## PURPOSE OF THE IVC SURVEY

"We sought to discover and assess how the spiritual parts of the IVC program affects Ignatian Volunteers. These findings will help us more effectively recruit men and women committed to service, retain current volunteers, and contribute to growth in the field of senior volunteer service."

Suzanne Geaney IVC Executive Director



# The Impact of Service on Spirituality: A Survey of the Ignatian Volunteer Corps

## Rating the Experience of the Ignatian Volunteer Corps in Meeting Today's Social Challenges

The Ignatian Volunteer Corps (IVC) was founded to address two social challenges. The first, how to harness the dynamic leadership of the 'third generation,' men and women 50 years and older who bring a lifetime of experience, energy, and wisdom into retirement or new careers and are seeking a way to serve their community.

The second social challenge was, and is, the ever-increasing needs of the poor, vulnerable, and marginalized individuals of our society, as well as those of the community organizations that serve them.

The results of a national survey of Ignatian Volunteers, conducted by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA), gives insights into IVC's success in meeting these challenges.

The majority of respondents (nearly 90%) rated their overall IVC experience positively,



including nearly half who describe it as 'excellent.'

Survey respondents affirmed the value of the IVC program in helping Volunteers spend their retirement in fulfilling ways, deepen their spirituality, and increase their social awareness.

- 93% of Ignatian
   Volunteers feel they are spending retirement in a fulfilling way;
- 89% feel they are making a difference in peoples' lives;
- 86% are using skills that they had before joining IVC to help others;

- 86% are learning more about problems of poverty and other social issues:
- 82% say IVC helped them recognize social injustice and use their spiritual beliefs to form opinions about social problems; and
- 79% have come to know individuals on a personal basis who are economically poor or needy.

In serving urban communities across the country, IVC strives to recruit and retain experienced men and women committed to service, and provides programs to support the Volunteers in their work. Ignatian Volunteers past and present rated highly the helpfulness of the IVC staff, the retreats, days of prayer, and program orientations, and their weekly community service experiences.

The IVC survey was funded by the Carnegie Corporation of New York.

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#### **Experience and Faith**

75% of respondents reported having participated in IVC for two or more years. Ignatian Volunteers are prized by nonprofit organizations for their consistency, competency, and caring assistance.

Organizations with increasingly limited financial and human resources commend Ignatian Volunteers for their sound judgment, know-how and dedicated efforts.

When joining IVC, most Volunteers (78%) cite improving the lives of people in need as their chief goal.

When Volunteers were asked to compare what was most important to them initially and what is most important now, the greatest area of growth

(15 percentage points) was in how they view their faith in a different way.

78% of respondents said their awareness of God's presence in their lives increased "somewhat" or "greatly."

82% said the IVC experience provided an opportunity to put their faith into practice. The importance of serving others remained consistent (78%) throughout the volunteer experience.



Photo by Steve Donisch Courtesy of Chicago Province of the Society of Jesus

### Describing Ignatian Volunteers

- Ignatian Volunteers differ from the profile of most senior volunteer programs in that half of the respondents are men and half are women (also indicative of each year's volunteer profile).
- The majority of volunteers, 88%, have a college degree, with 59%, completing postgraduate education. 10% attended college but did not receive a degree and 2% did not attend college.
- The average age of volunteers is 68 – with a range of 50 to 84. About 80% of the respondents are currently retired. The remaining 15% are still work part-time and 4% report working fulltime.

#### The Spiritual Support Program of IVC

The spiritual underpinning of IVC is Ignatian Spirituality, named for St. Ignatius of Loyola, founder of the Society of Jesus (Jesuits).

This spirituality is deeply rooted in being aware of what is happening in one's daily life, of finding God in all things. Ignatius understood that God is an active God. ever at work in one's life.

IVC's Spiritual Support program is designed to encourage spiritual reflection on three levels:

- Private reflecting on service experiences through journaling and prayer.
- <u>Individual</u> meeting monthly with a spiritual reflector, someone versed in Ignatian Spirituality who helps uncover the deeper meaning within one's service. experience.
- <u>Communal</u> sharing with other local volunteers monthly through prayer, reflecting on service experiences and discussing common reading materials. Two or three times a year IVC provides retreats or days of prayer.

Respondents say that the IVC experience has helped them to see God in their everyday lives and activities. More than 75% report an increased awareness of God's active presence in their lives.

Respondents also indicate that spiritual reflection has helped them to find spiritual meaning in their volunteer work, be aware of God's presence, and see God in the people they serve.



#### **Connections with the Jesuits**

From IVC's earliest days in the mid 1990's until now, IVC has relied on the help of individual Jesuits, Jesuit Communities, and Jesuit Provinces to assist in growing and sustaining the organization. IVC was founded by two lesuits, lim Conroy and Charlie Costello.

Overall, 51% of survey respondents noted past and current connections with the Society of Jesus.

About one-third of respondents attended a Jesuit college or university. 22% are or were members of a Jesuit parish. More than a quarter (27%) of the men

in IVC went to Jesuit high schools.

Finally, among the 60% with post-graduate degrees, 71% of those attended a lesuit college or university.

### Survey Design

In September 2006, surveys were mailed to 426 current and former Ignatian Volunteers, each with an optional survey for the volunteer's spouse.

A separate survey was mailed to 126 spiritual reflectors, persons trained in Ignatian spirituality who meet monthly with volunteers, one-on-one, to savor the meaning in their service experience.

The response rate was 54% among current and former

Ignatian Volunteers, 23% for spouses, and 46% for spiritual reflectors.

60% of respondents were currently active in IVC and

40% were alumni/ae of IVC.





#### **Ignatian Volunteer Corps**

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Fax: 410.752.8480 E-mail: ivc@ivcusa.org Web: www.ivcusa.org Founded in 1995, the Ignatian Volunteer
Corps provides men and women, age 50 and
better, with opportunities to put their faith
into action through meaningful volunteer and
community service work supported by
spiritual growth.

IVC commissioned the survey by CARA
(Center for Applied Research in the
Apostolate), based in Georgetown University.

The IVC survey was made possible by a grant from the Carnegie Corporation of New York. The statements made and views expressed are solely the responsibility of the Ignatian Volunteer Corps.

#### The Ignatian Volunteer Corps

The Ignatian Volunteer Corps is a national community service organization of volunteers and for volunteers, affiliated with the Society of Jesus. Ignatian Volunteers, men and women age 50 and over, come together for the opportunity to help serve the needs of people who are poor; to work for a more just society; and to grow in faith through prayer and reflection in the Ignatian tradition.

In 2006-07, 258 Ignatian Volunteers served in 218 community organizations in twelve metropolitan areas: Baltimore, Chicago, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Detroit, Los Angeles, Minneapolis/St. Paul, New York City/New Jersey, Philadelphia, St. Louis, San Diego, and Washington DC/ Northern Virginia.



Photo by Sean Masterson Courtesy of California Province of the Society of Jesus

Ignatian Volunteers pledge two days per week of service for ten months a year. They work in a variety of settings among children, adults, and families who are in need, including schools, adult education, shelters, food banks and kitchens, social service programs, prisons, healthcare centers, and immigrant programs.

Ignatian Volunteers take the Ignatian ideal of 'faith in action' seriously. They seek to share their experience and skills in a compassionate and dedicated manner, building relationships and trust with those they serve.