



Franciscan Community Volunteers

June 2010



Sister Clara Stang, Sister Loretta Denfeld, Sister Ange Mayers, Will Braun, Spenser Buchert, Alicia Landale, Sister Cordy Korkowski. (Back) Katie Janssen, Caitie Tobin

How Do You Say, 'Thank You'?

by Sister Clara Stang, Director

Dankie, merci, danke schoen,
mille grazie, muchisimas gracias....!

However you say it...for me at this time the word "thanks" gives expression to my great appreciation for the guidance of the Spirit and to so many of you! The ways are endless...but permit me to start the list:

Uppermost I give thanks to God's spirit that has gifted this first year of ministry of the Franciscan Community Volunteers. The Franciscan spirit has animated Katie Janssen, our FCV manager, and our four volunteers, Spenser Buchert, Alicia Landale, Will Braun, and Caitie Tobin, in the joy of Gospel living. Those of us (Sisters Cordy Korkowski, Loretta Denfeld, Ange Mayers and I) living with them here in St. Cloud feel very blessed with the liveliness and energy of these young adults.

Thanks to the nonprofit service agencies for the welcome and supervision you have given to the volunteers

this past year. Whether you serve at Place of Hope, the Children's Home, Hands Across the World, the St. Cloud Mission Office or the Dental Care Clinic in Alexandria, you are wonderful models of service to the needy in our midst. The volunteers have embodied your spirit of dedication, and this world is a better world because of how you serve the poor.



The first "Taste of St. Cloud" held at Coyote Moon and Grille/Territory Golf in St. Cloud was a tremendous success. Approximately 500 people enjoyed the delicious food, participated in the silent auction, and met the

volunteers. The event raised over \$19,000 which will go a long way to support Franciscan Community Volunteers. This could not have been done without the generous support of our sponsors and many generous donors. The Coyote Moon Restaurant and the participating restaurants outdid themselves with tasty food and a pleasant spirit of hospitality.

Mark your calendars now for the 2nd Annual "Taste of St. Cloud" which will be held on Monday, May 2, 2011, using two levels of Coyote Moon and Grill. With a lot more room, ample seating and even more good food, this will be another great social event!

FCV 2010-11

FCV is eagerly anticipating its second year, beginning in August. If you, or someone you know, are interested in a year of service, community living and Franciscan spirituality, please consider applying:
www.fslf.org/pages/ApplicationProcess

Go green with FCV newsletter!

Prefer to read the FCV newsletter online? E-mail Katie Janssen, kjanssen@fslf.org, and she'll send you a link to the website when each new issue is published.

What I'm taking with me?

by Will Braun, Volunteer



Because our year is drawing to a close, I've filled out applications for graduate schools, AmeriCorps, teaching positions overseas, and I've fixed up my resume, but none of that seems too much initially in line with the past year I've lived. The only thing that seems like it would be a continuation of it is joining the Franciscan order. So the question for me is what I will take away from this year.

From what I can tell, there is one thread though that connects this past with the future, and that's the idea of a Christian's vocation. James writes that undefiled religion is serving widows and orphans, which, if you

take it to mean people who lack something, creates a field for service out of any employment. It means that wherever I work I'll be able to serve God because everywhere I work will have people who lack something—whether it's education or knowledge of God's love. As Jesus said, "The poor will always be with you," and this includes the poor in spirit—the depressed and lonely. In that manner, through this year of service, I've found a vocation without unemployment, wherever I'm working.

Learning what it means to be a Franciscan Community Volunteer

by Sister Jan Kilian

At the April Enrichment Night, Alicia, Will, Caitie, and Spencer provided deep insights into what it means to be a Franciscan Community Volunteer. To say we were greatly inspired by the transparency and depth of their personal sharing with the group gathered at the Welcoming House would be an understatement. Sister Paula Pohlmann and I were blown away by the quality of spirituality and mission expressed by these four women and men.

All of the volunteers spoke of wanting community and of their

enjoyment of each other as they shared elements of communal life. Scripture and prayer played large in each of the volunteers' decisions to commit to this program. It was Will who referenced the letter of James, speaking of widows for example, who lack basic necessities, and that life in Jesus means to care for those who lack necessities. "There will always be someone without essentials to a healthy life. I am encouraged to know I will always have a purpose because I'll always be able to find someone to serve." It was evident that he and the other

volunteers have chosen to align their lives with Christ.



Sister Jan Kilian

We Franciscan Sisters could not be more grateful for the clarity of thought and ability to articulate Franciscan values which these young people demonstrated. What a privilege to have them with us, carrying the Franciscan charism into areas that would not be reached without them. We are grateful to Sister Clara Stang and Katie Janssen for their leadership on our behalf.

Using Words (if Necessary)

by Caitie Tobin, Volunteer

Back in January our volunteer manager Katie told me the story of Willamina, whom she'd met at the homeless shelter where she worked as a volunteer for the Vincentians. In Willamina, Katie found someone who revealed to her unerringly and unquestionably the presence of God. At the end of our conversation, Katie said that she hoped that, at some point during the year, I would find my Willamina. I have. Her name is Sophie.*

Sophie is one of the residents of a home for the disabled who has, among other things, turned my understanding of Saint Francis's words to "preach the Gospel always and, if necessary, use words" on their head. Hearing these words for the first time in January, I marveled at their genius, their call to live lives as disciples of Christ through acts of service directed at the good and happiness of others. Thanks to Sophie, however, I've realized there is maybe another dimension to Francis's words: the idea that we are called to embody the gospel. To not necessarily do more but to *be* more to others. In a sense, to strive to be that "living prayer" that Francis was in our own relationships with God. Sophie is in her 20s and has lived in this home for several years. She has cerebral palsy, which she has had all her life and, as a result, can neither talk nor walk and needs constant care for all of her daily needs.

I met Sophie for the first time a few weeks ago. As I sat down to spend some time with her, a surge of anxiety shot through me. Floundering, I cast my eyes away from her, suddenly unsure of what to

say or do. Looking around the room, I tried to find something we could focus on; something to talk about. But the more I searched the room, the more my mind drew a blank. It was only when my panic at not knowing what to say reached a peak that I moved my eyes back toward Sophie. And, as I did so, I was met with an overwhelming smile. It was a smile that stretched right across Sophie's face, from ear to ear, lighting up her eyes. It was unlike any other smile I'd ever seen before. It was truly uplifting.

As we were sitting together, one of the assistants walked by and commented that Sophie could almost always be found beaming. I sat with Sophie for, at most, ten minutes. We didn't do much during those ten minutes. But we didn't need to, because, I slowly realized, Sophie was happy to just sit together. And so as we sat together, Sophie smiled at me and I smiled back at her. In Sophie I saw someone who was, through her very presence, living that joy that we are invited to experience, that joy which Saint Francis famously conveyed as he bounded through the streets of Assisi on a morning singing, with gusto, "Buon giorno, Buon gente!" (Good morning, Good people!). Sophie embodied this same joy in its very purest form.

More than this, though, Sophie taught me that we don't need to do anything but be. Our presence alone can be a powerful testimony of the presence of God. Reflecting on the joy and peace I felt just sitting with Sophie, I realized that one of the things that struck me was the



seeming incongruity of pure, deep joy radiating from someone who, at first glance, looked to be so diminished. In a world that tends to turn its back on those who are disabled, God has chosen these very people to be the bearers of good news. Like Sophie, these "victims" become messengers of God who remind us of His presence and call us to a deeper belief in Him.

As my time as a Franciscan Community Volunteer rushes toward its close, I look back on my time spent with Sophie with gratitude for, like Willamina was to Katie, Sophie has been for me the very presence, joy and love of God. As we each walk our own, unique paths through life, I pray that a Sophie or a Willamina will be placed along each of our roads, slowing us down, and revealing to us, though disguised, the face of God.

*Name changed for the sake of privacy.

Sweet Humility

by Alicia Landale, Volunteer

I often wonder what it truly means to be a committed follower of Jesus. In the infancy of my Christian conversion a few years ago, I might have selfishly proclaimed that it meant having all of my “crap” taken care of, that I would be living a comfortable faith with little doubt, and that pleasing God would immediately become something like second nature. Ha! Thankfully, God does not lead His children astray and He has lovingly revealed my sincere foolishness over the past years, though I have found it often harsh and unpleasant. Something in my soul resonates with the Truth in these lessons that my spirituality is not all about me, my happiness, my comfort, and that living out the Gospel is not so easy, in fact!

I can boldly affirm that a lot of these beliefs have been squashed particularly in this past year as a volunteer amidst the “at-risk” youth community. Being around these children, it is impossible to be self-absorbed and also be

“Humility is not thinking less of yourself but thinking of yourself less.”

—C.S. Lewis

sensitive to their situation and their needs, and in each of our interactions God reiterates that similarly, my relationship with Him is not all about me. Considering the genuine nervousness I felt at the beginning

of my time with the children and the joy I have reaped since, I now know that living faithfully and committing to God’s design for me are not necessarily synonymous with personal comfort. He has let me stumble at the Children’s Home to downplay my ego and gently remind me that I am not perfect, and that is the point of the Gospel really, that He is holy and we are not.

God has used this past year to develop a deeper understanding in me that it takes a lifetime to expose the sinful areas of my life for Him to fashion into His likeness. I thank this year in particular for being the vehicle God used (and is using) to bring sincere humility and selflessness into my life.

All these achievements considered, I find it enormously easier to be myself



and simply have fun being with the kids. Lately I began taking a few of them to the Humane Society’s animal shelter to volunteer, and together we socialize with and care for the dogs and cats. It can get smelly, but the kids are learning responsibility, and I notice that simply being around animals, with all their unconditional love, can have a sincere, positive effect on the children. It is such a joy to be a part of their lives and I will always be grateful for those priceless experiences at my placement!

Blogging

Want to hear from volunteers more than three times a year? Become a follower on our **FCV blog** at <http://fcver.blogspot.com>.

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The 'Real World'

by Spencer Buchert, Volunteer

Last August, as I prepared to spend this year as a Franciscan Community Volunteer, I had a sense of anxiety, unsure about this next chapter in my life. I find myself feeling the same way now as we near the end of our FCV experience. Lately, it seems like everyone is asking me, "So what are you plans after FCV?"

A couple weeks ago at one of our Monday evening community meetings we talked about the plans (or lack of plans) we all have after FCV, and what anxieties we have as we move in new directions. Katie asked us to order the following things from highest to lowest priority: career, housing, faith life, service, community and simple living. After listing our priorities, it was very clear how concentrated we all were on the future. The exercise was a key step in realizing how important it is to balance planning for the future with enjoying the present.

I am reminded of something that one of the sponsors said several weeks ago at an enrichment night hosted at the Franciscan Welcoming House. He said something like, "Don't let anyone convince you that when you are finished here you are going back

to the real world, because you are in the real world now. All that garbage that society tells you is real, is not. Remember what you learned here." That thought totally blew me away. Over the last eight months, I've said many times what a blessing it is to be here, yet here I am ignoring the present, practically consumed with planning my future. Yes, planning is important, but so is enjoying God's gifts that are everywhere in the present. I see this as a very Franciscan way of thinking as well. Francis didn't have time to concern himself with the future that was out of his control; he was too busy thanking and praising God for creation and even the smallest blessings God provides. There you go, one of the many FCV lessons I will carry with me into the next phase of my life.

To all of you who have supported FCV with prayer, your time or donations, thank you so much. As much as FCV helps the St. Cloud community, I know that the volunteers have received many times more from this experience. Thank you again, I feel truly blessed to be part of the inaugural team of FCV.



Peter Mullin, Jason Stock (FCV Board Member),
Spencer Buchert (Volunteer)

"It is really hard to believe that Spencer's time here is coming to an end...It has been a great experience here for us, he has been faithful and helpful in any area we have put him in and it has helped us out on many levels. He has become part of us and we appreciate him so much."

— Pastor Carol Jean Smith

"Caitie is a person of deep faith who is not afraid to ask the hard questions, discerning what faith truly means for her own life and the lives of others."

— Rosanne Fischer, St. Cloud Mission Office

Green
tip

Alice's Wonder Spray

(for bathrooms, showers and use as a general all-purpose cleaner)

Kills 82 percent of mold and 99% of bacteria, according to Ami Voeltz of Do it Green Minnesota.

1 cup white vinegar
2 tsp. Borax
4 c. hot water
20 drops essential oil
(optional - for fragrance)
1/4 cup liquid dish soap

Put it in a spray bottle, if available!

— suggestion from Sister Adela Gross



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