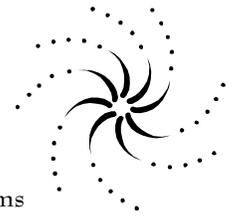


Staying Connected



a publication designed for alumni of Catholic full-time volunteer programs

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brought to you by the St. Vincent Pallotti Centers

Winter 2005

Staying Connected to ... Making a Difference

Survey Results: What Former Volunteers Told Us About Their Hunger To Make A Difference

Many formers told us that as volunteers they were passionate about making a difference in others' lives. But what happens to this desire when people 'graduate' and become alumni of their volunteer programs? Does their hunger decline or increase? Read what our survey revealed about volunteers' hunger to make a difference both as volunteers and, now, as formers. Also in this issue, we offer tools for helping formers not feel so overwhelmed by their desire to make a difference and suggest ways you can cultivate your vision through use of metaphor, motto and mantra.

Don't forget to check out our Spirituality column, which challenges us to think about how our role in each of the sacraments can lead to transformations that make a difference. You'll also want to note the practical suggestions for staying connected to making a difference in others lives, as well as in your own. Last, but not least, we can't have an issue of Staying Connected without helping formers...stay connected! This issue features 'Formers' Sightings' in western New York that may also give you ideas for setting up gatherings in your own area.

Do "hungry" volunteers live longer ???

Recent research about longevity has found that hungry mice live about 50% longer than well-fed mice. The hungry mice even have fewer illnesses.

We wonder if there's some metaphoric truth here, too. If a volunteer "hungers" to make a difference (the theme of this issue), will he or she have more "longevity" in pursuing social justice today, as a former volunteer?

In November, the Pallotti Center conducted a survey of former volunteers' experiences with making a difference in others' lives. We asked them, among other things, the extent of their hunger to make a difference both while they were volunteers and today, as former volunteers.

Overall, they were a very hungry bunch. When they were volunteers, 79% said they were hungry to make a difference. As formers, that number climbed to 87%. As volunteers, 25% said they were definitely fighting to change an oppressive system; as formers, that figure rose to 39%.

And those who were hungriest as volunteers became the ones most likely to remain hungry now. Of those who were



definitely "hungry to make a difference" in others' lives when they were volunteers, 93% say that's still true of them. And for some, the hunger has increased: of those who were *somewhat* hungry as volunteers, 67% are now *definitely* hungering to make a difference.

Volunteers who had a strong commitment to fighting to change an oppressive system are the ones most likely to maintain this commitment. Of those who were *definitely* fighting for this as

volunteers, 76% continue to do so now. Of those who said this was only *somewhat true* when they were volunteers, only 32% say they are now *definitely* fighting to change an oppressive system.

What does all this mean? Just as the hungry mice had greater physical longevity, volunteers whose hearts hungered to make a difference have social-justice "longevity." The volunteers who had the greatest hunger are, as formers, the ones most likely to remain hungriest in pursuit of changes that make a difference in others' lives. Today, nearly 9 out of 10 former volunteers who responded to the survey are continuing to extend themselves toward others, making a difference in other lives – and probably in their own lives, too.

Using **Metaphors**, **Mottos** and *Mantras* to Cultivate Your Vision

Cultivating your vision is essential in your quest to make a difference. Your vision is manifest in the dreams and goals you set for yourself. Joseph Campbell said “a dream is your creative vision for your life in the future. A goal is what specifically you intend to make happen.... Dreams and goals are coming attractions in your life.” But how can you set in motion your dreams and goals for a better world? One possibility is by utilizing “the 3 M’s” – metaphor, motto and mantra.

Creating a metaphor for yourself can help you carry your enthusiasm to make a difference from year to year. Some people may adopt a quote that has a special significance for them as their personal metaphor. For example, Mother Theresa’s quote “If you can’t feed a hundred people, then feed just one” embodies how many try to make a difference everyday. Such a metaphor can symbolize that dream or “creative vision” you have for yourself for your future. Find what inspires you, and make that your personal metaphor.

When you hear “Ruined for Life”, you probably recognize this as the motto of the Jesuit Volunteer Corps. Many other organizations also have mottos. The Boy Scouts use “Be Prepared.” “The love of Christ urges us on” is the motto of the Pallottine order. But what purpose do they serve? Mottos express the goals, ideals, and identity of an organization, or in this case, a person. Think about how you want to express your goals. What steps are you going to take to make your dream a reality? Perhaps a personal motto can help you formulate what direction you want to take.

After selecting a personal metaphor or motto, an effective method of being mindful and attentive of your vision is through the practice of mantra. Mantra can be defined as a form of chanted prayer, an intention or affirmation that you meditate everyday. By being attentive to the metaphor or motto that you have created, this will help you better focus on your vision to make a difference. When used consistently, mantra can allow you to integrate your dreams and goals into your daily life, thus, cultivating your vision.

Want to Avoid Getting a Messianic Complex?

Former volunteers know the feeling of sincerely wanting to make a difference in others' lives. Even so, sometimes we get caught up in trying to be the messiah who wants to step in and save everybody and every worthy cause.

Needless to say, this is an overwhelming task. Here is a well-known prayer for your reflection to help you better navigate this process.

The Serenity Prayer

God grant me the ***Serenity*** to accept the things I cannot change,
the ***Courage*** to change the things I can,
and the ***Wisdom*** to know the difference.

Reflective questions:

- What are the parts of my life I really want to change?
- Am I trying to change something or someone that I really can't influence?
- Am I reluctant to try changing something?
- If so, what are some of the reasons for my hesitation? A lack of courage? A lack of wisdom?

~ Spirituality ~

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

Sacraments and the Sacramental Principle Foster Transformations Which Make a Difference

We all know that the Catholic Church celebrates seven sacraments. How much are we aware of the broader theme of sacramentality that is at the core of the Church's view of our lives and of the created world?

Each of the seven sacraments celebrates an important, life-changing moment and relationship. For example, Baptism and Confirmation each welcome someone's introduction into the community. Reconciliation (Confession) expresses the healing of a broken relationship. Christian Marriage celebrates the divine love expressed by two persons committed to sharing their lives as one new reality.

Behind these sacraments is the deeper principle of sacramentality. Sacramentality is the conviction that creation is full of God's transforming love. Eucharist, for example, celebrates many levels of transformations.

First, we believe that the bread and wine change into Christ's body and blood, God's real presence. Eucharist also encourages us to ask broader "sacramental" questions: How does God's presence in creation transform me? For example, does my belief that God is present in my neighbor make me less self-centered, more aware of the needs of others, or more committed to social justice? Does my belief that God created the world transform my relationship to the environment?

The sacramental principle stretches how we think about the sacraments. Sacramentality asks us to see our own role in each of the seven sacraments. For example, in the celebration of Christian Marriage, the Church teaches that the couple, not the priest, is the main celebrant. You might ask yourself how you are the "celebrant" in other sacraments. In the Eucharist, to what extent do you prepare and offer the "gifts" of yourself and your daily life? Each day or week, challenge yourself to see one of the sacraments in its broader meaning. For example, think of Christian Marriage and consider how your relationships express God's grace, given and received. Thinking of Reconciliation, you might ask: What transformation am I seeking in my relationship with my significant other, my friends, or my family – and how does that transformation celebrate God's presence or



Former Volunteer Sightings in Western New York

Here's what some formers have told us about:

Buffalo

The Diocesan Service Corps gets formers together for a variety of social and social justice activities (contact Amy Fleischauer). // St. Joe's Parish is very focused on community and social justice - they have a very active social justice committee, and a 11:30 am gospel music mass that's fantastic! // The Buffalo State Newman Center also comes highly recommended. // Vive la Casa is an immigrant service organization - a good place that always needs volunteers. // The Western New York Peace Center provides opportunities for engaging with social/political issues. // There's lots of wonderful theater, including Shakespeare in Delaware Park, with two shows every summer. // The Allentown, Elmwood Ave., and Hertel Ave. districts are full of fun shops, co-ops and coffee houses. (Special thanks to Maureen Heffern and Amy Fleischauer for their great ideas.)

Syracuse

St. Lucy's is a very diverse, open and welcoming Catholic parish; St. Andrew's parish is also well-liked. // Also recommended: The Spiritual Renewal Center (run by the Sisters of St. Francis), the Christ the King Retreat Center, and the Stella Maris Retreat Center. // Service opportunities can be found at Vera House, the Brady Faith Center, Assumption Parish, and Franciscan Northside Ministries, to name a few. // Other good community organizations include the Syracuse Peace Council, the Dorothy Day House, and the four L'Arche communities in the area. // Armory Square, Westcott Center, and Tipperary Hill are full of good restaurants and hangouts. // Some good parks close by include Highland Forest, the Women's Rights National Park, and Green Lakes State Park. // The Great NY State Fair is fun for all, as are Jazzfest, Bluesfest, the Oswego Riverfest, and the Boilermaker Road Race. (Special thanks to Jennifer Shoaff Forth and the FrancisCorps staff for their great ideas.)

(To get contact information for these and other resources, visit our webpage at www.pallotticenter.org/Resources/InYourArea/new_york.htm)

Look for our Profile of **The Chicago/Milwaukee Area** in the Next Issue of *Staying Connected*

If you know of resources in the Chicago/Milwaukee area that no volunteer should be without, let us know!

bring divine life to greater fullness within the relationship? More broadly, where do I experience God's transforming presence? What's my role in transforming creation? What role do I want to have? Be alert and open to sacramental transformation, and to yourself as a sacramental presence in this world.



staying connected

In this issue:

Results from our survey on making a difference, the 3 M's of cultivating your vision, former volunteer sightings in western New York, and more!



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Practical Suggestions

for staying connected to making a difference in others' lives

By reflecting on and critiquing my hungers:

- How am I keeping myself motivated? Am I inspired by reading stories of how people are making a difference, e.g., in my volunteer program's newsletter?
- Do I want to nurture my counter-cultural identity, perhaps meditate on society's commercialism and contrast it with how I am striving to live more simply?
- To what extent am I living each day with purpose? Alice asked the Cheshire Cat: "How do I get away from here?" "Where do you want to go?" answered the Cat. "Oh, anywhere," Alice replied. "Then it does not matter which road you take, any path will take you there." - from Lewis Carroll's Alice in Wonderland.
- Am I striving to integrate my daily experiences with my spirituality?

By critiquing my activities and developing an action plan:

- In which type of activities do I feel I'm most alive? When have I last engaged in them? Are there any obstacles to my doing so? What, if anything, do I need to give up in order to pursue greater vitality?
- To what extent am I supporting my values by staying connected to like-minded persons, perhaps to fellow former volunteers, to people who volunteer part-time and other people who 'get it.'
- If I am a parent, to what extent do I believe that raising my children to be socially minded 'counts'? Am I convinced being a parent is a way to 'make a difference' in the world? Remember, children will live out the parents' values long after the parents are gone.
- In what ways am I nurturing my 'hunger' to make a difference by reading and feeding myself a 'diet' of information about others' struggles or success stories?
- Who are the world's 'good guys' who deserve my support, my time, talent and treasure (if I ever have any)? Which causes or interests, be they political, social, religious or educational do I really believe in?

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

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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 Oakland, CA.

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.