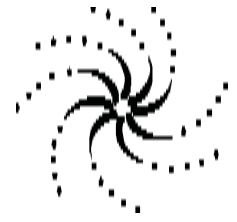




# Staying Connected



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

Volume 9, Number 2

Spring 2007

## Staying Connected to... Technology and Community

For this issue of *Staying Connected*, the Pallotti Center decided to explore issues of technology and community. With technology increasingly enhancing the ability to be "in touch," are there new or different ways people are creating and maintaining community? What are the benefits and limitations of technology with regard to sustaining community? We will begin to explore these questions here, and hope that you will develop and share your own insights with others.

Recently, the Pallotti Center polled over 800 alumni of volunteer programs to determine how formers are using technology, and how they view their use of technology, specifically how that use enhances or hinders their interpersonal relationships. Over 200 formers responded and indicated that, on a regular basis, they use the following technologies: the Internet (100%), email (100%), cell phones (90%), cable TV (51%), and MP3 players (43%). The survey also asked questions about the satisfaction formers feel regarding their use of technology, as well as questions about technology and the volunteer experience. Full survey results can be viewed at: <http://www.pallotticenter.org/StayingConnected/Vol.9/surveyresults.htm>.

The survey also asked whether or not formers utilized social networking sites. (MySpace, located at [www.myspace.com](http://www.myspace.com), and Facebook, [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com) are the two most popular.) While only 34% of total respondents use a social networking site on a regular basis, a whopping 83% of the formers who most recently completed their volunteer service use these sites. As the popularity of these sites continues to grow, how does this technology affect

community? One need not look too long in any number of popular media outlets to learn about the dangers and pitfalls of these sites and of sharing too much personal information. But what about the positive uses of a technology that allows one to connect with old friends, and presumably, make new ones?

In a way, social networking sites can be seen as a way to truly visualize the "six degrees of separation" between us. Users can not only see their friends, but also friends of friends. Perhaps you are moving to a new area, or are interested in a graduate program or new job. Through social networking connections, you are tapped into a wider circle than previously possible. These sites also often feature groups that are formed around a common interest, sometimes as lighthearted as celebrating a favorite TV show, but also as serious as rallying around an important social justice cause or alumni group (many volunteer programs have groups to link current and former volunteers together!). Through social networking sites, like-minded people have been able to find each other and mobilize around their passions.

While social networking online may not fall into the typical image of community, it is rapidly becoming an important facet to understanding how people view each other and make connections with one another. Armed with the "tools of today," what are the ways in which we can continue to create and sustain community?

Share your thoughts on technology and community with other formers! Join the Network of Former Volunteers at <http://www.pallotticenter.org/Former/index.htm>

## I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking for: Choosing Community in a Connected World

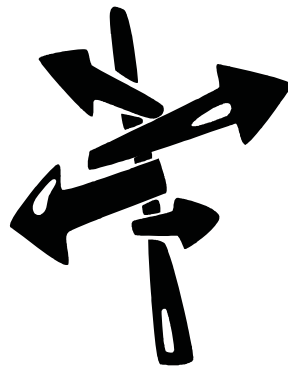
Our recent survey of former volunteers shows that the majority of formers are utilizing various forms of technology to create and maintain relationships. There is no question that this technology has helped to build a global community. We can now interact with people across the world as easily as we can with people across the U.S. But how does this affect how we perceive community?

The truth is, now, more than ever, we can choose when and with whom we want to interact. We can decide not to answer the phone, thanks to Caller ID. We don't have to smile or say hello to strangers on the street, thanks to iPods and cell phones. We don't even have to leave the comforts of home in order to shop for groceries. While we are benefiting from the added convenience of this technology, we are slowly eliminating the once common encounter with the stranger and the experience of making conversation with neighbors and passers-by. On the other hand, technology can help us choose community by leading us to like-minded people with

whom we may not normally come into contact. There are also times when utilizing technology helps us to address certain needs such as sustaining long-distance relationships. Because more and more adults are living farther away from their families than their parents' generation did, there is more distance between communities and a greater number of relationships to maintain. There is the hometown or high school community, the college community, and the volunteer program community, not to mention your family, friends and the community where you now live. There is so much to juggle, how can one possibly do it without using modern technology?

So whether out of choice or necessity the question remains: while keeping up with friends and family across the globe, are we missing out on opportunities to create community where we live? Can texting, instant messaging or social networking sites replace a phone call or face-to-face interaction? Could

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# Setting Technology Boundaries Enhances Our Presence In Community

In a recent Pallotti Center survey, former volunteers gave mixed reviews as to how technology impacts their personal interactions with others. Half the respondents (52%) said their use of technology had a positive impact, while 41% said the impact was an equal mix of positive and negative and 7% said it was slightly negative.

While we did not ask what made their use of technology either positive or negative, we suggest that setting boundaries helps make technological interactions

## Feel bombarded by technology use and abuse? Here are some web sites of interest:

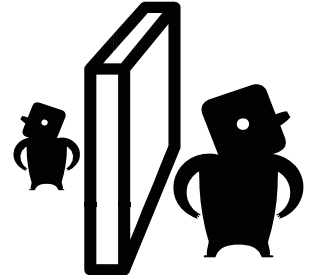
- 10 Commandments of Cell Phone Etiquette. #1 reads: "Thou shalt not subject defenseless others to cell phone conversations." Read more at: [www.infoworld.com/articles/op/xml/00/05/26/000526opwireless.html](http://www.infoworld.com/articles/op/xml/00/05/26/000526opwireless.html)
- Along with cell phone etiquette comes text messaging etiquette: [www.usatoday.com/tech/news/techinnovations/2006-01-29-safe-texting-sidebar\\_x.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/tech/news/techinnovations/2006-01-29-safe-texting-sidebar_x.htm)
- Would you ever profess your love via text message? How text messaging is changing relationships: [www.usatoday.com/tech/news/techinnovations/2006-01-29-love-texting\\_x.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/tech/news/techinnovations/2006-01-29-love-texting_x.htm)

positive and the lack of boundaries, or the presence of extreme boundaries, has negative consequences for both individuals and communities.

'Boundaries' are the areas of contact you have with your environment, whether social (other persons), environmental (nature), or spiritual (God). If your boundaries are too rigid (protective or defensive), you risk missing valuable opportunities or becoming isolated from others. An example of being rigid would be to declare all technology to be evil and vow never to use portable

communication devices or the Internet. On the flip side, if your boundaries are too loose, you risk having weak values or an ambiguous personal identity. Examples could include keeping your cell phone on 24/7, allowing it to be ringing during lectures, liturgies, or romantic dinners.

Ideal boundaries have the qualities of being both strong and flexible at the same time. An example is the semi-permeable membrane of the lungs, letting life-giving oxygen pass easily into our circulation and disposing of the harmful carbon dioxide. Strong and flexible boundaries, whether biological, religious or social, allow us to breathe while keeping us from being suffocated. An example could be to decide to turn technology off at certain times and places. This would let us focus our efforts and help make us available and more fully present to those around us.



Today's advances in communication technology present us with a new set of challenges as well as new possibilities for building communities. Here are some reflective questions to help you explore ways of thinking about your boundaries, how you use technology and build stronger communities with others.

When I think of my various environments (physical, social, technical, educational, religious), how do I describe my boundaries in each? Are they too rigid, weak or with just the right combination of flexibility and strength?

What are some life-giving experiences that I currently let into my life and to which I want greater exposure? Alternatively, to what extent is my inner-self drowning in music, images, chatter or noise?

How does technology help me and others share our lives? What decisions will allow me to be more present to myself and others?

What are some forms of technology I could use to build a supportive community, either for myself or for others?

We must not allow the clock and the calendar to blind us to the fact that each moment of life is a miracle and mystery.

- H. G. Wells

Continued from Page 1

the hours spent on MySpace and Facebook be spent hanging out with friends in coffee shops or meeting people in social clubs or volunteer organizations? Could that potential soul-mate be hanging out at the local park or café, rather than on eHarmony or Match.com? What if the opportunities for community that we are searching for are already right in front of our eyes?

While technology definitely has its benefits, we should allow ourselves the opportunity to interact with those who are members of the communities where we live, work and go to school. Reflect on how you can invite those opportunities into your life in addition to the online outlets that are presently available. Who knows? You just might find what you're looking for.

# SPIRITUALITY

Discovering God's transforming presence

in our lives



When you think about your spiritual life, the idea of "technology" probably does not spring to mind. Rather, for many former volunteers, the values of simple living and social justice continue to prominently guide their spirituality well beyond their days of full-time volunteering. The mainstream message says we should use as much technology as we can, and that we should always try to have the latest and greatest products. A built-in tension exists between this message and the idea of simple living.

That tension, however, is not new. Taking the view that technology refers to the tools of the time or culture, we can see this tension among Jesus' disciples. The Gospel accounts vary in the instructions Jesus gave to the disciples regarding what they could bring on their journeys to spread the good news, with the instructions ranging from take no staff or sandals to take both a staff and sandals, but not a second tunic (see Matthew 10:9-10, Luke 9:3, and Mark 6:8-9). While today these items seem commonplace, they were the tools – technology – in the culture of the early disciples. The biblical texts show that the disciples were initially unclear about what and how much should be used. Later in Luke, Jesus prepares his followers to continue his work by encouraging them to use whatever tools they have rather than giving everything up (Luke 22:35-36). Jesus seemed to encourage the disciples to use enough technology to get the job done.

What would it mean today, as a disciple of Jesus, to have enough technology to do the job? How do we reconcile the values of simple living with the tools of our time and culture? While the answer is different for everyone, it is possible to create a healthy balance of spirituality and technology. Consider the following:

- What is my role as a disciple? How can I use technology to assist my purpose and further the mission of Christ?
- How much technology do I really need to serve God and others? How does that compare with my current level of technology usage?
- Do I use technology to enhance my spirituality, or does technology take away from spiritual practices that I enjoy?

## Find yourself surfing the web aimlessly? Check out these sites that offer a rich variety of high-tech spirituality!

- The Irish Jesuits offer a guided, daily prayer (available on their website or on your PDA) at [www.sacredspace.ie](http://www.sacredspace.ie).

- Targeted toward spiritual seekers in their 20s and 30s, [BustedHalo.com](http://BustedHalo.com) offers many articles, faith guides, and tons of information for everyone.

- The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops has both the Sunday and daily Mass readings, as well as the entire New American Bible online – [www.usccb.org/nab](http://www.usccb.org/nab).

- Try [www.americancatholic.org](http://www.americancatholic.org) for Minute Meditations and the "Catholic Update" series.

Former Volunteer  
Sightings in

**Detroit**



**Parishes & Retreat Centers:** Gesu Church, 17204 Oak Drive, look for current and former volunteers at this parish // Ste. Anne de Detroit Parish, 1000 Sainte Anne St., oldest Catholic church in the Archdiocese of Detroit and the state of Michigan and dates back to the founding of Detroit, [www.ste-anne.org](http://www.ste-anne.org) // Manresa Jesuit Retreat House, Bloomfield Hills, [www.manresa-sj.org](http://www.manresa-sj.org) or (248) 644-4933 // Visitation Spirituality Center, Monroe, [www.ihmsisters.org/www/Spirituality/spirituality.asp](http://www.ihmsisters.org/www/Spirituality/spirituality.asp) or (734) 242-5520.

**Civic and Volunteer Opportunities:** Detroit Synergy, [www.detroit synergy.org](http://www.detroit synergy.org), "a group of young adults dedicated to revitalizing Detroit, offers opportunities for socializing, volunteering and dialogue" // Day House Catholic Worker, 2640 Trumbull Ave., (313) 963-4539.

**Activities & Festivals:** Detroit is quite the musical city: The Motown Historical Museum, [www.motownmuseum.com](http://www.motownmuseum.com), located at 2648 West Grand Blvd., is a must-see for music lovers // Detroit International Jazz Fest, [www.detroitjazzfest.com](http://www.detroitjazzfest.com), is a FREE festival held every Labor Day featuring renowned musicians and tons of events // Also on Labor Day: Arts, Beats, & Eats, [www.artsbeatseats.com](http://www.artsbeatseats.com), is a festival celebrated in downtown Pontiac (admission is free!) featuring locally and nationally known artists and musicians // Concert of Colors, "the largest free, world-music festival in North America," happens in July; the 2007 Festival is the 15th and will be held at the Max M. Fisher Music Hall // Belle Isle, an island in the middle of the Detroit River, has something for everyone: botanical garden, beach, trails, and more! [www.ci.detroit.mi.us/recreation/centers/M/belle\\_isle/belleM.htm](http://www.ci.detroit.mi.us/recreation/centers/M/belle_isle/belleM.htm).

**Good Eats:** Traffic Jam and Snug, 511 W. Canfield St., where they make their own beer, bread, cheese, and ice cream // "a Detroit Coney is a must" - comes topped with onions, chili, and mustard - try American Coney Island at 114 W. Lafayette or Lafayette Coney Island at 118 W. Lafayette // Las Brisas, 8445 W. Vernor Hwy. in Mexicantown, features traditional Mariachi music while you dine.

**For more Detroit sightings, visit [www.pallotticenter.org/Resources/InYourArea/michigan.htm](http://www.pallotticenter.org/Resources/InYourArea/michigan.htm)!**

Thanks to formers Leslie Wessel and Kelle Rose, and JVC: Midwest Assistant Director Cindy Schmersal for their great suggestions on all things Detroit!

Look for our Profile of the **Bay Area, CA** in the Next Issue of *Staying Connected*.

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



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## IN THIS ISSUE:

Choosing Community in  
a Connected World, setting  
technology boundaries, and  
Former Sightings in  
Detroit!

**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!**

## *Leadership through Technology*

Communication technologies, such as e-mail, cell phones, and social networking sites, have changed the way we define community. We may belong to online or virtual communities, and we are able to keep in touch with more people more frequently, but do we maintain a high level of quality in our communication with others? Current technology tends to focus on enhancing the experience of the individual rather than the community – many new products emphasize creating controlled environments for the individual user (personal music devices, noise-blocking headphones) that further keep us from having shared experiences with others.

Despite these trends, community leaders are finding ways to utilize technology to strengthen, rather than weaken, ties within local and global communities. By being innovative, and by actively making choices, you can also become a leader in using technology to benefit your community. Here are a few examples:

The TLT Group; Teaching, Learning and Technology, explores how information technology can be utilized to improve teaching and learning. A February 26, 2007 blog entry by co-founder, Steve Ehrmann depicts how one professor at Old Dominion University decided to address the problem of his students not being engaged by their textbook by allowing them to write their own text using wiki technology. Read the full article here: <http://tlt-swg.blogspot.com/2007/02/students-writing-their-own-textbook.html>. The TLT Group added this example as a resource to their "Digital Writing Across the Curriculum" so that other educators could utilize this technology in a similar way.

The Creating Community Connections Project is an ongoing effort at Camfield Estates, a low-income housing development in Roxbury, MA, in partnership with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). From 1999 to 2001, with support from various outside organizations, Dr. Richard O'Bryant and Dr. Randal Pinkett (from TV's *The Apprentice*) were able to address the "digital divide" by offering every family a new computer, high-speed Internet access, and comprehensive training at a local technology center to leverage this technological infrastructure for the purpose of building community. Read more: <http://www.randalpinkett.com/faith/volunteer.asp>.

You, too, can utilize available resources in order to bring people together, to share great ideas, or to spread the news about a worthy cause. Be a leader in your community by using technology creatively and wisely!

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

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**Mission:** Our goal is to promote lay volunteer service that challenges laity, clergy, and religious to work together in the mission of the Church, and 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.