

VSC WEST

NEWSLETTER | WINTER 2019



A YEAR OF SERVICE MAKES A LIFETIME OF DIFFERENCE

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Trusting God's providence, guidance

Dear VSCW Alums, Members of the Vincentian Family, Friends, and Collaborators of Vincentian Service Corps West,

Christmas Season greetings of Christ's peace and joy to you, your loved ones, and those you lovingly serve!

I am excited to share that Sr. Margaret Louise Brown, D.C., Director of Social Justice and Environmental Advocacy for the province, has joined the VSCW as a part-time staffer in October. She brings to us her rich experiences in finance that she acquired prior to becoming a Daughter of Charity. She has been a Daughter of Charity for 16 years. She assists us two days a week with bookkeeping, office services and much more! Some of you have met her through her presentations to the VSCW members.



In the 2018 Summer Newsletter, Sr. Frances Vista, D.C., introduced me to you. We will get to know each other more fully in and through the reflections and sharing in the Newsletters. For now, here are a few more details about my journey: I am originally from Vietnam. When I was 10, three of my siblings, my brother-in-law and his sister, along with 24 other people and myself, escaped by boat to Malaysia in 1977. My siblings and I relocated to the U.S. in February of 1978. I have lived, attended schools, and served the majority of those years in Southern California. I have been a Daughter of Charity for 26 years.

Embracing the themes of hope, love, joy and peace of Advent, and "God-with-us" of Christmas, along with a deep trust in God's providence and guidance, I hope to continue learning and moving the mission of Vincentian West forward. All of you have been in my heart and prayers along this sacred journey – members of the Vincentian Family, founders of Vincentian Service Corps and Vincentian Service Corps West, past executive directors, staff, collaborators and VSCW alums. I am grateful for all of you, and I thank God for you and for the legacy you have passed on to us.

My heart was filled with gratitude for our VSCW alums as I watched the legacy video clips you created for recruiting future members. You have been with me as I searched for photos of alums and former VSCW staff to create the poster for the Golden Jubilee of Elizabeth Ann Seton Province. Thank you for the images you contributed. I hope to meet you soon in person or virtually to get to know you better and learn about your experiences. I thank God for your generosity, and for the lives you have touched in service and in community life, lives which you continue to impact even after leaving VSCW.

I am grateful for your continued relationship with VSCW, and for honoring the Vincentian charism in the service of Christ to the marginalized of society. Thank you for sharing the rich experiences of your year of service with other alums, and passing the mission of VSCW on to future members.

I deeply appreciate your sharing of yourselves, time and talents, reaching out to update

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WORDS OF
ST. ELIZABETH ANN SETON

"Never be hurried by anything whatsoever, and nothing can be more pressing than the necessity for your peace before God. You will help others more by the peace and tranquility of your heart than by any eagerness or care you can bestow upon them."

*Collected Writings
Vol. IIIb, 84.*

VSCW

2019 CALENDAR

JAN

21 Martin Luther King Jr. Day

FEB

03 Vincentian Feast Day, Blessed Giuseppina Nicole, D.C.

18 Vincentian Feast Day, St. Francis Regis Clet, C.M., Priest & Martyr

MAR

06 Ash Wednesday

08 International Women's Day

10 Daylight Savings begins at 2 a.m.

21 Religious Education Congress, Youth Day

22-24 Religious Education Congress, Adult Days

25 Feast of the Annunciation

APR

15 Palm Sunday

19 Good Friday

21 Easter

28 Divine Mercy Sunday

Having an epiphany at the Epiphany Center

By NICOLE ELIZABETH BEJANY '15 – '16

Halfway through my third year of medical school, I am often struck by the impact my year of service with VSCW had on my perspective. Prior to starting medical school, I envisioned myself getting a Master of Public Health along with my medical degree.



I wanted to work with underserved populations to increase access to quality food and low-cost exercise options. While I still plan to pursue my MPH, my time at the Epiphany Center reshaped the direction I plan to take my studies. Before working at Epiphany, I had not fully grasped the impact of trauma on mental health and the challenge of motivating behavioral change in individuals who had been living in survival-mode. I quickly learned how difficult it is to engage people in conversations around wellness when their brains are craving their next fix. I witnessed both the healing power of compassion and the limits of medical intervention. This showed me that the best health prevention I can provide to families is to work toward breaking the cycles of trauma that so many endure.

As I continue my public health and medical education, I hope to gain the knowledge to become a proponent of quality policy reform and acquire the skills to implement effective trauma-informed treatment models. I am passionate about providing support to adolescents with significant adverse childhood experiences in hopes of improving both their health and the health of their future children. In many ways, my vision is to gain the knowledge and skills to create programs with a similar model to Epiphany. As I pursue my MPH next year, the stories and faces of the women I met at Epiphany will be an ongoing reminder of the importance of supporting the most vulnerable in our society.

SR. TRANG, D.C. Continued from page 1

us with news of your life journey. Your prayers, availability to accompany others on their discernment to VSCW for a year of service, generous sharing of faith, spiritual life, time, talents, and personal resources strengthen the VSCW mission. It is through your generosity that others are afforded an opportunity to volunteer a year of service while celebrating life, deepening faith, and growing in charity in communal living.

Since September I have had the honor of meeting many of you, and shared in your stories of joy, challenges, friendships and spiritual growth during your year of service, as well as your hopes and dreams for VSCW and future members. Last December, we had the honor of welcoming Gino Altamura (2013-2014) to the VSCW Board of Directors. On January 4, the 50th Anniversary of our Province (now renamed Province of Elizabeth Ann Seton), I had the joy of spending time with Jessica Ramirez, Drake Manalo, and Tess Keller (2016-2017). Please continue to reach out to me via e-mail, phone calls, in person or virtually. I look forward to hearing and learning from you!

As we conclude the Christmas Season, let us unite in our search for Christ, the incarnate Word-made-flesh, to whom God is sending us to be his hope and his compassion for the world. May we begin each day of the new year with the words of St. Vincent in our hearts and minds: "Let us go then, my brothers [and sisters] and work with a new love in the service of the poor, looking even for the most destitute and abandoned among them. Let us recognize that before God they are our lords and masters and we are unworthy to render them our small services." (*Documents, vol. 11, p. 393*)

You will be remembered with gratitude and prayers at the Chapel of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal at our Mother House in Paris, as I attend an international session from January 13-25 on "The Joy of Being Vincentian."

With affection, gratitude, and prayers,
Sr. Trang Truong, D.C.

The Virtues of VSCW

By GINO ALTAMURA '13 – '14



“VSCW helped me develop my vocation. Without the lessons I learned from Kansas, Angela, Taylor, Hope and Tyler (not to mention the faculty and staff of De Marillac Academy) I wouldn't be the educator and husband I am now.”

“This feels a lot like my year of service.”

When I heard this three weeks into marriage, I got a little worried. So I asked my wife to explain.

“Well, we've moved into this new lifestyle together. We started out with this big commissioning ceremony; we even took a “retreat.” Now we're trying to build a home with someone new, and finding out there's a lot we didn't know about each other. And just like a volunteer year, it's all fun in the beginning, but we both know it's going to be hard work.”

Although we did different programs, my wife is right – my volunteer year prepared me so well for the rest of my life. Shared responsibilities, communal dinners, a sort of simplicity to each day. Best of all there's a sharing when we arrive home – a sharing of the heart, so we can process and find strength for the work we're called to do.

I doubt I'm alone in saying my time in VSCW prepared me well for my chosen vocation – but not in the way I thought. It's been five years since I started my time with VSCW and I've been reflecting lately on that year: favorite moments, challenges, and lessons. I've been blessed to stay connected, as a community support person and now a new board member. So in honor of this milestone, I wanted to share five virtues I learned from VSC that remain with me today:

Joy

When I think of VSCW, I see myself sitting atop the Pink Palace, reading and watching the sunset. Life isn't easy as a volunteer. And yet there were little moments of joy, like this one, if we only looked.

Presence

Since middle school I spent my life looking

forward, wondering what would come next. I sacrificed the present at the expense of planning the future. But when I put the planning on hold to engage in a year of service, I finally found myself content in what I had and where I was.

Indifference

This principle is essential in community life – giving up control. I really struggled not living on my schedule but on the community's schedule. Yet once I accepted that no person's time is more valuable than the community, I found a great freedom: I could say “yes” to more opportunities and be present to more activities because I wasn't worried about the next thing on my schedule or things I could be doing instead.

Simplicity

It's not just a pillar – and it's certainly more than buying the store brand. We take on less so we can do the more. Before VSCW I “committed” to dozens of things – but devoted myself to almost none of them. As a volunteer, I could only focus on one thing at a time and it felt amazing! I'm still learning this lesson: saying “no” in order to more fully say “yes.”

Discernment

Treating this year as a retreat, I found not the answers to all my life's questions, but paths along which to ask them. The “real world” leaves little time for discernment; I'm grateful VSCW gave me a chance to do so.

VSCW helped me develop my vocation. Without the lessons I learned from Kansas, Angela, Taylor, Hope and Tyler (not to mention the faculty and staff of De Marillac Academy) I wouldn't be the educator and husband I am now. So I thank them for their work, and I hope we can all take time to acknowledge the good VSCW has brought to our life. Whether it's a donation of time, testimony or treasure, VSCW needs us to pay it forward in some small way. Perhaps start with a simple act of loving service. Who can you love today?



alumni UPDATE

Rebba Omer

2010-2011

Hello, VSCW Family! I'm happy to share that I recently moved to Washington, DC for a two-year fellowship in juvenile defense at Georgetown. Serving people with criminal records at SVdP in Oakland lead me to a career advocating for children and adults accused of breaking the law. After leaving the Pink Palace, I moved to Chicago for law school and then spent 4 years in Knoxville, TN, where I was part of Gideon's Promise and a public defender. Now that I'm in DC, I would love to connect with any fellow alums who also live here!

Rebba Omer <rebba.omer@gmail.com>



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VINCENTIAN SERVICE CORPS WEST

A YEAR OF SERVICE MAKES A LIFETIME OF DIFFERENCE



HISTORY OF VINCENTIAN SERVICE CORPS (VSC) 1983-2001 & VINCENTIAN SERVICE CORPS WEST (VSCW) 2001-PRESENT



In 1983 the Vincentian Service Corps was begun by the Congregation of the Mission in New York City, and similar groups are now sponsored by the Daughters of Charity and other Provinces of the Vincentian Priests. In 2001, the Daughters of Charity, Province of the West formed the VSCW to serve northern and southern California.



The MISSION of Vincentian Service Corps West offers lay women and men an opportunity to give one year of service, to live in community with other VSCW members, and to experience a simple lifestyle. While working directly with those living in poverty, members are called, in the spirit of the Gospel and in the tradition of St. Vincent de Paul, St. Louise de Marillac and St. Elizabeth Ann Seton to celebrate life, deepen faith, work for justice, and grow in charity.

