



Shared Visions

*A publication to assist in the spiritual formation of lay volunteers
presented by the Saint Vincent Pallotti Center ...
... The people who bring you Connections*

© 1994 The Saint Vincent Pallotti Center

Volume Four, Number Four

Overview: Sooner or later, each of us senses, "It's almost time to go." These words are practically never easy to hear. And for many volunteers, it's so hard to believe that their term of service is nearing an end...and yes, it's time to begin yet another transition.

This issue of *Shared Visions* can help you sort through the highs and lows of your volunteer experience, and face the decisions that lie ahead. Carrie Thompson, a former volunteer and current director of the Archdiocese of Boston's Lay Volunteer Program, writes about her anxieties and struggles over the choices awaiting her as a returning volunteer. John Sweeney, a current Vincentian volunteer, takes us through his volunteer year and his discoveries about what "mission" can mean for a person. The questions for discussion and personal reflection that follow each article, as well as the community game will help you to begin answering the many questions you encounter as you complete your volunteer service.

We encourage you to read about the Pallotti Center's "What's Next?" Notebook, Job Bank and Network of Former Lay Volunteers on page 5. These are free services designed to meet your needs at this time.

Inside:

- Approaches to making the transition from current volunteer to former volunteer.
- Exercises and questions for discussion.

God's Time...Not Mine!

*Carrie Thompson,
Former volunteer with the Archdiocese of Boston*

My last four years have seemed to fly by me as I have been through one cycle of transition after another. As the current Director of the Pallotti Center in Boston, I also administer the Lay Volunteer Program of the Archdiocese of Boston. And prior to my work with the Center, I served as a lay volunteer in the Archdiocese of Boston. All of these experiences have provided me the mixed blessings of personally gearing up for the post-volunteer transition process and of "coaching" my volunteers through their own process. And for my four years of experience I would have to say that with each year the process becomes a little easier for me.

Most volunteers that I have met have entered their volunteer service in some stage of discernment, even if they were not fully aware of it. You may have recently graduated from college and were hoping the year would confirm or deny an array of graduate school or career ambitions. Or, you may have left one career to serve as a lay volunteer and have been in search of the next. I was a volunteer in the second group and had left a career in the corporate world of engineering. Two definite goals through my year were to try to curb

"God's Time..." Continued page 2

Sense of Mission

John Sweeney, Vincentian Service Corps

Nine months have passed since I entered the Vincentian Service Corps; and it will probably take another nine months to process mentally my volunteer experience. However, there is one particular aspect of this year that is quite clear to me now: namely, my sense of mission.

When I entered the VSC everything was so undefined, or perhaps I should say, "ambiguous." For instance, I

realized rather immediately that everyone else had mixed emotions and less than focused expectations for the year ahead of them. But each of us also had an underlying sense of mission. Some referred to the mission as ministry whereas others thought of it as simply a year of service.

Initially, I must admit that I was somewhat confused by the semantics of catch-words like "service", "ministry", and "mission." Nonetheless, there was I believe a consensus among all the volunteers that the year was designed to

serve the poor. What one chose to call his or her particular job placement was simply left to discretion. How one chose to approach their "mission" was a personal decision as well.

In the beginning I did not look at my job as ministering to the poor. To be sure, I was familiar with the spiritual challenges that go along with homelessness, joblessness, and addiction. However, I simply saw my role as a problem solver. Whenever I thought of ministry, I envisioned a person with deeply religious convictions working to

"Sense of Mission..." Continued page 3

my strong need for control and to discern where God wanted me to continue to serve in my professional career.. Was I meant to return to engineering? Pursue further education toward teaching or social work? Or something else I had not even imagined?

As my volunteer year unfolded, I was sure that my decision to leave engineering had been right. I was enjoying serving others and a new freedom of needing to be less in control. But, as the spring months quickly passed, my anxiety level quickly rose. I had not come to any concrete decisions and my year of service was ending June 30. I had set myself up to believe that a termination date on a calendar would be synonymous with that long awaited for "sign from God" and that "light bulb" feeling of "Oh, now I see clearly where I'm headed!!"

Well, the reality was slightly different. As the program year was drawing to a close, I resorted to my old habits, spent the last two months anxiously weighing my options, took control of the situation and enrolled in classes towards a teaching certificate. Looking back, I realize that it was an OK decision, but it had unfolded without God when we had been a team throughout the year. I had panicked because God

had not responded in the time frame I had requested!

My summer months were filled working crazy, 80 hour weeks trying to save money for the coming school years. When out of the blue, one week before classes were to begin, I happened upon a position to work at the Pallotti Center of Boston. The job was mine if I wanted it and it indeed was just what I had hoped and prayed for through my year. I can remember feeling an overwhelming sense of peace and gratitude that God had indeed shown me a new path and only three short months after I finished my volunteer service. I can also remember feeling disappointed that I had felt such pressure to make decisions when just a little more patience, a little more prayer and a little more faith would have gone a long way to lessen my anxiety.

Now, after three years as Director of the Pallotti Center in Boston, I am again gearing up for a transition, as I am leaving my job this summer. But, this time there is no anxiety. And, it is indeed a gift! Oh sure, I have some options that I'm playing with but I am not losing sleep over the fact that I'm not yet sure where I'm headed. This time, I'm very sure that all will be revealed to me in God's time, not mine. And this time, that feels fine. †

Questions for Discussion and Personal Reflection - for Carrie Thompson's article

1. What goals did you have for yourself as you entered into your volunteer experience? How have those goals changed or been met during your term of service?

2. Carrie writes about her anxiety over the choices facing her as her volunteer term drew to a close. Describe any anxieties you have felt about your own transitioning.

3. What kind of a role do you feel God is playing in the choices you are making at this point? Are you challenged? Comforted?

4. If the "perfect" job or opportunity were to come your way, what would it be? What can you do to bring it your way?

WORKSHEET QUESTIONS & ACTIVITIES

VOLUNTEEROPOLY

...An old game, but a new way to share your thoughts and feelings with your community or other volunteers close to you. Each player find a button or a small object to use as a player piece. Place on starting square. Find a die or cut out the number circles on the bottom and put them face down in a hat. Each player take a turn picking a number out of the hat (or rolling the die), moving the appropriate number of squares and answering the question on the landing square. Continue taking turns until every player has reached the final square.

Starting Square
The Transition
Begins...

If you could create the ideal job, what would it be?

What have you left undone as a volunteer?

Name two things you can't wait to do when you return from volunteering.

What skills did you develop as a volunteer that you would like to continue to develop?

Name two things you'll miss about your volunteer term?

Where do you see service in your future?

Name two things you won't miss about your volunteer term.

How has your volunteer experience affected your relationship with God?

Name two things you learned about yourself as a volunteer.

What have you learned about being a lay person in the Church?

What have you discovered about living with others in community?

Define "success" for you.

How do you feel about what lies ahead for you?

Name two people who contributed to your development as a volunteer.

How has your prayer life changed since volunteering?

Give three reasons you became a volunteer

How have your personal goals changed since becoming a volunteer?

You're on your way!



TAKE ADVANTAGE OF OUR SERVICES!!

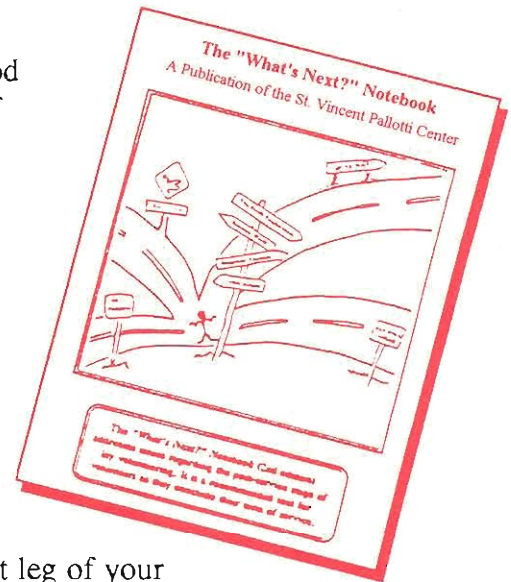
Below are descriptions of two of the free services the Pallotti Center offers you as former volunteers and missionaries. For more information, contact your program director or complete the coupon on page six and send it to the Pallotti Center in Washington, DC.

The "What's Next?" Notebook

You are about to complete your volunteer commitment. Undoubtedly your volunteer experience was filled with good times, hard times, times of pain, times of joy, and times of growth. You have grown professionally, personally, and spiritually. And now it's time to look back on all that has happened and figure out what it all means.

It is also time to look forward and ask yourself, **"What's Next?"** and "What do I want now: More training? A new vocation? A return to my old career plans? How do I incorporate my volunteer experience into the rest of my life?"

This **"What's Next?" Notebook** is designed to assist and guide you as you make some of these decisions. There are several resources available to you as you set out on the next leg of your journey. This booklet can point you toward a few of these resources, and perhaps give you some new ideas. Included in the notebook is information about receiving job listings in the non-profit sector through our **Job Bank**. Ask your program director for your free copy - or contact us directly.

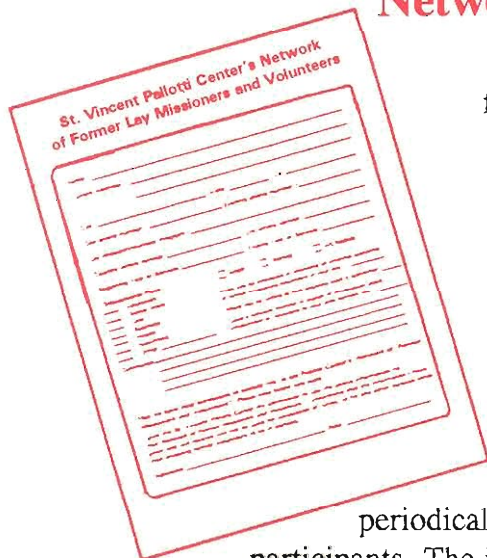


Network of Former Lay Volunteers and Missioners.

Our purpose for setting up this network is to provide you and other former lay missioners/ volunteers with a pool of returnees who can support one another. Our hope is that through this network, you can lend and obtain assistance in relocating to a new area, be linked to social gatherings, discussion or prayer groups, couples groups, as well as with employment leads and contacts. Here's how it works:

Joining the network: Your former lay program has been contacted and provided with the network form. Ask the program director to send you a copy. This form will supply us with your current information as well as some data on your volunteer/mission experience.

Getting information to you: We will then compile the data and periodically send the director of your former lay program updated lists of network participants. The information will be sorted alphabetically according to state. Your program director will either copy and distribute this data to you or have it on hand when you request specific information about people who are living in your area, working in your field, or share other common threads with you.



Please send me:

- Information about the Network of Former Lay Volunteers and Missioners
- Information about the What's Next Notebook and Job Network
- Future issues of Shared Visions
- A copy of Connections 1995

**Return this to The Pallotti Center
PO Box 893-Cardinal Station
Washington, DC 20064**

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Volunteer Program _____

Shared Visions

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

©1994 The Saint Vincent Pallotti Center

Volume 4, Number 4

Editor: Andrew Thompson · **Production Editor:** Susan Marble

Advisors: Frank Donio, S.A.C., Joelle Johnson, Rev. Bob Kinast, Bill Lowell, Sr. Anita Joseph Reeves, Evan Cuthbert and
Pallotti Center Directors: Nina Valmonte, Linda Ferriero,
Carrie Thompson, Betty Wallin

©The Saint Vincent Pallotti Center

These materials are copyrighted. Unauthorized reproduction is prohibited. The Pallotti Center hereby gives permission to reproduce all or any of the contents of this publication so long as proper credit is given to the Saint Vincent Pallotti Center and so long as reproduced materials are distributed gratis.

The mission of the Saint Vincent Pallotti Center:

To promote lay volunteer service that challenges the 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. Local Pallotti Centers are located in Boston, Memphis, Paterson, and Saint Louis. A new Center will be opening soon in northern California. 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.*



**The Saint Vincent Pallotti Center
for Apostolic Development**
Box 893-Cardinal Station
Washington, DC 20064
(202) 529-3330

NONPROFIT ORG
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
WASHINGTON, DC
PERMIT NO. 3188