

Meet the 2015 crop of CVV Volunteers! Pages 2, 3



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Colorado Vincentian Volunteers EST. 1994

# JOURNEY

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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

## Learning from the bees



The experiences of this year's group of CVV volunteers have some members jumping for joy and Mary Arczynski's experience moved her to write poetry.



### Community

By Mary Arczynski

Have you ever sat in a field of wildflowers and listened to a bee, be? It sounds cliché, or romantic, but I have heard bees buzz in harmony.

Each bee working among blossoms spreading, sharing pollen from bud to bud, helping them to grow and bloom, creating the beauty they buzz around.

But they also bring back nectar, to make sweet, sweet honey, for their community. The buzz, the rustle of blooms, the dripping of honey, a chorus, a symbiotic symphony.

And then, as you are sitting in that field of wildflowers, a squirrel surprise-attacks you, and you think of squirrels, and of trees,

and you realize that the life of bees is just one story.

By MARY ARCZYNSKI

CVV Volunteer

### FROM THE MOMENT

I moved to Colorado to start my year as a Colorado Vincentian Volunteer, I have been enveloped in a network of passionate people with a love for the world and for justice.

This program not only connects 20 service-driven strangers from across the country, but also connects all of us to the good work of almost 20 nonprofit work sites, their employees and the populations that they serve.

In our home at dinner, I hear about experiences from homeless shelters, to nursing clinics, to schools for children with developmental disabilities, to refugee resettlement programs. I have never felt so quickly connected to such a welcoming, diverse, and loving population. It took me two weeks to feel that Denver has been my home for 20 years.



CVV volunteer Mary Arczynski with students at Annunciation School.



## Twenty volunteers ...



**Coleen Calamari** came to CVV from Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C. where she studied nursing. She is now donning scrubs and nurse shoes at Denver's newly

renovated Stout Street Clinic. Coleen's hospitality is a gift to her community and the patients she serves. *"This population seems to have a unique wisdom and outlook on life."*



**Katharine Montemurri** came to Denver via Marquette University in Milwaukee, WI, where she studied Biological Sciences. Katharine is working at Lutheran Family Services where she is assisting with

their refugee resettlement program. Katharine's warm and welcoming presence is a gift to all at work and at home. *"While the Vincentian mission and spirituality were unfamiliar to me, the opportunity to embrace something different was an intriguing invitation."*



Loyola Marymount is **Alison Sackerson's** Alma Mater. She brings with her dedication and a heart for the elderly clients she serves with Dominican Home Health Agency. She traveled all the way to Denver with a Bocce ball set—which

likely means she's good! *"I have always loved to work with the elderly ... My senior thesis focused on Baby boomers and the needs of elderly and learning about ways to improve their lives."*



Pueblo is home for **Gianna Carleo** who joined CVV this year by way of Regis University. She's integrating her love for gardening and justice through her work at EarthLinks. Gianna has a down-to-earth presence that can invite loud laughter and really deep conversations in the same sitting. *"Let us do it together—work of the mind, work of the hands, work of the heart and let us do it together."*



**Tommy Ryan** may have taken the most circuitous route to get to Denver! A St. Louis native, he studied history at the University of Missouri-Columbia and hit the road to teach English abroad. A learner-at-heart, he is now serving at

the St. Francis Center. *"Reflection and meditation, self-awareness, compassion, prayer and service are all a part of my journey's path."*



**Lynne Bauman** is an Indiana native where she grew up and then attended Notre Dame University. She is now implementing her love for children in her work at Mt. Saint Vincent's. She is a gifted musician and shares her lovely

voice at Liturgy. *"Even though I have no idea if I left any impression on them (Juvenile offenders) whatsoever, each of those children most definitely changed and shaped me profoundly."*



**Catherine Ellis** joined CVV from Adrian Michigan. She majored in Chemistry and Secondary Education at Hope College.

She is putting her gifts to good use as a GED Counselor with Urban Peak.

Catherine has the gift of ingenuity about her—particularly demonstrated in her love for home-made bread! *"God is causing my heart to be restless in what I am doing now, and I won't rest until I've found what He has planned for me."*



**Alex Schelble** joined CVV after studying Biochemistry, Spanish and Theology at Rockhurst University in Kansas City. She is working at Laradon, accompanying children and adults with special needs through art and Occupational Therapy--

perhaps a foretaste of her hopes to work in medicine after CVV. Alex is an avid tennis player and thoughtful to the core. *"I see this as a remarkable opportunity for growth."*



**Kaela Allton** joined CVV from Xavier University. She studied Psychology, Business and Theology. She has literally dug into her work with the GrowHaus this year—through food production, distribution and education that empowers the

Elyria-Swansea neighborhood residents. The perfect site for a woman striving to be for others. *"I value love as a crucial building block of personal, social and systemic change."*



**Michelle Baumann** studied Psychology at Creighton University but calls Missouri home. She is working as a case manager at Urban Peak this year. Michelle jumps in with both feet and gives her all.

*"As I transition into another chapter of my life, I would love to learn about Vincentian spirituality. I feel that my faith will continue to grow as I experience my faith from another perspective."*

# ... CVV Year 21!



**Natalie Davies** joined CVV from Portland, Ore. by way of Creighton University where she studied Social Work. She now works at the St. Francis Center coordinating their housing program.

Natalie brings with her a tremendous compassion for the marginalized, only equaled by her love for hiking, rain and water. *"I believe that now is the time to put myself out there and into this adventure."*



Stout Street Clinic is where you will find **Chuck Lutz-Priefert** serving this year. He's a Creighton Bluejay and a Registered Nurse. He was deeply influenced by his work in an Omaha hospital prior to CVV. His vision of providing health care to those

In need is a natural extension of his compassionate personality. *"I feel called to not just try to help and serve others, but to see them as myself."*



**Kate Rosemeyer** is no stranger to the mountains after her summer spent working with the Rocky Mountain Youth Corps. She has a wonderful enthusiasm about her as well as a great collection of trail songs and

prayers. She attended the U of Wisc., Madison, where she studied Kinesiology. Laradon is where you can find her this year. *"Even if I never actually say any words about Jesus, I try to show others His love in my attitude."*



**Mary Arczynski** is getting acquainted with the west after her time in Williamsburg, VA at James Madison University where she studied economics and English. A poet at heart, Mary is serving at Annunciation Catholic School where she

inspire and is inspired by her students. *"I feel the most alive, feel the most connected to myself and the world, and feel that I know my purpose in life when I am serving others."*



**Karli Hunton's** positive energy is a gift to the CVV community and her service site where she serves as a resource Advocate at The Gathering Place. Karli studied Graphic Design at Creighton and brings creativity to all

that she does. *"One of my personal mantras is that we all deserve to feel loved as we are."*



**Jess Van Orden** came to CVV from the Christian Appalachian Project in Kentucky. She has a breadth of experience living in community—and is developing her skills with a younger population at Sewall CDC. She has a love for children and the great

outdoors. *"The poor are the people we are charged with taking care of. We are all family and I jump with enthusiasm to help the poor and oppressed, because I know if it were me, my brothers and sisters would help me."*



**Kristen Gittinger** has come west all the way from Ohio where she grew up and attended John Carroll University. Kristen studied Communication and Theater Arts. Her down-to-earth spirit and comfort

speaking in a crowd serve her well along with and all those she encounters in her many responsibilities at Metro Caring. *"I discovered the most valuable gift one can give and receive is the gift of self."*



**Brian Vander Heiden** is no stranger to long-term service. He joins us from St. John's University by way of a year with the Benedictine Volunteer Corps in Bogota, Columbia. Brian brings his quick

wit, midwestern charm and Spanish fluency to his placement site at DenUM where he serves as a case manager. *"I view being attentive as an imperative step to recognizing the dignity of each person."*



**Clare Callahan** is a New Yorker turned Denverite for the next year as she serves at Guardian Angels Catholic School. Clare attended Syracuse University where she studied Advertising and Psychology.

Community is a value Clare brings to her companions—a value she picked up in her time many summers working at Nazareth Farm. *"I know I will learn and grow significantly both because of other volunteers and those whom I serve."*



**Loren Gauzza** arrived in Denver from Le Moyne College where she studied Psychology and Spanish. Loren's encouraging presence surely does wonders in making her preschool students at the Aurora Community

Connection feel at home in the classroom. *"I believe one's work among the marginalized must be based on the formation of meaningful, reciprocal relationships."*

# This nurse is humbled by his work

By Chuck Lutz-Priefert  
CVV Volunteer

At 14,000 feet above sea level on a Sunday morning, surrounded by 10 of my new community members I look around and all I can see is dozens of mountains touching the clouds. I close my eyes, take a deep breath of the thin air and soak in the deafening peace that this moment has given me. At this moment I realize that God has placed me exactly where he wants me to be.

Growing up I often struggled with the way religion is practiced in this country. I often felt that many people that I encountered only attended church for an hour or so once or twice a week and generally didn't let the message permeate throughout the rest of their lives.

In reflecting on this phenomenon I have often felt restless with what my own Christian faith calls me to do, particularly in reaching out and caring for those on the margins of our society. In discerning what I was to do after I graduated college I felt this restlessness calling me to act on my faith, and to serve the poor in one way or another.

As providence would have it, I stumbled upon the Colorado Vincentian Volunteers. Here I have not only been able to literally touch the hands and feet of men and women experiencing homelessness



Chuck Lutz-Priefert, a registered nurse, at his work site, Stout Street Clinic

in Denver, but to see the face of God in them.

During my time here at CVV, I spend my days at the Stout Street Clinic as a nurse caring for individuals in Denver experiencing homelessness. A typical day might involve caring for a patient's complicated wound, filling a patient's medication box or caring for the feet of someone who is homeless.

While many of these tasks are familiar nursing actions that I was taught in school, I was never taught how to apply the various advancements in medicine to a patient who is literally sleeping

on the street every night. I find myself praying for my patients more than I ever imagined, for although I often know the steps to take to heal their bodies, I am at a loss for how I could ever help them heal their situation.

One of my favorite quotes is from St. Vincent De Paul: "It is only for your love alone that the poor will forgive you the bread you give to them."

This statement was difficult to grasp until I began my work at Stout Street Clinic. I now know I have to apologize to my patients. I frequently ask for forgiveness inwardly as well as out loud:

- "I am so sorry that we don't accept appointments ahead of time, please come in tomorrow at 6:45 a.m."
- "I'm sorry we don't have the pain pills you desperately need."
- "I am so sorry you've been waiting for three hours; I promise we will get your problem addressed soon."
- "I am so sorry that your medication was stolen last night."
- "I am so sorry that we could not find a bed for you to sleep in tonight."
- "I'm sorry, but we're not open on the weekends; you'll have to change this dressing yourself."

How humbled I am by the burden my patients carry on a daily basis and how my heart breaks every time I send them back to the street and the unknown challenges they face on top of their complicated medical issues.

Even though I rely on my patients to forgive me for the bread I give them, I am frequently reminded by their thankfulness, diligence and strength that I am meant to be here giving them that bread, and receiving their love and forgiveness 🙏.

## Learning the real meaning of Vincentian

By Natalie Davies  
CVV Volunteer

Vincentian: It's a tricky word. To remember, to pronounce and to define. Graduating from a Jesuit university, I was a bit wary of a different-faith community. I was unsure of their beliefs and how it would differ from what I have learned throughout my past four years at Creighton.

Those four years transformed me and led me to discover who I really am. From the Jesuit charisms, to pursuing social justice, I wasn't sure if I wanted to explore anything else. Next thing I knew, I accepted a position with CVV -- and on to learning about the Vincentians I went.

I came in blind. All I knew was that Vincentian was tied to St. Vincent de Paul. But after orientation week and the beginnings



Natalie Davies and St. Francis Center Supervisor Ann Smith.

of reflection and discussion starting, I think I'm inching toward a better understanding of how the Vincentian way will become a deep part of my experience this year.

I won't go into the story of St. Vincent de Paul but I will share the pieces of the Vincentian belief that have touched me as I begin this new journey.

Vincentians believe you cannot evangelize the poor; rather, the poor evangelize you. I grew closer to my belief in God through service, through working with others who have less or, in the words of St. Vincent de Paul, the poor.

They opened my heart and, along with the opening of my heart came the opening of my eyes. I began to see the world through more than one lens. For that, I am grateful for a few human beings: Thiago, Dakota, Martavious, Ernest, and Richard, all of whom I met while serving in college.

Each of these names carries a special story and a piece of who I am continuing to become. My life experience is far different from theirs, but somehow I found a resounding connection: *Humanity*.

There is one other aspect of the Vincentians that I have gotten a glimpse into. They believe in charity that goes beyond the simple aspect of a good deed. It delves into building relationship. To

being a human to another human. To acting in *love*.

*"You will find out that Charity is a heavy burden to carry, heavier than the kettle of soup and the full basket. But you will keep your gentleness and your smile. It is not enough to give soup to the poor, always smiling and good-humored. They are your masters, terribly sensitive and exacting masters you will see. And the uglier and the dirtier they will be, the more unjust and insulting, the more love you must give them. It is only for your love alone that the poor will forgive you the bread you give to them"*

– St. Vincent de Paul

These are two things I am reminded of each day I go to work: Being with individuals whose life experiences are unique keep me alive. They push me to channel the basic quality of humanity. It is not always a path filled with happiness and ease. There will be challenge. There will be days I'll need my community for support. There will be days I doubt myself, or even this greater humanity that I write of.

The world isn't perfect, but I'm going to make it my mission to find the beauty in the brokenness. 🙏



Kristen Gittinger at her work site, Metro Caring.

## Exploring the mutuality of relationships

By Kristen Gittinger  
CVV Volunteer

How can I serve the poor with my life? In search of answers to this question, I left Ohio and moved to Denver for CVV. Answering this question would be the focus of my volunteer experience (so I thought).

Within days at CVV I discovered God and St. Vincent DePaul teamed up to present me with a

different plan for my year. (How typical!) During orientation I learned about the life and values of St. Vincent, who invited people to embrace mutuality of relationships. He challenges us to serve the poor by giving of ourselves and receiving what the poor have to offer. Called to serve the Vincentian way I now ask myself, 'How am I served by the lives of poor?'

Working at Metro Caring -- a food pantry that provides families with nutritious foods and promotes self-sufficiency -- has opened my eyes to the generosity and gifts of the poor. At first, my work ethic kept me from the receiving side of relationships I was building with families. I would not sit long with them because there was always work to be done and someone else to help.

During a typical, chaotic afternoon, a smiling

man dressed in a suit entered my office. We chatted and asked one another questions.

The man lived in an upscale apartment on a popular street in downtown Denver. He lost his job and was at risk of losing his apartment. The man, who just a month ago lived in luxury, was still smiling as he asked me for help.

To my surprise he returned the next day unashamed and waving at me. How was he still smiling in the midst of crisis? In this moment I realized how much I have to learn from the poor. The man in the suit with the big smile knew things I did not: He radiated humility and optimism. His smile made me aware of what the poor can teach me and all I have to learn. I realized that receiving begins by sitting, listening, chatting and asking questions. From small things like jokes and home remedies to qualities like gratitude and patience, the families and individuals I meet at Metro Caring increasingly enrich my life.

When I take time to connect with participants and receive from them, I become nourished and energized by my work rather than exhausted from a busy day -- just as St. Vincent imagined service to be.

I admit that I do not and will not know everything about serving the Vincentian way. However, a piece I now grasp is that my mission is not to be-all and do-all.

As humans we are interdependent -- we need each other daily! Slowly, I am learning to receive and accept mutual relationships with the poor. As I continue to work at Metro Caring, I bet my stipend that I will leave this year feeling served and knowing I have grown by my relationships with those who are poor more than I am of service to them. 

## Building global community started on Pearl Street

By Shaughnessy Miller  
CVV Volunteer Alumna

**I**t's been two months since we turned in our keys and stepped outside of the giant homes that had housed our adopted family of 10. It felt surreal ... A day I had been looking forward to and dreading.

Each of us had new opportunities and goals to pursue but we realized it meant the end of an experience that could never be recreated. We knew there would be few times we would gather again. That scared us.

Those times gathered together were the best moments of the year. Did it start to get repetitive? Definitely. Was it difficult to cook for 30-plus people while attending Mass? Yes. Were there days we wanted to take dinner to our room out of pure exhaustion? Of course.

But the fact that we never did, that we chose each other over throwing in the towel, makes all the difference now.

The first week of CVV, we found out what we were there to learn: Not to add volunteering to our resume, not for pats on the back, not to give and show the right way.

In addition to building relationship with our community of 20, we would strive for right relationship with all people and nature. We were there to be and to learn to love all ways of being. To accept and share.

It took several months for me to begin to accompany people rather than to expect them to conform to what I wanted.

At work, I realized that my higher education and status as a native English speaker were no more valuable than the knowledge and experiences of the families at the Aurora Community Connection.

Eventually, the people there became my



CVV year 20

friends and the people I learned from, as well. At home, I began learning each person's story and personality on a deeper level, which allowed them to be themselves.

Having been away for a while, I find myself retreating to that selfish place. Without the support of my community and the structure of CVV, it becomes more difficult to live out community in everyday life. Still, the empathy, critical thinking and learning process I found at CVV is ingrained.

Now my friends are scattered. Many have chosen to pursue masters and doctoral degrees. Others are continuing with social and non-profit work. The rest have chosen to pursue fields such as teaching and behavioral therapy and are searching for jobs in psychology research, food justice and book publishing. We are an eclectic, ambitious group.

The four CVVers remaining in Denver have chosen to continue building community together.

We all started in a similar place: Feeling nervous as we moved into WoHo or CoHo in August of 2014. Now, I rest easier knowing my CVV community -- 20 bright future leaders -- will bring our communal foundation into our global community. 



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Check us out!  
**www.covivo.org**

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1732 Pearl St. \* Denver, CO 80203

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## CVV JOURNEY

### ¡Muchas Gracias!

**Board of Directors and Committee members, Heart and Soul Planning Committee, Monthly and individual donors, Coupon Clippers** from the summer mailing, **Prayer Families** who pray for each volunteer, **Summer Cleaning Crew, Repair crew, Melanie Simonet and Julie Hutchinson**, graphic arts and design, **Spinelli's Market, Wheat Ridge Cyclery Bike repair men, Associates in Action @ KOHL'S, Superior Plumbing Services, The Bank of Denver, Parishioners and staff at Good Shepherd, Most Precious Blood, St. Elizabeth of Hungary, Spirit of Christ, St. Frances Cabrini, St. Thomas More, Franciscans of the Holy Name Province May Bon-fils Memorial Trust.**

Special thanks to **Katie Lacz** who served CVV as Community Coordinator for two years! **Katie** and **Patrick** have a new baby, **Isaac**, and they are spending great quality time as a new family. **Katie** has become so



Katie Lacz

integrated into our CVV family that she is staying on to help us write grants! Thanks for the way you embrace CVV!

Welcome, **R. J.** and **Marianne Toledo!** **R. J.** comes to CVV with great experience as he served as a volunteer and worked with Vincentian Service Corps in California before joining our staff as Community Coordinator.



L to R: Marianne and R.J. Toledo

**R. J.** has jumped right into life in Denver and at CVV. He brings great enthusiasm and a beautiful Vincentian heart. **Marianne** is serving the Denver metro community as a nurse. We are blessed to have **R. J.** on our staff and look forward to great years.

*Mary Frances + Bill*

### What we **really** need ...



... is a shop vac -- any brand will do, new or used. P.S.: Doesn't our model vac look like R2-D2? We picked this model because it matches this edition's bee theme.

We also need bicycle helmets and lamps. Anything will help (and donated items don't need our logo, we're just having a little fun with Photoshop)..

