

# SHARED VISIONS

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Volume Fifteen, Number Four

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

## Don't Let Time Run Out... Before Reality "Reals" You In

In this issue of Shared Visions, we encourage you to reflect on the key events of your past year and to make an 'inventory' of the skills and values you are taking with you. We offer some suggestions to help you look back and look forward as well as some tips for handling the topsy-turvy time of transition. Now's the best time to work on sorting out your true feelings about what you've done, who you've met and how you have made a difference.

We also encourage you to take specific steps so you can "stay connected" to your program and the ideals that brought you into volunteer service to start with (see page 5). We suggest how you might think about the meaning of giving thanks, often around a shared meal, for the gifts you have received (see pages 2 and 6). To those who are moving on, we wish you 'bon voyage,' and to those who are staying, we wish you a beautiful summer/winter!

## Looking Back....

For those of you who have been with Shared Visions throughout this year, you will remember an exercise in the first issue, *Volunteers' Participation in Creation: Tools for the Journey*, that asked the question, "How did I get here?" That activity asked you to look back to what led you to become a volunteer.

Now, as your year(s) as a volunteer draw to a close, we ask you once again to look back on your experience to remember how and why you embarked on this journey.



- **Why did you decide to be a full-time volunteer? What were the motivating factors?** (e.g. gaining experience in a certain career, making a difference in the lives of others, deferring decision-making about jobs or where to live, trying to figure out the future in terms of careers, further schooling, religious life, other factors?)
- **What were you looking forward to most about your volunteer year? What were you most concerned about?**
- **What did you expect to learn? How did you expect to grow through your volunteer experience?**
- **What did you hope to accomplish? What were the goals that you set for yourself?**
- **How did those goals change throughout your time as a volunteer? How accurate were your initial expectations?**

## In This Issue...

Page 1: Looking Back... / Page 2: Thanksgiving in May? / Page 2: Are You Feeling Up in the Air About Re-Entry? / Page 3: Looking Forward... / Page 4: Finishing Your Term of Service? Taking an Inventory Will Help You / Page 5: Making the Most Out of the Pallotti Center Resources / Page 6: Biblical Reflection: Making Time to Be Grateful

# Thanksgiving in May?

When people think of Thanksgiving, they tend to think of Thanksgiving dinner, when families and friends come together to share a meal. Since it's only once a year, it has to be extra special. We encourage you and your volunteer community to once again celebrate Thanksgiving, only this time celebrate the times you've shared together as a community. Make this part of your community farewell.

Here are a few ideas for your volunteer community thanksgiving celebration:

## Community Smorgasbord

Have everyone in the community make one of their favorite dishes to share. This can be a recipe that you picked up while being a volunteer or one of your favorites from your childhood. This act of sharing dishes can be representative of the sharing you did as a community by sharing yourselves

with each other throughout your time together.

## CLEAN-UP TIME

Why not celebrate and clean out your fridge at the same time? Have you been wondering what to do with that left over rice or that last can of kidney beans? A great way to use up those leftovers is by making a community stew. You can be as creative as you want. The goal is to use up as much as you can so you have less to clean out later.

## The Urge to Splurge

For most volunteer communities, simple living is the name of the game. However we all like to splurge every once in awhile. Why not take the opportunity to *revel* in the end of this special time with an especially delicious dessert? The following recipe is sure to fit the bill.

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## **Chocolate Revel Bars** (Source: Better Homes and Gardens, www.bhg.com)

Prep: 30 min

Bake: 25 min

### **Ingredients:**

1 cup butter or margarine
2 cups packed brown sugar
2 teaspoons vanilla
3 cups quick-cooking rolled oats
1 -12 oz. package (2 cups) of semisweet chocolate pieces
1 -14 oz. can (1-1/4 cups) of sweetened condensed milk
2 ½ cups all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon baking soda
2 eggs
1 cup chopped walnuts
2 (more) teaspoons vanilla

the beaten mixture. Set aside.

2) In a medium saucepan combine the reserved butter or margarine, the sweetened condensed milk, and chocolate pieces. Cook over low heat until chocolate melts, stirring occasionally. Remove from heat. Stir in walnuts and the 2 teaspoons vanilla.

3) Press two-thirds (about 3-1/3 cups) of the oat mixture into the bottom of an ungreased 15x10x1-inch baking pan. Spread chocolate mixture over the oat mixture. Using your fingers, dot remaining oat mixture over the chocolate.

4) Bake in a 350 degree F oven about 25 minutes or until top is lightly browned (chocolate mixture will still look moist). Cool on a wire rack. Cut into 2x1-inch bars, or as desired.

**Directions:** 1) Set aside 2 tablespoons of the butter or margarine. In a large mixing bowl beat the remaining butter or margarine with an electric mixer on medium speed for 30 seconds. Add brown sugar; beat until well mixed. Beat in eggs and 2 teaspoons vanilla. In another large bowl stir together flour and baking soda; stir in oats. Gradually stir the dry mixture into

Are you Feeling



Up



Air

About Your Re-entry?...

... Re-entry into the "real world," that is. You're probably feeling as if, just when you were getting used to your volunteer scene, you're now at the end of it. So how are you going to change gears and move on?

Well, don't worry. This re-entry stress is normal; you are not crazy for feeling these things! Remember: you have already transitioned from college into another phase of your life, so you already possess the psychological skills

and tools to handle your upcoming transition.

Nevertheless, sometimes you need to give yourself permission to *let go* (like the trapeze artist) and move on to your next stage in life. So we have given you a **Re-entry Permission Slip**, listing many things you should give yourself permission to do to make your re-entry easier. Put it in your wallet, in your purse, or on your wall, but in any event, remember to be good to yourself and let go!

# Looking Forward...

As you get ready to complete your term of service, not only is it important to look back on your experience, but it is also important to look forward. One way to do this is by thinking about what it is that you will take away with you and what do you need to leave behind.

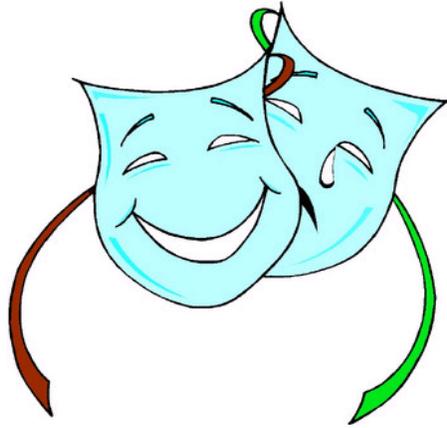
## Things to leave behind...

### **Take time to say your goodbyes –**

Make a list of the key people you've met and what you especially want to say to them. This could be a bit difficult. However, good-byes are best planned. This will help you to face your feelings now, with their sense of loss and sadness, rather than ignoring them only to have them resurface in the months to come. One way to say good-bye is through a group ritual or party. This can be a great way to say thanks to many people at once.

### **Create a list of recommendations**

**for next year's volunteers –** During your next community night, take an hour to discuss what tips would be helpful for next year's incoming volunteers. Things to include may be inexpensive places to shop, bus routes, dates of area festivals and other fun, free events, parishes that have great liturgies, a list of support people, emergency phone numbers, peculiarities about how your house works, and anything else that you'd wished you'd known when you began your volunteer year.



## Things to take with you...

**Tell your story –** Perhaps one of the most beneficial things you can do to get yourself ready to leave your volunteer program is to formulate your story. Some people will ask you: "Well, how was your trip?" Others will want to know what was the most impacting part of your experience. You'll be asking yourself similar questions as well. So start by sitting down and writing the plot. What was your motivation? In what way did it change, if at all, during your term of service? Were there some surprises? What were the struggles? What did you learn? Try to pinpoint which experiences were among the most meaningful to you.

**Describe your new self –** You have grown as a result of your volunteer experience. The changes differ from one volunteer to the next, but they are still present. Your experiences of living in community, working with diverse populations, working out of your comfort zone, living in a new area, living a simpler lifestyle, making new friends, leaving friends and family behind... all have helped you to form a new sense of self. It is important to acknowledge how you have changed as a result of this experience and that you will take this with you as you continue your journey.

**Is there anything that you would add to this list? What else do you want to leave behind? What else is important that you take with you?**

## Re-Entry Permission Slip

The Bearer of this Permission Slip, having served as a Volunteer or Missioner, is hereby permitted to take the following actions to facilitate a healthy transition into post-volunteer life:

- 1) **Take time to reflect:** *processing the experience is vital to being able to let it go and move on..*
- 2) **Rest, relax, and rejoice:** *take your time to readjust, and rejoice in what you have learned.*
- 3) **Stay in touch with people you met:** *be sure to share current news, and don't cut yourself off.*
- 4) **Seek out new communities:** *you won't be betraying those you have just left.*
- 5) **Be gentle with yourself and others:** *you have changed - and so have others!*

# Finishing Your Term of Service? Taking an Inventory Will Help You

As you get ready to depart your volunteer placement site, you have to decide which things you're taking with you and which you're leaving behind. But it's even more important for you to think about which *skills* and *values* you are taking with you. Here are two checklists to help you get started.

**What skills are you taking with you? Put a check mark next to those that apply.**

- Administrative and personal organization
- Advocacy: the ability to be a voice for the voiceless
- Conflict resolution know-how
- Cross-cultural awareness and sensitivity to cultural stereotypes
- Communication skills in the workplace, within community, between the genders (from Shared Visions Vol. 15 No. 2 earlier this year)
- Familiarity with using the pastoral cycle to reflect on and process your faith experiences
- Team building
- Ability to self-reflect and to be aware of how others are responding to you
- Yearning for results, seeing change, making a positive difference
- Leadership, openness to yours and that of others
- Better understanding of Catholic Social Teachings
- Expanded sense of diverse ways of praying
- Better facility with a second language
- Ability to live simply and flexibly (Vol. 15 No. 3)
- Better sense of social justice principles
- Better know-how with household skills e.g. cooking, maintenance, etc.
- Better understanding of the marginalized (Vol. 15 No. 3 – “From Wilderness to the Capital”)

**What values are you taking with you and to what extent have they changed? Here's a list to help you jump-start your values inventory. Feel free to add other values that come to mind. In each of the areas listed below, to what extent have your values: 1) improved greatly, 2) improved somewhat, 3) about the same, 4) decreased somewhat, 5) decreased greatly.**

- Appreciation of my family (of origin)
- An expanded sense of who is in my “family”
- Appreciation of Catholicism (or Christianity)
- Appreciation for Scripture
- Altruism, importance of serving others
- Friendship
- Bonds with other volunteers
- Flexibility
- Humility (awareness of your own limitations)
- Hunger for more training or education
- Critical thinking (evaluating your circumstances)
- Spirituality
- Solitude
- Recognition of the importance of how government policy impacts lives
- Seeing myself as a co-creator with God



**When you complete your skills and values inventories, you may want to find an opportunity to share your results with your fellow volunteers, friends, support personnel or program staff.**

## *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 resources — the community of “formers.”*

*To access these services, please visit our Former Volunteers page at [www.pallotticenter.org/Former](http://www.pallotticenter.org/Former), or contact the national office of the Pallotti Center at [formervolunteer@pallotticenter.org](mailto:formervolunteer@pallotticenter.org), or by calling our toll free number at 1-877-VOL-LINK.*

**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 1,200 former volunteers have joined this alumni database of lay volunteers, managed by the Pallotti Center. Once former volunteers have signed on to the Network by supplying their contact and volunteer service information, they are added to the Pallotti Center's national Network of Former Volunteers listserv. Through this network, “formers” can connect first and foremost with each other, but also with social gatherings, discussion or prayer groups, couples groups, and with help in employment leads and contacts. The Network database will not be used for fundraising or spam mail.

### **The “What's Next?” Notebook**

Are you freaking out about what to do next? The “What's Next?” Notebook helps guide your transition out of 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 and Washington/Baltimore areas. 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](http://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. Current events are also posted on a separate page.

## Biblical Reflection: Making Time to Be Grateful

“Giving thanks” to God for life and love is a central theme expressed throughout the Scriptures (Psalm 138, Colossians 1:3). Many volunteers say they serve others as a way to say “thanks” for the gifts they have received. This gratitude seems to well up from a depth within the human spirit. So it is no wonder that in the early Church, gratitude took the form of a sacred meal that became central to Christianity, namely the Eucharistic (great-thanks) celebration. Here’s a suggestion for gratitude that contributes to the theme of this



fourth issue of *Shared Visions*, “taking inventory.” Each night before your head hits the pillow, take two minutes to simply think about and then write down five to ten things, persons, or experiences from that day for which you are grateful. Do this nightly between now and when you complete your volunteer service. Consider sharing your thoughts with a close friend. Giving thanks for life’s simple abundance will gradually become central to who you are. It has the potential to make a life-changing difference in helping you see where you’ve been and where you’re headed.

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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 Oakland, CA. 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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