SHARED VISIONS

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

Establishing Healthy Boundaries

WELCOME!

HELLO volunteers, and welcome to the first issue of our 14th year of Shared Visions, written by former volunteers for current volunteers. We bring you Shared Visions four times a year to help you reflect on your volunteer experience and to provide you with tools for reflection, community activities, prayer ideas and more. We welcome any comments, questions or suggestions from you, the volunteer. Email us at: SHAREDVISIONS@PALLOTTICENTER.ORG In this issue we propose that you and maybe your community take a closer look at *boundaries* and *holistic health* as important tools to help you remain healthy and effective volunteers.

The following pages offer some activities and reflections to help you think about how creating boundaries for yourself can enrich your volunteer experience and prevent premature burnout.

WHY ARE BOUNDARIES IMPORTANT?

A boundary is the area of contact a person has with his or her environment, be it with other persons, nature or God. Ideal boundaries work like the membrane of lungs, which are semi-permeable and allow life-giving elements (oxygen, carbon dioxide) to pass to and from blood cells while keeping the blood outside the lungs. When the boundaries are too difficult to cross, like 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.

Think of college... for many of us boundaries didn't exist. How many of you remember pulling an all-nighter (No-Doze with coffee anyone?)? How about writing a ten-page paper in two hours? College culture –and even some work cultures- don't exactly teach us about boundaries. Volunteering differs from both a regular work experience and college life. Not only are you responsible for yourself, but the people you serve count on you, sometimes heavily. How are you supposed to remain a sane volunteer without a conscious effort to maintain balance in your life? We are here to tell you that as a volunteer, you can and should strive for a balanced life. You deserve as much, and so do the people you serve.

Can you think of any object that has no borders, something amorphous? Hard to define isn't? This is because defining an existence depends on borders. Nothing has an identity without borders. Working with the poor can be tough and if you do not have personal boundaries (i.e., your own borders) it will be hard for you not to become an overextended, amorphous, burnt-out blob (ok, that's an exaggeration). The image of the volunteer is of someone always saying yes and helping others, and you might feel pressure to adhere to that image. For example, some of us may have the tendency to always say "yes", then frantically figure out how to deal with it. Saying "no" is definitely harder. Yet, sometimes saying "no" can actually be more thoughtful and respectful to yourself and the people you serve. Your job is to be the best you can to the people you serve and you can't do that if you're spreading yourself too thin.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE..... On pages 2 and 3- DRAWING OUT YOUR ECO-MAP ... On pages 4 and 5- THE "YES/NO" GAME, RECIPES FOR HUNGRY COMMUNITIES and HOLISTIC HEALTH, WHY DOES IT MATTER?... On page 6- BIBLICAL REFLECTION ON BOUNDARIES ⇨⇨⇨⇨⇨

The Ec

A Balancing

Volunteering is r

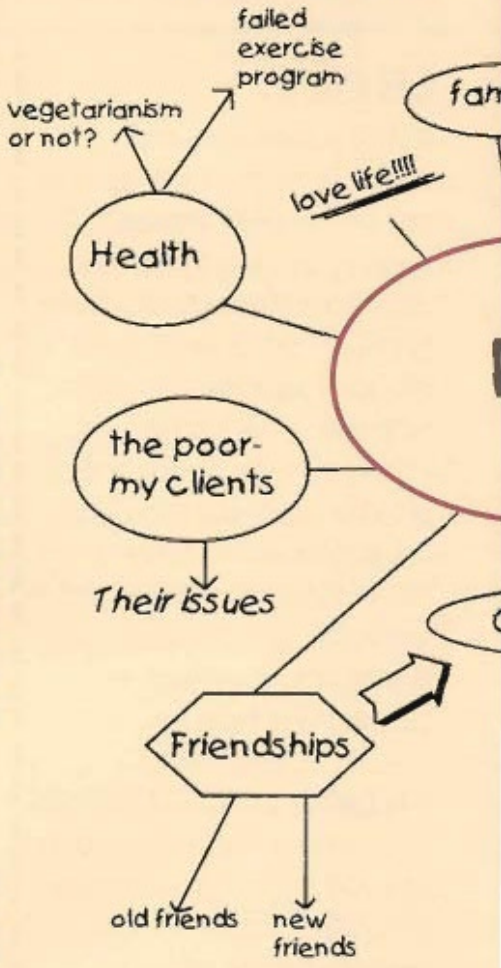
Papers to grade, students to coach, clients to visit, community nights to attend, learning more about the cultu
with family and friends, cooking actual meals for a whole group of people, findin

How does one stay balanced with so much going on? How does one ev
Have you gotten that sense that something just feels a little "out of whack" but
Guess wha

Here is a simple exercise for all of you visual, artistic types that might help you to actually see more clearly th
the demands of volunteer li

Start Here

Materials: A piece of paper, a pen or pencil, crayons, markers, and/or paints and a quiet place where you won't be interrupted for 30-45 minutes.



Step 1

In the middle of your paper, draw a circle (using any color you want) and write your name in the middle of the circle.

Step 2

Using any of the writing materials, start freely writing lines emanating outward from your "name circle" adding new circles to the ends of each line. Each circle represents part of your environment or a part of yourself. For example, you may write in some of your circles words like "work," "family," or "health." You may find yourself drawing new circles coming out from these circles. For example, you may draw two lines coming out of your "health" circle to create two new circles with the words "diet" and "exercise" in them. The idea is that you are creating a "snapshot" of your current self in your current environment. Freely use whatever format and colors you wish. Do this part of the exercise without pondering too much; just get onto the paper all the things that pop into your head.

Step 3

Once you have done that, begin to look over all the various circles and make notes about all of the positive, healthy, aspects of your current lifestyle that bring you a sense of balance and well-being (for example, you may notice that you have been going for a run about 3 days/week and that feels good to you).

Step 4

Next, take note of any components or areas that are bringing you stress or a sense of imbalance (for example, in thinking about your work circle, you may discover that you are not getting enough sleep because you are obsessing over lesson plans until 3 am).

A WORD TO THE V
where you currently
routine, consider t
volunteer life-style

Happy Mapping!

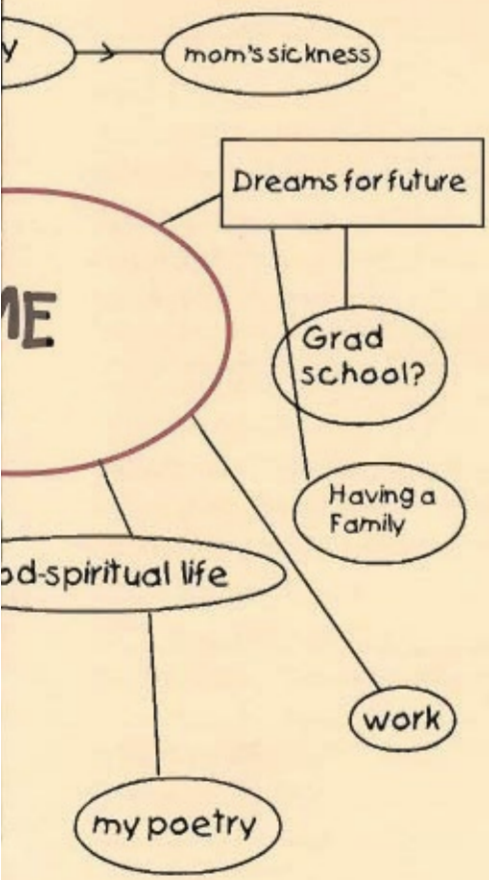
o-Map:

ol For Your Life

an easy life-style!
and perhaps even a new language, meeting new people all the time, figuring out community life, staying in touch
ime to exercise, pray and just be....the "to do" list just goes on and on without end!

know that the balance may be tipping toward OVERLOAD or BURNOUT??
ren't really sure what to do about it? Maybe if you just ignore it, it will go away?
It won't!!

areas of your life that are in need of care right now to get you back on track if you are feeling a bit stretched by
. It is called ***"The Eco-map"***.



Step5

Next scan your page and see if there are any "holes," that is, areas that just didn't make it on the paper the first time around (for example, "oops, I haven't even thought of my family for the last month.") Make any additions that you wish.

Step 6

Next, notice the colors that you used for different areas of your life—what does that tell you, if anything? If you are so inclined, what can you "see" about your life from your layout, use of color and lines?

Step 7

Reflect for a moment on the process of this activity. Did all the stuff just start flowing out of you in a mad rush, or was it more slow and deliberate? What does this tell you?

Step 8

In reviewing your Eco-map and taking into account your observations of the positives, the negatives and the holes, do any goals for better balance come to mind? What are they? Write them down. Pick one or two of them to concentrate on over the upcoming weeks. They can be as simple as:

- I will eat breakfast everyday.
- I will leave the office by at least 6:00 pm more days than not out of the week.

ISE... In making your goals, don't aim for what you consider perfection. Just start are and then make the goal a small step toward your ideal. Once your goals become kling some of your other goals and you will be on the road to a balanced, healthy that fits you!

The Yes/No Game ... A community activity

Materials: One index card for each person
Details: Here's an activity best done with fellow volunteers or co-workers. Invite people to be comfortably seated around a table or living room. Allow yourselves about 30 minutes or more, as desired. Give each person an index card or piece of paper with one side reading "yes" and the other "no." Chose one person as the Master of Ceremonies (MC). The MC begins by reading aloud one of the following statements and then asking each person to express their agreement or disagreement by holding up the appropriate "yes" or "no" card. Ask people to briefly share the reason they agree or disagree with the statement and then move on to the next statement. This game is all about the presence or absence of boundaries as explained above. It's value comes from developing and defining your own reasoning and listening to the reasoning offered by others.

1-It is good for a country to have clearly defined borders (or boundaries).

2-It is crucial for an individual to know what his or her personal boundaries are.

3-Volunteers should do absolutely everything possible to serve their clients or students, even if it means having to miss out on important community events or meetings once in a while.

4-Living as a volunteer can be seen as an extension of living as a college student.

5-It's good for a volunteer to have an "open door" policy regarding the room or house where he/she lives.

6-What's mine is yours and what's yours is mine.

7-People should stop acknowledging cultural and ethnic differences between people.

8-When volunteers live together in a community setting, personal boundaries must change in order to accommodate the community.

9-Volunteers should immerse themselves entirely in their host culture/community, striving to truly become one with the people they serve.

10-The kids volunteers work with need love and affection in their lives. Volunteers should offer to give kids hugs when they need them.

11-In order to get to know the youth that volunteers work with, they should hang out with them outside of the work environment and try to befriend them.

EASY DINNER IDEAS FOR HUNGRY COMMUNITIES *-double or triple the portions if you need to.*

MEXICANO SPAGHETTI: Ingredients: 1lb. spaghetti, 4 Tbs. canola oil, 2 C water, 1 small can tomato sauce, 1/2 tsp. salt, 1/2 tsp. pepper, 1/4 C white onion (chopped), 1/2 tsp. garlic (chopped), 1 C cheddar cheese

Directions: Brown spaghetti in 4 Tbs. of canola oil. Add 2 C water. Add one small can of tomato sauce. Add 1/2 tsp. of salt and pepper and 1/4 C chopped white onion. Allow this to cook until the water has evaporated. Add another cup of water. Once more, cook until the water evaporates. Add 1 C of cheddar cheese and allow it to melt into the noodles. *Serves 5.*

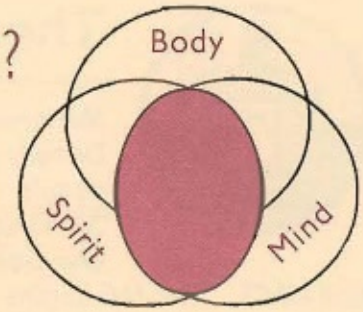
BLACK BEANS AND RICE: Ingredients: 2 C water; 1 C converted white rice; 1/2 C shredded carrots; 1/2 tsp. salt; 2 cans (15-oz) black beans; 1 C chicken broth; 1 C diced ham or bacon; 1 C onions; 1 Tbs. minced garlic; 1/2 tsp. oregano; 1/2 tsp. ground cumin

Directions: Put water, rice, shredded carrots, and salt in medium saucepan. Cook as rice package directs. Meanwhile combine beans, chicken broth, diced ham, onions, minced garlic, oregano, and ground cumin in a large saucepan. Cook over medium heat 12 minutes or until onion is tender. Mash some of the beans against side of pot to thicken the mixture. Serve over rice. *Serves 4-6.*

VEGETABLE-CRACKER CASSEROLE Ingredients: 1 medium red pepper (cut into strips), 32 Saltine Crackers, 1 small onion (sliced), 1 C Cheddar cheese (shredded), 1 small zucchini (sliced), 2 C skim milk, 1 C eggs, 1/2 tsp. dried oregano leaves, 1 Tbs. margarine (or oil)

Directions: In a large skillet, over medium heat, cook and stir red pepper, onion, zucchini, and oregano in margarine until tender. In lightly greased 9x9x2- inch baking pan, layer half each of the crackers, vegetable mixture and cheese. Repeat layers, ending with cheese. In a bowl, beat milk and eggs; evenly pour over cheese layer. Bake at 350 degree for 30-35 minutes or until knife inserted in center comes out clean. *Serves 4.*

what's all the buzz about holistic health?



holistic health definition. what do we mean?

You may have heard the phrase "holistic" health tossed around in a variety of ways. In fact, various definitions of the expression exist, so it's best to start out with a definition and an explanation of why a holistic approach to life could benefit you as a volunteer.

The holistic approach refers to treating your self as a whole, as made up of interdependent parts: the mind, body and spirit. This way of seeing yourself allows you to respond to different situations (for example illness, stress or change) in a way which takes into account the effect it will have on your emotional state, health and spiritual life. A holistic approach helps a person recognize and responsd to his or her limits, which is important for volunteers who are often serving people with endless needs. For example a holistic approach might involve: striving for balance in your work and social life since stress can cause physical and emotional problems; taking care of yourself physically since physical well-being is related to outlook and health; establishing healthy relationships with others and the environment since our environment and relationships can affect us physically and spiritually; cultivating and nurturing spiritual practice and expression since it can lead to greater peace and stable grounding.

why does it matter to the volunteer? to the Christian?

A Christian basis for a holistic approach could be found in Jesus' exhortation to "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 19:19). For if we are unable to love and take care of ourselves, how can we effectively love and serve others? Ignoring our minds, bodies and spirits can definitely lead volunteers to burn out, which negatively impacts the people they serve, not to mention their community life.

how can you integrate holistic practices into your life as a volunteer?

Pay attention to what your body is telling you.

*This is important because often the body responds before the mind and heart want to recognize that things are out of whack. Do you feel tired all the time, despite getting eight hours of sleep a night? Well, maybe your tiredness has something to say about a work, relationship or community situation that is taking a lot of your mental and/or emotional energy. Paying attention to your body will give you huge clues as to what is going on with you on various levels.

Take care of your body.

*Your diet can have a great effect on your mood and general well-being. Eating plenty of fruits and vegetables and the right amount of carbohydrates, protein and fat will positively contribute to many things including your energy level and your ability to concentrate. Learn more about functional foods like garlic, tomatoes, olive oil, which have properties that may reduce the risk of certain illnesses and diseases.

*Drink plenty of water, around 6-8 glasses per day. Water keeps everything about us going and helps clear our bodies of toxins. Dehydration can set in before we know it. In fact, many headaches can actually be attributed to slight dehydration, so drink before feeling thirsty.

*By now you've heard that a consistent program of exercise is important. Exercise is not only great for keeping in shape and "looking good" but it is also a great stress reducer. Dr. Herbert Benson of the Mind Body institute at Harvard University found that jogging, swimming, yoga and tai chi (as well as prayer and meditation) can evoke a "relaxation response" in the brain. The relaxation response has been found to reduce high blood pressure, insomnia, mild depression, chronic headaches and more.

Take care of your spirit.

*When our spiritual lives are suffering it *could* be a sign that we are suffering on some level, or that there are deep spiritual questions we have neglected to explore. Therefore, it's important to pay attention to the spiritual aspect of ourselves as well. We may choose to do this in a variety of ways. Some enjoy praying silently or simply communing with nature. Others prefer devotional or structured prayer like the rosary. Whatever our preferred method of communicating with God, spirituality is an important part of who we are. Incidentally, studies show that people who participate in private religious activity - prayer, meditation or bible study- appear to have a survival advantage that others who do not pray do not have. Meditation in particular can lead to a marked physiological response of relaxation that often persists hours after meditation. Scripture offers us great advice too. "Turn all your anxiety over to God because God cares for you" (1 Peter 5:7) "If any of you are having trouble, pray. If you are happy, sing praise" (James 5:13). So don't ignore this part of yourself, even if it is a part of you with more mystery and questions than facts and assertions. Ignoring the big questions about life and death won't make them go away.

Watch your mental state.

*Be aware of your mental state. Here are some questions you can use to gauge whether you may be on the verge of burnout. *Are you cutting short telephone calls with family or friends? Have you given up hobbies or other activities? Are you experiencing headaches, backaches, constant fatigue or depression? Do you have unexpected outbursts of anger? Have you involuntarily gained or lost weight? Do you have an unshakable feeling of despair? Are you crying "for no reason"? Do you experience insomnia?* If you answer yes to three or more of these questions it is important for you to seek help from friends, family and/or a mental or health professional.

And if the Stress Still Comes- Learn to relax.

There are many practices that you can utilize when you feel stressed out. Some examples include: meditation, deep breathing, listening to music, reading poetry, getting involved in the arts either as a participant or a spectator, taking a warm bath, going on nature walks, watching a funny movie or reading a funny book (studies show laughing regularly leads to many health benefits including lowering stress levels and lowering high blood pressure). Simply sitting down for a few quiet moments by yourself with a good book or cup of tea can do wonders. And with all that said, we hope you take care of yourself! ✚

Biblical Reflection: Boundaries Can Help or Hinder Your Faith

This issue of *Shared Visions* focuses on "boundaries" as a key for helping volunteers to live and work together and also to develop your personal and professional identities. Knowing where your skin ends and another person's begins, knowing your values and how to express and stand up for them, this also helps you clarify and nurture your own spiritual formation. The gospels are replete with examples of Jesus encouraging followers to re-evaluate their priorities, rules for living and spiritual boundaries. Jesus preaches the coming of the Kingdom of God, the Reign of God, where boundaries are revised: the last (peasants) will be first and the first (aristocrats) will be last [Matt: 19:30]; those who are despised (Samaritans) will be the heroes [Luke 10: 29-37]; where being a member of the chosen race, of the politically correct family, will not be superior to non-family members who do the will of God [Matt. 10:37]. Strengthening some weak boundaries, softening rigid ones, crossing over and mediating between two opposing camps, these are critical abilities for today's volunteers and missionaries, who are walking in Jesus' footsteps. ✚

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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.*

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