

ANNUAL REPORT

BRETHREN VOLUNTEER SERVICE



Brethren Volunteer Service Updates

New Opportunities

Under new leadership, BVS has introduced several exciting changes. A new early enrollment initiative gives motivated volunteers the opportunity to apply early for targeted volunteer placements—this year, 9 applicants joined BVS during this time! A new pre-orientation discernment period helps volunteers gain a deeper understanding of the policies, procedures, and expectations of BVS before they sign their service covenant and attend

orientation—this aims to improve volunteer retention and resilience. And, four new project sites allow more options for the upcoming year: SPARK, a service-learning organization in North Carolina; Shepherd's Spring Camp and Global Village in Maryland; Food for Greater Elgin, a food pantry in Illinois; and The Shalom Project, a gap-year program in Pennsylvania. BVS is excited to offer these new opportunities to our volunteers!



“Though the world certainly seems chaotic currently, these months in BVS at SnowCap Community Charities have given me hope and shown me the sheer incredible number of people who are working toward making a more just world where everybody looks out for their community and everyone has enough.”

— Josiah Esch, Unit 338

Volunteer Spotlight

Meet the FaithX BVSer

Aly Heckerth is serving her second BVS year as the Assistant FaithX Coordinator in the BVS office! Aly helps to plan FaithX trips and supports the work of BVS.



2025: BVS by the Numbers

- **Full-Time Volunteers:** 43 served in 8 states, Japan, and Northern Ireland.
- **Short-Term Volunteers:** 165 served in 7 states and Uganda.

| BVS Staff Transitions

Welcome New Co-Directors!

After three years of service as Director of BVS, Chelsea Skillen resigned from her position in early 2026 ahead of a move to Portugal. We are grateful for Chelsea's leadership, generosity, and commitment to service.

In January 2026, Marissa Witkovsky-Eldred and Virginia Rendler accepted the positions of Interim Co-Directors of BVS.

Marissa resides in Spruce Creek, PA, and served with BVS during the 2018–2019

year (Unit 321) as Assistant Workcamp Coordinator in Elgin, IL. She continues her current role as Coordinator of Short-Term Service (FaithX) while also providing leadership in the administration of BVS as Co-Director.

Virginia resides in North Manchester, IN, and served with BVS during the 2022–2023 year (Unit 331) at the Corrymeela Community in Northern Ireland. She continues in her role as Volunteer Coordinator while also leading BVS development and partner relationships as Co-Director.

Although the role is currently designated as interim, there are no plans to pursue candidates for the BVS Director position.

Marissa and Virginia are excited for the future and looking forward to leading BVS into its next chapter as Co-Directors!



Orientations

19 volunteers completed orientation in 2025. Summer orientation (Unit 337) was at Camp Colorado and fall orientation (Unit 338) was at Camp Mardela. Orientations for 2026 will be held at Inspiration Hills Camp on July 28-August 5 and Camp Emmaus on September 15-23.

Did You Know?

- BVS welcomes **anyone over age 18**... young adults, mid-age, or retirees!
- FaithX offers **custom short-term service trips** for districts, churches, youth groups, or families!

Stay in Touch

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| FaithX Updates

Living With Purpose

In 2025, FaithX welcomed 165 youth and adults for 9 week-long service trips in Uganda, Arkansas, Indiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Oregon, North Carolina, and Virginia. Participants ranged in age from 11 to 70, represented 26 Church of the Brethren congregations, and 36% were first time attendees! The year's theme, "Living with Purpose," was grounded in Ephesians 4:1-3 and invited participants

to explore the unique ways that Christ calls them to serve and love others. Thank you to Rachel Johnson for serving as our BVS Assistant FaithX Coordinator for the 2025 season!

In 2026, FaithX will host 5 trips with over 60 youth, adults, and young adults with intellectual disabilities. The 2026 theme is "Break Through" inspired by Isaiah 43:2.



"The knowledge that FaithX trips provide is astounding. A lot of it is getting to know what goes into serving people and understanding what people are going through. It is very interesting and eye-opening."

— Kellen, Senior High Participant