



The Volunteer

Sharing God's love through acts of service

FINDING JOY

Joy in the Mundane

By Sheldon Shank, Unit #320



How can we find joy? One secret is to allow it to reign over the mundane tasks of life. In scripture, King David's early life as a shepherd boy was an example of this concept. Shepherding was, no doubt, a mundane life. But did David waste these boring years? No—he acquired skills with the harp and slingshot that would later benefit his people.

Each season of life brings its own set of joys. My year serving as a BVS house parent in Lewiston, Maine, with my wife, Jolene, and our eight children is no different. Joy meets my heart when individuals from our project, The Root Cellar, call out to us as we stroll through the neighborhood. Joy fills my heart when I meet refugees who have been through so much, yet still have laughter and a grateful spirit. Nevertheless, there are days when joy must be chosen. This year has been full of new challenges that I've never faced before. While mentoring at-risk boys, there are days that joy must be pulled from my heart. When our after-school program closes its doors and the community center falls quiet, joy can be hidden as my head continues to spin from the controlled chaos of an inner-city after-school program. When I reflect on conversations of conflict transformation I've had with mentees, I question if I should have said something differently or handled a conflict in a different way. It's in these moments that joy must come from the Holy Spirit dwelling deep within. Despite the challenges, joy lurks close as I see others, made in the image of God, interacting across cultural and racial lines. Living in community with dozen people who are committed to both a year of service through BVS and to our Lord Jesus Christ creates immense joy.



Finding Joy: The following contributions come from BVSers and BVS alumni across the globe. Hear stories of laughter, connections, appreciation, and blessings as volunteers find joy during their service.

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Upcoming Orientations:

- **Summer Unit #322**
July 21 - August 9, 2019
- **BRF Unit #323**
August 18 - August 26, 2019
- **Fall Unit #324**
September 22 - October 11, 2019

By the Numbers:

Active Volunteers - 41

- 29 in United States
- 5 in Europe
- 4 in Japan
- 2 in Latin America
- 1 in Africa

Active Projects - 67

- 47 in United States
- 7 in Europe
- 4 in Latin America
- 3 in Africa
- 2 in Japan
- 1 in China
- 1 in South America
- 1 in the Caribbean

Light in the Darkness

By Pauline Liu, Unit #319



As the saying goes, joy is not the absence of suffering. During my time in BVS, I am learning that joy can be found in the darkest of times by intentionally seeking out moments of gratefulness and blessings.

2 Corinthians 4:8-10 and 16-18 New Living Translation says, "We are pressed on every side by troubles, but we are not crushed. We are perplexed, but not driven to despair. We are hunted down, but never abandoned by God. We get knocked down, but we are not destroyed. Through suffering, our bodies continue to share in the death of Jesus so that the life of Jesus may also be seen in our bodies. That is why we never give up. Though our bodies are dying, our spirits are being renewed every day. For our present troubles are small and won't last very long. Yet they produce for us a glory that vastly outweighs them and will last forever! So we don't look at the troubles we can see now; rather, we fix our gaze on things that cannot be seen. For the things we see now will soon be gone, but the things we cannot see will last forever."



Pauline & Roisin in December 2018

When depression immobilizes me, all I can do is cling to the cross and pray that the Lord will walk with me through the despair and the devastation that I feel. In my project, I have found joy in spending time in community with others. I have been incredibly blessed by the core members I live with because they show me what true acceptance looks like. I can feel the presence, joy, and love of Christ in L'Arche Kilkenny each day as we fulfill our purpose to support others and love them. Even though I frequently get overwhelmed while juggling work, self-care, boundaries, and conflict management, I am reassured by the knowledge that the Lord uses these moments to mold me in the image of Christ. I have hope and assurance that painful instances hold a purpose in God's Kingdom, and that God will redeem all the broken parts and make me whole in the love of Christ.

"In my project, I have found joy in spending time in community with others."



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Profound Joy

By Riccardo Burkardt, Unit #321



I am currently serving at Project PLASE (People Lacking Ample Shelter and Employment) in Baltimore, Maryland. Project PLASE addresses homelessness by providing emergency housing, permanent housing, and supportive services. We also serve the most vulnerable and underserved, including those with mental illness, HIV/AIDS, addiction, developmental disabilities, and ex-offenders.

While working at the Project PLASE homeless shelter, I have experienced profound joy. Seeing the misfortunes that residents face can be discouraging, but working with them is also very rewarding. These relationships fascinate and inspire

me. I often see many residents find the power and resiliency to stay optimistic and step into the lives they aspire to. Knowing that I am a part of this process and that I have helped some residents remain faithful and find joy in their own lives is just as joyful for me and an experience I am thankful for.

Furthermore, in my working environment, my colleagues and supervisor are always welcoming and respectful. They have taught me countless new things, supported me as I became a volunteer advocacy counselor, and are fun to be around. I am thankful for them every day and will always value these relationships as I move on in the future.

Finally, I have found joy in the relationships I have built with other international BVS volunteers. We recently spent a week in Florida for our mid-year retreat and despite serving in very different projects and locations, we often find ourselves in similar positions. I have appreciated their support and the ability to share our experiences with each other. 🌿

Members of Units #319 and #321 gather in Gotha, Florida for a mid-year retreat.



Joy in the Moment

By Lauren Capasso, Unit #319

Within my first week at Casa de Esperanza de Los Niños in Houston, Texas, I experienced different struggles including moving to a new place, parenting and living with people I'd never met before, and getting to know four new children. The environment in which I live houses adults and children together as if they are a family. After only a week of being in my house, I experienced one of the realities of becoming a parent—having sick children.

One evening, when I was putting a little girl to bed, she started to become drowsy, but would not fall asleep. While reading to her, I saw out of the corner of my eye that she was sitting up and a large amount of liquid was coming out of her mouth. As an immediate reaction, I grabbed her blanket and quickly draped it across my arms in an attempt to make something that resembled a bowl. Oh so quickly there was vomit all over her face and hair, but also all over my arms. As soon as I thought it was safe, I started to lower my arms to clean up the mess, but it started happening again. Eventually, I wiped her face and noticed the look in her eyes that told me she was scared and needed someone to comfort her.

Although I was panicking internally, I was able to stay calm in this moment and help ease the fear and discomfort she was feeling. We were both such a mess, but it was in this moment that I found joy in working with children simply because I realized that this girl and my other kids do need my help. She needed me and I could help her, which brought joy and reminded me of my purpose at Casa. The first few weeks at my project were difficult, but they became very rewarding and made me want to continue this mission even more. 🌿

Sparking Joy & Saying Thank You, Next

By Emily Tyler, BVS Director



As I write this, I am in the midst of writing position descriptions, learning more fully the ins and outs of our volunteer insurance policy, and responding to our BVS partners with organizational position statements. And then I looked at this issue's topic, finding joy. I couldn't help but chuckle.

In my nearly seven years of working for Brethren Volunteer Service, I have not very often struggled to find joy in my work. The BVS office in Elgin is a pretty fun place to be! However, I must be honest, in this time of transition with no BVS director after Dan McFadden's resignation, to then being called to fill the position myself, creating joy has sometimes had to be a more intentional part of my work.

This winter, I hopped on the bandwagon of watching Marie Kondo "spark joy" for so many by helping them to purge and organize their belongings. There was one part of the process that I was admittedly skeptical of at first, but learned to appreciate when I put it into practice myself. When the homeowners decided that something was no longer sparking joy for them, before they put it in the "toss" pile, Marie had them thank that item out loud for serving them.

While I can't toss out the tasks that I do every day that don't spark joy for me, I can be intentional about finding the joy in those tasks—how they serve our volunteers and our program. It has also been important for me as I've settled into the role of director of BVS to think about the history of BVS and how it has served us, and moving forward, learning how to thank those pieces that no longer serve us and usher in new programming that sparks joy for the next generation of BVSers.

Joy may have to be intentionally found at times. But allowing our work and calling to spark joy while also letting go of and thanking the seasons in life that have served us but are no longer needed is a delicate but important balance. What would the world look like if we all followed a calling that sparked joy in us? 🌿

Emily at the young adult workcamp in Nepal.



Unit #265 on drop-off day at orientation.



Emily speaking to workcamp participants in Brooklyn.



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