

# Ignatian Lay Volunteer Corps



## *Love in Deeds of Service*

Fall 2003  
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*Suzanne Geaney*

### Welcome to Suzanne Geaney ILVC Executive Director

Suzanne Geaney is bursting with energy. Recently appointed ILVC's Executive Director and with barely a month on the job, she has already jumped right in with enthusiasm, ability, and a very special place in her heart for the Ignatian Lay Volunteer Corps. Suzanne is not new to ILVC. She dreamed the dreams of an organization that tapped into the wisdom and experience of senior volunteers along with co-founders Charlie Costello, S.J. and Jim Conroy, S.J. back in 1994.

Being part of those early conversations, and having served on ILVC's Board of Directors since 1995, Suzanne knows and loves ILVC in a very special way. She is committed to its growth remarking, "I am ready to help ILVC deepen roots in the areas where we already are and then move to other cities and communities where we are needed and where enough potential volunteers are there to help address those needs."

"ILVC volunteers are amazing people. Our world is certainly better off for the significant contributions ILVC volunteers are making...."

Suzanne was born in Paterson, NJ, graduated from the College of the Holy Cross with a Bachelors degree in English and later earned a Masters in Social Service from the Bryn Mawr College Graduate School of Social Work and Social Research. Most recently Suzanne spent three years as Development Director and 10 years as Director of Social Ministries for the Maryland Province Jesuits. She is married and has two children.

"ILVC volunteers are amazing people," she remarked. "Our world is certainly better off for the significant contributions ILVC volunteers are making while they themselves experience their own transformations. I am proud to be part of this remarkable organization."

# “Great promise...”

I prayed the Lord would put me where I could do the most good. He reminded me that my gift to give was my “grandmothering.” House of Ruth’s children could use some unconditional love, some Grandma love.



My first visit to House of Ruth introduced me to a house full of children, all wanting love, affection, acceptance, respect. Each time the children greet me, it is with smiles and hugs. I think our Lord is glad I’m there. The children vie for my attention and I’m happy to respond to them. We play games or train or cars or house. We run, hop, skip, swing. We talk about their day. We do homework. They sit on my lap while I read books to them. They draw me pictures and I take them home and put them on my refrigerator. They decorate my home and my heart.

To a stranger, these poor children have nothing. To a friend of Jesus they hold great promise. They have been battered and broken, but they have reached out in hope and trust and welcomed me in. I am, indeed, greatly blessed. And I feel compelled to pray for them and their families every day. Jesus is growing me a bigger heart

*Kay Sempel*

*ILVC Member from Northern Virginia*



## **Poder Learning Center in Chicago appreciates ILVC partnership**

*George Sullivan, ILVC Regional Director for the Chicago area, recently received the following letter from Daniel Loftus, Executive Director of the Poder Learning Center, an ILVC partner agency.*

“I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks on behalf of Poder Learning Center for the tremendous commitment that we have received these past two years from the Ignatian Lay Volunteer Corps members. As you know, two ILVC members have

Worked at Poder, helping out in our various adult educational classes. We have found both volunteers consistent in their twice weekly attendance, skilled in helping us address our needs, and extremely generous with their time and energy.

Poder Learning Center and ILVC have developed a mutually beneficial arrangement. For while we see great benefit on a daily basis from the members’ service as outlined above, I have also witnessed the tremendous support that ILVC affords its volunteers. Through the monthly meetings with other members as well as the ongoing reflection on their service, this system of support not only provides necessary assistance to the ILVC volunteer, but also brings significant value to us, the participating agency. We are in this together and these activities only make our team stronger.

We greatly appreciate the contribution that ILVC members make, not only to Poder but also and most importantly, to our students. They are the true beneficiaries of this partnership and for that I am grateful.

I look forward to continuing to work with our current volunteers and hopefully many more in years to come.”

## Youngsters at De La Salle School on Long Island, NY work with ILVC volunteer Evelyn Sheehan

They are bright children, but have had problems in school. They come from families in poverty and suffer the ills that come with being materially poor. It is difficult, at best, to be a young boy in middle school. And so they found their way, these 15 youngsters, to De La Salle School in Freeport, NY where they met Evelyn Sheehan. Evelyn joined ILVC several years ago. A teacher by trade, Evelyn had extensive experience



working with middle school children in both English and special education. Now, she is able to contribute the skills, experience, and maturity that she has developed over the years to youngsters who could use some special attention.

Evelyn's special concern is just what these young boys needed. She remembers how amazed the children were at the beginning of the year when she returned their homework with comments written about their work. She heard a child say, "No one ever read my stuff before." The personal caring and respect that Evelyn brings to her volunteer work make a tremendous difference in the lives of the 15 students she sees two days each week. These youngsters are growing not only educationally, but in the confidence that they are valuable people with gifts to share with others.

### New York ILVC "Down State"

Suzanne Elsesser directs ILVC's program in the New York Metropolitan area. ILVC volunteers work to ease the effects of poverty in a variety of ways. Some examples are:

- People who lack healthcare
- Immigrants struggling to learn English
- Prisoners who want to finish high school
- Families who need food or clothing
- Individuals who need job training skills

For more information about the ILVC program in Metropolitan New York and Long Island, call Suzanne at 718-409-0716

## ILVC Mission

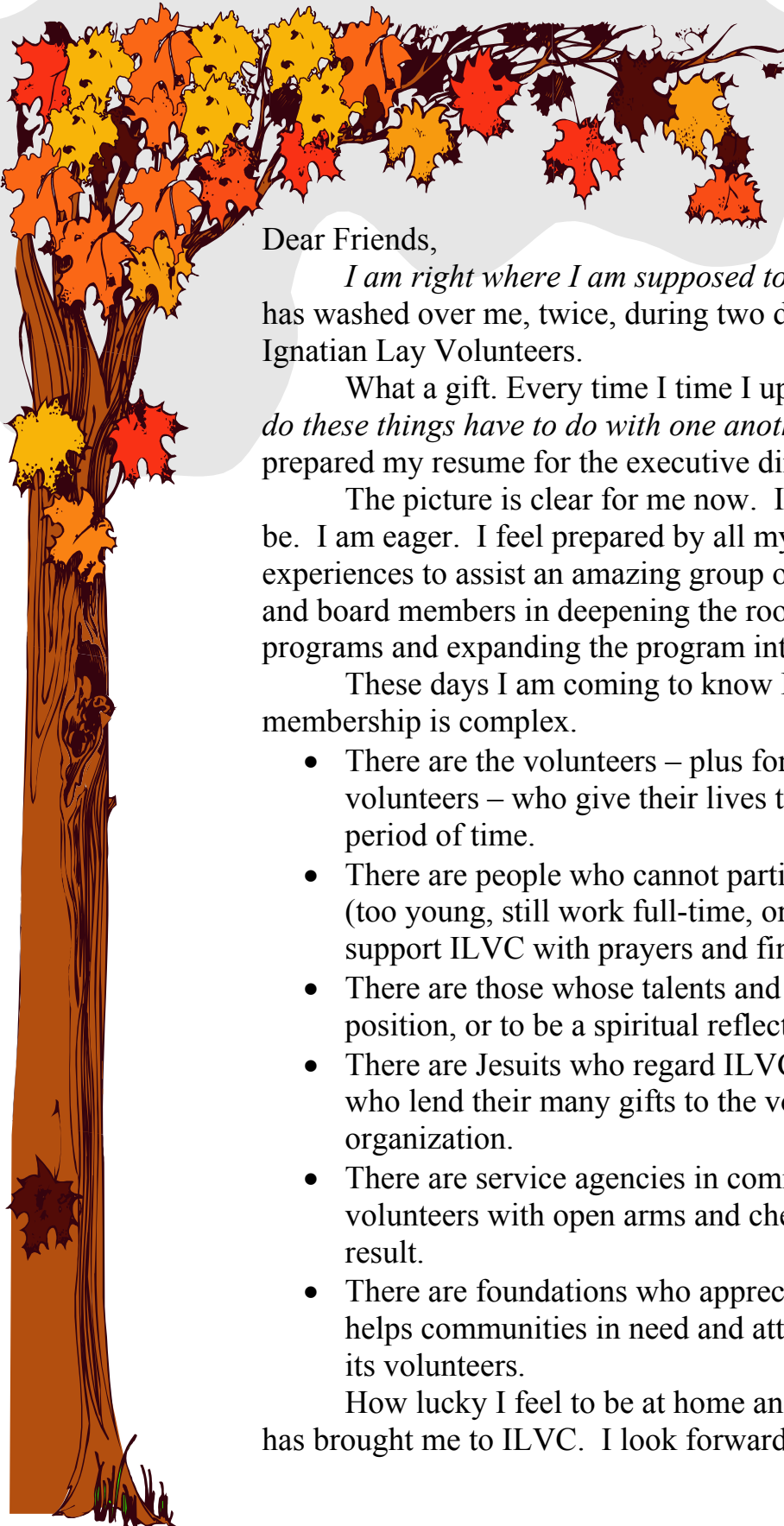
*The Ignatian Lay Volunteer Corps (ILVC) provides men and women age 50 and over the opportunity to serve the needs of people who are poor, to work for a more just society, and to grow deeper in Christian faith by reflecting and praying in the Ignatian tradition.*

### *Did you know?*

Currently there are 35 million Americans age 65 and older and by 2030 there will be 70 million.

# From the Director

Suzanne Geaney



Dear Friends,

*I am right where I am supposed to be.* That's the feeling that has washed over me, twice, during two different retreat sessions with Ignatian Lay Volunteers.

What a gift. Every time I update my resume I think, *What do these things have to do with one another?* It happened again as I prepared my resume for the executive director position at ILVC.

The picture is clear for me now. I am where I am supposed to be. I am eager. I feel prepared by all my various life and work experiences to assist an amazing group of volunteers, regional staff and board members in deepening the roots of the ILVC's current programs and expanding the program into new areas.

These days I am coming to know ILVC as a kind of *family*. Its membership is complex.

- There are the volunteers – plus former volunteers and future volunteers – who give their lives to ILVC for a brief or long period of time.
- There are people who cannot participate in ILVC personally (too young, still work full-time, or have poor health) and they support ILVC with prayers and financial gifts.
- There are those whose talents and wisdom lead them to a staff position, or to be a spiritual reflector or board member.
- There are Jesuits who regard ILVC'ers as their partners and who lend their many gifts to the volunteers and the organization.
- There are service agencies in communities that welcome volunteers with open arms and cherish the good they see as a result.
- There are foundations who appreciate the ways ILVC both helps communities in need and attends to the spiritual lives of its volunteers.

How lucky I feel to be at home and grateful for the way God has brought me to ILVC. I look forward to meeting all the relatives!



*ILVC Volunteer Helen Taney (center) helps train nursing assistants at the Center for Employment Training in Washington, DC*



*Service to others is the highest activity to which we can aspire. Since each individual is a unique expression of God, our offerings to the world will look different. Some of us may serve in ways that seem grand to the human eye, while others give their gifts in less visible ways. But each gift of love is God's expression in the world. Honor who God made you to be, a precious and irreplaceable child of God. Nurture your gifts so that you may be Love's presence in our world.*

*Mary Manin Morrissey*

### **Women at the DC Jail rely on ILVC volunteer Chris Swift**

The jail in Washington DC houses about 130 women. They are there for lots of different reasons, but one thing most share is worry about families on the outside.

Chris Swift, volunteer chaplain, addresses these worries and fears. The range of human and spiritual need is broad. Frequently, the women are concerned about the welfare of their children. Many have illness or death in their families, and others simply need a compassionate ear. Chris is there to listen and to do what she can to help these women connect with family members while they are incarcerated.

It would be an understatement to say that ministry at the jail was a challenge. The jail is severely overcrowded pressing more and more people into less and less space. Noise and confusion are the order of the day. Meeting the needs of security and the competing human needs of the residents can be daunting. In spite of all the obstacles, Chris in her quiet, efficient way gets the job done. Her calm and smiling presence is an antidote to the chaos that swirls about the jail. The scriptures state, "The harvest is great and the laborers are few." I thank the Lord for sending such an able laborer!

*Father Michael Bryant  
Chaplain*



# Discernment and education in St. Ignatius' life

*Charles P. Costello, S.J.*

It was early in Ignatius' life – while he was recuperating from a leg wound received in a war – that he received the grace of discernment. This central grace came to him as he realized the marked difference in his feelings after reading contemporary romances as compared with reading the lives of the saints. The feelings after the romances were ephemeral pleasure, a dispiritedness, a lack of peace, and things seemed to go nowhere. The feelings after the lives of the saints were admiration, encouragement to imitate, a great peace, and desire for growth. Desire for growth was the graced incentive which led him on and opened him to the quest for true freedom. This grace of discernment was the source point for the further development of the Spiritual Exercises.

Education also became paramount in Ignatius' thinking during his recovery. During his critical stay at the cave of Manresa following his conversion, Ignatius began an educational project, the recording of the experiences the Lord led him through. This was the beginning of the Spiritual Exercises. Under inspiration, they were to become a way of conversion, commitment, and mission which was filtered out of Ignatius' own experience and which have universal application and appeal for others. Over the years, Ignatius continued to modify and fine-tune the Exercises out of his experience.

Dissatisfied with the Spanish Universities of Salamanca and Alcala, Ignatius attended the University of Paris. In choosing the University of Paris, he was rejecting the absence of personal concern for students exemplified in the lecture system and the lack of an organized and progressive course of studies. At Paris, the educational and pedagogical inspirations fit in already with much of his Spiritual Exercises approach. There is very strong evidence, too, that the present method in the Exercises owes much to his Paris experience.

The University of Paris had taken the humanism fostered by the Renaissance and integrated it with the philosophical-theological studies Ignatius was experiencing. This surely fed Ignatius' deep awe before creation and the central prominence that he gives to the Incarnation in the Spiritual Exercises. In the training of men entering the society, he would foster a solid and excellent program in the humanities.

Ignatius understood the relationship between education and spirituality. This had a great bearing on the Christian humanism for which Jesuit schools became famous. The love of learning and the desire for God were intimately related, not a forced marriage. Knowledge was to be integrated with moral virtue and Christian motivation. This integration flowed naturally from the creation-incarnation-pascal mysteries of the heart of the Gospel and the Exercises. But beyond this, and most important, was how Ignatius always viewed education as a means to an end, not an end in itself. Students are to experience not only personal development in all their finest human capacities but also are to be moved toward an apostolic dedication to working for a better, more humane and more Christian world for the whole society in which they live.

# Thank You!

**ILVC is very grateful for its many generous donors. The following gifts were received between July 1, 2003 and October 13, 2003**

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Ignatian Lay Volunteer Corps  
801 St. Paul Street  
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*Your Most Important Work May Not Begin  
Until After You Retire*



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For more information please call us at 410-752-4686 or 888-831-4686 or visit us on the web at [www.ilvc.org](http://www.ilvc.org)