



Vincentian Service Corps-Central

A Year of Service Makes a Lifetime of Difference

Fall 2008

VSC-Central

Meet the 2008-2009 VSC Volunteers!

We asked our newest volunteers to tell you about their families, why they are doing a year of service, what attracted them to VSC, where they are serving and about their hopes and dreams for their year of service.
We think you will enjoy getting to know them!



Caryn Murray

I like how the VSC Corps strives to work with and help poor and vulnerable populations. Often the needy are overlooked or ignored, but serving with VSC, I've been able to be present in the lives of some of these people as we both make a difference in each other's lives as we help and learn from each other.

I love my family! There are six of us...my mom and dad—Debbie & David Murray, my older brother—Patrick, me, my younger sister—Colleen and my youngest sister—Kate. My family is pretty supportive of each other and I'm so thankful for them and all the times we've spent together.

Living in community was another thing I thought I would enjoy with the VSC. The idea of living with people of similar faith and sharing experiences with one another to grow closer together as a community with God and supporting each other in our different ministries is great.

A year of service for me is a time to step back for a little while to see and do things I've wanted to take time to do—to help others, to grow spiritually, to learn more about myself and much more. I believe that not only will I gain life experiences that will help me in the future but that I will also get to experience God's presence and love in my service and interactions with the people I meet every day.

I am serving at St. Elizabeth's Adult Day Care where individuals can come for the day to receive care and love. Not only are basic needs fulfilled but attention is given through daily interactions and activities that promote overall wellbeing.

I've never really worked with the elderly or the mentally and/or physically challenged population very much so this type of service is pretty new

VSC MISSION STATEMENT
Responding to the call of the Gospel in the spirit of St. Vincent de Paul, lay women and men of the Vincentian Service Corps serve those who are poor, while growing in prayer and living in community.

Vincentian Service Corps-Central is sponsored by the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul of the West-Central Province.
www.Daughters-of-Charity.org

to me. I really like my Service Site and I'm learning things already. I'm starting to get use to the fact that my presence alone goes a long way in helping the participants at the center. I can't wait to see how the rest of the year unfolds and see the relationships I have with the people at St. Elizabeth's grow.

I'm trying and hoping to keep an open heart and mind throughout my year of service, to allow God to use me, knowing that He has His ways of working through me to better serve the world and His people. As far as expectations for this year, I'm trying to have none...anything is possible with God and surely I won't be disappointed.

VSC Advisory Board Members
Julie Gryskiewicz-Chair
Sr. Julie Cutter, D.C.
Liz Foshage
Jason Gray
Fr. Dan Kearns, C.M.
Sr. Kieran Kneaves, D.C.



"The desire to love God and put His love into practice makes everything sweet."

-St. Vincent de Paul

Vincentian Service Corps—Central is a member of Catholic Network of Volunteer Service (CNVS)



I am blessed to be part of a large immediate and extended family. I am the middle child of seven and have grown very close to my family after the unexpected death of my father ten years ago. He was a science teacher and showed his love for service to the community every day through his career. His life has had a significant impact on me and my siblings. Along with her husband, Mike, and children, Teddy and Bette, my older sister, Emily, lives in upstate New York while she pursues her PhD. Along with his wife, Pam, and stepson, Collin, my brother, John, lives in Connecticut where he teaches high school business classes. My brother, Dan, recently finished a high school Physics teaching position in Florida. My sister, Gabriele, is currently attending college. My two youngest sisters,

Elena Spear

Jan and Rachel, are still living at home. My mother is a school psychologist at a school for troubled youth. I am also very excited for the upcoming expansion of our family once more—my mom will re-marry and Ken will join our family along with his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Kroog and his sister, Lauren (who also teaches!). I am truly very blessed to be part of such a loving, awesome, huge family!

While attending St. John's University in Queens, NY, I fell in love with the Vincintian Mission of service to the poor. In my senior year of college, I debated whether or not I wanted to do a year of service or start my career of teaching. I opted to start my career and I filled a leave-replacement math position at my hometown high school. It was a very challenging experience and also one that led me to have a hard time even considering giving teaching another chance. I also felt like I had drifted away from St. Vincent de Paul's message during that year. I knew that if I was going to do a year of service, it

would be with a Vincintian group. This service year will allow me to restore my love for the Vincintian Mission while also re-exploring my career as a teacher.

The VSC has given me the opportunity to teach math and religion at De La Salle Middle School in North St. Louis. I have been very anxious about this opportunity since my first teaching experience was difficult. Even though the school is small (about 55 students), I do recognize that there will be challenges; but I know that I will have the on-going support of my fellow teachers and faculty. They have been very helpful and caring, even before the first day of school. After meeting the students, I am very excited and honored to be able to teach them. I am also looking forward to what they will teach me.

I hope this year will allow me to grow in my relationship with God through living St. Vincent's Mission. I am also hoping for a renewed love of teaching.

I was born in Chicago but moved to southern California when I was a year old. My dad was an electrician for almost seventeen years and ran his own business. My mother homeschooled me from preschool through high school graduation. Any educational success I have is a result of her efforts. I have two younger brothers and one younger sister. In June, 2007, my family re-located to Mountain Home, Arkansas where they currently own and operate a fishing resort on the White River.

I chose to do a volunteer year out of a desire to give back. I expect to serve God by serving others in need and to allow Him to use me to fulfill His will on earth. I have been abundantly, extravagantly and undeservedly blessed in my life and I want to use my time with VSC to give of myself to those who have not been given the same opportunities.

I found out about VSC from the Catholic Network of Volunteer Service and felt led to it immediately. Circumstances continued to point toward VSC in a way that I couldn't ignore and I felt

that this was the program God had selected for me.

So far, Loyola Academy of St. Louis is more than I could have hoped for. As a former film student, (and having never set foot in a middle school myself), I was worried that I may have been in over my head. I have never had the slightest inclination toward teaching and had no idea what was involved in preparing a class. The days are long and demanding and I sometimes come home overwhelmed. Despite all this, I'm finding my days at Loyola to be more rewarding than anything I've ever experienced. As a whole, the young men of Loyola are a remarkable group of people. The opportunity to interact with them every day is the biggest blessing in my life right now. Something very powerful and exciting is being accomplished at Loyola Academy. Working toward that goal is a group of the most dedicated, generous and inspirational adults I have ever encountered. I am proud and honored to be a part of the Loyola staff of teachers and administrators. I am learning more than I am teaching.

For myself, I really hope for change. I hope that God will use this year to make a real change in my attitude, desires and means of relating to people. I don't expect my year of service to necessarily impact the world, I'm really just hoping it changes mine.



Emma Olwell

Life's too short not to be Vincintian!

Fall 2008

I am so blessed to have a large family who love and support me unconditionally and I hope they all know how much I love them and appreciate them.

Why do a year of service? Well, why not? I was just about to graduate from college and suddenly realized that I had absolutely no idea what I was going to do next. So, I began praying about what God wanted me to do next. That was when I found a brochure for the Vincentian Service Corps and as soon as I read it, I knew that this was where I was supposed to be.

That flashy little black and white brochure first grabbed my attention but what really attracted me was the opportunity to try to follow God's will for my life and to serve His people.

My Service Site is Covenant House Missouri. I have a profound new respect for every teacher I have ever had! Really, though, I love it at Covenant House. For the first time in my life, I feel like I am in exactly the right place

at exactly the right time. I feel like I have really made a connection with the kids I serve and hope I will be able to be a positive influence in their lives; I know they have had an amazing impact on me already. Someone told me recently that you don't really become a student until you become a teacher and its seems so true right now. I have learned so much in the few short weeks that I have been at Covenant House—about life, about God, about love, about myself and about the human condition among so many other things. I never wanted to be a teacher and it's only been very recently that I felt called to work with teenagers, but now I can't imagine doing anything other than what I am doing right now. I have learned to rely fully on God to give me whatever it is I need to do His work each day and he provides in abundance. I have learned to always look beyond the surface in a person because everyone has a story, and I have learned that "sometimes God has a kid's face."



Jessica Amspoker

Overall, I just want to fulfill whatever purpose it is that God sent me here for. I would also like to find a greater respect for the things that are really important in life and further myself from attachment to those things that aren't. So far, I've already discovered that name-brand toilet paper isn't actually a necessity! I am enjoying experiencing and learning about other ways of living and thinking than what I'm used to and hope that this will help bring about in me a greater love and appreciation for all of God's children.



My mom and dad are Barb and Dan. They live in Baltimore, Maryland. My sister is Erin and her husband is Taylor. They both work in Columbia, MD. I also have a dog, Rocky, and a kitten, Audrey, who I miss!

I wanted to do a year of service in order to experience and appreciate a different point of view and culture. I also wanted to develop my skills in criminal justice and to discover ways I can serve the poor with my personal skills and talents.

I was attracted to VSC because I would be living in community with other volunteers who share similar values and because I would be able to serve the poor through the St. Vincent de Paul Criminal Justice Ministry.

I love serving at SVDP Criminal Justice Ministry because I am able to directly assist people in need and I am able to use what I studied in college to better understand the people I serve. Everyone I work with is so helpful and willing to teach me what they've already learned from serving the poor.

My hopes for the year were to start with an open mind and to be ready for anything!

Kelly Mahoney

A Note From the Director

Dear Friends,

Here we are at the beginning of another Service Year. This year there are nine young women who are living in community and serving in the St. Louis area with persons who are poor.

I hope you take the time to read their stories and learn a little about who they are. I think you will like them as much as we do.

Thank you for your continued prayerful and financial support of Vincentian Service Corps—Central.

God Bless You,
Sr. Teresa Daly, DC





Kristina Schliesman

Kristina and her first "Our Lady's Inn" baby

I grew up in Knoxville, Tennessee with my parents, Earl and Nancy and my older brother, Aaron. My parents are two of my very best friends. They are the most supportive, encouraging and loving people I have ever known and I am so blessed to have them in my life. My dad works for the University of Tennessee as an NCAA compliance officer and my mom is a middle and elementary school guidance counselor. My brother recently move to Alabama with

I am part of an eight-person, loving, Catholic family, one of two daughters and four sons. I was born in New Orleans. When I was two, we moved to Texas. After three years, my family moved to Perth, Australia where we lived for four years. After living "down under", I lived in Livermore, CA, Mandeville, LA, Bakersfield, CA and San Jose, CA. Currently my family is scattered throughout the United States due to school. We are all very close in age and it is exciting seeing everyone move onto bigger and better things.

I wanted to do a year of service to better both myself and the lives of the less fortunate. I have been given so many blessings throughout my life and know that I have been called to give some of them back. I felt that a year of service

was a great way to surrender to God's perfect plan. I know that this year will help me in the vocation to which I am called in my future.



Vincentian Service Corps really fell into my lap when I was searching for a service year. I felt particularly drawn to

Molly Rawicki

his job in pharmaceutical sales. I spent the last six years in school in Indiana at Saint Mary's college, where I earned my bachelor's degree in music education, and the University of Notre Dame (go Irish!), where I completed my master's degree in sacred music. Music, particularly singing, (and especially sharing it with others) has always been a big part of my life.

As I was finishing up at Notre Dame, I really had no idea what I wanted to do after graduation. I had lots of options but not until I started thinking about giving a year to God in direct service to the poor did I really become excited. I started researching various programs and found the size and service opportunities of Vincentian Service Corps most appealing.

I'm serving at Our Lady's Inn, which is a shelter for homeless, pregnant women and their children. I've met

the call of helping the poor. St. Vincent de Paul is such an inspirational saint and I immediately wanted to be part of his incredible mission. The program seemed so well put together and I had very good feelings throughout the application process. I was really attracted to VSC because it is really all about loving and serving others fully.

I am really enjoying my Service Site. I work with adorable one year old children at Guardian Angel De Sales Child Care. I get so much out of working with these little ones and have learned so much from all of my coworkers already. There is such a beautiful sense of self-giving and love all through the Guardian Angel Settlement Association. I love being part of the mission of helping others because they are all images of Christ.

I hope to become more aware of all those less fortunate so that I will be more generous with all the gifts I have been given. I hope to learn more about myself, the other volunteers and the poverty stricken of St. Louis. I expect all the VSC volunteers will take the knowledge and experience of this year to go on to really great things and continue to make a difference in the community.

some amazing people through my ministry there and I've already had the chance to accompany a woman to the hospital and stay with her through her labor. Every day at the Inn is different. I often leave exhausted, sometimes frustrated or worried about a client, but always happy and thankful. It is more life-giving than anything I've ever done. I am energized by the love and spirit that is unmistakably present in that very special place.

I hope to grow closer to God this year in my service with the poor, my interactions with my new housemates and my personal reflection over the year. I am already learning more than I imagined possible and truly love my Service Site. I have been challenged in many ways already and have already experienced personal growth in overcoming these challenges.



" You will love one another realizing that since God has chosen and assembled you to render Him the same service, you must be like one body animated by the same Spirit, and look upon one another as members of the same body."

-St. Louise de Marillac



Many Thanks to Our Generous Donors

We give special thanks to those who have so generously donated to the VSC Program during this past quarter.

Your support helps our VSC Members in their service to persons who are poor and marginalized.

If you are able to help support our volunteers in their service, please send your donation in the enclosed envelope. Thank you so much for your generosity and your prayerful support.

Deborah Bean
 Jimmy & Cynthia Bolt
 Del & Teo Bumgardner
 Viola Clements
 Timothy & Theresa Cronan
 Matt & Patterson Ford
 Claire & Gary Gehrki
 Pat Jones
 Sr. Joan Kuester
 Steven & Martha Kymes
 Lloyd & Phyllis LeBlanc
 Kenny Scott
 Colleen & Edwin Sullivan

My parents live in northern Virginia, outside Washington, D.C. I'm the oldest of five siblings: Peter goes to Virginia Tech, Rachel and Mark are in high school and Joseph is in third grade. Moving to St. Louis has connected me to my family's Midwestern roots, since my parents both grew up in nearby Chicago and my mom is a St. Louis University alum.

Service trips with my home parish during high school and college got me interested in meeting and serving the people of a new location. I've had the privilege of repairing homes in West Virginia, Tennessee and New Hampshire, and working in schools in Kingston, Jamaica. Since then, I've always wanted to embark on a more long-term service mission so I could really get to know the area I was serving.

This spring, when I graduated from the College of William and Mary, I wasn't sure what type of graduate studies to pursue afterwards. A priest suggested that I "do something radical for God" instead and I thought that was a great idea. To me, this year is a period of time to dedicate especially to God. I want to offer my time for His work and to explore what plans He might have in store for my life.

I knew I wanted a service organization with a Catholic identity rather than something secular. My public college really emphasized volunteering, but just the "civic engagement" seemed

empty to me. You can't truly make a difference just on your own. Without the love of Christ, we can do nothing.

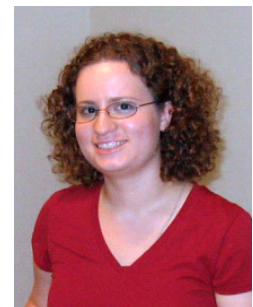
I picked VSC because Sr. Teresa answered my email inquiry right away. The VSC wasn't just a large, impersonal organization. I also loved the emphasis on community living and spiritual growth.

I am serving at Nurses for Newborns Foundation where I do a variety of service. Nurses for Newborns Foundation exists as a safety net for at-risk families and their babies, providing nurse home visits. Our nurses are generous, determined women who bring their clients health advice, parenting education, and the occasional package of diapers. Sometimes I am able to accompany the nurses on their visits. Often I work in the main office where I help intake donations and help prepare for home visits. I also help with grant writing. Grant proposal writing requires a lot of attention to details, but I mostly enjoy it. I'm glad to have an assignment where I can use the research and writing skills I learned as a history major. Preparing a grant application means I have to be an advocate for the babies we help, telling donors why our work is important. Every day I learn more about the scope of NFNF's work and about the collaboration with donors and agencies that work requires. So far, I have been really impressed with the atmosphere in the NFNF office. There is a sense of cama-

raderie, and everyone keeps in mind the babies and moms we serve. It's all about our clients. That has really illustrated for me St. Vincent de Paul's statement that "The poor are our masters".

I have already seen that my year in the VSC is going to be challenging, but I also hope that God will give me the grace to meet those challenges.

I expect, and have already experienced, a lot of challenges but also the grace to face and learn from them. I hope to continue to learn more about NFNF's work and to get to know the staff better. I'm also looking forward to exploring more of St. Louis and to hanging out with the other volunteer groups in the area. My hope for our VSC community is that we become tighter-knit and are able to support each other on our faith journeys.



Sarah LaVigne

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Address Correction Requested

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Nora Tullis

I grew up in the Washington, D.C. area; my family still lives there with my dog, Sweetheart.

As a Catholic, I believe that I am called to live the Gospel in action and to me, service is at

the heart of living the Gospel. In the past I have been very active in various service ministries.

I volunteered with the St. Vincent de Paul Society, serving the elderly and young children. I was also active in peace and justice issues; however, service always fell behind my academics. After graduation, I knew that there were many opportunities open to me. I could have applied to graduate school or started working at a well paying job but neither of those options were very attractive to me. I knew in my heart of hearts that I wanted to serve. I just did not know in what capacity.

I looked at some secular programs which were service oriented but I couldn't find one that "fit" me. I prayed for discernment and soon realized that in order for me to succeed at service, I really needed a more spiritual program. After some research, I found the VSC program and knew that the Vincentian spirituality was just what I was looking for.

When I applied to the VSC program, I said that I would go wherever I was most needed. I was placed in East St. Louis with the Education Advocacy Project. My responsibility as a child advocate is to work for the educational rights of children in the school district. The Education Advocacy Project is in its early stages so I am involved with many aspects of developing the program. I have an amazing work environment and I am surrounded by wonderful and generous people who dedicate themselves to serving the poor. I truly love the work that I am doing because I can really see that I can and will make a difference in the lives of the children that I am working with.



2008-2009 VSC Volunteers

Left to right:

Sarah, Elena, Emma, Caryn, Kelly,
Kristina, Nora, Molly and Jessica