



Volunteer Ministries

UCC Young Adult Service Communities (UCC YASC) Year-Long and Summer Communities of Service

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- Live in Conscientious Community
- Hands-On Justice Advocacy and Direct Service
- Leadership Development in a Congregational Setting
- Faith Conversations Related to Service & Spirituality

More Information and Application On-Line:

APPLY NOW

Summer Openings Still Available (Ages 19-30)

<http://www.ucc.org/volunteer/YASC3.html>

Year-Long YASC Positions Will Begin Filling with Applications received by March 15 (Ages 21-30)

<http://www.ucc.org/volunteer/companion-communities-2.html>

Questions:

Contact Mary Schaller Blaufuss, Executive for Volunteer Ministries
216-736-3214; blaufusm@ucc.org

Housing, health insurance and small stipend provided.

Participation in the September - August YASC may qualify volunteer for a part-time AmeriCorps Education Grant and student loan deferment.



Young Adult Service Communities (UCC YASC) Mid-Year Gathering

Members of
BeatiCorps of Church of the Beatitudes UCC, Phoenix, AZ and of
YASC of the Good Shepherd UCC, Sahuarita, AZ
February 3-6, 2011

Volunteers from the two new Young Adult Service Communities (YASC) host churches met for their mid-year gathering in Tucson, AZ. The Good Shepherd UCC, Sahuarita, AZ and Church of the Beatitudes, Phoenix, AZ join the Westmoreland UCC, Bethesda, MD in hosting year-long volunteer communities. This growing network of host churches is making it possible for young adults to serve in UCC settings engaged in direct service and justice advocacy, participating in leadership development in a congregational setting, living in conscientious community with one another, and reflecting together on questions of service and spirituality.

The theme of the gathering "Revealing Vocation: Finding God's Story in Our Lives" shaped the time together. These are eight amazing young women, serving God in the church and world.



Cathy Sims, Brittany Stricklen,
Jessica Lambertson, Melanie Fox
The Good Shepherd UCC
Sahuarita, AZ
2010-2011



Elizabeth Stirbens, Elizabeth Analla,
Tina Phillips, Charu Vijayakumar
BeatiCorps of
Church of the Beatitudes UCC
Phoenix, AZ
2010-2011



ALONG THE WAY... NEWS FROM VOLUNTEERS

New Orleans Mission Trip
February 14 -18, 2011
St. Luke's UCC, Ottsville, PA

Excerpts from daily reflections by the group's crew chief, Neil Jesiolowski.

OUR FIRST DAY OF WORK

Our group was assigned a house in the upper ninth ward, northeast of downtown New Orleans. The home owner was living in the home, along with her son and grandson. This woman was scammed by contractors; taking all her savings when she tried to have her home fixed after the flooding. In addition to that, in the past twelve years she lost a son, husband, another son and her sister. Mary was her name and she cried and praised God upon our arrival. It felt really good to be there and it was all we had hoped for the previous night in our nightly devotionals at St. Paul's Church. We reflected on what to expect and what would be the ideal and most rewarding situation to be involved. That situation would be to work closely with a home owner, fixing their home and having direct interaction and impact on that person's life.

READ MORE ... www.ucc.org/volunteer/volunteer-stories/2011-new-orleans-mission-trip.html

LAST DAY OF WORK

It was a gift giving day. We arrived at Mary's house right on time. Everyone seemed to leap from the van and excited for many reasons. The last day of hard work, projects close to being done and gifts of love for Mary. We wanted to give the flowers and light bulbs to Mary right away. Mary wept, as did most of us. Then everyone gathered themselves and off to work.

Kitchen cabinets were polyurethane and they were reinstalled in her kitchen. The wall cabinets were installed much lower this time. Mary really appreciated that. The kitchen looked amazing! The last doors to her rooms were installed and a crew was right behind the installers painting them with a glossy white paint to make Mary's home even brighter. The sunroom ceiling was trimmed and painted. It looked like a room now.

Read more stories of volunteer experiences and reflections at www.ucc.org/volunteer under "Resources."

The last task was to plant the flowers for Mary. We purchased large concrete planters and as they were planted we set them around the outside of the home. Mary seemed giddy over them. Tim, our construction manager, praised our team's work. He seemed fulfilled by what we accomplished in just five days. You couldn't wipe the smile from his face. Now, one more surprise for Mary.

On the first day, when we pulled up in front of Mary's home, you couldn't help but notice three old, crumbling cinder blocks arranged in a manner to support an old wooden plank to form a makeshift bench. Mary would sit on this bench every day praising God and constantly thanking us as she observed us working on her home. We knew this was an important place for her. A place she would use often to reflect and pray. We had to do something about that place. We purchased a stone bench and on the bottom of the bench each team member wrote Mary a blessing. These blessings were to remind her: not who we were or what we did, but how much we were touched by her strength and faith in God. We may have done a lot for her but ... she did more for us as Christians and human beings. There wasn't a dry eye in front of her house that day. Mary was overwhelmed with joy and; typical of Mary, she praised God. As we continued to cry, the mood changed to smatterings of laughter as someone shouted, "*There's no crying in construction*".

In the end we loaded up our van, said our final good-byes to Mary and started to drive away. As we pulled away from Mary's home, there were mixed emotions. Joy and sorrow, a sense of fulfillment and a sense of emptiness. But most definitely there was an everlasting image of Mary. She was sitting on her new bench, still weeping. She was shaking her head and gazing skyward, praising God. This was an image and a trip that, I think, anyone involved will never forget. Thanks be to God for leading us down this path and allowing us to do his work for Mary's sake ... and ours.

LET'S GO HOME!

Neil and his group served through the South Central Conference UCC Disaster Ministries Program in New Orleans.

UCC Volunteer Ministries was seeking a creative way to communicate the many opportunities for service through the United Church of Christ. Richard and Maxwell Brooke and their Twin Maps project provided this possibility.

Join Richard and Maxwell at the midway point of their journey as they spend a year in volunteer service across the United Church of Christ. Share their experiences and their enthusiasm for mission.



TwinMaps Philosophy (From About us)

People live in this world to change it. The generous citizens of the world help the needy, give comfort to the downtrodden, and offer aid to the mistreated. We offer their stories as a testament to the kindness that flourishes in this world. We believe that with hard work, flexibility, and a little luck, you can change someone's life.

Mission Statement: It is our duty to highlight and promote the good deeds of the people we meet. We travel around the country to film and document volunteers as they fulfill their desires to help others. We will highlight any type of aid, whether it be shelter to the homeless, advice to the afflicted, or peace to the troubled. Their stories will be shared through our visions and travels.

Follow Twin Maps.com You'll see this philosophy and mission statement embodied. You'll see videos of partner host sites of UCC Volunteer Ministries and meet people who serve there. You'll reflect and ask questions and have new insights, along with Richard and Maxwell, during their experiences of God in the world. **Join the conversation on their blog.**

**Partners in Service Long-Term Volunteers Mid-Year Gathering
Slumber Falls Camp and Conference Center, New Braunfels, TX
February 9-13, 2011**



Rev. Dan Moser, Pennsylvania Southeast Conference, led the group in reflections and exercises of Sabbath



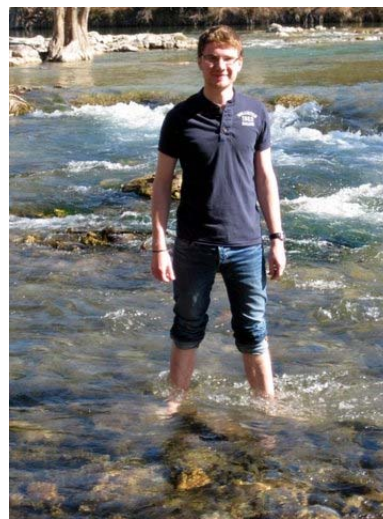
Making Connections for Life



Eating



Reflecting on Motivations for Service. It's like fitting together lots of puzzle pieces.



Playing ~ Wadim Baslow serving at the Religious Coalition in Frederick, MD braves the cold river



Sharing Stories of our service experiences
Joseph Rwanyindo and Hanna Weinsheimer tell stories of Camp Courageous in Iowa



Sharing our Stories of Life
Dale Bonds serving with Disaster Recovery in New Orleans and Ed Finertie finishing service with Humane Borders in Tucson, AZ.

Dan Sather, pastor of St. Paul UCC, Evansville, IL served as a UCC Partners in Service volunteer during his sabbatical (May 2010). "The Open Window" are some of his reflections.

An estimated 20,000 homeless men and women sleep on the streets at night in Atlanta, Georgia. Open Door Community, founded in 1981 in partnership with the Presbytery of Greater Atlanta, draws inspiration and guidance from the Catholic Worker Movement of Dorothy Day, Jubilee Partners of Comer, GA, and the Koinonia Community model of the 1960s. Resident volunteers live at Open Door Community and serve the homeless everyday and it was in this capacity that I wrote my reflection, entitled, *The Open Window*. Every morning the homeless men and women would gather below my open window and would wait for the restrooms to be opened. In their waiting, conversations and stories were shared that I over-heard from our friends beneath my window.

The Open Window

I awoke to the sound of voices early this morning. They were coming from the yard below, an early morning sanctuary for the night traveler, tired from his long and lonely walk. Amid the noise of the early morning traffic along the street outside my window, there are spirited conversations below. At times they are quiet and thoughtful and other times loud and rather boisterous for a sleeping neighborhood. The water from the hose is turned on and splashes down the dusty driveway. Some were brushing their teeth while others splashed the cool water on their faces to wash away the slumber from their tired, red eyes. Occasionally a waft of stale cigar smoke or used puff from cigarettes would drift through my open window, an opium for a hard life on the streets of Atlanta. The public bathrooms are two floors beneath me and the slam of the door reminds me that our friends with their loud and boisterous voices are human just like me and this morning they can find relief in the public bathrooms open to our friends along a street called Ponce de Leon Avenue.

Our friends spend the night moving from one public place to another as police officers patrol the public places looking for anyone who is littering public space with their bodies or their belongings that may consist of a change of clothes in a plastic bag or a backpack with a few nibbles of food and the rest of their earthly belongings. They're trying to rest, but find no place to lay their head.

The public bathrooms in Atlanta close at 7 p.m. each night and remain locked until 7 a.m. the next morning. Not only is there no quiet place to rest for the night, neither is there a private place to answer nature's call. Our homeless friends are used to being harassed, humiliated, belittled, and scorned for it happens everyday. Will someone make room for our friends? Will someone offer a warm embrace, a kind word, or a sanctuary of peace in a hostile world? I wonder.

Our friends are not alone. Yes there are many on the streets of Atlanta, but that is not what I mean. I know a friend who was born in a shelter -- the only place open for a homeless couple. By the time he was 12 years old, he had been a child refugee on the run in a land he did not know. My friend reminds me that each night he looks for a place to lay his head, for he has no place to call his home. In addition, my friend is a despised criminal and there are many who want him killed. My friend is homeless too and seeks a sanctuary where he can brush his teeth and answer nature's call. "Our friends are not alone. Yes there are many on the streets of Atlanta, but that is not what I mean. From my faith I know a friend, Jesus who was born in a shelter — the only place open for a homeless couple."



Partner Organizations of UCC Volunteer Ministries



PRISONER VISITATION AND SUPPORT

(PVS) is a volunteer visitation program to Federal and Military prisoners throughout the United States.

Our primary focus is on those prisoners who:

- do not ordinarily receive visits from family and friends,
- want or need supportive human contact,
- are in solitary confinement or on death row, or
- are serving long sentences.

We offer friendship and a listening ear to help prisoners prepare to assume a useful place in society.

<http://www.prisonervisitation.org>

Reflections from Rabbi Michael Lerner, Tikkum Magazine (Network of Spiritual Progressives)

It's a mitzvah we are all asked to do – visit those in prison. [PVS](#) (Prisoner Visitation Services) has been at work, sending visitors to prisons since 1968.

I was imprisoned in 1970 as one of the "Seattle Seven" for organizing against the Vietnam War. During my time in prison, I was scared, lonely and cut off from all sources of support.

Being exposed to the deep suffering of others throughout my life has helped to ground my belief that love and caring is the bottom line that will counteract the hatred and alienation that is so prevalent, and that many small acts of sharing are needed to turn this world into the place it is meant to be.

Many federal prisoners live thousands of miles from their families, forgotten by the world, aching for a little bit of non-judgmental attention. PVS sends volunteer visitors to Federal and Military prisons throughout the US. Every month, 300 visitors travel many miles at their own expense to bring some light into a desolate place. Many of these are men and women who have been visiting ten years or longer, and have created their own support groups for newer visitors. They don't lay religious trips on prisoners, but come only to listen and lend emotional support.

PVS has been commended for its work by the Federal Bureau of Prisons and is the only organization authorized to visit all federal and military prisons. PVS visitors are often the only face to face connection prisoners have with the outside world. They help prisoners maintain a sense of self-esteem and encourage their efforts at self-growth so they can be reintegrated into society.

PVS stretches a lean budget to the maximum, using funds for outreach and for training volunteers at workshops across the country, often covering their airfare and expenses. With new prisons continually being built, the need for visitors keeps growing, and funding needs grow along with it.

New & Returning 'Partners in Service' Volunteers 2011

Kim Cartwright, CT at Manual School, Albuquerque, NM

Pat Cartwright, CT at Manual School, Albuquerque, NM

Billi Charron, AL at Old First Reformed UCC, Philadelphia, PA

Marilyn DeTizio, VT at Back Bay Mission, Biloxi, MS

Patricia Eddings, WI at Manual School, Albuquerque, NM

Ed Finertie, NE at CrossKeys Village, New Oxford, PA

Marjorie Flowers, IL at South Central Conference Disaster Ministries, New Orleans, LA

Marcie Magness, PA at South Central Conference Disaster Recovery, New Orleans, LA

Ken Nelson, IL at Back Bay Mission, Biloxi, MS

William Oglesby, AZ at JOIN, Portland, OR

Jennifer Rowles, OH at Back Bay Mission, Biloxi, MS

Tim Rowles, OH at Back Bay Mission, Biloxi, MS

Bill Ruth, TN at Slumber Falls Camp and Retreat Center, New Braunfels, TX

Mary Ruth, TN at Slumber Falls Camp and Retreat Center, New Braunfels, TX

Bette Mae Sheer, OH at Abernethy Laurels Retirement Home, Newton, NC

Shae Skye, U.S. Virgin Islands at Koinonia Farms, Americus, GA

Pam Small, IN at Disaster Recovery, Nashville, TN



Planning a disaster recovery mission trip? T-Shirt available to help identify your group and build awareness. Order from United Church of Christ Resources 1-800-537-3394 or www.ucc.org under "Buy it"
Cost of T-shirt: \$7.00 + Shipping & Handling.

UCC VOLUNTEER

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For over 50 years, Volunteer Ministries has provided opportunities for people to share their gifts of service and witness to others. Through the act of foot washing, Jesus makes clear God's call to serve others. We are invited to ministries of service that reflect God's love by responding to the needs of the world and involving ourselves in efforts to challenge injustices. The logo of the towel and basin remind us of God's call to serve.



New Postings on the website!
<http://www.ucc.org/volunteer>

*YOUNG ADULT SERVICE COMMUNITIES (YASC)
SUMMER COMMUNITIES OF SERVICE
PARTNERS IN SERVICE VOLUNTEERS
MISSION TRIPS
SERVICE DAYS*