

Brethren Volunteer Service Annual Report

Summer 2015

Sharing God's Love Through Acts of Service

Working for Peace
Advocating Justice

Caring for Creation
Serving Human Needs



Here are a few of the exciting things happening in BVS!

In 2014:

- BVS hosted four orientation units: one in Gotha, Fla., one in Denton, Md., and two in New Windsor, Md.
- 48 new volunteers entered the program
- 115 total volunteers served throughout the year



Dan McFadden

The 2014 fall orientation, Unit #307, gathers for a picture in New Windsor, Md., after attending Sunday morning worship services at local congregations.

Currently, BVS has 64 volunteers...

- ranging in age from 18 to 78
- placed in 12 different US states and Washington, D.C.
- serving in 10 countries: Bosnia-Herzegovina, El Salvador, Germany, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Republic of Ireland, Japan, Northern Ireland, and the USA

2015 BVS Partners in Service Award

Each year, BVS presents a Partners in Service Award to an individual, group, or organization that has shown an exceptional commitment to the work of sharing God's love through acts of service. Cincinnati (Ohio) Church of the Brethren, Highland Avenue Church of the Brethren in Elgin, Ill., and Peace Church of the Brethren in Portland, Ore., will share the award for 2015. These congregations will be recognized for their commitment to partnering with BVS in hosting intentional community houses within their communities. The members of these congregations have supported volunteers and hosted a community house where volunteers commit to living together and serving at BVS projects in the area. The Cincinnati and Highland Avenue churches hosted the first BVS community houses starting in 2009, followed by Peace Church in 2010.

Brandon Gumm



Cincinnati house with neighbors

Kristen Hoffman



Elgin's BVS house

Melina Wilkens



Multiple generations of Portland BVSers

The Partners in Service Award will be presented to representatives of the three congregations at the BVS Annual Conference Luncheon on July 13 in Tampa, Fla.

Jocelyn Snyder Joins BVS Staff

Jocelyn Snyder



In January 2015, BVS welcomed Jocelyn Snyder as its newest staff member as the orientation coordinator. Jocelyn succeeds Callie Surber, who served in the same role for more than seven years. A member of BVS unit 299, Jocelyn served for two years with the Africa Inland Church in Torit, South Sudan. Previously, she had spent three years as a volunteer in Choma, Zambia, through Mennonite Central Committee, working with Choma Secondary School. Jocelyn also has worked in a pastoral role with youth at her home congregation, Hartville (Ohio) Church of the Brethren, and at Mount Tabor United Methodist Church in East Canton, Ohio.

Responsibilities for the orientation coordinator include the application process for new volunteers, coordination of orientations and mid-year retreats, and support for current volunteers. Jocelyn hit the ground running, leading the winter orientation for Unit 308 only a few weeks after arriving! Looking forward, Jocelyn is excited about growing into her work and ministry with BVS. "Service isn't always easy but, hopefully, the good times outweigh the bad. Learning to be resilient is important. I hope that I can help people be able to learn, grow, struggle, laugh, and love. It is about truly loving God and loving others."

Jocelyn holds a degree in Youth Ministry from Malone College in Canton, Ohio. She resides in Elgin, Ill., and is based at the Church of the Brethren General Offices.

Jessie Houff Is the BVS Orientation Volunteer

Jessie Houff began a second year of BVS in January 2015 when she joined the orientation team in Elgin, Ill. Previously, Jessie had served as the first BVS volunteer working at Rural and Migrant Ministry in Liberty, N.Y. She is a member of Bridgewater (Va.) Church of the Brethren and is a 2013 graduate of Bridgewater College with a bachelor of arts degree in Art and Theater. Welcome to Elgin and the BVS team, Jessie!

Lisa Moyers Houff



Project Spotlight: Food, Hunger, and Gardening Associate

In the past few years, BVS has welcomed some exciting new projects as options for volunteers. Blue Rose Ranch (Springfield, Colo.), Midwives for Haiti (Hinche, Haiti), and Rural and Migrant Ministry (Liberty, N.Y.) are a few examples. One of these new projects that has been particularly exciting to watch take shape, the Food, Hunger, and Gardening Associate in Washington, D.C., was created through the joint efforts of the Church of the Brethren's Global Food Crisis Fund (GFCF) and the Office of Public Witness. This position is funded through a grant from the GFCF and works to expand the Going to the Garden initiative.

Maureen Zach



The first volunteer associate is Katie Furrow. Katie joined BVS as part of unit 307 and is a 2014 graduate of Bridgewater (Va.) College where she majored in sociology and minored in peace studies, both of which have been useful and applicable in her work in D.C. She has traveled around the country visiting with other urban community gardeners and learning about the challenges people in cities face regarding food availability and nutrition. The topic is nothing new to Katie; her senior honor's project was a year-long ethnographic study of low-income individuals struggling with food access. Katie sees her current work as a continuation of her undergraduate work. "When I learned about this project, I was intrigued by the intersection of advocating for food policy programs while

working on the ground to help establish community gardens in areas much like the one I studied. The prospect of getting to advocate for a more fair food system, which would allow people from all walks of life to have full access to healthy food really excited me!"

Katie has constructed a garden outside of Washington City (D.C.) Church of the Brethren with the hope that it will be a tool to not only educate, but potentially feed people through programs such as the Brethren Nutrition Program (another BVS project). BVS is eager to establish new projects such as Katie's. If you think you may know of one, contact the BVS office.

Katie Furrow



Pepper plants in the D.C. garden



Workcamp Update

Theresa Ford (left) and Hannah Shultz are serving as assistant workcamp coordinators. The 2015 theme is "Side by Side: Imitating Christ's Humility."

Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford



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