



# Brethren Volunteer Service Annual Report

*Sharing God's Love Through Acts of Service*

*Working for Peace*

*Caring for Creation*

*Advocating Justice*

*Serving Human Needs*

## Currently, BVS has 45 volunteers...

- Serving in eight countries: Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, El Salvador, Honduras, Republic of Ireland, Japan, Northern Ireland and the United States.
- Placed in 11 different U.S. states and Washington, D.C.



BVS Staff

## In 2016:

- BVS hosted four orientation units: one at Camp Ithiel in Gotha, Fla., one at Camp Eder in Fairfield, Pa., and two at the Brethren Service Center in New Windsor, Md.
- 87 total volunteers served throughout the year.

*Unit 313, Summer 2016—The last orientation unit to go through training at the Brethren Service Center in New Windsor, Md.*

## Partners in Service Award

Each year, BVS presents a Partners in Service Award to an individual, group, or organization that has shown exceptional commitment to the work of sharing God's love through acts of service. The 2017 award goes to Bethany Theological Seminary.

Bethany has partnered with BVS since the beginning of BVS in 1948. In recent years the partnership includes regular participation by Bethany staff in the annual BVS mid-year retreats. Staff have been an integral part of a day at the retreat focused on vocation and call. Many former BVSers have found their way to Bethany for further education. The class of 2017 saw four former BVSers graduating— Jody Gunn, Bryan Hanger, Wendy McFadden, and Jonathan Stauffer.

The Partners in Service Award will be accepted by Jeff Carter, president of Bethany Seminary, himself a former BVSer, at the BVS Annual Conference Luncheon on June 29 in Grand Rapids, Mich. Jeff will also serve as the luncheon speaker, reflecting on "What goes around . . . Politics, Religion, and BVS."

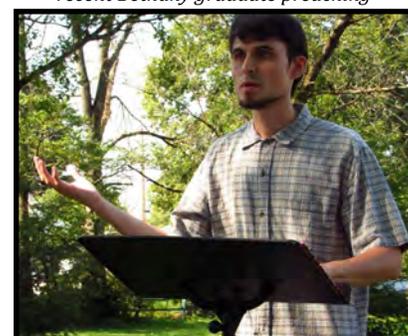
*New Bethany students for the 2016-2017 school year*

*Bryan Hanger (2nd from left): Former BVSer who recently graduated from Bethany*

*Jonathan Stauffer: Former BVSer and recent Bethany graduate preaching*



Photos courtesy of Bethany Seminary





BVS Unit #1 in front of Old Main, 1948.

## Brethren Service Center: Remembered

Most BVS orientation units were held at the Brethren Service Center in New Windsor, Md., including the first one pictured at left. During those early years, volunteers worked half a day at the clothing center or other settings on campus to pay for their training. Units were held there regularly until 1971, and they returned there off and on for many years. In the past 20 years, at least one unit a year was held at the Center—as were the 50th and 60th anniversary events for BVS.

The Center was also the site for a number of BVS projects, including SERRV, Zigler Hospitality Center, Brethren Disaster Ministries, the maintenance department, Material Resources, and On Earth Peace. Many volunteers served as truck drivers, hauling donations from locations around the country and to the ports in Baltimore.

If you came through New Windsor at a certain time, you remember Joel Petre, the head chef. He went there in the mid-1940s following alternative service in the CPS camps. Joel headed up the kitchen for many years and later was also head of the maintenance department. “He was a wonderful chef,” says Miller Davis, former BVSer and longtime manager of the Brethren Service Center.

Why remember the food? For BVS and service, the context of food has been central—whether it’s our own meals or food for those we serve. Conversations happen around meals. Hunger issues are a focus of service. In food banks, soup kitchens, meals for residents, sustainable agriculture, and community gardens, food is central to our wellbeing. When we remember Joel Petre, we also remember how BVS—and the whole Church of the Brethren—was fed by the Brethren Service Center.



Joel Petre serving in the dining room, Windsor Hall, 1950s.

## New Project Spotlight: Horton’s Kids



Matilde Thompson  
Unit 315

Horton’s Kids is one of the newest BVS projects. It is a program that empowers children living in one of Washington, D.C.’s most under-resourced communities, and prepares them to graduate from high school ready for college, career and life. In fall of 2016, Horton’s Kids received its first volunteer, Matilde Thompson. Matilde came to BVS from Germany through the partnership BVS has with EIRENE, a development and volunteer program that the Church of the Brethren helped start in 1957.

Matilde did not think she wanted to serve with kids when she came to the US. She didn’t even know she was good at working with kids. And then she met the kids from the Anacostia neighborhood. She discovered a hidden gift.

“Even though I didn’t know the kids at first, they were super nice. Really welcoming to me. They’ve taught me a lot about their culture, from such different backgrounds. And even though they have lots of challenges outside of Horton’s, they have ambitions, and they want to come to tutoring, and they want to learn. Some have parents in jail and they are still motivated to keep going.” Matilde says she “really hopes they get a new BVSer when I leave, and that they like this project as much as I do. It will be hard to leave this community at the end of my term.”



Matilde reading to one of the students at Horton’s Kids.

## Workcamp Update

Shelley Weachter (left) and Deanna Beckner are serving as assistant workcamp coordinators. The 2017 theme is “Say Hello.”



**sayhello**  
3 John 13-14  
2017 Brethren Workcamps

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