

Staying Connected

a publication designed for alumni of Catholic full-time volunteer programs
brought to you by the St. Vincent Pallotti Centers

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Staying Connected to ... COMMUNITY

Is there community life after volunteering? Formers say "Yes!" Results from our survey on community

Survey Rationale

"I really miss my community" former volunteers often exclaim. So we asked the 700 former volunteers and missionaries in the Pallotti Center network about their past and current experiences of community living and if they had any suggestions for other formers searching for a new community.



Who responded to the survey? About 300 former volunteers responded to our email survey of 12 questions asked in May of 2003.

The majority of respondents, more than three out of four (78%), were women, and roughly half (47%) were between the ages of 25 and 30. Almost all (98%) the respondents said that while serving as volunteers they had lived in a community of 'fellow volunteers or other persons' and 94% said they had a good experience of community; 74% said this was 'absolutely' true of them and 20% said it was 'somewhat' true for them.

What were their views on 'community?' The majority of respondents, four out of five (81%) said being part of a community today was 'very important' to them, and another 18% said it was 'somewhat important' to them. Only 2% said it was 'a little important' and 1% said it was of 'not at all' important (error due to rounding).

So, how successful have they been in becoming part of a meaningful or satisfying community after being a full-time volunteer?

The good news is that two out of three formers said they were currently part of a meaningful or satisfying community, with 36% saying it was 'definitely true' of them and another 36% saying it was 'somewhat true' of them. One out of five (20%) said it was only 'a little true' of them, and one in twelve (8%) said it was 'not at all' true of them. We theorized that those who were over 25 years of age, who have been away from their volunteer service and more likely to be settled would also be more likely to say they had found a community than those formers under the age of 25 who more recently completed their full-time volunteer service. Not so. Those under 25 were just as likely to feel they were currently part of a community as those over 25.

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WHY COMMUNITY?

What is the search for community about? What is it about that experience of living in community that touches volunteers so deeply that afterward they go looking for it? Because let's all face it, living in community has its share of trials and joys. Maybe that sense of belonging, of sharing your life with others in a deeper way is what keeps us searching for a stronger connection with others after we've finished our term of service. In this issue of Staying Connected, we hope to give you a sense that your experiences with community as a volunteer were precious ones which give you a special understanding of authentic connectedness. Community doesn't have to be people living together physically, or mean that you have to be a volunteer necessarily, but rather community (we think) is about living in openness with others, sharing your life with them, holding close to the core, common values you treasure. Communities are families, parishes, prayer groups, young adult groups, marriages, lay movements, friendship circles, social justice groups.... Hard to define, but once we've found it, we certainly know it. +

Top Ten Tips on Community by former volunteers

- 1) Know yourself and take your personal interests seriously. When you know what you like, what you are passionate about, then you can look for a community which supports this interest. As one former put it, "Involve yourself in something you like and let the community develop."
- 2) Try to define what you're looking for, what is guiding your search (values/faith/etc.) and what community means for you. One former said: "Know what you are looking for, then be flexible, gentle, and forgiving."
- 3) Patience, patience, patience. Finding the right community or building one takes time because trust among individuals takes time. "Be open to how community evolves" is how one former phrased it. Another said finding community "is a process."
- 4) Networks of former volunteers (see www.pallotticenter.org/Former/network_of_former_volunteers.htm) are super places to start your search of kindred spirits, but also, don't limit your world to those who have had volunteer experiences. As one former put it, "extend outward and seek that which expands you...do not settle for what is convenient..."
- 5) The results of this survey have shown that there are MANY of you out there searching for community. One of the most common tips offered was "keep looking!"
- 6) Go out and try something. Get involved. One former affirmed, "It may take some searching, and certainly [it] requires you to put yourself out there in terms of who you are and what you believe in, but [it's] definitely worth the risks."
- 7) If you can't find the type of community you're looking for, create it! "Don't be afraid to start a group—even if there's just a handful of you that gathers on a regular basis."
- 8) Adopt and cultivate an attitude of openness, honesty and trust. Be open and honest about who you are and what you're searching for and trust that your openness with others will lead to the discovery of fellow searchers.
- 9) Seek out places and events where there is likely to be an expression of the values closest to you. A lot of formers say community is likely to be more successful if there is a common mission.
- 10) Seek out people who have similar values, "Stay true to your values in terms of who you choose to spend time with, and how you spend it... and if you do this, you'll be led to people who share your commitment and support you in it." +

We also asked the special group of those still seeking community what they were looking for in a community. They responded they sought one or more of the following: persons who shared their values, who cared about social justice, and/or who shared their spiritual values.

For the formers who were currently in a community, we wanted to know where they were finding their sense of community? Was it through marriage? Friends? Family? Co-workers? We kept the survey short and simple, so don't have the answer to this. But we did ask if they found community in a parish. About 10% said they they did find community in their parish 'always' and 25% said they did 'most of the time.' Another 3 in 10 (31%) said they occasionally found it in their parish.

We also asked about the extent they found community at Eucharistic liturgies. About 7 of 10 responded positively: 14% said they 'always' did, 31% said 'most of the time,' and 29% said they 'occasionally' found community at the Eucharist liturgies.

We have also frequently heard formers say social justice was very important to them. So we asked them the extent to which it was an important component of their ideal community. Practically every respondent (97%) said social justice was central, with 69% saying it was 'very' central and 28% saying it was 'somewhat' central. Similarly, we asked the extent they saw community as rooted in their faith. Again, 88% said it was rooted in faith, with 59% saying it was 'very much' rooted and another 29% saying it was 'somewhat' rooted in their faith.

Did the men and women respond differently? Not really. Their answers were usually within a few percentage points of each other. The one question where they did differ pertained to whether they were a part of a community which was based in an electronic world such as a list serve discussion group or chat room. About twice as many men responded in the affirmative than did the women, with 27% vs. 12% saying it was 'definitely true' for them and 20% vs. 12% saying it was 'somewhat true' of them.

So are the formers becoming a part of a new community after having completed their full time volunteer service? Based on our respondents, most have found at least a somewhat meaningful and satisfying community. The others said they care about it deeply and we hope their search will be rewarded. ✚

"As long as we refuse to accept that we are a mixture of light and darkness, ... we will continue to divide the world into enemies- the 'baddies'-and friends- the 'goodies'. We will go on throwing up barriers within and around ourselves and spreading prejudice.... A community is only a community when the majority of its members have consciously decided to break these barriers and come out of their cocoons of "friendship" to stretch out their hand to their enemies."

Jean Vanier, *Community and Growth*.

"Community, like marriage, requires that we hang in there when the going gets a little rough. It requires a certain degree of commitment."

Scott Peck *The Different Drum*

The SEARCH continues

Here's what some formers said they were looking for in community...

"I'm looking for people who are open to new ideas, supportive in prayer and the different ways prayer is expressed. I am also seeking a community that is challenged by the need for social justice."

"I am looking for more -for 'community' in a romantic relationship. Ideally, marriage is community and at this point in my life I am looking for a partner with the same take on it. Someone with a shared vision who will share hopes, dreams, prayers, work etc. And isn't that what community is?"

"I am looking for a community to live with, people dedicated to living a simple lifestyle, dedicated to ideals that we lived out as volunteers."

"A group of people with whom God is a central figure and who care about each other."

Practical Ways of Getting Started

Start your own book club... Join or start your own prayer group... What about a new social ministry in your parish?... Host an open house for your neighborhood once a week for a soup night... Get involved in community organizing... Start your own former volunteer group (use the Pallotti Center Network to find other fellow formers)... Find out if your program has an alumni list and get a group together... Open up your social circle by joining a sports team... Try part-time volunteering... Find out about diocesan young adult ministry in your diocese... Use the internet to find organizations that respond to your passions and interests... And if all else fails, just MOVE to a new city!



THE PAGES & LINKS ~ references for open minds ~



Community and Growth: Our Pilgrimage Together AND -From Brokenness to Community, both by Jean Vanier -Facilitating for Growth: A Guide for Scripture Study Groups and Small Christian Communities, Barbara Fleischer -Life Together: The Classic Exploration of Faith in Community, Dietrich Bonhoeffer -People, Promise, and Community: A Practical Guide to Creating and Sustaining Small Communities of -Faith. Harriet Burke editor -Sacred Circles: A Guide to Creating Your Own Women's Spirituality Group, Robin Carnes -Small Christian Communities: Imagining Future Church by Robert S. Pelton (Editor), Notre Dame International Theological Consultation on Small Christian -Small Christian Communities: A Vision of Hope for the 21st Century by Thomas Kleissler, et al. -The Long Loneliness by Dorothy Day -The Empowerment Process: Centering Social Ministry in the Life of the Local Christian Community by Durban et al. -The Different Drum: Community Making and Peace by M. Scott Peck, M.D. www.pallotticenter.org Our website has a multitude of resources for formers who are looking to build community with other formers including a quarterly newsletter, a discussion forum, resources in your area, information on former volunteer gatherings and much, much more! www.clc-usa.org/index.htm website for background and information on forming Christian Life Communities, a lay, international movement formed out of Ignatian spirituality www.paxchristiusa.org website for Pax Christi USA, a Catholic peace and justice movement with local chapters all over the US and abroad. www.catholicworker.org website for the Catholic Worker, intentional communities dedicated to nonviolence, voluntary poverty, prayer and hospitality for the homeless and hungry. www.beliefnet.com a multi-faith e-community designed to help you meet your own religious and spiritual needs. With a deep respect for all religious traditions, Beliefnet offers prayer circles, discussions and dialogue groups. www.cta-usa.org/regyoungcta.html - Call to Action's Next Generation programming reaches out to progressive young adult Catholics between the ages of 18-42. With retreat, email discussion list serve and young adult faith community development opportunities available www.sojo.net - The Sojourners Christians for Justice and Peace is a great place to get started and get plugged into the world of Christian faith-based social activism. www.cmanet.org/ccma.nsf/resources-smallchristian?OpenPage for resources for small Christian communities. **Other ideas** Does your volunteer program have a web page, discussion forum or listserve for formers? Find out by calling your program to say "hi" or by doing a web search. Also, volunteer programs like to "stay connected" to their formers, as you are a wonderful resource in continuing the good work in which you participated as a volunteer. Does your program utilize formers as support people, orientation speakers, interviewers, etc. for prospective and current volunteers? Chances are, you can continue to participate in an expanded understanding of "community" by serving your program in these ways as a former.

~ Spirituality ~

The search for the discovery of God's transforming presence in our lives

Build Your Spirituality on Community Themes

When you hear the word "spirituality," what comes to mind? For many, it evokes an individual's religious priorities, prayer life, religious practices, moral tone and connectedness to God. Others associate spirituality with the familiar traditions and themes of popular religious orders such as the Franciscans, Jesuits or Benedictines. These spiritualities emphasize living in a spirit of poverty, respect for all creation, peace-making, discernment, setting one's priorities, hospitality and closeness with God.



It is no surprise that ancient monastic and modern apostolic religious orders of monks and nuns, rather than parishes, have given birth to a rich spectrum of spiritualities. Why might this be? It is typical, for example, that the monks constantly work together and treat each other respectfully and as equals. This is significant when viewed from the technical perspective of boundary theory, i.e., how a person behaves at the point of his or her contact with the environment, be it other persons, nature or God. The ideal boundaries function like the membrane of lungs, semi-permeable, allowing life-giving elements (oxygen and carbon dioxide) to pass to and from blood cells while keeping the blood outside the lungs. When the boundaries are too difficult to cross, as when someone has pneumonia, the person's strength declines. Similarly, if the boundaries are too easy to cross, the oxygen escapes and again, there's a decline.

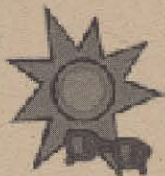
So also in a society, if you live or work in a rigid caste system of have's and have-nots, of inequality between persons, there's little or no growth. When the boundaries are too loose, the person or community has no real identity, no agreed upon standards, weakness sets in and ultimately the system collapses.

Healthy religious orders have developed boundaries having flexibility and strength. St. Francis Assisi in the 1200's succeeded wildly in part because he bridged numerous boundaries including between the rich and poor, lay and clergy (he remained a brother, not a priest), Christian and Muslim. As a result, he brought life-giving insights and new religious practices to his followers. Similarly, St. Vincent Pallotti in the 1800's established the Union of the Catholic Apostolate which promoted a new model for teamwork among clergy, religious and laity as well as an ecumenical appreciation for God's image in each person, regardless of one's culture or religious tradition.

The challenge for many of us today is to develop a spirituality which helps us to bridge boundaries and gain access to life-giving elements. As volunteers, we grew by living in our volunteer community. We can now extend this process by learning from the charisms and themes of religious communities. We can also learn from our personal experiences with our own communities, in our: families, parishes, volunteer service organizations or network of friends. Our immersion in and reflections on our community interactions will help us evaluate how we are bridging our boundaries with one another, with God, with our own past and our future. Living in a community, broadly understood, is a key to spiritual growth. ✚



Former Volunteer Sightings Los Angeles & Southern California



Gatherings:

Formers from all programs are invited to the **Lay Mission Helpers** volunteer program's Mission Gatherings held 3 times per year usually held in LA or Orange County.

Contact Janice England at LMH@la-archdiocese.org for more info.

The **Jesuit Volunteer Corps** hosts a pot-luck for incoming volunteers in the area. Former JV's and formers "of any stripe" are welcome to attend. This year it will be on August 17th, 1pm at the JV house 325 S. Commonwealth in LA. For more info contact Linda Krippner thissimple55@hotmail.com

Parishes & Groups:

St. Agatha's 2610 S. Mansfield Ave. 323-935-8127 www.stagathas.org "Great hospitality and liturgy". / **Our Mother of Good Counsel Church** 2060 N. Vermont Ave. in Los Angeles has an active young adult group (6pm Sunday mass) that meets every Wednesday at 7pm for spirituality night. / **Dolores Mission**, 171 S. Gless St. 323-881-0039, has English and Spanish masses, great music ministry & outreach to the surrounding neighborhood. / **St. Brendan's**, 310 S. Van Ness Ave. is a "incredibly moving and uplifting" experience with a strong sense of community. / Don't miss **St. Brigid's**, 5214 S. Western Ave., 323-292-0781 10 am Gospel mass. / **St. Monica's** 725 California Ave., 310-393-9287 www.stmonica.net was mentioned by many formers as having a vibrant young adult community and good music ministry. Sunday evening mass recommended. / **St. Thomas the Apostle** 1321 S. Mariposa Ave. 323-737-3325 has a great Salvadoran community. Go to mass on Sunday and get pupusas afterward. / **USC Catholic** located at the USC Newman Center on Hoover and 32nd. "Inspiring". / **Holy Name of Jesus Church**, 2190 W. 31st St. 323-734-8888 <http://home.earthlink.net/~holyname> "Fr. Chilsom rocks" and the 2.5 hour Gospel mass is not to be missed. / **Ministry at Central Juvenile Hall**, call Dolores Mission Church (above) about getting involved in the ministry to the youth there. First Sunday of the month highly recommended-Fr. Greg Boyle, SJ of www.homeboys-industries.org says mass. / **St. Killian's** at 26872 Estanciero Dr. Mission Viejo, contact stkillians@cox.net for more info. / **San Diego Mission Young Adults** meets every Wed. See www.missionyoungadults.com for more details. / **Christ the King**, on the corner of 32nd and Imperial avenues in Downtown San Diego is the "very vibrant parish" where a lot of formers go. / Also recommended the **UC San Diego's Newman Center** in La Jolla, see <http://orpheus.ucsd.edu/csa/> for details. / **St. Brigid's** parish in San Diego, see www.stbrigid-sandiego.org.

Communities/Retreats:

The **L.A. Catholic Worker**, Ammon Hennacy House 632 N. Britannia St. 213-267-8789 runs a soup kitchen, hosts socially conscious prayers and celebrations and is strongly recommended by former JV's.

The **San Diego Catholic Worker** <http://projects.edtech.sandi.net/bayweb/catholicworker/index.htm>

San Diego Coalition for Peace and Justice, www.sdpeaceandjustice.org.

The **Pilgrimage Joshua Tree** www.thepilgrimagejoshuatree.com is a retreat center suitable for small group retreat or for private or directed retreats. Situated in the middle of the Mojave Desert six miles north of Joshua Tree National Park. For more info call 760-366-3399.

Recommended restaurants, fun, interesting places etc.

Casa La Golondrina on Olvera St./ Veggie Bistro 6557 Comstock Ave., Whittier/Shatto 39 Lanes Bowling 3255 W. 4th St. for cheap and fun bowling/ Westwood area around UCLA has lots of coffee shops, clubs and restaurants/ Bourgeois Pig 5931 Franklin Ave. Hollywood 323-962-6366/ Old Town Pasadena/ Olvera Street/ Melrose/ Midnight Special Bookstore, 1450 2nd St. Santa Monica with cool speakers and free films www.msbooks.com/ Watts Towers/ Vango's Ear coffee shop at 796 Main St. in Venice/

Websites to check out what's going on in the area:

www.latimes.com (calendar section)/ www.laweekly.com/
www.the-tidings.com (area Catholic newspaper)/ www.signonsandiego.com

We are grateful to all who contributed information to this section.

*A special thanks to former Jesuit volunteer
Molly Campanella who provided many of the resources.*



The Saint Vincent Pallotti Center
for Apostolic Development
415 Michigan Ave., N.E.
Washington, DC 20017

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Inside this issue
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finding and building community,
spirituality of community
former volunteer sightings in the
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and much more...



Staying Connected is printed on recycled paper. Please do your part by passing on your copy to another former volunteer or by recycling the paper. Thanks!

FORMERS: BE OPEN TO BEING A LEADER IN YOUR COMMUNITY

Our vision of what it means to be a 'leader' is changing, making it more within the grasp of a large number of people, and perhaps more inviting to former volunteers and to those who have lived in a community.

In the last century, the notion of a leader was a bit off-putting, namely that of a rare and lone executive, an authority figure who stood at the top of a corporate structure and who had the skills to plan, budget, organize, staff, control, and problem solve" (Leading Change, John Kotter, 1996, p.165) That old-style leader seemed born with the innate ability to manage employees so widgets kept coming off the assembly line and profits remained steady. In the 21st century, a new notion of a leader is needed to help corporations respond to the rapid level of change inherent in today's world. This new notion of a leader is not about the rugged individual but instead about team players who have a vision, the ability to communicate it to others and to empower others to participate in a common endeavor.

The new leader has the skills of creating a vision, convincingly telling the story to others, and respectfully inviting their participation. As a volunteer or missionary you worked for a year or two, long enough to grasp a bigger picture of the community, to develop your appreciation for others in all their ethnic diversity, and you probably worked at empowering them to be more effective in their own labors. Also, because most volunteers have lived in community lifestyle with other volunteers, you may well have an edge in becoming this new type of leader. Congratulations. Go for it. ✚

Staying Connected: Assisting in the continued formation of former lay volunteers.

The St. Vincent Pallotti Center for Apostolic Development **Editors:** Andrew Thompson, Dani Clark Scano and Kaela Volkmer **Production Editor:** Dani Clark Scano
Advisors: Kristelle Angelli, Sally Quinn Reed, Anita Saira Morawski and Maureen Cunningham. **E-mail:** stayingconnected@pallotticenter.org **Webpage:** www.pallotticenter.org

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Mission: 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. **Location:** Local Pallotti Centers are in Boston, Paterson, NJ, St. Louis and Sacramento. The National Office is in Washington, DC. **Inspiration:** 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.