



Olivia Chopra with girls from Immokalee



Volunteers Collin Frank and Dan Emerson

RSHM VOLUNTEER PROGRAM NEWSLETTER



Volume 2 Issue 1



Beginning the Journey *by Dan Emerson*

I love the service I am doing in Immokalee Legal Aid Services of Collier County and Immokalee Housing and Family Services (IHFS). It can be overwhelming, but it is worth it. I am learning a lot about what immigrants have to face when they come to this country and why they leave their native country. I'm thinking of taking a bit of Creole because a lot of the clients that come into the Legal Aid office speak only Creole and I'd like to communicate with them. I felt guilty and embarrassed today because a client came into the Legal Aid office with her daughter and I told her that her daughter was really cute and proceeded to ask the girl what her name was in Spanish. It turned out that the woman was not Spanish, but that she was Native American. It really made me take a step back and think about the generalization that I had made because I had become so accustomed to clients being either Hispanic or Haitian.

Please visit my blog to learn more about my journey.

danrshm2014.blogspot.com/2014

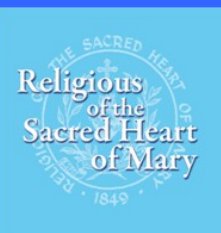
\$20,000 Raskob Matching Grant Challenge

We are delighted to share that we received a \$20,000 matching grant challenge from the Raskob Foundation. With the help of many generous people, we have just about raised the \$10,000 and will receive the matching \$10,000 from the Raskob Foundation when we do and it will support the RSHM Volunteer Program. Many thanks to all of you who contributed and helped us towards this goal.

Applications are
available online:
www.rshmvolunteers.org
Deadline:
April 1, 2015

RSHM VOLUNTEERS MISSION

The RSHM Volunteer Program provides an opportunity for women and men to share the RSHM mission: The challenge of the gospel and the spirit of faith and zeal urge us to respond to the needs of our time, working especially with women and children, enabling the powerless and the deprived to work effectively for their own development and liberation. The volunteers collaborate with the RSHM ministries to bring abundant life to all. RSHM Volunteers are called to serve with a sense of humor, zeal, and a generous heart.



Continuing on the Journey

by Olivia Chopra

Olivia, why did you decide to be a part of the RSHM Volunteer Program last year?

I was working at POTS (Part of the Solution) near Fordham University, where I went to school. I worked there with an RSHM, Sr. Marcella Tyson. Through knowing her, I was able to get to know a lot of the sisters and I went to some of their prayer gatherings. At these events, I got to know the Volunteer Program Co-Coordinator and heard more about the volunteer program. I realized that I had a connection to Immokalee because when I was at Fordham I was part of the Global Outreach Program trip to Immokalee. It wasn't an immediate yes, but after some thought, as a result of reading all my journal entries, I really thought this is what I am supposed to do. In one of my old journals, I had written: "I really loved getting to know Immokalee, but I feel I'm taking more than I am giving." I felt in a lot of ways in doing this volunteer program, I was saying I am going to give up a year of my life and go do this because it is something that I want to do.

You decided to stay in Immokalee after your year of service. What are you doing now?

I recently accepted a position at the Guadalupe Center of Immokalee as a Family Support Worker for early Head Start, a program for infants-three for low-income families. Part of my work is program management and making sure we have all the files ready for clients because it is a federal program. We have to make sure we have the application filled out correctly and have the children's medical forms. A lot of my work is with families and setting goals for the parents and children and other family members, not just mom and baby, but the whole family. One of the things that really struck me about early Head Start is how inclusive it is. I sit with families every month and we fill out a form. I ask what are your strengths, needs, interests, also maybe what are your emergencies? From that list I ask: "What are the things that you want to work on and what can I help you achieve or how can I help you achieve your goals?" In that way I really like the work. I like working in the office and working directly with people.

Greatest Achievement

by Nick Harris

"Da-da"! "What?" I asked, hardly able to contain my excitement. After eight months of worrying about the developmental progress of my mute two-year old friend Henry, I was overjoyed when he finally spoke.



But when he repeated those two syllables, a whole new mix of emotions came over me. Within a couple weeks of my arrival, I'd be greeted daily as I returned from work with screams, "Mr. Nick!" followed by one or more children diving into my arms. I loved spending time with these kids, but they certainly made me understand the stresses of being a parent when my polite denials to push them on the swings were met with screaming and crying. Henry became one of my favorites. Often appearing in only a diaper, he was full of energy but smiled on only two conditions, when being pushed on the swings, or when throwing things at his siblings. So that day when I picked Henry up after a nasty fall from the swing, I was elated to hear him speak, but moments later, I registered what he had said. While I was flattered by his affection, I was heartbroken knowing that I'd leave in a few short months and Henry would feel fatherless once again. In that moment, I swallowed those doubts, lifted Henry high up in the air and gave him ebullient congratulations for finally speaking. This was only the beginning of Henry's successes. A few weeks later, his mother enrolled him in a daycare program and the opportunity to interact with other toddlers had marvelous effects. Soon, he could speak a dozen words. He cried when he was hurt and he began returning people's smiles. Since leaving Immokalee, I've only been able to communicate with his family through letters, but I'm confident that when I head back, Henry will smile and run into my arms. That relationship I formed with those children was my greatest achievement in Immokalee.

*Editor: Susannah Bourbeau,
Co-Coordinator of the RSHM
Volunteer Program
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