



# The Volunteer

Sharing God's love through acts of service

## SHARING LIGHT

### Let your light shine before others

By Katinka Kalusche



Leaving home in Germany to serve in another country was a significant decision, especially considering that I had no clue where I would spend my year of service. This was sometimes intimidating and disorienting, but following the call to share the light that I find through my faith in God is helping me to stay calm and confident.

My project is at Highland Park Elementary School in Roanoke, Virginia, where I am a full-time teacher's assistant. My duties include chaperoning field trips and running the Pack-a-Snack program, which provides take-home weekend meals for students from food-deficient households.

The teachers at Highland Park do a wonderful job trying to show each student his or her own strengths. Though the students' home environments are often difficult, the teachers encourage them to not let their lights be set under a bowl (Matthew 5:15), but to let them shine as bright

as can be. By doing so, the children make me smile every day!

In my position I also join in the ministry and fellowship of Central Church of the Brethren in Roanoke. The whole congregation has given me a kinder and more loving welcome than I could have ever expected. Through their hospitality and generosity, they are sharing their light with me.

I have been here five weeks, and looking back shows me how quickly time has flown. Living each day surrounded by wonderful people has taught me that it is more than worth while to share—whether joys, concerns, food, or memories. By serving others, I share my light, and receive blessings from others who share their light with me. This opportunity is more than fulfilling for me! 🌿

Preparing at the Pack-A-Snack Program.



Photo by Crystal Pruett

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

### In this issue:

• **Let your light shine before others**

By Katinka Kalusche

• **Yay Quakers!**

By Maya Davis

• **For each of us to see the other**

By Joan Huston

• **Sharing the light of God**

By Katie Hiscock

• **Alumni Corner**

By Amy S. Gall Ritchie

### Upcoming orientations:

• **Summer Unit #319**

July 29 - August 17, 2018

• **BRF Unit #320**

August 19 - August 27, 2018

• **Fall Unit #321**

Sept. 30 - Oct. 19, 2018

### By the numbers:

• **Active volunteers - 43**

31 in United States

7 in Europe

2 in Latin America

3 in Japan

• **Active Projects - 73**

47 in United States

12 in Europe

9 in Latin America

2 in Japan

2 in Africa

1 in China

### Yay Quakers!

By Maya Davis



Belfast, Northern Ireland, is a unique city full of public art, folk music, rainbows, strong accents, and a long history of conflict. "The Troubles" are over but it doesn't feel that way when you walk through north and west Belfast. The tension is palpable when you drive down the Shankill Road or through the Ardoyne. Catholics and Protestants have been raised as enemies for

generations. It's a hard culture; The people of Belfast love hard, fight hard, laugh hard, and live hard. It's what gives Belfast its charm and what makes it difficult for some people to keep their heads above water.

That's what makes Quaker Cottage such a magical place. It's soft. It's a safe haven that sits in the clouds looking over the city. A 5-minute drive half way up Black Mountain and you feel miles and miles away from the conflict on the ground. We truly have the best view in Belfast; you can see the whole city, the harbor, and on a clear day, Scotland.

For more than 30 years Quaker Cottage has been a place where struggling mothers, both Catholic and Protestant, could come for a few hours of peace. They can grab a cup of tea and discuss their lives with a trained social worker and other women like themselves. Meanwhile, their children



get a few hours of play and unconditional love. Quaker Cottage is the highlight of the week for many of these women. They can talk openly about their struggles, and they know their children are safe here.

As a childcare worker at Quaker Cottage, it is an absolute honor to work with the children of Belfast. Whether we're belting out a song from *Frozen*, having a teddy bear tea party, or feeding the farm animals outside, there is never a shortage of laughs or cuteness. The children I work with often have a lot going against them in their lives, and the houses they live in can be dark and scary. But when we pick up the kids and they run on to the bus and yell, "Yay Quakers!!!" I am comforted that we are a light for them. And just the same, they are certainly a light for me. 🌿



**INTERESTED IN VOLUNTEERING?**

**VISIT [BRETHRENVOLUNTEERSERVICE.ORG](http://BRETHRENVOLUNTEERSERVICE.ORG) OR EMAIL [BVS@BRETHREN.ORG](mailto:BVS@BRETHREN.ORG)**



## For each of us to see the other

By Joan Huston

My husband, Ery, and I are working with Brethren Disaster Ministries, rebuilding houses damaged by flooding from Hurricane Matthew in October 2016. We are currently 60 miles northwest of Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, in the state's poorest county and far from any golf courses.

I'm learning many skills. For example, today two high school girls and I were hanging drywall. In one corner of the drywall sheet we were short 3/4", while in another corner it was too long. I disgustedly figured we had measured wrong and asked an experienced person for help—but he got the same measurements! We discussed it, got a level, and determined which wall was more plumb. Finally our wallboard trapezoid fit! This kind of problem solving is fun, even if the work is tiring, and it's rewarding to restore a house—as well as the homeowners to it.

We continue to meet a wide variety of people. Each week a new crew of 12 to 15 volunteers comes to work. Most are Brethren men who, like us, are retired. But there are also local volunteers, students, and non-Brethren groups. Once I learned how to set boundaries in our dorm-like living situation, I have found it exhilarating to relate to such a diverse population.

One favorite aspect of BDM life is singing before breakfast and supper, followed by someone leading devotions. These worship times frequently offer a glimpse into the leader's core and helps us to begin meaningful conversation. Recently someone read Genesis 1:3 about God creating light, and suggested God's light is for each of us to see the other. It's a life, not just a BVS goal, to see others and care. I want to see past differences in age, economic status, heritage, or political views that I may have with others and know that God loves each the same as me. Yes, Lord, you created light! Help us live in your light. ✨

Joan with Catlin Bundenthal and Matilda Earwood applying math to drywall cuts.



Photo by Jim Shively



Katie Hiscock, Unit 316

## Sharing the light of God

By Katie Hiscock

My name is Katie Hiscock and I am a part of BVS Unit 316. My placement is at Casa de Esperanza de Los Niños in Houston, Texas. I have the privilege of being a foster parent to four amazing children ranging in ages from 4 months to 3 years. The children come to Casa either through Child Protective Services or a voluntary placement. They are here because of a parent's mental illness, abuse, neglect, drugs, or other reason that makes Casa the safest and best place for them.

As a foster parent, I share in the children's joys and happy times, and I get to snuggle them when they are sad or scared. I show what love means by telling them constantly that I love them, and by giving them hugs and kisses. It's not an easy job, but what makes it meaningful is when I see a child who should have been walking months ago, finally start to walk and then run. Or when a child randomly tells me that they love me on the way to a doctor's appointment. Or when I see a child's face light up as they run to me because they missed me while I was gone for an hour. The kids make my sleepless nights

and many tears worth it, because I can give them what they need in the moment.

I share the light of God with these children every day by showing them what love and kindness mean. Being there for them when they wake up shows that I care about them and am not going to leave them. The children also remind me every day of what it's like to have a child-like faith, and I'm blessed to experience the world through their eyes. I am excited every day to share new experiences with the kids, and to make more memories with them at Casa. ✨

## ALUMNI CORNER

### Nobody gets hit here

By Amy S. Gall Ritchie, D. Min.



Amy S Gall Ritchie  
Unit 181

After my first year at Bethany Seminary it was evident that seminary wasn't a good fit for me at the time. A wise professor suggested I take a year and do BVS, so I took an assignment in a domestic violence shelter in Warsaw, Indiana. While not far from home, the culture was anything but familiar, and I was given responsibility right away. I was 23.

One of my first tasks was to come up with a procedure for working with the children in the shelter, all of whom were traumatized when they entered. Behavior was often out of control and mothers needed care themselves, so discipline was a mixed bag. What did I have to offer as a young, recent college graduate with no parenting skills?

I thought back to my college classes in the Psychology department and my Church of the Brethren upbringing to craft a policy and practice that drew from nonviolent teachings, respect for all persons of all ages, and deep listening. One of the things we did was to calmly express that "No one gets hit here," as I put hands and arms to children's sides. I would have them say it with me when they were able to. We also

talked with the children about how fears and stress sometimes makes us want to hit or yell or be mean, and we would learn together. Miracle of miracles, it worked time and again.

These were challenging kids, but with time the process became part of the culture of the shelter. I saw this when toward the end of my time a boy of 10 was getting ready to leave with his mom. "Charlie" had arrived a month earlier, often lashing out in angry bursts, but he and I had gotten to know each other through daily tutoring. He was a smart boy and our conversations often turned philosophical, if you can imagine. He learned the ways of the safe environment we created at the shelter and soon his outbursts lessened to the point that he could tell us he was getting angry and why, and we would find an appropriate way for him to let off steam.

The day Charlie and his mother were leaving was also the day a new family came to the shelter. One of the new children was running around, very excited, energetic and stimulated by the new environment and the trauma he and his family had recently escaped. The boy came up to Charlie and began to pummel him in the chest. Charlie calmly took the boy by the arms and gently said, "Nobody gets hit here. You won't get hit here. Nobody gets hit here." Then Charlie looked at the three staff members on the couch and said to us, "He's been through a lot."

I continue to point to this very moment as an example of when the theory of nonviolence became real life. I saw the light overcome the darkness right then and there. Charlie changed me and brought the gospel to life. ✨

BVS Unit 181.

