



In this issue:

- **Living Your Passion**
By Dan McFadden
- **Passion Brought Me Here**
By Stephen Miller
- **Uncontrollable Joy**
By Esther Miller
- **Together, Every Step**
By Frieden Gresh

Upcoming Orientations:

- **Summer Unit #319**
July 29-August 17, 2018
- **BRF Unit #320**
August 19-August 27, 2018
- **Fall Unit #321**
September 30-October 19, 2018

By the Numbers:

- **Active volunteers - 38**
27 in the United States
6 in Europe
2 in Latin America
3 in Japan
- **Active Projects - 72**
46 in the United States
15 in Europe
7 in Latin America
2 in Japan
1 in Africa
1 in China

The Volunteer

Sharing God's love through acts of service

LIVING YOUR PASSION



Dan McFadden, Unit 152

Living Your Passion

By Dan McFadden

My BVS colleagues laugh at me when we start talking about BVS themes. Any time we are looking for a theme about how BVS has impacted your life, what is important about BVS, or an anniversary year, I seem to come back to the 50th anniversary theme, "Living the Story." The staff say, "Not again, Dan! We have beaten that theme into the ground!" And yet it keeps working for me. In 1996, soon after I started in this position, we formed a committee to plan the 50th anniversary of BVS. Don Snyder, a former BVS staff trainer in BVS's New Windsor days, was on the committee. We were trying to come up with the right theme for that anniversary when Don said, "I was just singing the hymn 'I love to tell the story of Jesus and his love,' and I thought, in BVS we don't tell the story of Jesus, we live the story of Jesus." Bingo. Theme! This is now the 70th year of BVS. How does one summarize a program that has influenced so many lives? All the time, people tell me how BVS has made an impact on their lives. "My BVS years were some of the best years of my life," they say. Here's one of those stories: In 1956, Nancy Schall Hildebrandt and Carol Stephens Scott lived for a year on top of a mountain near Kingsport, Tenn., serving a small rural church in some of the most rustic conditions in which BVSers have served. They had no running water and made an indoor latrine. They rode horses to get around. They were two young women, their own in the hills of Appalachia. I wonder if any parents today would let BVS send their children into a setting like that. But Nancy says that year was very formative in her life.



BVS Staff - 2018

What is it about hardship and struggle that makes an experience like BVS so formative? *Story continued on page 2.*

This issue of *The Volunteer* focuses on Living Your Passion. The following contributions come from BVSers and BVS alumni across the globe, with a special farewell from Dan McFadden, who concludes his role as Director of BVS in November. Come walk with them on their journey.

Living Your Passion, cont'd



Unit 152

Not everyone's year of service is hard. But in most cases the setting is unfamiliar and the culture is new (after all, any placement site is a new culture for the volunteer). The volunteer must develop connections and friendships just to survive. Those experiences of growth can influence a whole lifetime of living. The saying is true: BVS does "ruin" you for life.

My own BVS story started in the fall of 1981. Orientation for Unit 152 was held at the now closed Camp Woodbrook, in Mid-Atlantic District. There were 33 of us. We received 50¢ for breakfast, 75¢ for lunch, and \$1 for dinner per person, per day, to buy the food for our meals. (That amount has gone up only 75¢ in 36 years). I was pre-assigned to serve in Honduras with Salvadoran refugees fleeing the war across the border. Looking back from my current chair as director, I wonder if that was wise. My Spanish wasn't good enough. Steve Newcomer and I were sent to what was, for all practical purposes, a war zone. Through no fault of the BVS staff, the receiving agency didn't know who we were when we arrived. We had little support, and it was a difficult assignment. Perhaps the staff at the time wondered if they had made a mistake sending me there. And yet, I wouldn't trade it for a different experience. Since then? I came back to BVS as the director in late 1995. When I'm done, I will have served for 22 years and 11 months. I met my wife in BVS. Two of our children served in BVS and now live where they served. Our third is entering BVS this summer. Do I have a passion for BVS? Absolutely! I recruit all the time. I buttonhole young adults while waiting to board a plane anywhere in the world. I'm expecting one of those recruits to show up any day now! Living the story? Those words still work for me. 🌿



INTERESTED IN VOLUNTEERING?
VISIT BRETHRENVOLUNTEERSERVICE.ORG OR EMAIL BVS@BRETHREN.ORG



Passion Brought Me Here

By Stephen Miller

Asian Rural Institute (ARI) has provided me with more than just a life-changing experience; it has given me direction. When I first began to consider volunteer work this time last year, I felt unmoored in life. Adrift in a placid sea of routine and plagued by an existential melancholy I couldn't quite explain to myself, I decided to follow a time-tested path to self-actualization: service.

But who to serve? In this age of global interconnectedness, adventurous young people have access to countless slick, well-laminated opportunities to aid their fellow man. Wary of these thinly-veiled vacations (as well as the commercialization of altruism in general), I sought a project that would strengthen my love for the

Earth through personal challenge. This search led me to BVS and subsequently, to ARI.

It would be untruthful to say there was no period of adjustment. Thrust from the relatively undemanding expectations of 9-5 employment and into an uncompromisingly Earth-conscious community where you eat what the sweat of your brow produces, I was unsure at times I would be able to persevere. Yet it was through these struggles that I came to realize an uncomfortable truth: I had spent years pontificating environmentalism from the comfort of a climate-controlled studio apartment, confident that my moral obligations to the cause were fulfilled (and generously so!) by righteous belief alone. There was no need to expose myself to the coarse edges of nature. No reason to venture beyond the recycle bin. What foolishness. From labor in the fields to lessons in the classroom, ARI has honed my previously vague convictions into passion; passion for a planet I've known for a lifetime yet only just truly met; and for those happy, soil encrusted few who understand that its rejuvenation must begin at the grassroots. What an honor it has been to live and work among some of these individuals. What a pleasure it is to have direction. 🌿

"ARI has honed my previously vague convictions into passion for a planet I've known for a lifetime, yet only just truly met."



Photo Credit

Together, Every Step

By Frieden Gresh



Growing up with a strong Church of the Brethren background at a Brethren summer camp, I was taught how important it is to help others. Over time, that teaching became my passion, so upon finishing school, joining BVS was the obvious next step. I decided to go to a project across the country doing something quite different from camp work: working in a homeless shelter right outside of Silicon Valley (which is possibly the most expensive place to live in the United States).

My project has me working as a shelter monitor at the front desk of Adobe Services Sunrise Village Emergency Shelter. In my daily work I help our residents set up meetings with the in-house service coordinators who assist residents in looking for housing or employment, and who also discuss with the residents any

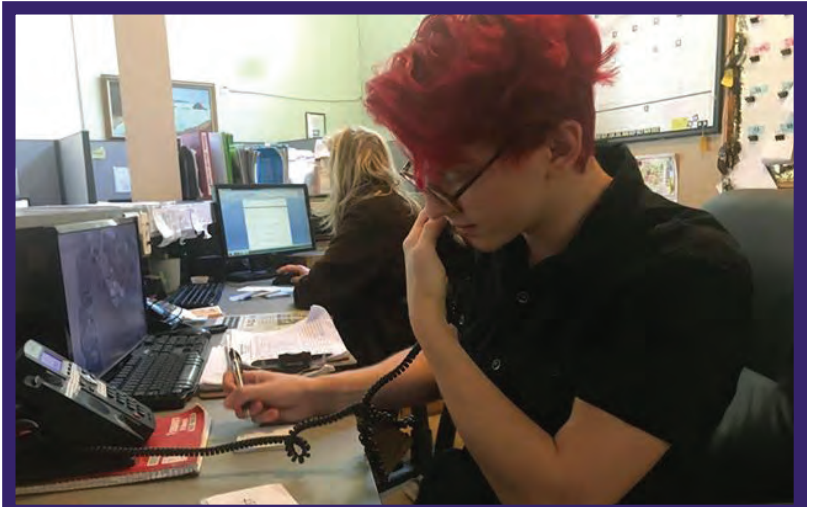
savings that they've built up in their time with us. Sometimes, my role includes helping residents complete their daily chores around the shelter and, if needed, I help in the kitchen or pantry alongside other volunteers from the community as we cook meals or label and sort donated food for later use.

I enjoy my work because I can see how it directly helps the participants in our program to reach their housing goals and transition into stable, independent living in a place where doing so is no easy feat. It's an amazing feeling to accompany a person in each step of the program; from calling the shelter at a very low point in their lives, to filling out their exit paperwork and receiving house-warming gifts for their new homes. I feel that I am living my passion, knowing that I am part of a community that is vital to each resident's success. 🌿

"I'm living my passion knowing that I am part of a community that is vital to each resident's success."



Taking calls at the front desk at Adobe Services Sunrise Village Emergency Shelter.



Esther Miller, Unit 315



Uncontrollable Joy

By Esther Miller

I read, "A strong and barely controllable emotion," as the first definition of "passion" on Google. Growing up around strong women, I learned quickly that my passion has always been utilizing my strength to connect emotionally with people in order to together create a better, just world. I certainly feel an emotional connection with this place. Sometimes I can barely control the joy I feel to be a part of an organization working through the arts to promote peace.

There are good moments: sticky painted hands leaving our class clutching onto galaxies. Their smiles as wide as their new night sky. Students yelling at me from across the parking lot, "HELLO!" using any excuse to practice their English. These moments fill me with joy and pride in my little artists and English scholars.

But not every day is perfect in this effort for peace. Not every day has the same bright and exciting results. Stories are brought to me by old and new friends of the difficult moments in this country.

Stories of family members killed, unable to pay for medical costs, people working so incredibly hard for little amounts of food. These moments fill me with heartache. But these stories continually shift: advancing, growing worse, getting better. But through the struggle of their perseverance, there is still hope.

Centro Arte para la Paz wants to use "creative ideas for a better world." My passion starts there, too. I am learning from and working alongside creative artists, students, luchadoras and guerreros; and tapping into the strong and barely controllable emotions of joy and hope; fighting every day for our passions for a better, just world to become a reality. 🌿

