

SHARED VISIONS

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Volume Sixteen, Number One

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

How to Be Attentive to... Your Volunteer Experience

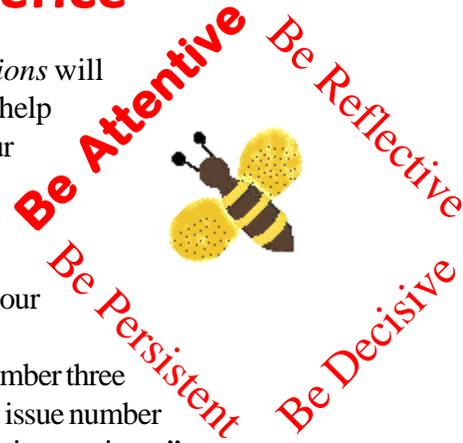
WELCOME, VOLUNTEERS!

- to the first issue of our 16th year of *Shared Visions*, written by former volunteers for current volunteers. *Shared Visions* comes 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. You can also access this and past issues at our website, www.pallotticenter.org.

We welcome any comments, questions, or suggestions from you, the volunteers that we serve - just e-mail us at:

sharedvisions@pallotticenter.org

The year's four issues of *Shared Visions* will have an added feature: four "bees" to help you survive and thrive throughout your year of service. Each issue will give a little more emphasis to one of the "bee" themes. This issue, Vol. 16, No. 1, highlights "being attentive" to your experiences. Issue number two will emphasize "being reflective," while number three will focus on "being decisive." Finally issue number four will highlight the importance of "being persistent" in your values. These four focal points are rooted in theological and psychological methods discussed in earlier issues. (See *Shared Visions*, Vol. 13, No. 3 at www.pallotticenter.org/SharedVisions/Vol13No3.pdf for a discussion of the pastoral circle.)



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Be Attentive to: Your Workplace

Directions: Find a place where you can sit quietly and without interruption. Imagine you are in your workplace. Try journaling about the *here and now* by focusing on your senses. Ask yourself...

- What is one scent or smell which is present here?
- What is one sound, if any, which predominates?
- Which are the colors that stand out?
- Am I physically comfortable while I'm working?
- Am I calm while I'm at work? Anxious? What other feelings do I experience at work?
- What is it about my workplace that stands out most for me?

Be Attentive to: Living in the Present Moment

AWOL is a military term meaning that a soldier has left his or her post without permission, and so is Absent WithOut Leave. But sometimes it is possible to be AWOL in civilian life, such as when you are physically present but mentally or emotionally elsewhere. Familiar examples include students daydreaming during class, or people letting their attention drift away while a fellow volunteer is talking.

To help you deal with your own forms of being AWOL, here's a reality-check to help you rate yourself on how you are doing in this area. Be 100% honest with yourself and know you don't need to share your findings with anyone. Make a list of your main daily activities and assign to each the percent attention you typically give to it. Then, in the third column, say whether that percent attention is satisfactory (S) or not (N).

Here's one example of how a person might complete the checklist:

<u>DAILY ACTIVITY</u>	<u>ACTUAL % ATTENTION</u>	<u>SATISFACTORY (S) OR NOT SATISFACTORY (N)</u>
Working with clients	90 %	N
Lunch with co-workers	75 %	S
Staff/Faculty Meetings	25 %	S
Dinner with volunteers	100 %	S

Now it's your turn to evaluate how attentive you are being in your daily life:

<u>DAILY ACTIVITY</u>	<u>ACTUAL % ATTENTION</u>	<u>SATISFACTORY (S) OR NOT SATISFACTORY (N)</u>
Working with my clients	_____ %	_____
Lunch with co-workers	_____ %	_____
Staff/Faculty Meetings	_____ %	_____
Dinner with volunteers	_____ %	_____
Playing or watching sports	_____ %	_____
Praying	_____ %	_____

Questions for Personal Reflection:

1. What were some times I was mentally or emotionally AWOL? A time when it was discovered by those around me?
2. What were the factors contributing to that time or times?
3. What would '100% present' mean for me? (e.g.: emotionally, intellectually, physically?)
4. What would my life be like if I were able to be 100% present for each event?
5. Who is a person(s) in my life who always seems to be 100% present for me?
6. For whom would I like to be 100% present?
7. If I want to be more fully present to others, what do I need to stop doing, start doing or change about myself?

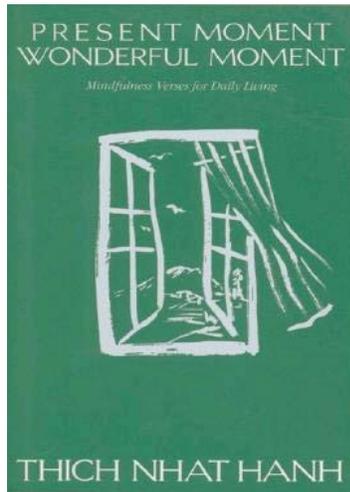
Be Attentive to: Your Volunteer Community

Many of you have spent the last few months adjusting to living within an intentional community. You've most certainly recognized that it takes quite a commitment on each person's part to make the community work at its best. Your *attentiveness* to each person and the needs of the community can only help you in this endeavor.

Each day, we spend countless hours stressed and distracted by everything going on around us. There is a need to slow down and process what is going on in our lives. The Spiritual Rx: Prescriptions for Living a Meaningful Life, by Frederick and Mary Ann Brussat, offers practices or steps to take to achieve a more meaningful life. Attention is the first step in this process.

Attention is made up of mindfulness, concentration and recollection. It is a skill that we must work at. But how can we practice this in the busyness of everyday life?

Thich Nhat Hanh, a Vietnamese Buddhist Monk, offers some suggestions. In his book, Present Moment, Wonderful Moment, Hanh includes *gathas* or ways to be attentive and present in each moment.



For example, his gatha for walking:

“The mind can go in a thousand directions.
But on this beautiful path, I walk in peace.
With each step, a gentle wind blows.
With each step, a flower blooms.”

He gives another gatha to use when eating:

“In this food,
I see clearly the presence
of the entire universe
supporting my existence.”

Each gatha is a call to mindfulness; a challenge to be present in every single moment. Hanh says that, “When we focus our minds on a gatha, we return to ourselves and become more aware of each action. When the gatha ends, we continue our activity with heightened awareness.”

As a community member, how can you be more attentive, and thus, more aware of the other members of your community?

Try practicing Hanh's suggestion of being present in the moment by reciting a gatha. The next time it's your turn to prepare dinner for the community, recall:

“Preparing this meal, I know that this food will nourish my community members and help invigorate them in their work.”

You can also try writing your own gathas using the space below. Here's something to help you get started.

1. Listening to a fellow volunteer, ...

2. _____

Suggestions for community discussion (from Spiritual Rx):

1. Share a story with your community about a time when paying attention enriched your understanding of a relationship or your experience of the natural world.
2. Share an example of something that has flourished because of the attention that you have lavished on it.

Practicing attentiveness and mindfulness through these exercises is the first step to being more aware of the needs in your community and will help create a greater appreciation for the moments you share together.

Be Attentive to: The Community Around You

By now, you've met your fellow community members, you've moved into your volunteer house or apartment, and you've started work. There's been so much to learn, it's enough to make your head spin. Nevertheless, there's another important part of making the most of your volunteer experience: "Being Attentive" to the community around you.

As a volunteer who is probably committed to your location for a finite amount of time, it's very easy to simply hole up in your own little world of work and home. A richer, more complete volunteer experience includes a growing familiarity with the village, town, or city in which you live. In fact, the trials of work and the troubles of community life may be helped by getting involved with some other part of the community: maybe an after-school tutoring program, maybe a parish activities committee, possibly a neighborhood campaign to fix the streets.

The following questions should help you focus your attempts to learn more about the community around you, and also suggest ways in which you might get more involved.

Public Safety: Where is the nearest fire department? Police station? Who are the officers who patrol your neighborhood? Have you ever said hello or spoken to any of them? How do these departments respond to emergency situations? Do the departments have any community outreach programs?



Schools:

Where is the nearest school? How large is it? Is it public or private, and what age range does it serve? Do you know any neighbors who attend there? Do they have any sporting events, performances, or exhibitions

that are open to the public? Are there tutoring or volunteer coaching opportunities at the school?



Churches:

Where are the nearest churches, and what denominations are they? On what days of the week do they have services, and at what times? Do you know any neighbors who attend these churches? Do the majority of the neighbors belong to any one church or denomination? Have you attended mass or a service at any of these churches? Have you attended a church function or assisted with a church program that they offer?



Parks:

Where are the nearby community parks? What community groups gather there? What events are held there? Do you know anyone who goes to the parks regularly? Do the parks have walking, biking, or exercise trails? What activities would you use that park for if it was in your hometown?



Local Government:

What do you know about the local unit of government? How do members of the community get involved with their local government? How could you help out the local election board? Are there local or statewide community action groups working on issues that interest you?



These and other activities can give you a broader perspective on the place where you live and the people who share it with you – as well as offer a release from the tensions and frustrations that no volunteer goes without! At the very least, learning more about your community makes you feel more secure, more empowered, and more at home in your new surroundings.

Be Attentive to: The Greater National Community

What Do Your Experiences of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita Tell You About Your Priorities, and Those of Your Nation?

TV and other media coverage of the recent hurricanes has seemed non-stop. But have you given yourself the chance to reflect on your own feelings and thoughts about the disasters and their after-effects? If you and your community of fellow volunteers or friends want to ‘process’ reactions to and responses to the events, here’s a four-step approach, based on the pastoral circle, that may stimulate your discussion.

Format: Have a group discussion which gives each person the opportunity to respond round-robin style to each of the following, one question at a time. If you are not in a group setting, you can reflect as an individual on these questions.

Reflection and/or Discussion Questions:

1. What reaction did I have to the media’s images of the people who were desperate for aid?
2. What was my initial understanding about each of these disasters? How did my understanding change over time? What were the main contributing factors to these disasters? What do I need to learn more about in order to clarify my understanding?
3. What priorities seemed to guide the various groups of people involved in the events, including the survivors, the local and national government agencies, non-profit aid agencies, and the media? What do these priorities say about community, interdependence, salvation?
4. What does all of this say about my values and priorities? Contrast what did happen and what I think could have or should have happened? What decisions, if any, have I made about this? What aspect of my own values do I want to monitor to see if I’m being true to myself? To what extent do I walk my talk?

Biblical Reflection: Be Attentive to the Signs of the Times

“Be attentive,” the theme of this issue of *Shared Visions*, is an important part of Jesus’ teachings, and a process promoted in the documents of Vatican II and the Church’s encyclicals. For example, Jesus rebuked the Pharisees and Sadducees for being able to read the weather signs in the sky, but ignoring the signs which pointed to him as the much-awaited Messiah (Matthew 16:4). The importance of interpreting signs was also underscored when the disciples wanted to know if Jesus was the one spoken of by John the Baptist. Jesus responded that the disciples needed to recognize that the key signs, caring for the poor, the lame, and the blind, were already present and pointed to his messianic arrival (Matthew 11: 2-6).

In the early 1960’s, Pope John XXIII similarly highlighted this theme by calling together all the bishops of the world to discern the “signs of the times” so the Church could open its windows and allow the fresh air of renewal to reinvigorate the People of God. “. . . The Church has always had the duty of scrutinizing the signs of the times and of interpreting

them in the light of the Gospel . . . We must therefore recognize and understand the world in which we live, its explanations, its longings, and its often dramatic characteristics.” (*Gaudium et Spes*, Par. 4)

As a volunteer, reflect on the following questions as a way of “being attentive” to your experiences and the needs of the broader community.

- What are the “dramatic characteristics” of the people I’m serving?
- What do I see as their major anxieties, joys, hopes? How are they evident?
- How am I attentive to my own anxieties, joys, hopes?
- What are some signs of my own personal need for physical or spiritual renewal?
- How is God’s presence revealed to me in my current experience?
- Within my community of volunteers, to what developments ought we be more attentive?
- What are some signs within the Church that renewal is or is not taking place?

Recipe for a Good Time: Flying Bee Breakfast Burritos

Presented by the Flying Bee Ranch Bed & Breakfast,
www.flyingbee-ranch.com, located in Bayard, Nebraska.

Ingredients:

2 medium potatoes, cubed
1 lb pork sausage, cooked and drained
1/2 onion, finely chopped
5 beaten eggs
1 green or red bell pepper
1 large can whole green chiles
2 cups grated cheddar cheese
1 can sliced black olives
1 pkg 8-12 inch flour tortillas

Directions:

Cook potatoes and chopped onions in a large lightly oiled (olive oil) skillet. When done add pork sausage and green pepper. Cook until it's warm and peppers are cooked. Add beaten eggs. Stir until eggs are done. Warm tortillas on the stove or in the microwave (25 sec). Slice whole green chiles in half, clean out seeds and place one on each tortilla. Add egg, potato & sausage mixture in tortilla along with a little grated cheese. Roll tortilla up and place seam side down on a plate. Add the remaining grated cheese and sliced black olives on top. Very filling! Makes 4-6 large servings. (Salsa and Green Pepper Tabasco Sauce can be served with it for added flavor.)

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Editors: Andrew Thompson, Jennifer Taylor, Mark J. Torma

Production Editor: Mark J. Torma

Advisors: Rev. Frank Donio, S.A.C., Rev. Bob Kinast,
Bill Lowell, Sr. Anita Joseph Reeves and

Pallotti Center Directors: Kristelle Angelli and Joan Smith.

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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; 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.

**The Saint Vincent Pallotti Center
for Apostolic Development**
415 Michigan Ave., NE
Washington, DC 20017
(202) 529-3330 (in DC area)
or toll-free: (877) VOL-LINK (outside DC area)
pallotti@pallotticenter.org
www.pallotticenter.org

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