



The Volunteer

Sharing God's love through acts of service

RESILIENCY

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It makes all the difference.

By Sarah Uhl, Unit #313



Doing Brethren Volunteer Service has always been one of my dreams. Filling out the BVS application was so exciting! But when the time finally came to leave home, it was a little scary. I was unsure of my next destination and I didn't know when I would see my family again. I would have to meet and work with all new people.

When I got to orientation I was unbelievably home sick. I lost sight of my dream and how exciting this journey could be. At first I thought about quitting, but I knew how disappointing it would be to my family, my church family, and to me. I thought about choosing a project close to home, but I also knew I would be tempted to go home every weekend and wouldn't be as committed to the project. So, after reading many project descriptions, I was sure Sunrise Village

Abode Services was the perfect fit, which meant I would be 2,808 miles away from home in Fremont, California.

When I first arrived I was even more homesick. But after two weeks, the homesickness faded and I fell in love with the job, the location, and my new daily life. We face both big and small problems at SRV, but without facing problems we wouldn't grow. Every day I see the resilience in our residents at SRV as they struggle with adversity, trauma, drug addiction, budgeting issues, mental health or just plain bad luck. With a hand up, they are open and willing to change, and often have the ability to recover from their difficulties. Resilience of the human spirit is what makes the difference. 🌿

Making Lunch!



This issue of The Volunteer focuses on Resiliency. The following contributions come from BVSers and BVS alumni across the globe. Come walk with them on their journey.

Upcoming Orientations:

• **Summer Unit #316**

July 16 - August 4, 2017

• **BRF Unit #317**

August 20-29, 2017

• **Fall Unit #318**

Sep. 24 - Oct. 13, 2017

• **Winter Unit #319**

Jan. 28 - Feb. 16, 2018

By the Numbers:

• **Active volunteers - 45**

33 in the United States

7 in Europe

3 in Latin America

2 in Japan

• **Active Projects - 82**

51 in the United States

19 in Europe

8 in Latin America

2 in Japan

2 in Africa

Resilient Peace

By Andrew Bollinger, Unit #313



Have you ever hefted a cumbersome barrel of poly fence posts onto your back and trekked through waves of broom sage in the merciless heat of the Arkansas sun? Have you ever paced along a quarter-mile fence line letting the electric wire drag abrasively through your hand as you unwind it from its plastic spool? Have you ever had to carry the dense, stiff body of an animal you cared about to a hole you dug in the frost-hardened earth?



Goat Kisses!

My placement as a livestock volunteer at Heifer Ranch in Perryville, AS has demanded a lot of me physically and emotionally. It is my daily job to care for animals, pastures, fences, and to teach people about hunger and poverty and how to care for the earth. And of course, on top of the normal, wearisome day's work, it's not uncommon to encounter the mentally fatiguing presence of suffering or death. This is the work an average farmer faces every day, so how do we make it through? The answer: Resilience.

Resiliency is the capacity to be flexible when circumstances make you bend. It is the ability to recover quickly when one moment you are burying a baby piglet and the next you are teaching children to milk a goat. And it can be found in many places: arms of empathetic friends, ivory keys beneath dirt-stained fingers, or the healing breath of starlit walks.

When hardship strikes or a task is hard, I encourage you to find your peace—a resilient peace. If a barrel of emotions is weighing you down, lean on your friends and family. If the harsh words of long past are dragging through your mind again, immerse your worries in meditation. If you are carrying the dense burdens of a long day or a long life, lay them down gently and whisper words of thanks—for it is through these that you will become resilient. 🌿

A farmer's work is never done. (Sunset at the ranch.)



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Nigeria Crisis Volunteers

By Pat Krabacher, Unit #308

Before retiring in December 2014, I (Pat Krabacher) wanted to support the Nigeria crisis by serving in Brethren Volunteer Service (BVS). My husband, John Krabacher, initially was not so excited. At Unit #308 orientation, John expressed his hesitation, saying he was a Jonah (who ran from God and Nineveh). But BVS orientation changed us both—perhaps John the most. At the closing gathering, John had embraced his BVS role.

The highlights of our BVS adventure have been many and life-changing. We have met with Congressional Staff, Ambassadors, Embassy staff, U.S. State Department (USSD), and International NGO's doing humanitarian work. We've analyzed human rights data on the terror in Nigeria, provided pulpit supply telling of the Nigeria Crisis, and submitted concept papers/applications to bring federal foreign aid to the devastated NE sector. Being resilient as a BVSer is especially important in a project where the "routine" is "no routine."

Our two years of BVS have been rewarding beyond measure. Less than a month before Annual Conference in 2014, we received data on deaths in NE Nigeria. Reviewing the spreadsheet of data which contained nearly 10,000 names I asked, "How can we display the data so that it can be understood?" John replied, "Like the Vietnam Memorial." Embracing that challenge meant organizing data day and night, obtaining stories/pictures, and formatting the display. Tears were shed as names became victims, and editing stories was telling of their suffering. Amazingly, we finished just in time and 17 six-foot-tall panels were carried into the business session on Monday. You could hear a pin drop. Data analysis continues, but as of this writing, 40,000 victims have been documented and presented to human rights authorities.

As I type this, John is driving a cargo van loaded with 40 boxes of books from Ohio for the COB Nigeria book project. This project started over a year ago when Books for Africa (an NGO) was identified as a potential partner, and now the COB is shipping a 40' container of donated books to NE Nigeria. Resilience requires pursuing opportunities and partnering within and outside the denomination for success. 🌿

John, sorting book donations.



Data Analysis.



AC Wall of Healing.



Rising

By Gillian Miller, Unit #309

Spending two years right after graduating college in a different country and culture, speaking a different language and working in a new field tests a person's resilience. Sometimes I question my decision, wondering if it would have been easier or better to stay home. But I was hungry for it, I wanted to see how resilient I really am.

I also care deeply about the peace work being done in this region and the women that my organization partners with. Those women have taught me more about resiliency than any of my own struggles could. They have lived through a war, governmental and economic strife, the loss of family members, friends, and neighbors, all while living with less because they would rather live in their home country than stay abroad. They are the picture of resiliency, because, in light of all that keeps them down, they get back up stronger than before, empowering not only themselves, but their communities. They rise above petty governments, hopelessness, loss and economic struggle and shine as beacons for a peaceful future in this region and the world.

These women have taught me the importance of believing in something bigger, of using faith to empower, connect and reconcile the world. Because of them, resilience has an entirely new meaning for me. It is no longer a response to events, but a way of life. Resilience is creating a grassroots organization to improve your local economy because you saw a need and took the initiative. It is creating an event to connect women of different faith backgrounds, because everyone else was too afraid, but you knew it was what your community needed most. It is women rising to the challenge and changing the world around them. These women have taught me that resilience is within every single one of us, it is only a matter of whether we choose to rise to it. 🌿

ALUMNI CORNER

Bouncing Back

Greg Davidson Laszakovits, Unit #214



My BVS assignment was as Workcamp Coordinator for the Church of the Brethren Youth and Young Adult Ministries Office (the best project ever!). Like most BVS projects, it is demanding mentally, spiritually, and even physically. From September through May I planned what and where the camps would be, advertised for them, processed registrations, and made all kinds of preparations. (This was the pre-internet days so we had to write lists by hand and make tons of printouts for everything—in between tending the horses we used for transportation, of course).

Soon enough, the summer came and I was on the road for eight straight weeks, crisscrossing the US. A camp would end on Sunday afternoon, I would catch a flight to the next city, and the next camp would begin Monday afternoon. Some-

where along the way I picked up a virus that my body couldn't kick. It sapped my strength and stamina and I lost about 30 pounds. But somehow I was able to finish the summer in high spirits. I didn't know it at the time, but the reason I could push through was resiliency.

BVS Unit #214.



Resiliency is defined as the ability to adapt well in the face of adversity and stress. I wasn't resilient because of some great character trait or genetic strength, it was because I had great support and used it! Anyone can increase their resilience. Here's how:

1. Make connections with people. Those relationships will support you in times of adversity (and you will support others in their tough times too!)
2. Accept that change is a part of life.
3. Move towards your goals—if right now sucks, focus on how to move into a different reality.
4. Take charge. You can't control others or many situations, but you can control your attitude and much in your own life, so take control of what you can.
5. Take care of yourself. Eat and sleep well. Do things that are fun to you!
6. Be positive! Especially about yourself. You are awesome! 🌿

