

SHARED VISIONS

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Volume Thirteen, Number Four

— A publication to assist in the spiritual formation of lay volunteers — presented by the people who bring you *Connections* —

Have you figured this one out:

WHY DO YOU HAVE TO LEAVE YOUR VOLUNTEER PROGRAM?

Most volunteer programs limit the number of years a volunteer can stay in the program. Aside from that, what are your personal reasons for leaving the program at this time? Write down the first reasons that come to your mind.

I think I have to leave my volunteer site because....

Take a few quiet moments and read the following answers. Circle any answers that make sense for you. Then as a group, discuss with your fellow volunteers the reasons why you chose a particular answer or answers.

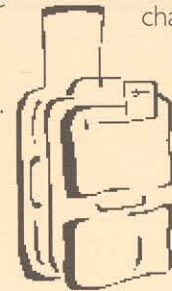
Possible answers:

- I feel it's time for me to get on with the next phase of my life.
- I never really thought about it. I guess it is just the way they set up the program.
- I've been wondering about the effect of my leaving my program. I'm still thinking about the pluses and minuses for myself and my clients.
- Actually, I'm not leaving my volunteer service program anytime soon.
- In one sense, my volunteer and mission work really continue after I return home and, based on my experiences, I want to speak up and be a voice for the voiceless.
- I need to leave in order to make room for others to take my place, to bring their unique skills which build on and complement the contributions I have made.
- I am a unique instrument of God, as is my volunteer program. So it's important to trust that the Holy Spirit's plan is to use the skills of many people over many years to complete the job of helping the people I am now serving during the long haul.
- The clients eventually have to get out from under the shadow cast by the volunteers. My staying might encourage them to be overly dependent on me.

Conclusions? It's best to leave your volunteer program and placement site for a "great reason," rather than simply because "your time's up". You are part of something much bigger than yourself!

THE END IS NEAR!

This thought may cause you to panic if you haven't thought about finishing your volunteer service and what lies beyond this year (or two or more)! In this issue of *Shared Visions*, we hope to offer you some ideas that will help move you out of panic mode and into planning mode. As this part of your volunteer experience comes to a close, you are facing a time of change and transition. You CAN manage it, but you need to start by thinking about it if you haven't already!






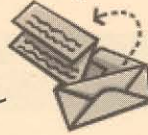

Planning a Goodbye

What do I want the last two weeks at my volunteer site to look like?

For many volunteers, the last weeks are a total blur. It's a rush of completing tasks, marking final exams, cleaning up the volunteer house, saying goodbye to co-workers, to housemates, neighbors, students and clients. All the while, there's a bit of anxiety floating around the edges of your awareness: *What's next for me? Will I find a job and like it? Will it be meaningful? Where can I afford to live? Who will I hang out with?*

The final two weeks

Here's a checklist and some suggestions to help you organize your goodbyes.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
 <p>HOUSE PARTY Do I want to have one just for my fellow volunteers so we can celebrate what we have accomplished together? Do I want to give them some gift to remember me by?</p>		 <p>SPECIAL LETTERS Who are the five or ten people for whom I really want to write a special letter or note?</p>		<p>PACK SOUVENIRS Think about your fellow volunteers, clients, local music, special places, events, things, smells or foods you have experienced during this past year (or more). Which do you think you will miss the most when you are gone? Think about any ways by which you can "take them with you" when you leave your community. Start "packing" away these intangible treasures.</p>		
<p>NOTE HOW YOU HAVE CHANGED. Make a list of ways you have changed since volunteering. Which, if any, of your beliefs or values have changed? How have your feelings changed about your family, the poor, God, the Church, money, government policy, the environment, your consumption of goods, your skills or your future employment?</p>		<p>BIG PARTY Is it possible to have one so you can say goodbye to a lot of people at once?</p>	<p>WRITE YOUR STORIES People for the next two years will probably be asking you: So, how'd your volunteer year(s) go? Often one of the most helpful activities you can engage in is figuring out and formulating your response. Outline a two minute verbal response and a two and ten page written response. Afterwards, your year(s) of service will not be a blur.</p> 			

ANXIETY:

HOW TO DEAL WITH IT IN YOUR LAST MONTHS.

Ever tried performing a "mindsweep"?



Volunteers often have a difficult time meeting all the expectations and demands of their final weeks of service. Sometimes the pressure comes from oneself, sometimes from others.

The key is to find practical ways of responding and dealing with it. Here's one technique some people find helpful to do from time to time, namely, a "mind sweep."

DIRECTIONS

- ☐ When you have 20 or 30 minutes to spare, sit down with pen and paper in a quiet place where you will not have to answer phones or meet others' demands.
- ☐ Draw a line down the middle of the page. In the left hand column, begin making a list of all the tasks you are worried about completing, be they big or small, job-related or personal, short- or long-term. Take about 10 minutes or until you have between six and 20 items on your list and then stop.
- ☐ Now take a second 10 minutes. In the right hand column, across from each item of worry in the left hand column, write a short answer to the question: What's the first action step I have to take in order to get started addressing the task or worry? An example of an anxiety-inducing task could be deciding

where you will live when the volunteer year ends. An example of a "first action step" could be to make a list of all the reasonable possibilities. Another anxiety item could be if you're late in sending in your 1040 tax forms to the IRS. A corresponding action step could be to download the 1040 forms from the web or pick up copies at a local library. Do this for each item in your worry list.

☐ Having done the first half of this mind sweep, some people initially feel overwhelmed when they see all the anxiety-inducing items in their list. The payoff comes when they complete the second half of the exercise and they have listed their "first steps" they can take toward meeting each demand.

☐ A lot of free-floating anxiety stems from the general feeling that one has way too much to do and also from not knowing how to begin addressing all the demands. Clarity about what the demands are and the recognition that you can take first steps gives many people the "can do" sense that they will prevail.

☐ If the list is totally out of control, then the key is to prioritize the list and identify items which you can deal with. Seek help from friends as to how you can let go of the other responsibilities, perhaps transferring them to friends or to other persons in authority. Good luck. +

It does not take much strength to do things, but it requires a great deal of strength to decide what to do.

-Elbert Hubbard

You've been here before. You can do it (say goodbye) really well!



Chances are, you have already had several experiences of saying goodbye in your life. Maybe it was when you moved from one state to another growing up, or when you left home for college, or when you said goodbye to an ailing grandparent before s/he passed away. Reflect for a moment on these goodbyes that you have already experienced in your own life. Choose one that particularly stands out for you and answer the following questions (in a journal, in your own head, with a trusted friend, in community, whatever feels most comfortable for you):



☞ What was the situation?

☞ What were the feelings involved?

☞ What did you do that helped you with this goodbye?

☞ What did you do that perhaps complicated or hindered the goodbye?



☞ How is the goodbye you now face (leaving your volunteer program) similar to the goodbyes you have experienced in the past?

☞ How is the goodbye that you now face different from the ones you have experienced in the past?

☞ Based on this reflection, what is one thing that you would like to do to prepare for saying goodbye to any aspect of your volunteer experience?

A Goodbye Prayer

From Praying Your Goodbyes by Joyce Rupp

"You will leave with joy and be led away in safety" Isaiah 55:12

Yahweh, God of the journey, you went with the Israelites in the form of a pillar of cloud by day to show them the way and by night in the form of a pillar of fire to give them light for their journey (Ex 13: 21-22). I long for that kind of assuredness of your presence on my new road, too. I fear the unknown and I wonder what the future will hold for me. A part of me wants to hold onto the blessings I have known and to rest in the security that is mine.

Remind me often that I am to bring the good news, that I am your servant, a herald of justice and peace (Is 52:7). May I be so open to your word and your way as I travel on that people will "take me by the sleeve" and say: "We want to go with you since we have learnt that God is with you" (Zec 8:23). Encourage me with a deepened awareness of my calling when I want to look back or when I experience feelings of loneliness, doubt of homelessness. Take me to your people and shine through my life. Amen.

Make the Most Out of The Pallotti Center Re-Entry Resources

Please learn about our free services, and make the most of the opportunities and resources available to volunteers in re-entry! Get connected with the increasingly large community of former volunteers, and strengthen one of our most valuable strengths — community of our “formers.”

To access these services please visit our website page for former volunteers at www.pallotticenter.org/Former/index.htm or contact the national office of the Pallotti Center at 1-877-VOL-LINK or 202-529-3330 in the DC metro area.

staying connected is a free quarterly newsletter for former volunteers, with each issue focusing on an aspect of volunteering (simple living, social justice, spirituality, relationships, transitions, financial stewardship, etc.) and how this can apply to life after service.

The Job Bank

Our *Job Bank* aids former volunteers in their search for meaningful and fulfilling work. It consists of a starter kit containing articles, resources, and strategies for career discernment and job searching, and a weekly email of job announcements which we send to interested former volunteers.

JOIN THE NETWORK OF FORMER VOLUNTEERS AND MISSIONERS

Since its inception in 1994, over 1,100 former volunteers have joined this alumni database of lay volunteers, managed by the Pallotti Center. Once a former volunteer has signed on to the Network by supplying their contact and volunteer experience information, as well as their job field and willingness to gather or organize gatherings, other former volunteers in their area can request that information from the Pallotti Center. In this way “formers” can be linked first and foremost to each other, but also to social gatherings, discussion or prayer groups, couples groups, as well as with help in employment leads and contacts. The database will not be used for fundraising or spam mail.

The “What's Next?” Notebook

The “What's Next?” Notebook helps guide the transition after volunteer service. It contains questions to help you reflect both on your volunteer experience and your future hopes, dreams, and goals. It also contains some practical suggestions for taking your next steps as a former volunteer, eg., re-entry self-evaluation, resume and interview tips, discernment resources, reflection questions and exercises on career direction, ideas on how to remain active in your faith, social justice, the Church, your community, etc. Master copies are sent each year to program directors, and Former Volunteers can request a copy from them, or read the on-line version on our website.

Our **Gatherings of Former Volunteers** take place in the NYC area and the Washington/Baltimore area. Other cities such as Chicago, Portland, Philadelphia and St. Louis also have gatherings of former volunteers. Contact the Pallotti Center for more information.

One-on-one support. The transition following a term of service can be a trying time. In addition to the various resources and services provided, former volunteers might benefit from talking with someone who understands the challenges involved and can offer some feedback regarding personal career decisions, life path choices, and the like. Call or stop in any of the Pallotti Centers for help today!

WWW.PALLOTTICENTER.ORG Check out the different features on our website, including the: *Resources in Your Area* section with an extensive listing of all kinds of resources in areas all across the U.S. *The Discussion Forum/Housing Board* was created to give prospective, current and former volunteers a forum where they can get connected with one another. Current events, are also posted on a separate page.

Volunteers Saying Goodbye to a Lifestyle?



Saying goodbye to co-workers, to an employer, to students, even to a city, these are hard enough. But saying goodbye to a lifestyle is subtle and requires volunteers to adopt a different strategy. How about an example? Many volunteers have been living in community and in your post volunteer service you could find yourself living more on your own. What other big lifestyle changes do you see coming your way? Finances? Work? How you use your time?

The gospel stories lend some insight here because Chris-

tianity required a radical change in lifestyle. Read Matthew 26: 69-75 which describes when Jesus was arrested and crucified. Ask yourself: What challenges did the crushed disciples face? What helped the disciples survive? Read John 16:1-4. Upon completing your volunteer service, how can your memories help you create a new lifestyle? What decisions do you need to make? Are there some personal practices you need to stop? Are there some parts of yourself you need to let go of? On the other hand, what values and/or current practices will you take away with you and carry into your post-service life? +

Shared Visions

*A publication to assist in the spiritual formation of lay volunteers
presented by the Saint Vincent Pallotti Centers*

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The mission of the St. Vincent Pallotti Center

To promote lay volunteer service that challenges laity, clergy, and religious to work together in the mission of the Church. Our goal is to support lay volunteers *before, during and after* their term of service. Regional Pallotti Centers are located in Boston; Paterson, NJ; St. Louis; and Sacramento. The National Office is in Washington, DC.

The Centers take their inspiration from Saint Vincent Pallotti (1795-1850) who believed passionately in the laity, in each person as being an image of God and as called to be missionary.

Shared Visions' goal is to explore five building blocks of spiritual development: Intellectual Growth, Emotional and Physical Health, Leadership and Prayer.



INSIDE: Stories and activities to nurture the personal, communal and spiritual development of lay volunteers and missionaries!

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