



SISTERS OF BON SECOURS USA
 Bon Secours Volunteer Ministry Program
 1525 Marriottsville Road
 Marriottsville, MD 21104

Non Profit Org
 US Postage
 PAID
 Woodstock, MD
 Permit #6



BON SECOURS BEACON

The newsletter of the Volunteer Ministry Program

Summer, 2008

Issue 7

Discovering My Lenten Journey Through Others

By Stephanie Kern, current volunteer



Stephanie Kern

With Easter approaching this year, all of us Bon Secours volunteers were looking forward to the break. I, in particular, anticipated excitedly the opportunity to go home to New Jersey and bring along two of my fellow volunteers. As often happens, despite my good intentions, I had let Lent slip by in long work hours, community meetings, and school applications.

I had let Lent slip by in long work hours...

We had volunteers from Marquette University in Milwaukee, Wisconsin scheduled to come Holy Week but with Easter break trips to plan for the Bon Secours Family Support Center and packing for home looming on the horizon, I saw their coming as more of an additional chore than anything else. The prospect of four additional women in our house, equipped with one shower for which we permanent volunteers already undergo daily Wall-Street worthy negotiations, also seemed underwhelming. Their visit meant planning, coordinating, and shuffling after long hours chasing after a dozen or so toddlers.

The Marquette volunteers; Josie, Megan, Erin, and Barbara; arrived on a Saturday night after an ambitious day-long drive. While a little quiet at first meeting, they soon warmed into our volunteer family. They quickly became natural and close friends. More than that, they truly dedicated themselves to every task and experience that was a part of their week. They began their initiation into Southwest Baltimore by attending Mass at our own local Catholic parish where they were introduced to the small, but strong, community that welcomed us so warmly nearly eight months earlier.

Next, these young women were led by Sr. Kitty, a Sister of Mercy who has lived in our neighborhood for several decades, through a

cursorious tour of the neighborhood. Even this summary tour allowed them a meaningful encounter with the rich and complex culture that is as evident in the cobblestone alleys



Marquette Volunteers and students at the Sisters Academy

and "Arabber" stables as in the blocks of vacant houses and four generations of families chatting on crumbling porch steps. This context provided the backdrop for the volunteers' service to the work sites to which we "veterans" have been committed since our arrival in August.

A meaningful encounter with the rich and complex culture ...

The Marquette students began the week with two days at the Family Support Center, where I work. On Monday, they cleaned our kitchen and our storage closet. That may sound like chores mom leaves on "Teacher Spirituality Day" but if you saw the state of either room you would know they required more than a Mary Poppins touch. Our director at the time, Ms. Eva Austin, took time between their busy scrubbing, lifting, and reorganizing to describe the services at the Center (GED test preparation, job skill training, parenting classes, etc.) and the populations we assist. On Tuesday, the volunteers joined me in the Child Development room... *Continued on page three.*

BSVM Advisory Board:

Roslyn Brock
 Director, System Fund
 Development, BSHSI

Ed Gerardo
 Director, Community Health,
 BSHSI

Mary Herbert
 CBS Archivist
 Bon Secours Associate

Sister Rose Marie Jasinski, CBS
 Senior Vice President for
 Sponsorship, BSHSI

Faye Larkins
 Director of Ambulatory Services,
 Bon Secours Baltimore

Kristine Wollscheid
 BSVM Volunteer 1999-2000

BSVM Staff:
 Shannon Curran, Director
 Marie Truffer, Admin. Asst.

Support Bon Secours Volunteer Ministry

Share your time and enthusiasm. Your personal presence is one of the best ways to support the program. We would like to offer each of the 2008-2009 volunteers a host family. If you would like more information about serving as a host family, then please contact the office at 410.442.3161 or shannon_curran@bshsi.org for more information.

Offer your gently used goods. Help the volunteers "go green." We would like to have some bicycles available for volunteer use. If you would like to donate a bicycle that is in good condition for urban biking, then please be in touch. Also, as we are preparing the house for the next group of volunteers we are in need of many home furnishings, please contact Marie Truffer for a copy of our wish list.

Spread the word. Tell your friends, neighbors and co-workers about the Volunteer Ministry Program. Perhaps you know someone who would like to apply to become a BSVM volunteer.

Partner with us. Become a ministry site for a full-time volunteer. Contact the office at 410-442-3161 for more information.

Support the program financially. It costs about \$16,000 to support one volunteer for the year, including rent, health insurance, stipend and funds for community support. In addition, we are trying to make some improvements to the volunteer residence. Donations for paint and furnishings for the reflection room are greatly appreciated.

Donations are tax-deductible and can be sent directly to:
 Bon Secours Volunteer Ministry Program,
 1525 Marriottsville Road, Marriottsville, MD 21104



From the Director

In this issue, I think you will discover how our volunteers Stephanie Kern and Amber Hamilton both invite us to ask new questions. After reading Stephanie's article on the work of the Marquette Volunteers, it seems that one must consider how others guide and shape our journey. Stephanie calls us to ask: How often do our daily distractions prevent us from being led by the lives of others? How do our preoccupations with the future cause us to overlook the fact that we are, *currently*, in the midst of our journey?

The future will be different if we make the present different.
~ Peter Maurin

While Amber's reflection on her service in the Emergency Department catches our attention in a variety of ways, it also demands us to think differently. Amber's observations raise questions about why the needs of residents in Southwest Baltimore are not being met. While not all of these needs are medical, Amber's reflection demonstrates how the amount of need in the neighborhood has reached an Emergency Level! Although it has been several years since, then, Mayor O'Malley declared Southwest Baltimore a "war zone," Amber clarifies why *all* the needs of residents in Southwest Baltimore must receive immediate, long-lasting, and compassionate attention from our City officials as well as all residents in Baltimore.

I hope that our volunteers' reflections also cause you to ask some new questions.

Peace to you,
Shannon Curran

Emergency Needs in Southwest Baltimore

By Amber Hamilton, current volunteer



Amber Hamilton

This year, my work in the Emergency Room (ER) at Bon Secours Hospital in Baltimore has taught me the necessity of both patience and compassion. The ER sees a plethora of patients. In my eyes, some seem genuinely ill and others seem to come for pain medication, prescription refills, or food. On top of the variety of aromas that waft in with some patients, I overhear others tell the physicians which pain medication works best for them. Additionally, it can be difficult to offer patience and compassion to patients who choose to be verbally or physically aggressive towards staff. There are times when some patients become restless when they have to wait for an extended period of time or when an unresponsive patient with low blood sugar requires more immediate attention. From my perspective, some patients seem to appropriately utilize the ER for actual emergencies and others have their own definition of what constitutes an emergency.

One must take a step back and examine...

These encounters with patients may cause one to consider how other hospitals in Baltimore operate. How long do staff members in other hospitals put up with a patient whose behavior is aggressive? Perhaps, more importantly, one should ask: What is causing this patient to behave this way? At this point, one must take a step back and examine how the immediate surroundings of Southwest Baltimore play a role in our patients' lives and in these interactions. *Continued on page five.*

Continued from page two.

While it by no means excuses disrespectful behavior, it is worth pondering how the many boarded up houses and homicides in a city with the second highest rate of new AIDS cases in the nation factors into the encounters described above. In this part of the city, there are few backyards where children can safely play nor is there an abundance of places such as YMCAs or Girls and Boys Clubs to keep children off the streets. As these children grow up, the likelihood that they may fall victim to life in a desolate city and become entrapped in the trenches of violence, teen pregnancy, and substance abuse seems to increase. Perhaps, if there were more resources available to the residents of Baltimore or better knowledge about the ones available, people would not turn to the ER or call paramedics for food or for non-urgent matters. I have often wondered how the staff is able to deal with these "non-emergencies" or different emergencies, along with the seriously ill, day after day.



Despite the many types of people I have encountered, the greatest benefit I have gained through my work has been learning how to interact with difficult patients. Providing care for those who desire care or for those who are not incapacitated by addiction is a worthy endeavor. While these patients are few and far between, they act as bits of respite which help retain the care giver's sanity. Yet, the true challenge of medicine involves caring for those who desperately need care but present their care providers with many obstacles. When patients are argumentative, un-bathed, or offensive, it is easy to forget that they are, *also*, equally in need of treatment. Yet, it is the gratitude expressed by family members or the unruly patient who calls back to say "Thank you" that makes one's efforts feel truly appreciated. My respect for the field has grown deeply from this realization; and, my own hopes for practicing medicine have become more firmly rooted in the fundamental precept that quality health care is a human right that all people deserve.

I have found my co-workers in the ER to be a group of dedicated people. I have enjoyed working with and getting to know doctors, nurses, technicians, and other members of the staff. I treasure the times when I was able, even for a brief moment, to interact with a grandmother, who despite a drug addiction, is raising her granddaughter, a 90 year-old woman who continues to work, and a 2-year-old girl who has a smile that lights up the room. It is these stories and interactions which remind me that each patient is a person with rich life experiences and dignity. Thus, each patient should be cared for with dignity even when we do not always hear or see how that care is appreciated.

Each patient should be cared for with dignity...

Alumni Corner *Continued from page four.*



Emily with children at the Family Support Center in fall 2005.

Emily is employed in the social work department at Augsburg College in Minneapolis. Emily writes, "I enjoy the people I work with, I enjoy the students, I have a very short commute, and I am in a very inspiring environment." Working at a college has some nice tuition benefits so Emily started a graduate program for a Masters of Arts in Leadership Studies. However, because classes are held on Saturdays, Emily does not necessarily enjoy rising early on Saturday mornings or the extensive homework that comes with the course. But Emily did say that she enjoys the learning, the challenge, and just being in the classroom again. In addition to work, studies, and volunteering, she keeps busy with friends and family, and travel.

Last summer, Emily traveled to Kenya where she visited several schools in the villages surrounding Nairobi and managed a very short but very satisfactory Safari! This summer Emily has a camping trip planned for the Boundary Waters in northern Minnesota and is looking forward to renewing her canoeing skills.

Alumni Corner

Some Updates From Our Former Volunteers

By Marie Truffer



On May 10, 2008, **Lisa Kobs** (2005-2006) received a Masters of Science in Nutrition from the University of Georgia. Lisa writes, "My thesis consisted of increasing the antioxidant capacity in the DASH diet using commonly consumed foods as well as acorns collected around campus and cookies and muffins containing acorns. This was not the kind of research I thought I was going to be doing when I got here, but it turned out to be pretty interesting."

This summer Lisa will conduct post-testing in a nutrition intervention led by one of the professors in the Nutrition Department at UGA. She is really excited about teaching her own class this summer too.

After August, Lisa will be leaving Georgia for either a new living experience somewhere west of the Mississippi or back to Wisconsin. "I would like to make a living promoting sustainable eating practices, but I don't know exactly where that job is located. I've always heard that one should be passionate about what one does, and I could see myself being passionate about promoting sustainable eating habits," Lisa expressed.



Alexis "Lexy" Janda (2005–2006) has an exciting summer ahead of her. She will be leaving her position at LaSalle Manor Retreat Center in Plano, Illinois. In early June, she will arrive in Baltimore for the Sisters Academy's first graduation. Lexy will stay in town for a few days before heading back home to Omaha. In July, Lexy will travel to Australia for World Youth Day 2008. Right after she returns home from Australia, Lexy will be moving back east to attend graduate school at the University of Maryland, College Park. She plans to study Higher Education Administration and work with college students in Student Affairs and Activities. Lexy writes, "I am just super excited to move back to the east

coast and start graduate school. I have missed learning and look forward to being in a classroom again, never thought I'd say that!"



Emily Cronk (2005 – 2006) continues to live a life of service. Emily volunteers with Minneapolis Public Schools as a tutor in their English Language Learning (ELL) program. About her one-on-one tutoring, Emily said "It is so much fun! It's challenging to try to teach the confusing language of English, but the people are inspiring and the work is good." She also serves at the Family Project, sponsored by Family and Children's Service, where she assists with monthly family gatherings in the Minneapolis area. Perhaps Emily's Bon Secours volunteer year at

the Family Support Center was a perfect fit! *Continued on page five.*

where they met the children of our GED students. In the afternoon, they participated in the students' yoga class, organized the massive quantity of children's books heaped in our storage containers, and excavated high-chairs from layers of spaghetti and applesauce!



Stephanie with some of the children enrolled at the Family Support Center.

Wednesday, our tireless volunteers joined Cassie at Sisters Academy. They were given a thorough tour of the school, including its bathrooms and cleaning closets, by one of its many proud students. The women experienced the mission and philosophy of the school, which seeks to provide an expansive education, founded on a Nativity-model pedagogy, to middle-school aged girls from Southwest Baltimore. The volunteers were quickly put to work moving, organizing, and setting up computers — another daunting but much needed task.

Thursday, the Marquette group joined Amber at Bon Secours Hospital in order to serve and observe in the Emergency Department, the Operating Room and the Physical Therapy Department. Spending time with patients who rely on Bon Secours Hospital for everything from practical medical care — to counseling — to a meal and a bed — to a little, much-needed, attention towards the pain many residents endure from social, cultural, and familial strains made a deep impression on the group.

On their final day, the volunteers spent some time in Washington DC — a beautiful day for monuments, museums, and tangible history. Before they left, these women had shared themselves wholly with our community as well as with the community in Southwest Baltimore. Over the course of a week, they transformed from quiet newcomers to old friends who sang "boy band" hits while doing dishes. The time they sacrificed and the effort they devoted was greatly appreciated by each of the work sites. Before heading back to Milwaukee, they left each of us and our work sites thank-you notes. Their Spring Break service left a mark on me in a special way. Their naïveté about the city reminded me of how far I have traveled from the girl who had never lived in a city to the girl who never forgets to lock the door. But more importantly, they approached each of our sites and those with whom we work with fresh love and empathy. Theirs was a true Lenten journey of which I was privileged to be a part.

Their Spring Break service left a mark on me in a special way.



Bon Secours Volunteer Ministry Will Turn 10!

This fall, we will begin our 10th year of supporting lay persons through a year of full-time volunteer service.

Please let us know if you would like to be involved in planning a celebration to honor this anniversary.

