

**BVS/BRETHREN SERVICE
PROJECT FORM**

Name of project/organization: **Brot & Rosen, Diakonische Basisgemeinschaft**

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BVser's job title: **Volunteer on a full time basis**

BVser's immediate supervisor: **Volunteer Co-ordinator, Brot und Rosen (at present Dietrich Gerstner) - right at the beginning of the placement an additional "pastoral friend" from within the community will be appointed to support the volunteer in his/her life and work at Brot & Rosen**

Job description:

List specific duties the volunteer would be required to do. If duties are flexible according to the skills and interests of the volunteer, please state this.)

- To share in the communal life and household duties of the community in the 'house of hospitality'
- To share an interest in refugee, peace and injustice issues

Regular tasks include :

- cooking
- cleaning
- attendance at weekly community meetings
- answering the telephone and door
- extensive conversation with and social support to the resident guests

Optional activities include:

- preparing monthly house worship
- participation in events on social, political and theological issues and house parties
- correspondence
- updating of the mailing list
- working in a team editing a newsletter

List minimum requirements re: education, skills, abilities, experience, physical requirements, etc.

- personal maturity
- flexibility and ability to structure one's individual day within a community household
- good basic spoken and written German and demonstrable ability and willingness to improve it
- active desire to live in an ecumenical Christian and multicultural community and participate in daily morning worship (previous experience of living in a community would be preferable)
- openness to and respect for a multi-faith environment, particularly in the context of the Muslim faith of the majority of resident guests

Description of project/organization:

Please include overall purpose or goals of your organization, description of programs, brief history, size of your organization, brief description of your location/area, and anything else you think would be helpful and would attract prospective volunteers.

Brot & Rosen

In our house of hospitality in Hamburg people from Germany and refugees from other countries live together under one roof. Without bureaucratic hurdles and regardless of legal status, refugees are accepted and find a home for some time, an outreach that is carried out by a small Christian community. Together we have a vision of another life-style: serving the poor and needy; working towards justice, peace and maintaining the integrity of creation; and living in community. These are the three main roots of our life and our work.

Some History

We started in 1993 as a group of people living all over Germany but came together to think about starting an intentional Christian community in Germany. Important influences have been different U.S. American Catholic Worker communities as well as the Taizé community. At times the group has included up to twelve people, out of which four are still members, and since 1996 we have lived together as a community in Hamburg.

Today our community consists of five people from Germany (plus one child) and two volunteers from Germany and the USA. We live in a former church community center which we rent from the Protestant Church, and it is in this 19-room home that we give hospitality to the homeless.

The Community

The community members divide time, money and work duties. Our Christian faith is our basis, and we once a year we renew our commitment to common life, work and prayer. Each day is started with a short prayer in our small chapel in the basement of our house. Our household is complemented by volunteers who live with us for a year or two, as well as by people who visit for several days or weeks.

We share income and try to live a simple lifestyle. Much of the household functions on donations, e.g. food, furniture, clothing and money. Some community members have income-producing jobs which, as agreed upon early on in our history, must not consist of more than part-time work. Dietrich, for example, works as a mediator, and Ute is a minister in our local church. From this income we pay for things such as rent, health insurance, public transportation and pocket money. Differences in work schedules as well as different job status (e.g. employed,

self-employed, student worker) have sometimes caused problems in the rhythm of our community.

Decision making is done through consensus, with weekly decisions being discussed during our Monday morning meetings. During these weekly meetings we talk about projects and work in the house, give a structure to the coming week, answer letters and e-mails, etc. In addition, we meet for a whole day once a month to discuss bigger issues like: How do we organize vigils? Do we want to talk about our guests in public for fundraising reasons? Do we plan to get a pension in 30 years ... and who is going to pay for it? Are we happy?! Even bigger issues are tackled twice a year during our community weekends.

Hospitality

"Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unaware". Hebr 13,2

We share our house with people who have lost their shelter, regardless of the reason. We started out inviting any homeless person but are now limiting our rooms to refugees. There are usually 8 guests living with us, and over the years we have had people from all over the world, though mainly from Africa and the Near East Region, sharing our home. Some have stayed just overnight, other have stayed for years.

One example is Muhamad from Togo, who came to Hamburg as a stowaway on a ship. When he went to the immigration office and said he was seeking asylum, he was sent to Mecklenburg in eastern Germany. There he had to stay in a building on the outskirts of a small village where the German inhabitants didn't like having foreigners around. He was told by another refugee that it was very dangerous to leave the building and that he should not go outside on his own, not even to make a phone call from the only public telephone in the middle of the village. He could not learn German because there were no classes offered, and the people of the village were very hostile. Muhamad got scared and decided to return to Hamburg where he hoped to find other people from his country. This was a great risk as he was technically not allowed to leave the German region he was assigned to. When he decided to return to Hamburg, he did so with the risk of having no food or shelter, as well as the risk of being caught by the police and getting sent back to Mecklenburg.

Hospitality to us means offering room and food, a shelter, a family. We are not lawyers and try not to act as social workers in our house. We are just living together. Everybody shares household duties and takes turns doing the cooking.

Political and consciousness work

"Our problems stem from our acceptance of this filthy, rotten system." Dorothy Day

The outreach work through hospitality in our house cannot be seen without the general goal of creating a new form of society. In our free quarterly newsletter we write about our life in the house of hospitality and publish ideas about an alternative lifestyle. We are part of different local networks of refugee councils and take part in (as well as organize on our own) campaigns, vigils and demonstrations for a better life for refugees in our country.

Non-profit organization

From the very beginning we formed a non-profit, charitable association which is tax deductible. This organization, called "Diakonische Basisgemeinschaft e.V.," is tenant of the house and finances the living of our refugee guests. Through this association we do fundraising by collecting

donations. We do not, however, receive any public (national or church) funds.

Housing for volunteer:

- in community (preferable!)*
- in independent apartment in the neighborhood (also at times an option)*
- on project site*
- with family*
- other*
- Must the volunteer seek his/her own housing?*

Description of housing:

The community lives in a big house and two adjacent apartments in the city (not right in the center, but it's certainly not in the countryside - Hamburg is all in all a city of 1,7 million inhabitants).

Other comments:

As of now (11/2001) the household consists of
5 long-term community members
2 (international) volunteers
7 "guests" / householdmembers with a refugee background
3 children