# Ignatian Volunteer Corps

Love in Deeds of Service



Summer 2006 Vol. VIII, No. 2

### Why Am I Here?

Duffy Laws, IVC Baltimore Duffy Laws is a volunteer at Project PLASE in Baltimore.

Shortly after Ι began working at the shelter I found myself asked by client, "Why a are you here?" I noticed clients watching me in the kitchen and taking note of when I arrived and when I left. Since I was not sure why I showed up at the shelter, I side-stepped the question.



Duffy Laws working in the garden at Project PLASE (photo by Tobi Morris)

As I reflect upon my experience over

the course of this year, I think I have the beginnings of understanding "why I am here." I go to be. To be present to the lost, the forgotten, the lonely, the sick, the rejected, the hated the despised; those who, like all of us, are loved and cared for by Christ. Even in my human imperfections, my presence to be among them says "I care."

I care because you are. Because you are, you are deserving of dignity, compassion, friendship, respect. Because you are, you teach me to let go, look beyond the surface, open myself and surrender my control. A simple walk to the store, pot of coffee, or moment shared on the stoop can be graced through openness without judgment, Project PLASE staff in May 2006. Normally, the Caught in the Act Award is presented to employees. Duffy's dedication, compassion and commitment were so impressive, that for the first time, the award was given to a volunteer. Teresa Walker, Human Services Administrator for Project PLASE, says, "Duffy goes above and beyond to help the residents. She volunteers at the co-ed facility twice a week. She prepares meals and, at her expense, buys fruits and vegetables. She schedules outside events and activities. She started a weekly knitting class, and helps in the garden. Duffy is a valuable asset. We are very fortunate to have her."

genuine interest without motive, acceptance without condition. Every human being longs for the same things: respect, safety, love.

We are all vulnerable. We are all unlovable and unloving. We all need others. We all have much to learn from each other.

Duffy received the "Caught in the Act" Award from the

#### **IVC** Mission

The Ignatian Volunteer Corps (IVC) provides men and women age 50 and over the opportunity to serve the needs of people who are poor, to work for a more just society, and to grow deeper in Christian faith by reflecting and praying in the Ignatian tradition.

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### **Reflection on Spiritual Reflection**

When I joined the Ignatian Volunteer Corps (IVC) staff three years ago I decided to memorize our mission statement. I discovered it to be one long sentence, and not usually the best way to introduce someone to IVC. I had to come up with another set of words for my 30-second speech.

What I say *now* begins like this, "We in the Ignatian Volunteer Corps believe that your most important work may begin *after* you retire." Then I tell the person that IVC has many wonderful nonprofit partners, providing



vital services and programs with the assistance of our generous, talented and committed volunteers. I conclude: "IVC's unique element is its spiritual reflection program that helps volunteers find God in their service."

Even if I recited IVC's mission statement, I would still end up at the same place: the element of **spiritual reflection**. In this issue of the newsletter, volunteers and others consider their own discoveries through spiritual reflection.

Our co-founder, Fr. Charlie Costello, often quoted from a T.S. Eliot poem: "We had the experience but missed the meaning." Fr. Charlie and Fr. Jim Conroy created a Christian program hinged on reflection on experience, in the light of Scripture. IVC has an *incarnational* vision. We believe God is active and involved in all reality – family, friends, nature, events of the day and fears of the night.

We ask Ignatian Volunteers for openness and commitment to experiencing and reflecting on God's grace in everyday life as the volunteers share their wisdom and talents.

Conventional thinking says that as we become older, we become more rigid and stuck in our patterns. That is the exact opposite of what I see in IVC. I hear IVC's many partner nonprofits who delight in the flexibility and adaptability of Ignatian Volunteers. I see the commitment of Ignatian Volunteers to serve people, their new friends, who live with the pain and desolation of poverty, addiction, violence, homelessness and more.

Just like the nonprofits who partner with IVC, Ignatian Volunteers live out their faith through service and with hope, experiencing greater understanding and gratitude for their part in God's work in our world.

Sincerely,

Suzanne Geaney

### Joseph's Home Ministry

Dennis M. Grapo, IVC Cleveland

Joseph's Home is a transitional housing facility for recuperating homeless men. While recovering from a wide variety of illnesses and/ or injuries, residents also learn to perform what most of us would consider to be the normal activities of everyday life. The goal is to help these men move to a state of self-sufficiency, i.e., employment and independent living. Educational activities selfwhich foster self-starting esteem, goals, life skills, and ongoing recovery are



Dennis Grapo

all part of the process which prepares residents for selfsufficiency.

The concept for such a facility was originated by the Sisters of Charity of St. Augustine. Long active in health care services, the Sisters noted the need for a place where men who were homeless and/or unemployed could recover from illnesses or injuries in a safe and positive environment. There was no such place in Cleveland prior to early 2000, when Joseph's Home opened for business. Nearly 200 men, who otherwise would have faced serious health problems and homelessness alone, have since passed through its programs. The Sisters of Charity of St. Augustine are ably assisted by a professional staff and volunteers. Residents have assigned housekeeping duties and assist in the operation.

The problem of homelessness is obviously a serious one in our society. Those who are healthy and homeless have difficult lives. Those who are sick face overwhelming or virtually impossible struggles. The opportunity for me to help serve these men is an opportunity to relate to at least one very important mission of the church on earth; that is, to serve the poor as a response to God's love.

It is in ministering to the poorest of the poor that the church learns its own heart and carries out an important facet of its earthly mission. I feel I can also better know my own inner self, and grow spiritually by serving men who are poor.

The connection is clear – "Whatsoever you do for the least of my brethren..." While it is true that the church must know all people, those who are poor "truly reveal to the church its very heart and mission and the importance of every human life." (Fr. Gary Smith, SJ)

My duties at Joseph's Home are wide-ranging. I have set up and cleaned up at mealtimes, cleaned the store room, sorted donated clothing, and shopped for groceries. I have also advised residents on simple financial matters, driven residents to medical appointments, and helped generate and organize admission and post-discharge documentation for residents. I even learned to operate the copier and the postage meter!

At the same time, I have been amazed to observe the dedication and hard work of the Sisters and other professional staff, and the equally awesome positive response of most residents to the love and dedication these individuals contribute on an ongoing basis.

### An Outpouring Of Love

#### Selette Pearce, IVC Washington DC/Northern Virginia

Selette writes, "When I was think about this scene, it reminds me of the scripture concerning the poor widow who offered her few coins."

There is a client at New Endeavors for Women (NEW), where I volunteer, that I have become very fond of. She has been there about 18 months and will be leaving soon. When she was on the street, she was a drug dealer/user and the mother of 14 children (including two sets of twins), all by the same man, and no doubt a tough one to cross.

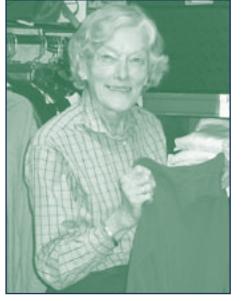
She came to NEW from Allenwood Prison after serving time for dealing drugs, and has cleaned up her act

considerably. She likes to sing, and is a big cheerleader for other clients' successes and gets after those whom she feels are backsliding.

When she arrived at NEW, she was blind in one eye and had very limited vision in the other. Many years ago she had eye surgery to implant a lens after cataract removal and no doubt did not take care of her eyes after the surgery. I suspect the initial medical procedure itself was not well done. About four months ago, Howard Hospital removed the non-seeing eye and had an artificial one made. She had the other eye repaired with a new lens implanted.

Because NEW is not set up for post-op medical care, she went to Christ House for recovery. Christ House is a drop in place for men who are homeless. They also have a ward for post-op care for people discharged from the hospital who are homeless and should not return to the street.

I went over there to see her three times and was very impressed with the care she received. She is a very positive woman, has a good heart, and probably the



Selette Pearce at work in the NEW Clothing Closet (photo by Dick Bowling)

most generous spirit of anyone I know. Very quickly, she was liked by the men and the staff.

When she was discharged and moving back to NEW, the men at Christ House gave her a large picture of the printed words of "Amazing Grace."

These men had pooled their little bits of money to buy this gift, and they told her how they would never forget her and how much she had meant to the place; some of the men cried. I was so impressed by this outpouring of love.

### Symphony

Pamela Hoover, IVC San Diego

Hawks soar in your majesty.

- Leaves tremble with love as you breathe life into planet earth's soul.
- The sun's shadows dance with joy and birds call and sing your triumph.
- Crickets and cicadas strum the rhythm to your masterpiece of choral arrangement.
- All my senses are enthralled in awe of your divine direction and my place within your symphony.

Opus is never finished.

- Notes and chords are added to swell the chorus crescendoing and falling in God's life concert.
- We listen and are transformed.
- We become your instruments.

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We are honored to be able to recognize the individuals and organizations whose generous financial support helps to provide IVC members opportunities to serve the needs of the poor, to work for a more just society, and to grow deeper in Christian faith by reflecting and praying in the Ignatian tradition. *Listed alphabetically. List represents gifts received between July 1, 2005 and June 30, 2006.* 

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Do what you can and then pray that God will give you the power to do what you cannot.

- St. Augustine

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We would be happy to talk with you or your financial planner about opportunities to make a lifetime gift to IVC through a bequest, life insurance, retirement funds, or other assets that best serves your interests.



For more information, contact Tamara Zavislan, IVC Director of Development, 888-831-4686 or tzavislan@ilvc.org.

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Fr. Wayne Negrete, SJ (Spiritual Reflector, IVC Los Angeles), pauses during a retreat

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How good it is to center down! To sit quietly and see one's self pass by! The streets of our minds see the with endless traffic; our spirits resound with clashings, with noisy silences, while something deep within hungers and thirsts for the still moment and the resting lull.

- Howard Thurman

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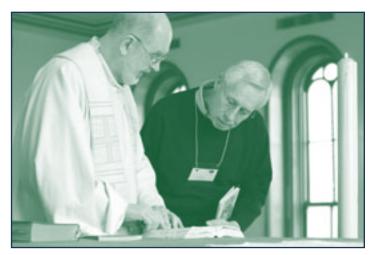
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**Rev. Robert Haskins, SJ** Mr. & Mrs. Michael Guerra

**Charles Herald** Mrs. Elizabeth F. Herald

William J. Higgins, best buddy Mr. Tom Cotter

Irene Johnson Mr. & Mrs. Richard J. Evans

All deceased Jesuits & my family Philip L. Meddleton

Frank Keevers Mr. & Mrs. David P. Durbin David J. Walsh

Louis B. Kines, SJ, Edmund Anabell, SJ, & Joseph Fortescue, SJ William J. Ray, Sr.

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### A Journey of Blessings

Pam Lucey, IVC Washington DC/Northern Virginia

#### Pam is a member of the IVC Board of Directors and the Regional Advisory Council for Washington DC/Northern Virginia

Looking back over my adult years, I realize how very blessed I have been when it has come to those important life decisions that set you on a certain path: where to go to college, what to major in, what career path to follow, where to live, whether or not to marry and if so, whom – all the big questions.

For each major life decision, there has of course been a general questioning of the "I-wonderwhat-God-has-in-store-for-meand-will-I-be-up-to-it variety;

but there has been no great soul-searching and anxious weighing of alternatives. Rather, in every case, some person has entered my life at exactly the right moment and engaged me in a conversation, resulting in a feeling deep inside that what that person was telling me or asking me to do was right, exactly where God wanted me to be.

The feeling was always so strong that I could simply let go and go with the flow. A conversation with my pastor back home in Rhode Island just before I finally had to decide on a major (at that point I had declared five different ones) led me to ultimately choose Biology and teaching. A close friend asking me to move down to DC, giving up my teaching position of 5 years with no job to go to, led me here. A man I had known for twenty-one days asking me to marry him and live in Liberia while he directed the Peace Corps began a marriage now in its 30th year. Each time there was a feeling of "OK, Lord, here we go again!"

And last year, it happened once more just as I was contemplating, as the Jesuits would say, "the Magis." What more did I need to be doing to help build God's kingdom? Should I be volunteering with some group that directly serves the poor? What about that group of retired volunteers started by Frs. Costello and Conroy? And then Fran Butler called as she was finishing up her



Pam Lucey

term on IVC's Board. "Would you consider becoming a board member?" she asked. At first I thought no, I need to be in the trenches and then in an instant that same strong feeling was immediately evident and, without hesitation, I said, "Yes!"

And so began my first year on the IVC Board of Directors. In the course of this past year I have met so many wonderfully dedicated people. Some I already knew, like our Executive Director, Suzanne Geaney and my new fellow board members, Kitty Higgins, Chuck Krambuhl, and Paul McElligott. Others, like our Director of Development, Tami Zavislan;

Regional Director, Jim Kelley; and the rest of the National Board and Regional Advisory Council were friends I just hadn't met yet. All of them are very special blessings for IVC and also in my life. Through them and all the amazing volunteers in each of the agencies, I have been able to be a small part of enabling this great work for God.

So what do I make of the path my life has taken? Underneath there has been a basic desire to do God's will and I think the thread that has woven its way throughout is something central to Ignatian spirituality: God is intimately involved in our lives and if we can, like Mary, say "Yes!" when a door opens, it will be obvious to us that we were meant to walk through it by the feeling of consolation and peace we feel. Then we just have to go with it and enjoy the journey. May God continue to bless IVC!

The more faithfully you listen to the voice within you, the better you will hear what is sounding outside. And only the one who listens can speak.

- Dag Kammarskjold

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