



**Franciscan
Community Volunteers**

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Social Justice @ SJU

By Spencer Buchert, Volunteer

Sister Clara and I had the opportunity last week to meet with two freshman classes at St. Johns University, my alma mater. The students are reading *Rachel and her Children*, a book written about homelessness in New York City. Professor Susan Douma invited us to share experiences from our work with the homeless in St. Cloud with the intention of bringing some of the principles of the book into the context of Central MN. It was great to be back at SJU, and I feel our presentation was effective, as students were engaged and had many questions about our experiences in service to others. I am hopeful that many of the students will become active in addressing the issues of poverty and homelessness in their communities.



Franciscan Community Volunteers

January 2010



Volunteers assemble their advent wreath.
(L to R) Spencer buchert, Will Braun, S. Clara Stang and Alicia Landale.

Revelations and Epiphanies

by Alicia Landale, Volunteer

I am volunteering at the Saint Cloud Children's Home, a residential treatment center for at-risk youth. Talk about being out of my comfort zone! It is challenging work, whether learning to be purposeful with my time, having my boundaries stretched, being willing to be taught, or coming to work with a humble heart. I have really needed to put away my pride here, and I believe I am responding to God's call in doing so.

God has shown me so much already, about myself and about Himself. One particular revelation I have had in the past months is that of my past and present struggles. None has plagued me more than my struggle to establish well-grounded relationships, rooted in love. I often get stuck allowing my thoughts to snowball into something silly or dramatic, worried about what others are thinking. At the Children's Home, God has shown me that what I truly struggle with is being genuine. This is

surfacing because recently, I have seen some real beauty in this part of my life. It is overwhelming sometimes as I see the Father wonderfully reflected in my relationships with the at-risk youth.

The youth are, bluntly, pretty intense. They have been exposed to ten times as much in their lives than I have in my twenty two years of living. They have been conditioned to see the world without rose-tinted glasses. Most things are accepted at face-value, so naturally they see through anything that is not genuine.

What has shifted in this 'surfacing beauty'? I learned quickly that they saw straight through me. I needed to start being real with them. I needed to focus on them, their struggles, their ideas and their words, instead of being consumed

with how they perceived me. So I stopped being paranoid about how much they liked or disliked me. What a relief to stop worrying and to just be present with them. I cannot go into a conversation with thoughts like "How will she perceive me?" It is enough to make my head spin. If those are my encounters with these children – here's the epiphany – how will I ever get to know them or develop flourishing relationships with them? Like my relationship with Christ, the more sincere I am in my encounters with Him, the more our relationship flourishes. I am thankful to be at the Children's Home, though it is not easy, I know that God is glorified here, and opportunities arise each time I look a child in the eyes and listen, care about and relate to them, as Christ undoubtedly would.



Inside: Words from Will • Christmas Open House • Thoughts from the Director • Green Idea • and more

A is for Apple Pie, Advent and Australia

It is our pleasure to introduce the newest Franciscan Community Volunteer, Caitie Tobin! She hails all the way from Sydney, Australia, where she has finished college with a degree in French and History. She is looking for an opportunity to serve the marginalized.



“As my faith is linked to how I am with others, I strive to live it out in my everyday life. That is, my interactions with others and to be truly present. As a Catholic, to have faith is to me to strive to live a life in accordance with that of Jesus — to be a disciple. This is essentially an inner-transformation or state of being. It is to strive to live a life for others.”

Caitie will be trading in an Aussie summer for a Minnesotan winter. We are pleased to welcome her and hope you'll join us in doing so!

Contact FCV:

Sister Clara Stang or Katie Janssen
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(320)240-6184

Words from Will: Why are you here?

by Will Braun, Volunteer

God called me to serve through the book of James. James wrote that pure and undefiled religion before God the father is to help widows and orphans in their troubles. When I read that passage during the months before I applied to the FCV program, I had never acted on these words, and God convicted me that I should obey them if I was going to follow him. The best way to put them into action, I thought, was to volunteer. I thought, too, serving the least of these would bring me closer to him.

God called me to live in intentional community because he knew that living with like-minded people, free from distractions, was the best way for me to meet him. To me, the relationships formed in this community are a symbol of the relationship between God and humanity. They are the tactile representations of the spiritual, and the only way I can understand God's love for me.

25th Annual Homeless Memorial Service

by Katie Janssen

Members of FCV were among the nearly 400 that gathered December 17th for the 25th annual Homeless Memorial March in Minneapolis, organized by Simpson Housing Services. The evening began at 5PM with a silent vigil through the streets of Minneapolis and ended at Simpson United Methodist Church for the memorial service, followed by a dinner served in the homeless center's dining room. The gathering is set up to honor the many homeless, formerly homeless and advocates for the homeless who have died this year. At the memorial we remembered 126 known and unknown individuals from Apple Valley, Ham Lake, Moorhead, Plymouth, Olmstead County, Duluth, St. Cloud, Minneapolis and St. Paul whose lives were shortened by their time on the streets.

As we silently walked through the streets of Minneapolis, adorned for Christmas

and the ever-popular Holidazzle parade, I couldn't help but feel like we were infringing on the Christmas spirit. Who were we to distract from the joy of the Christmas parties, gatherings and festivities planned for the evening? It occurred to me then, that the ever-growing groups of walkers were delivering the spirit of Christmas: Just as the Bethlehem inn keeper was asked to make room for Joseph, Mary and the Christ child, we too are called to make room for Christ in the persons who come to us with unmet needs. For many, there is still no room at the inn. For those who have lost their lives, for those who work for them and for a greater spirit of Christmas hospitality, let us pray.



Photo courtesy of Simpson Housing Services

Adam's Farewell

As you might know, one of our volunteers is no longer with us. In September, Adam determined for a number of reasons that he would be of better service in the southern part of the states, closer to home. All of us were sad to see him go, but joined in to send him off with a birthday celebration and a volunteer "last supper" together, complete with red cake and goose kabobs, compliments of one of Spencer's hunting trips! As we prepare to "winterize" at the Welcoming House, Volunteer House and the volunteer sites, we extend a warm, hearty Minnesotan invitation his way to come back and visit, bringing his guitar and southern sun!

Please note:
Donations to FCV need to be made out to Franciscan Sisters of Little Falls (FSLF) with FCV in the memo line for tax-deduction purposes.

1st Annual Christmas Open House

by Katie Janssen

This December 13, the Franciscan Welcoming House and Franciscan Volunteer House were warmed by the presence of friends, neighbors and co-workers who stopped by for Christmas cookies, hot cider and tours of the two houses. Each was beautifully and creatively decorated! Many guests were able to see how the furniture and appliances they generously donated in August have been put to use in establishing our volunteer homes. What

a joy it was to welcome our friends and supporters while at the same time getting to introduce ourselves and volunteers to neighbors we have not yet met!

Volunteers made invitations from recycled Christmas cards and delivered them door to door around the neighborhood, introducing themselves and the volunteer program to many who were unfamiliar with it.



Because of the tremendous success, we hope to make this an annual event. Please keep your eyes peeled next year for news and invites to join us in both celebration and thanksgiving for the work, love and support that FCV brings about in the St. Cloud Community!

Thoughts from the Director

by Sister Clara Stang

We begin this new year with renewed hope! Two years ago Franciscan Community Volunteers was a mere inspiration that today is bringing life to so many. I take this opportunity to share our mission and invite you to partner with us to bring even more hope to more people in need. The Mission of Franciscan Community Volunteers is to accompany young men and women ages 21-30 to grow in Christian discipleship and leadership through Franciscan spirituality, service and a simple community life.

Today we have four full-time volunteers giving direct service to the needy in our midst: the homeless, uninsured, immigrants, elderly and at-risk youth. Together the volunteers devote time to prayer, study of the Gospel of Jesus and Social Teachings of the Catholic Church. They live with us in a simple community

life in the spirit of Saint Francis and Saint Clare.

As Franciscan Sisters, our role is that of mentoring. The volunteers bring so much to us by their youthful energy and generosity. For sure, this is making a big difference in each Volunteer, to us Franciscan Sisters, and to the many with whom they serve.

Our hope is that the FCV Program will continue to grow. It is a tremendous leadership experience for young adults and a great asset to the St. Cloud civic community. **We invite you to support us with your financial donations.** We are grateful for our donors whom we affectionately refer to as our "Franciscan Companions."



Green Idea: 'Tis a Gift to be Simple

Ten ways to have a red and GREEN Christmas:

10. Send electronic cards or make your own.
9. Separate out wants from needs.
8. 'Decorate' trees in your yard with peanut butter and birdseed.
7. Keep a potted tree in your home for Christmas and year-round greenery.
6. If you have to rationalize it, don't buy it.
5. Use lemon, vinegar or ammonia & water for cleaning.
4. Shop locally.
3. Create your own gift wrap with brown paper bags or comics.
2. Bring a re-usable water bottle along with you.
1. Make your own birthday and Christmas gifts.

— Above image courtesy of Union Climate Connectors

A Special Thanks to Recent Donors

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