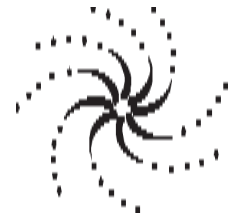




# Staying Connected



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

Volume 9, Number 1

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## Staying Connected to... Your Volunteer Program



Let's review some sample communications recently received by a typical former volunteer. In the mail: letter number 149 of the year from your college alumni association, asking for more money; five letters addressed to "Current Resident;" something meant for the next door neighbor. Email inbox: six spam messages and a forwarded joke that wasn't even funny. Nothing really personal or exciting. Sure can leave a person feeling...unconnected.

The purpose of this issue of *Staying Connected* is to show you the many benefits of staying in touch with your volunteer program, and how easy that can be. Programs love to hear from their alumni, and they aren't just looking for donations. As a current volunteer, programs valued you for who you are and what you brought to your placement and community, and the same is true now that you are a former volunteer. However, it is important to remember that volunteer programs don't always have the time they'd like to devote to organizing alumni activities. That's why it's so crucial for you to get involved! If you want to help alumni of your program stay connected, it's up to you to take the lead in spearheading the effort.

So, without further ado, the...

### Top 10 Reasons to Stay Connected to Your Volunteer Program

10. Good genes aren't the only thing you can give to your children! By staying connected to your volunteer experience, you can help **pass along the value of service to future generations.**

9. Moving to a new area? Your program may have current volunteers living in the area or know of formers who can help you adjust to your new locale - **instant ties to community!**

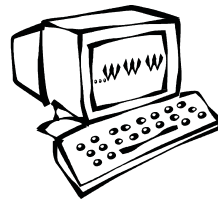
8. Remember that great recipe your community member always used? You don't? What about the phone number of the cute person who lived in your community? No? Your program may have the **contact information for other former volunteers to help you stay in touch!**

7. **Know someone who might like to volunteer with your program?** How can you help share your great experience if you don't have the current contact information for your program?

6. Lay-offs are never easy, but perhaps your volunteer program, which is probably connected to a wider network of people, knows of someone hiring. If they have your contact information, **your program can help you network and even find meaningful employment.**

5. The great growth and enrichment experiences

provided by your volunteer program don't have to end when you move on...your program can still **nurture your spirit!**



4. Former volunteers often provide great support to current volunteers... lifts to the airport, dinner or a night out...you TOO could **be a super hero to a community of current volunteers...**if you stay in touch!

3. Why did you volunteer with your particular program? Was it the mission or cause they served? Or maybe the location? Keeping in touch can provide you with **news and information regarding the causes and places that are important to you!**

2. Remember how great it was to make a difference in the lives of others? Staying in touch with your program can help **remind you of and keep you connected to that important time in your life.**

**And the number one reason to stay connected to your volunteer program...(drum roll please)**

1. **They would love to hear from you because you are important to them! Who doesn't like to feel connected and know that they matter to someone else?! Pick up the phone, sign in to your email, or pull out those stamps!**



# Ten Ways Alumni Can Be Super Alumni and Help Their Volunteer Program

- ❖ Keep your contact info updated at least with your current email address.
- ❖ Offer to help produce or contribute to your program's newsletter or organize an annual event.
- ❖ Offer to attend or help with your program's orientation or re-entry programs.



- ❖ Offer to help promote your program's mission by representing your program at a college volunteer or career fair or by talking in parishes or schools about your volunteer experience (word of mouth is one of the strongest recruiting tools).

- ❖ Write an article about full-time volunteer service for the local Catholic diocesan or secular papers.
- ❖ If possible, support the fundraising efforts of your program; find out if your employer will match gifts.

- ❖ Become a support person for a local volunteer community.

- ❖ Organize a gathering for alumni of your program and others (you can use the Pallotti Center network to find the former volunteers in your area).



- ❖ Continue to develop your own spirituality, learn about your faith by reading and going to talks, join a prayer or faith-sharing group, and learn more about the charism and mission of your program.

- ❖ Find ways of being politically aware and active by lobbying for your program's cause or being a "voice for the voiceless."

## Common Challenges to Staying Connected to Your Program (And Suggestions for Overcoming the Obstacles)

Sometimes former volunteers say . . .

"I've moved out of the area where my program was located and fell out of touch."  
Suggestion: Email is free and they'd love to hear from you.

"That part of my life is over and I've already moved on to another stage of my life."  
Suggestion: Building on your past and incorporating it into the person you are today can be more rewarding than abandoning it.

"My income is really gross (and I don't mean large), so I can't send money."  
Suggestion: Everybody knows non-profit salaries and college debts equal near poverty. However, you have a lot more than money to offer a program, and vice versa.

"I'm really busy raising a young family."  
Suggestion: Raising a family is a form of service, and programs would love to hear from you when life is less hectic (a quick email, Christmas card, or picture of your kids works well!).

"My program has since closed and I'm feeling a bit abandoned."  
Suggestion: Contact others in the same situation and find ways of helping each other.

"I wish I could apply the lessons of my volunteer experiences in a more concrete way."  
Suggestion: Contact your parish about giving an informal speech about your time as a volunteer. If you know other former volunteers in the area, form a panel to answer the questions of those interested in volunteering.

Are YOU in the Network? If you're not connected to the Network of Former Volunteers, or you'd like more resources designed with formers in mind, visit <http://www.pallotticenter.org/Former/index.htm>. The Network connects you to hundreds of other former volunteers, information about housing and jobs, as well as announcements about events in your area!

## Have you recently experienced...

*a feeling of disconnectedness from your Church or faith community?*

*a lack of emotional or spiritual support?*

*indifference towards prayer, or even towards God?*

If you are familiar with any of these experiences, know that you are not alone. Young adults—especially those who have previously been part of a strong spiritual community—can feel disconnected or disillusioned. This is an especially relevant problem for former volunteers, many of whom have lived in intentional communities. Because living in a strong community can be a “mountaintop” experience, entering the real world can require a long process of searching, of seeking out new life strategies.

## Here are a few questions to ask yourself:

- Why might you feel spiritually disconnected?
- Have you done your research about faith communities, or about spiritual writings and resources? Are you actively searching for a way to feel connected? Why or why not?
- What qualities are you looking for in a spiritual community?

## ...and a few suggestions to consider:

- Begin searching for a church/parish where you feel comfortable. You can't complain about not having a community if you aren't putting forth any effort to find one!
- Once you have visited several churches, choose the community where you feel most comfortable, and stick with it. Join something - a social justice program, young adult group, or religious education for your children. The more you participate, the more familiar faces you will see. Community does not develop overnight!
- Meet with some type of spiritual director. Not just priests, but people from all walks of life have been trained to be spiritual directors. He or she may be able to give you objective advice about your faith journey.
- Volunteer with a local organization, religious or non-religious. It is likely that you will meet people who are on a 'search' similar to your own.
- Pray. You can't expect to do all of this work on your own, so ask for God's help.

If you are **not** familiar with these experiences, you may be a great resource for your peers! How have you found spiritual fulfillment in your post-college, post-volunteer life? Is there a particular book or other resource that you have found to be helpful? How did you go about searching for a community? Share your insights with friends who seek your advice, and don't be afraid to invite people to participate in church or community events.

## Former Volunteer Sightings in

## North and South Carolina

### North Carolina



**Parishes & Retreat Centers:** St. Mary Parish, 412 Ann St., Wilmington, [www.thestmaryparish.org](http://www.thestmaryparish.org), very social justice-oriented community that serves the community via an outreach clinic // St. Peter's, 507 S. Tryon St., Charlotte, [www.stpeterscatholic.org](http://www.stpeterscatholic.org), Jesuit parish with a Young Adult ministry and many outreach ministries // Newman Catholic Student Center Parish, 218 Pittsboro St., Chapel Hill, [www.newman-chapelhill.org](http://www.newman-chapelhill.org), serves UNC students as well as the surrounding community, with many young adults and some formers attending // Living Waters Catholic Reflection Center, Maggie Valley, [www.catholicretreat.org](http://www.catholicretreat.org), offers private and directed retreats by Augustinian Friars // CFL Family Retreat Center, N. Topsail Beach, [www.christianfamilyliving.org](http://www.christianfamilyliving.org), retreats focus on families and small Christian communities; you can also make “away days” here.

**Social Justice & Volunteer Opportunities:** People of Faith Against the Death Penalty, [www.pfadp.org](http://www.pfadp.org), active chapters exist across NC // Catholic Social Services of the Diocese of Charlotte, [www.cssnc.org/volunteer](http://www.cssnc.org/volunteer) // Inter-Faith Council for Social Service, Carrboro, [www.ifcweb.org](http://www.ifcweb.org), variety of volunteer opportunities, especially in the shelters and kitchen // Student Action with Farmworkers, Durham, <http://cds.aas.duke.edu/saf>, students and community members advocating for better rights for farmworkers across NC.

**Events:** NC State Fair, 1025 Blue Ridge Rd., Raleigh, [www.ncstatefair.org](http://www.ncstatefair.org), held each October // Azalea Festival, historic Wilmington, [www.ncazaleafestival.org](http://www.ncazaleafestival.org), held each April // Bele Chere Festival, Asheville, [www.belecherefestival.com](http://www.belecherefestival.com), held each July // The Barbecue Festival, Lexington, [www.barbecuefestival.com](http://www.barbecuefestival.com), the title of “Best Barbecue” is hotly contested in NC!

### South Carolina



**Parishes & Retreat Centers:** Christ Our King, 1149 Russell Drive, Mt. Pleasant, [www.christourking.org](http://www.christourking.org), features a Young Adult group and a lively 7pm Mass on Sundays // St. Mary of the Angels, 1821 White St., Anderson, “small Franciscan church with an amazingly welcoming atmosphere” // Church of the Nativity, 1061 Folly Road, Charleston, features “an (almost) life-size nativity scene” // St. Andrew's, corner of Sloan & Edgewood, Clemson, serves Clemson University as well as the surrounding communities // Mepkin Abbey, Moncks Corner, [www.mepkinabbey.org](http://www.mepkinabbey.org), a Trappist monastery open to day visitors and retreatants, with beautiful grounds.

**Volunteer Opportunities:** Our Lady of Mercy Community Outreach Services, Johns Island, [www.olmoutreach.org](http://www.olmoutreach.org), offers short term and long term volunteer opportunities // South Carolina School for the Deaf and Blind, Spartanburg, <http://www.scsdb.k12.sc.us/employment/volunteer.html>, flexible hours and several types of volunteer positions.

**Events:** City of Charleston, [www.ci.charleston.sc.us](http://www.ci.charleston.sc.us), features cultural events and festivals all year, including the Parade of Boats, Day of Caring, Charleston Jazz Festival, and the Piccolo Spoleto arts festival. // Tour the islands off the coast and attend the Gullah Festival to learn more about the Gullah culture, [www.gullahfestival.org](http://www.gullahfestival.org), held in May. // Sun Fun Festival, Myrtle Beach, [www.sunfunfestival.com](http://www.sunfunfestival.com), held at the beginning of June.

Thank you to the many former volunteers who helped contribute these resources! More resources can be found online at [www.pallottcenter.org/Resources/InYourArea/resources\\_in\\_your\\_area.htm](http://www.pallottcenter.org/Resources/InYourArea/resources_in_your_area.htm).

*Look for our Profile of Detroit, MI  
in the Next Issue of Staying Connected.*

If you know of resources in Detroit that no former should be without, email [stayingconnected@pallottcenter.org](mailto:stayingconnected@pallottcenter.org).



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## IN THIS ISSUE:

How and why to stay  
connected to your  
volunteer program, North and  
South Carolina sightings,  
and more!

**WOULD YOU LIKE TO RECEIVE FUTURE EDITIONS OF STAYING CONNECTED VIA  
E-MAIL? IF SO, PLEASE LET US KNOW BY E-MAILING US AT:  
[stayingconnected@pallotticenter.org](mailto:stayingconnected@pallotticenter.org)**

Help us recycle. Please do your part by passing on your copy to another  
former volunteer or by recycling the paper. Thanks!

## ***Practical Suggestions for How You Can Be a Leader in Your Post-Volunteer Experience***

In your experience as a volunteer, did you ever tire of having to explain the concept of full-time volunteering? How many times did you compare your program to AmeriCorps or the Peace Corps just so people would know what you were talking about? Now that you've completed your volunteer experience, have you found that others do not understand what you spent a year or longer doing?

Wouldn't it be great if others knew more about faith-based volunteer programs and the positive outcomes they achieve? As an alumnus or alumna, you have the opportunity to be a leader for your volunteer program by helping to promote the work they do. Who else would be better suited than someone who has first-hand knowledge of the volunteer experience?

If you've been looking for a way to help your program but didn't quite know how, now is your opportunity to take action. You can start by following any of the suggestions presented in this issue. Remember that your program may not have the resources (staff, funds, etc.) to coordinate alumni activities. The important thing is to find something that you are passionate about and can easily manage, even if you must lead the effort.



1. The first step is to get motivated and take the initiative. This is possible no matter what stage of life you're in. You can help promote your program by talking to your friends or organizing a dinner party or play date with parents and kids. Simply sharing the message of service with your friends and family is very helpful. Telling your volunteer story can also help **you** to integrate and even understand your own experience.

2. The next step is to make sure you are prepared and organized with your ideas. If you would like to plan a fundraising event or give a talk to the youth group at your parish, you will want to have already designed a strategy for implementing your plan when you initially bring the idea to your program, parish, or other organization. This will facilitate the process and ensure that things run smoothly.

3. The final step is to contact your program and get the ball rolling! You have all the right tools to get started. Not only will your program benefit from your efforts, but you will know that you are giving something back to a program that gives so much to others.

### ***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, 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.