amounts to the level of justice by which we live, and thanks to Sam and all the other children at Mount Saint Vincent Home, I'm one step closer to an ever-deepening faith. 🙏

life lessons

◀ Seasons from previous page

the program year, I can't wait to continue to grow with my community.

We've been through the four seasons together and now, with the year coming to a close, we have the opportunity to continue to grow together and see one another through our next stage in life.

It's now the time of year that we are thinking about what the next step is for our lives, whether that is grad school, a full-time job, traveling or moving back home.

Having been continually grounded within community this year, I can't wait to see what kind of fruit we will all bear in the coming years. 🙏

Cassie Kienbaum, right, with Sharon, a client from Senior Support Services.



Mission and Service the Vincentian Way



MISEVI USA (Mission and Service the Vincentian Way, a Vincentian Volunteer Network) is a collaborative effort of Vincentian groups committed to the values of St. Vincent de Paul and St. Louise de Marillac.

The members of the Network are independent organizations that invite lay adults to work for justice while tending to the needs of those who are poor and to deepen their faith through prayer, community and reflection.

MISEVI-USA includes:

- Colorado Vincentian Volunteers
- Heartland Charity Volunteers
- St. Vincent DePaul Youth and Young Adult Center

- Vincentian Lay Missionaries
- Vincentian Mission Corps
- Vincentian Service Corps
- Vincentian Volunteers of Cincinnati.

We are also collaborating with several Vincentian Universities as we find ways of supporting, challenging, and working together to better support the Vincentian charism of service with those who are poor and creating bridge-building connections among individuals and organizations.

MISEVI – USA was formally accepted and recognized by MISEVI International in 2013. ✚

HEART & SOUL 2014
 To Benefit Colorado Vincentian Volunteers
Faith and Service in Action

MONDAY JUNE 16 • 7PM

FEATURING
 Boulder's Dinner Theatre • Aurora Fox Theatre
 Academy of Theatre Arts
 T.J. Mullin and Annie Dwyer,
 formerly with Heritage Square Theatre

SPOTLIGHT
 on
Musical Theatre

Donatations always welcomed: www.covivo.org

Save the date!

save the date

20 years of
 faith in
ACTION

*Colorado Vincentian Volunteers
 please join us in celebrating our 20th year*

*September 26-27, 2014
 (more details to follow)*

A product of privilege faces a new reality

By Jon Rivard

CVV Volunteer

IF I MANAGE TO HOLD ONTO one single realization from this year it is this: There is nothing, ABSOLUTELY NOTHING remotely commendable about my



CVV volunteer
Jon Rivard.

work, my life, or my mission as a volunteer.

At best, this year serves as a mild baby step in a potentially right direction. At worst, I enable the continuation of gross iniquity and inequality running rampant in our society by working

for an organization doing enough for those in need to assuage society's guilt.

When considering the following prose, I pray you will not dismiss the bread crumbs that led me home to this conclusion as doomsday propaganda, and will simply sit with my reflection.

I am a product of privilege; I am a well-fed, well-groomed, well-educated

white male living in a society designed to accommodate my success.

I am also a study in inner conflict, and while the ease of my existence nauseates me, I am grateful for the opportunities privilege has allowed. I am blessed by opportunities this year that have begun to unravel the opaque cloth covering the lens of my world view.

Through the Colorado Vincentian Volunteers, I have found spiritual direction and, encouraged by my spiritual director, I have attempted to build a relationship with Scripture. In November, while reading the Book of Jeremiah, one particular phrase stuck with me.

They do not say in their hearts, "Let us fear our God, who gives rain in its season, the autumn rain and the spring rain, and keeps for us the weeks appointed for the harvest." Your iniquities have turned these away, and your sins have deprived you of good. For scoundrels are found among my people; they take over the goods of others. Like fowls they set a trap; they catch human beings. Like a cage full of birds, their houses are full of treachery; therefore they have become great and rich, they have grown fat and sleek. They

know no limits in deeds of wickedness; they do not judge with justice the cause of the orphan, to make it prosper, and they do not defend the rights of the needy. (Jeremiah 5:24-28)

Try as I might, I cannot get over these words. Our society's answer to the needy is relocation; more than 2600 years later and still we do not defend their rights. I cannot justify why I have the privilege of choice and services, and the guests at the St. Francis Center do not. It is all a matter of luck. The divide separating my opportunities from our guests is insurmountable, and yet is defined by coincidence.

The prophecy of Jeremiah and my experience at the St. Francis Center bring to mind quotation of Gandhi's: "One man cannot do right in one department of life whilst he is occupied in doing wrong in any other department. Life is one indivisible whole."

With these words in mind, I believe any minute aid I am able to provide is insignificant compared to the evil of a society that oppresses and hides the needy. I am not commendable; I am a distraction. ↑

In Juarez, priceless observations in an undervalued landscape

By Christa Merrion

CVV Volunteer

A LITTLE GIRL IN A RED COAT sits on the other side of a fence, alone, watching other children play. I cannot speak to her. The language barrier is as effective as the fence keeping her from the kids she is watching.

Once again behind a fence, I listen in anger to a man, who, because he is in a uniform and because he can cross this fence, tells us that those who want to cross it cannot because they are disabled. They are criminals. They are bums. They are not skilled. They are not high-priority. He labels them. And because they are labeled, they are trapped.

A widowed mother watches as her teenage daughter plays in a therapeutic ball pen. She goes across to El Paso to get medical supplies to sell so she can make a living. She is harassed trying to cross into Mexico. They don't believe her story. Finally they let her go. I show my U.S. passport and there are no questions.

I sit in the dirt along the border. I see a bird fly over the fence. It is free to go where it wills, to flee danger as it comes. As I look at the U.S.-Mexico border, all I see is a cage.

But then I remember a verse from the prophet Jeremiah that I read on the bus to El Paso: "But in this place of which you say it is a waste, there will be heard again the voice of mirth and the voice of glad-

ness ... the voices of those who sing."

As I look back on the weekend, and I see Cristina, who cries because she has dedicated her life to helping children. She has reminded them of their dignity and their voices will be heard.

I see Fr. Peter and Sister Betty who have lived in Juarez for 20 years. Their presence is like rain in a drought.

I hear the words of a woman who even after fleeing domestic violence and

overcoming drug addiction has found God and in finding Him has found herself. And I think about all those who have worked and will continue to work tirelessly to change the way things are.

And I think that this is a weight that is laid upon us all. And when I think of all those we met who do not see Mexico as a wasteland but instead hear the voices and see the individuals, the weight is not so heavy. ↑

Members from CVV Group 19 with Christa Merrion in Juarez.





CVV Board of Directors

PAUL BURSON, MIKE
DIXON, CARLA FRENZEL,
PAUL GOLDEN CM,
ANNIE GREEN, ALANNA
KIMMEL, CHRIS LANE,
MELISSA RANDALL, STEVE
SAUL, JOSH WISE

Check us out!

www.covivo.org

CVV Staff:

Fred Eyerman

Bill Jaster

Mary Frances Jaster

Tom Nelson, CM

Katie Cassidy

Katie Lacz

Colorado Vincentian Volunteers

1732 Pearl St. * Denver, CO 80203

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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

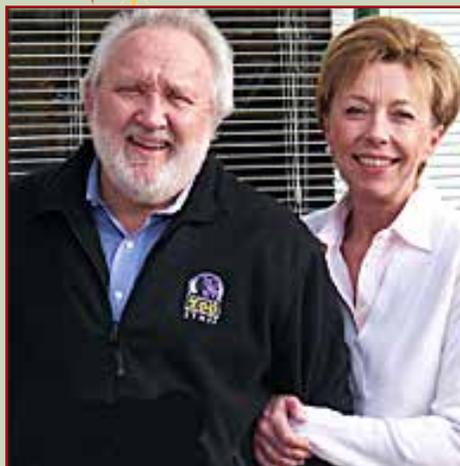


¡Muchas Gracias!

Thanks to so many of you for the countless ways that YOU are part of the CVV Community, through financial donations, food, household items, furniture, house repairs, computer repair, plumbing, office help, graphic design, mailing assistance, committee work, prayer, advocacy, presiding at our liturgies, spiritual direction for the volunteers and prayer families. YOU are truly reflective of the CVV theme of Companions on the Journey.

Special thanks to **Melissa Randall** who is leaving our board of directors after 10 years. Melissa is a former volunteer ('96-'97); her expertise as an attorney, her compassionate nature and her commitment to the mission, vision and values of CVV will be truly missed!

March Madness at CVV ... The following universities participated in service trips coordinated by CVV ... De Paul U., St. Edwards U., Creighton U., St. John's U New York, St. Benedict's/St. John's University and St. Catherine's U.



Muchisimas Gracias!

Jerry and Mary Ellen Spinelli have contributed food to CVV from Spinelli's Market for many years. Jerry and Mary Ellen are retiring and we are deeply grateful to them for their support.

"To wear oneself out for God, to have happiness and strength only to consume them for God, is to do what Our Lord Himself did, who exhausted Himself for love of His Father." -- St. Vincent de Paul



CVV Needs list: A full house at the Heart & Soul Concert, Monday, June 16. Please join us!

Planned Giving

