



The Volunteer

Sharing God's love through acts of service

WE'RE A LITTLE DIFFERENT. MAYBE YOU ARE TOO.

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Upcoming Orientations:

- **Summer Unit #331**
August 9 – 17, 2022
Location: Camp Stover, New Meadows, ID
- **Fall Unit #332**
October 11 – 19, 2022
Location: Camp Brethren Heights, Rodney, MI

By the Numbers:

- **Active volunteers – 13**
9 in United States
1 in Europe
1 in Latin America
2 in Japan
- **Active Projects – 58**
40 in the United States
6 in Europe
5 Latin America
1 South America
2 in Japan
3 in Nigeria
1 in China



Galen Fitzkee, Unit #329

New Kid on the Block

By Galen Fitzkee

As a BVSer with the Church of the Brethren Office of Peacebuilding and Policy, I have had the incredible opportunity to live and work in Washington, DC within walking distance of Capitol Hill. For a kid that grew up in a small town in rural Pennsylvania, this was a drastic change, and when I first arrived in DC it was clear to me that I did not belong. To begin, the volunteer house where I am staying is located in a wealthy neighborhood, quite obviously out of the price range of a recent college graduate. Additionally, as I learned to take public transportation and find my way around the big city,

I most certainly looked uncomfortable and out of place. Over time, I have come to adapt to my environment and grown to love my new home away from home, but there are still a few ways that I am a little different than most.

One of those is the fact that I am not preoccupied by financial concerns. Because of my BVS stipend, I have more freedom to explore DC museums, meet new people, and think about things other than pursuing a career or meeting my basic needs. Another thing that sets me apart from other people in DC is my purpose for being here. As a BVSer, an important part of my identity is in volunteering, and a volunteer is always ready to lend a hand to someone in need. For me, this includes doing chores around the volunteer house, helping run Sunday services at church, and contributing positively to my project placement. The willingness to joyfully engage in service to others is a characteristic that sets the BVS community apart and makes others wonder just what it is that makes us a little different. 🌿



Frisbee by the Washington Monument. Photo by Galen Fitzkee.

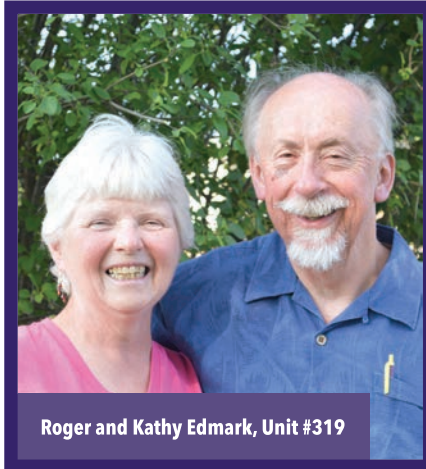


Capitol Building After Dark. Photo by Galen Fitzkee.

The following contributions come from current and former BVS volunteers. Get a glimpse into their experiences as they share about what makes BVS different and how it relates to their lives and projects.

Loving Your Neighbor in an Unusually Good Way

By Roger and Kathy Edmark



Roger and Kathy Edmark, Unit #319

Loving our neighbor usually involves people we run into everyday- the people next door, those in stores we frequent, those we encounter on the streets, our family, friends, and work associates. There are many opportunities to help people in their time of need, or maybe just with a smile. In our day to day lives these encounters make a difference and change the world around us. This is something we all can do each day.

But sometimes we get an unusual opportunity to meet new people in a place we have never lived before. An opportunity to help serve and love our neighbors in a little different way you may never have thought to do.

My wife and I did just that in August of 2019. We were sent by BVS to Hiroshima Japan to serve with World Friendship Center as the Volunteer Directors. We were met by dedicated volunteers, English class students, and staff that all became our friends.

For seven months, before the pandemic closed the borders of Japan to tourists, we also received people from all over the world that wanted to study peace at WFC. World leaders of many countries consider atomic bombs to be “strategic” weapons of mass destruction. Hiroshima and Nagasaki survivors (hibakusha) know of the personal pain and devastation from the bomb that indiscriminately wreaked havoc on everyone within the shadow of its destructive heat, hurricane force winds, and radiation. Barbara Reynolds, in 1965, established WFC as a place where people could come to hear the stories of the hibakusha and to work together for peace. Hibakusha’s cry is “No More Hiroshimas, No More Nagasakis!”

As you can imagine, this opportunity to live and serve in Hiroshima had a great impact on our lives. We are thankful that BVS works to connect people willing to serve “in a little different way” with organizations all over the world needing volunteers to work side by side with amazing people and groups making a difference.

You may have a heart to do something a little different too. If you decide to do something unusual or go someplace you have never been to, it may, like it did for us, change your life. 🌿



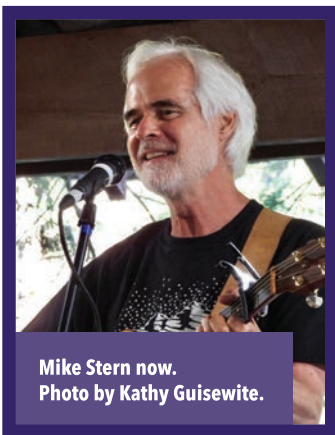
Children's Family Class with Roger and Kathy. Photo by Megumi Mozume.



WFC Send-off Group. Photo by Megumi Mozume.

INTERESTED IN VOLUNTEERING?

VISIT BRETHRENVOLUNTEERSERVICE.ORG OR EMAIL BVS@BRETHREN.ORG



Mike Stern now.
Photo by Kathy Guisewite.

Peace as an Alternative

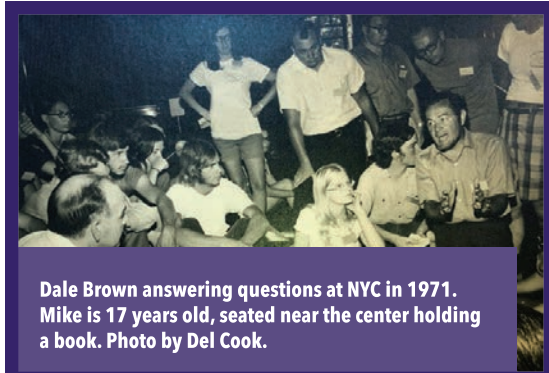
By Mike Stern

After my trial and conviction for refusing to register for the draft in 1971, the judge sentenced me to three years of probation with a two-year work stipulation. But he specified that he would NOT accept me serving in BVS when I proposed it because throughout my trial, our defense had centered so heavily on my Brethren upbringing, Annual Conference statements giving equal support to either conscientious objection or non-violent non-cooperation with the draft, and my key

defense witnesses were Dale Brown while he was the current AC moderator, Art Gish, and my mom. The judge indicated that for him to accept BVS for probation would be allowing me to continue consorting with proponents of criminal activity instead of being rehabilitated. When I told Chuck Boyer of my dilemma, he said I could by-pass BVS training and go straight to the BVS project in Dayton, and to just tell the judge and probation office about the job I would have in an inner-city Head Start Center. It wouldn't be necessary, he said, to add that I would also be doing peace education and anti-draft counseling for Brethren youth groups on weekends and evenings.

At this year's Annual Conference Brethren Service Luncheon, Mike Stern will be accepting BVS's 2022 Partners in Service Award on behalf of the World Friendship Center in Hiroshima, Japan. The award recognizes an individual, project, or congregation that has demonstrated exceptional commitment in partnering with BVS to share God's love through acts of service. BVS is proud to recognize the World Friendship Center for its non-wavering commitment to peace. In addition to the BVS luncheon, Mike will be doing a Wednesday evening concert with several phenomenal musician friends,

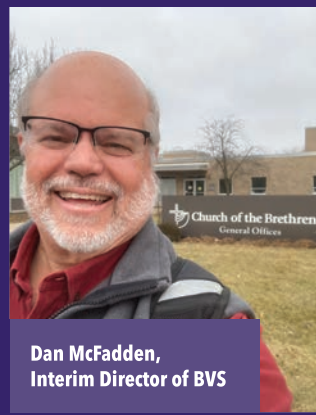
signing songbooks and CDs at the Brethren Press Bookstore on Tuesday at 3:00 p.m., and working alongside his wife, Carol, with the children's choir preparing kids to sing a couple original songs at Wednesday's evening worship. 🌿



Dale Brown answering questions at NYC in 1971. Mike is 17 years old, seated near the center holding a book. Photo by Del Cook.

We're a little different. Maybe you are too.

By Dan McFadden



Dan McFadden,
Interim Director of BVS

Soon after I came back to the BVS office as the interim director, I was asked if BVS wanted to place an ad in the church's monthly magazine, "Messenger". I didn't have much time to make a decision nor come up with an ad.

And then I forgot the whole thing. So, one Monday at noon, I texted my daughter (a former BVSer), her friend, Taryn, and my wife. Could they put their heads together and help me out? They started with a phrase I gave them, "Find your passion." Then came a progression of their

thinking. My wife took notes and kept the piece of paper.

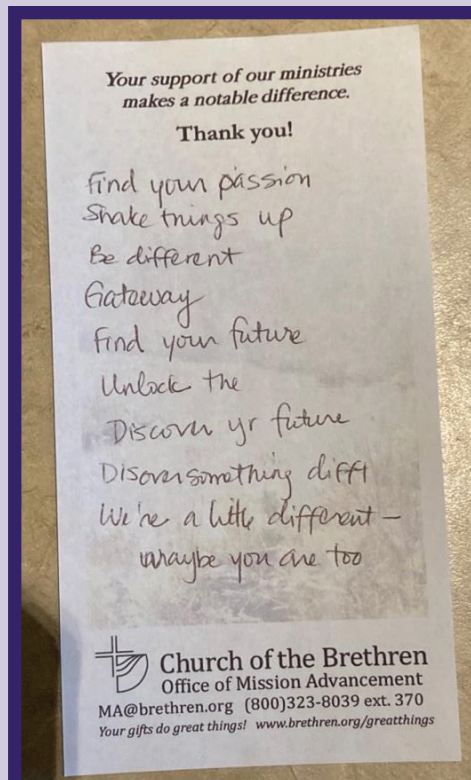
And finally, "we're a little different. maybe you are too."

This all came about in about 10 minutes. When pressed for time sometimes great ideas spring forth.

We on the BVS team have become captivated by this phrase. Right away it seemed to fit and its simplicity tells the BVS experience.

We in BVS are a little different. We always have been. In the way we place volunteers, our hope for living simply, food groups cooking for the orientation units the last 40 years, drop-off day. Is what you gain from your volunteer experience unique to BVS? No. Many others gain the same thing from their service years. And yet, the Church of the Brethren, who forms the foundation of BVS and following Jesus, the reason we do what we do... yes, we're a little different.

Maybe you know of others who are different too. Invite them to join us. 🌿



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Volunteering Abroad

By Florian Wesseler and Johannes Stitz



Florian Wesseler, Unit #330

"We are a little different. Maybe you are too." This is a quote that fits pretty well in the situation we are in at the moment.

We are Florian and Johannes, 19 years old from Germany. We both grew up in the same city and have been best friends since we were seven years old, as we met in our soccer club. In order to experience something in the time between high school and college, we decided to do something different than is usual in Germany or in the US. Most of the people our age are just starting to go to a college after high school and continue studying. We wanted to do something different than the others and decided to do volunteer work in a country that is far away from home. Since the beginning of February, we have been volunteering in a food pantry called SnowCap in Portland, Oregon and work there for 40 hours a week. This was our first step in living alone and being responsible for ourselves. It has been a really defining decision so far.

Never in our lives has time passed so quickly, and we have made so many enriching contacts with new people. It's so interesting to see all the differences and similarities compared to our home country, and every day we gain experiences that seem so important for our lives.

At SnowCap we are responsible for many different things. We have various tasks in the warehouse. We restock the food pantry that runs every day during the week and take part in the interview process that happens at the front window with the clients to give them out the food they need. With all these exercises, we have gained so much experience in many areas. Learning how to speak to customers, working in a team together with people, or just keeping an eye on things and getting to know logistical planning.

With the decision to leave our normal environment in

Germany, we have dared to take a big and difficult step. We left friends, family, and our home behind to do this volunteer service for BVS 5,000 miles away from home. But this is what we can say at this point: sometimes it is definitely worth taking a risk and being a bit different than the usual person. We can absolutely recommend doing a volunteer service with BVS and getting out of your comfort zone could be better than you think! 🌿



Johannes Stitz, Unit #330

we're a little different. maybe you are too.

Learn more about Brethren Volunteer Service:

brethren.org/bvs

