



Everyday Evangelists Ignatian Volunteer Corps Ignatian Volunteers put Gospel values into practice

March 1, 2013 @ 9:49 am

By Patricia McGeever For The Catholic Telegraph

As social service agencies and nonprofits struggle to meet the needs of a growing number of people, one national organization with a local footprint is looking for more volunteers to serve them. The Ignatian Volunteer Corps (IVC) has 12 volunteers locally who incorporate the values of the Gospel into all their works. Ignatian Volunteers are all over age 50, have a strong commitment to their faith and adhere to the principle of “finding God in all things.”

“Most volunteer opportunities are all about nurturing the people that you serve,” says Linda Wihl, regional director of Ignatian Volunteer Corps Cincinnati. “IVC provides nurturing for those who serve.”

That nurturing offers the opportunity for spiritual development in the Ignatian way. Volunteers meet monthly to share their experiences with each other. They read and discuss spiritual books. There is an opportunity to meet with a spiritual reflector each month plus attend semi-annual retreats. IVC works to place each volunteer with a ministry that matches his or her interests and abilities. Currently, volunteers work at agencies that tutor students, assist refugees, provide food, clothing and housing for the poor. IVC is also exploring volunteer opportunities for someone who wants to work with veterans.

Sue Lennert is an Ignatian Volunteer who has been working at Churches Active in Northside (CAIN) twice a week for three years. CAIN is a choice pantry that provides food, clothing and other items to those who need them. Lennert said it’s been a humbling and eye-opening experience for her.

“In my normal life, everybody I know is somebody just like me. So here, it’s wonderful to see what’s really going on in the world.”

When someone visits CAIN, Lennert is one of the people who registers them and helps guide them through the process. “The reason I always wanted to do volunteer work is because I know I’ve been very blessed,” she said.

When CAIN’s Executive Director MiMi Chamberlain heard about the Ignatian Volunteer Corps she knew right away she wanted a volunteer placed in her agency. “Because they are committed to nine months or a year, I was really interested in that because it would be like another part time staff person,” said Chamberlain.

That time commitment means Chamberlain doesn’t have to keep training new volunteers. Because the volunteers become so familiar with their organization, they are given more responsibility.

Michael Heinrichs is also an Ignatian Volunteer who works at CAIN. He does other volunteer work as well but really sees the value in the spiritual benefits IVC offers. At the monthly meetings he says, “You still hear the raw emotion in people when they talk about the people they help.” Heinrichs treasures the time spent with his spiritual reflector. “It helps me with life,” he said.

Agencies with Ignatian Volunteers agree to pay a partnership fee of \$2,500 to place a volunteer twice a week for nine months. The cost for a volunteer one day a week is \$1,250. Five of the local volunteers are supported by partnership fees. Those agencies that can’t pay the fee have their costs covered by sponsorships that come from parishes, companies and individuals. Three local volunteers are supported by sponsorships. The fees go toward the spiritual development of the volunteers by funding the retreats and supporting their monthly day of reflection.

More than 16 U.S. cities have Ignatian volunteers and the local chapter would like to boost both its number of volunteers as well as its number of sponsors.

You can find out more information by logging on to www.ivcusa.org.