



# The Volunteer

Sharing God's love through acts of service

## CHASING CREATIVITY

### Creativity In Unexpected Places

Emily Bowdle



My time at the Asian Rural Institute (ARI) has been a big learning experience and a crazy adventure. Although my work keeps me busy, there's still plenty of time for being creative and trying new activities. For instance, after dinner, many people sing songs or play instruments. Other times, people dye clothes with onion peels, bake breads and cakes, smoke bacon from pork raised at ARI, and knit socks. Personally, I enjoy hand sewing, crocheting, and dancing with friends. There is no shortage of creativity on the ARI campus, as the atmosphere itself is a source of inspiration.

For many ARI members, English is their second language, so accents, speed, and vocabulary all play a role in how well we can understand each other.

While the language barrier has been a challenge, it has also caused me to think of creative word choices, explanations, and gestures.

Language becomes an even greater obstacle when leaving ARI and going into town. One day, while I was jogging, I got caught in the rain and found shelter under a gazebo in a park where another woman was already waiting. Since we were stuck together for 20 minutes, we had a whole conversation even though we didn't know each other's languages. We "talked" about the fish in the pond and how she forgot her umbrella, and we laughed about getting drenched by the rain. After performing crazy charades to get our points across, we sat down together and watched the raindrops fall into the pond. This was a very meaningful moment for me because I realized how much joy can be found in having an interaction with a stranger, and, better yet, with someone who doesn't speak my language. With patience and creativity, we could enjoy that fleeting, stormy instance without understanding a word. 🌿



A group photo taken while viewing hydrangeas. Photo credit: Noriko Nakayama Alhassen



A campfire celebration with the community, which involved singing and dancing. Photo credit: Unknown

### In this issue:

- **Creativity in Unexpected Places**

Emily Bowdle, Unit #324

- **Creativity as an Answer to Liminal Space**

Malachi Nelson, Unit #329

- **A Burst of Color**

LeRae Wilson, Unit #329

- **A Generous Host**

Lydia DeMoss, Unit #329

- **May Our Hands Tell Our Stories**

Claire Horrell, Unit #328

### Upcoming Orientations:

- **Winter Unit #330**

January 18 – February 4, 2022  
Camp Bethel, Fincastle, VA

- **Summer Unit #331**

July 31 – August 19, 2022  
Camp Stover, New Meadows, ID

- **Fall Unit #332**

September 18 – October 7, 2022  
Camp Brethren Heights, Rodney, MI

### By the Numbers:

- **Active volunteers – 11**

7 in United States  
1 in Europe  
1 in Latin America  
1 in Japan

- **Active Projects – 55**

37 in the United States  
6 in Europe  
5 in Latin America  
1 in South America  
2 in Japan  
3 in Africa  
1 in China

### Creativity as an Answer to Liminal Space

Malachi Nelson



In waiting for my VISA to Japan to be approved, I've learned that the virtues of patience and creativity are likely siblings. The final destination for my BVS service is the World Friendship Center in Hiroshima, Japan, where I will work with survivors of the atomic bomb and welcome visitors to hear their stories. However, due to COVID, my VISA has not yet been approved. During orientation with unit #329, BVS staff suggested I volunteer with an interim project site while I wait.

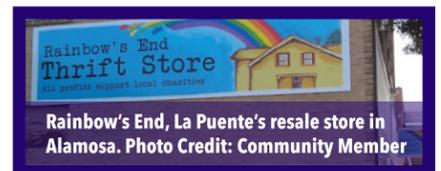
I liked this idea and began serving directly following orientation with La Puente in Alamosa, Colo., a non-profit that works with families and persons near the poverty line. I work as a full-time volunteer at their resale store, Rainbow's End, and make coffee at Milagros, their local coffee shop.

La Puente has proven to be a great example of how to collaborate with community members, provide strengths-based and dignified service, and garner support from a variety of sectors. My bosses have worked with me to develop new skills from my strengths by placing me in retail and the coffee shop. We've tapped my outgoing and communal nature and built on it by creating my regulars' drinks, helping connect community members with La Puente programs which can assist them, and even starting a "Staff Picks" bookshelf at Rainbow's End. I love observing and learning from La Puente as I partner with them because when I put down roots in a community I hope to contribute creatively, effectively, and wisely with those on the margins of the community.

The liminal space of waiting for my VISA hasn't been easy, but finding creative solutions with others has proven beneficial for the community and for myself. I will be excited to land in Hiroshima but will be better for chasing creativity here in Alamosa. 🌿



Group Shot, Unit 329 at BVS Orientation, Summer 2021. Photo Credit: Emily Tyler



Rainbow's End, La Puente's resale store in Alamosa. Photo Credit: Community Member



Milagros, La Puente's coffee shop in Alamosa. Photo Credit: Community Member

**Chasing Creativity:** The following contributions come from current and former BVS volunteers. Get a glimpse into their experiences as they share about where they find creativity at work in their communities and how they channel their own creativity to make an impact.

### INTERESTED IN VOLUNTEERING?

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



## A Burst of Color

LeRae Wilson

Joining BVS was probably the most creative thing I've done. After years of pursuing goals within my career field, I finally decided to just go for it. When looking through projects, I was drawn to the international projects. Once I started chatting with the BVS coordinator in Europe, things moved rather quickly, and I knew I was accepted at my project in L'Arche Dublin two weeks later. When I arrived in Ireland, I found it just as I expected to. The sky is usually gray and gloomy (although

I've taken far more sunrise/sunset pictures than I expected to). The people are usually smiling and greeting me as I pass them on the footpath. What I was not expecting to find, however, are wildly colorful doors. Beautiful bright doors, demure pastel doors, and fun neon doors line the streets in Dublin and the surrounding towns. There are many theories as to why the doors are brightly colored (spanning rebellion against England to helping a drunk author find his way home). My theory is that this is how people combat some of the weather's dreariness- with a burst of color.

Sometimes my life gets a bit dreary, because life doesn't always go as planned. Creativity is a burst of color in our lives to combat the dreariness. There is a huge movement to integrate creativity into school, work, and general everyday life. Creativity looks different for everyone. Maybe creativity is forming a piece of art, baking, or finding beauty in creation. Maybe creativity is planning a game night, visiting the theatre or symphony, or taking a long walk to someplace you've never been. Or maybe creativity is having a conversation with someone about a topic that you're not familiar with. Creativity breaks up the monotony of life. Creativity is feeling free to find your burst of color on a dreary day. 🌿



Sara Cook (European BVS coordinator) and LeRae Wilson at Mt Stewart, County Down, Northern Ireland. Photo credit: Cormack McCleary



Dún Laoghaire Harbor, Dublin. Photo credit: LeRae Wilson



"Nothing like a Dublin Sunshine" Burrow Beach, Dublin. Photo credit: LeRae Wilson



## A Generous Host

Lydia DeMoss

Wikipedia contains a unique definition of creativity; "creativity is a phenomenon whereby something new and valuable is formed."

I am currently volunteering for an organization called L'Arche in Syracuse, NY. L'Arche employs assistants to care for and share life with adults with intellectual or developmental disabilities. Here in Syracuse,

this theme of "sharing life" extends far beyond interactions with the adults that we care for.

Last week, I met a gentleman, Keith, who opened his home for my mother and I to stay when she came for a visit. Keith had been on the board for L'Arche for many years. I learned that this unofficial guest house came to be because of his incredible generosity and love for other people. He told me stories of the many guests that stepped foot in his house; the families of international volunteers with no place to stay, the large family with young kids that struggled to find beds to sleep in between a move, even the current executive director of L'Arche Syracuse who needed a place to live for six weeks after moving here. Keith shared his home with any stranger in need.

Perhaps the most rewarding way to be creative, is to look for creativity in relationships. There is no doubt that Keith, opening his home to so many, has created several new and valuable relationships in his life. His life is full of diversity thanks to all the people he got to know and the stories they have to tell. While I don't have a home to offer people right now, I reflect on what I do have to share. I can only hope to pursue a fraction of the creativity in relationships that Keith does in his. 🌿



The first room guests see when they enter Keith's house. Photo credit: Lydia DeMoss



Notice the wallpaper, the old furniture, and the worn couch that give this room a homey and welcoming feel. Photo credit: Lydia DeMoss

## May Our Hands Tell Our Stories

Claire Horrell



Marta's hands caressed and took attention to each plant, not ignoring any small detail. I was infatuated at not only this routine task, but the form of her hands. The hands of Marta and many other elders in El Salvador told much different stories than those of my own grandparents. They were strong and almost squarish--weathered and with little sensation to heat.

After passing time in a coffee shop one afternoon, I met a woman in her 90's. I was immediately drawn to her hands, and she asked if she could share her story with me. It was not important that I fully understood Spanish because, as she recounted her life, she wept. I held her hands and could feel the life lived in them. This moment inspired in me to document not only her hands, but also the hands of others who spent their lives working the land, battling loss, raising kids, and sheltering their families from war.

With my experience in photography and videography, I have started to create videos and collections of photos displaying the hands and stories of these people. This was not in the description that I read about for my project site, nor was it something listed as a need. However, I believe this to be absolutely necessary. I will never fully understand the lives of other people--especially those that have gone through war. But I can, at the least, show them how beautiful and strong they are through this creative outlet.

Here at Centro Arte para la Paz, the mission is to help aid in the restoration of peace and healing of the trauma that individuals have undergone. My videos and photos will be presented and archived at the center for future tourists, students, and citizens of the area to learn a bit more of the history of the people. My vision is for others to take away from these videos the experiences that I have had through encounters with people such as Marta and the lady in the coffee shop. Chasing creativity is, in itself, chasing after God's will for ourselves. Through artistic methods we learn more about Him, ourselves, and the people around us. May our hands forever tell our stories. 🌿



"Homes of the Pueblo (Rooftops)" Photo credit: Claire Horrell This shot shows the typical houses here in Suchitoto, El Salvador. The traditional adobe walls and roofing have been maintained in this historic city.



"Las Historias de Nuestras Manos (Hands)" Photo credit: Claire Horrell This is the first photos out of a collection of photos that tells the stories of the people's hands. Featured here is Marta Rivas.



"Piensas en tus Acciones (Pig)" Photo credit: Kimberly Flamenco Kimberly participated in my photography seminar. Her photo shows the integration of pollution and the natural environment; a harsh reality for El Salvador.

