



RSHM Volunteer Dan Emerson and the Catholic Volunteers in Florida

RSHM VOLUNTEER PROGRAM NEWSLETTER



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Spring retreat – RSHM Volunteer with the Catholic Volunteers in Florida (CVIF) by Susannah Bourbeau

Anna Maria Lionetti, RSHM and I traveled to Miami to meet our Volunteer Dan Emerson and the CVIF Volunteers for a weeklong retreat experience in April. The week consisted of small group discussions, resume and interview workshop, a visit to Camillus House to serve a meal to 250 homeless, and a day of silence. The volunteers truly enjoyed the opportunity to connect with each other and share their struggles and joys of the year and challenged each other in the remaining 100 days of service. The week ended with a talent show which highlighted the individual gifts and talents of each volunteer. This was Dan’s second retreat with CVIF and once again he was warmly welcomed into the group. We are grateful for the opportunity to collaborate with the Catholic Volunteers in Florida and look forward to more gatherings.

Spring retreat by Dan Emerson

The retreat that I went on with CVIF was an enlightening experience. The retreat was on the water and was next to the Shrine of Our Lady of Charity. I was able to reconnect with my friends in the group as well as reconnect with my own spirituality through Sister Anna Maria and the other speakers. I really enjoyed the time of reflection we had during our day of silence.



Dan Emerson (center)

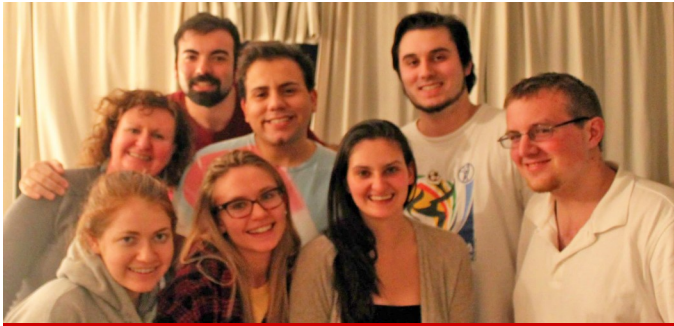
Spring retreat by Anna Maria Lionetti, RSHM

I found myself celebrating the Resurrection of Jesus during Easter week in the sunny and warm breezes of Miami, Florida. My presentation was “Discipleship” and included thoughts on Vocation and Discernment. I underlined the fact that we are all called in virtue of our Baptism, and that God desires our happiness, whether it be as a married person, a religious sister or brother, a priest, or a single person. Some of the women were interested in knowing how does a person know what God is asking of them. For me, the fact that the question was even raised meant the Spirit was at work within them. The experience helped me to come to the awareness of the many men and women trying to live their lives in meaningful ways through choices that are life changing for them and for those they encounter in service experiences. I feel God put me in contact with these young adults, so as to deepen my RSHM mission “...that all may have life”, and I left Miami with renewed hope and joy for the future.

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.





Global Outreach team, Olivia Chopra, Thomas Ginch

Working for Food Justice in Southern Florida

Taken from Fordham News: Patrick Verel and Janet Sassi

background, it is possible to pretend that social injustice is a phenomenon that only plagues exotic, developing countries,” said Fordham University senior Thomas Ginch. “In reality, injustice is alive and well in America.” Ginch was one of 7 students who spent his winter break in Immokalee, FL with the Global Outreach (GO) Program. Ginch led a team to Immokalee, a community where the issues of immigration reform, farming rights, affordable housing, and food justice are of major importance to the local population. The group worked with Immokalee Housing and Family Services, power-washing, painting, and repairing two housing units for recently arrived homeless families from Haiti, said Carol Gibney, associate director of campus ministry and the trip’s chaperone. They helped prune planted fields on one of the local farms, where day laborers harvest the area’s tomatoes and peppers. They met with a lawyer to learn about its farming rights work and its work on behalf of area undocumented women and children. Ginch said the GO team also learned about ongoing tensions between undocumented workers and management at local farms, where food production and labor issues are at the forefront. “Immigration reform could transform the community from one that fears authority too much to challenge corporate corruption, to one with enough residency security to defend itself,” he said. “Once you enter into the world of the ‘other’ and talk and meet and hear stories, you are different. You put the face to the name and it is incredible.” *Thomas Ginch has committed to serve in Immokalee as an RSHM Volunteer starting in August, 2015 along with another Fordham graduate and graduate of St. Anselm’s College.*

“Coming from a financially secure

Ut Vitam Habeant : That They May Have Life (Jn. 10:10)

by Carol Gibney, Campus Minister, Fordham University

In early January, 2015, I found myself in a sweater with a blanket wrapped around my shoulders, standing on the side of a highway in the wee hours of the morning. I was accompanying a group of Fordham University students on a service immersion project to this rural farming community. This is when the laborers are selected by crew bosses to get on the buses taking them to the farms where they will spend 8-10 hours in the hot sun, picking fruits and vegetables that are brought to local packing houses, then sent by tractor trailers to various supermarket chains in the US. This experience opened my eyes and heart to a variety of justice issues that had not been at the top of my awareness level when I go and purchase produce at a grocery store for my family. But that pre-dawn vigil, heightened my awareness of food justice, exploited and underpaid undocumented workers in the USA, and how their lives and well-being are connected to me and to all of our lives. During the week, we met with Sr. Maureen Kelleher, RSHM a lawyer advocating for the individuals and families who risk life and limb to come to the US only to be treated as “less than” humans, with no rights to laws or basic dignity. We met with Dan Emerson, the RSHM volunteer, who has made a positive impact on the families and children that live in the Immokalee Housing and Family Services. Just spending nine days in this community, gave me a better understanding of the life of migrant workers and the wonderful opportunity it is for individuals to grow in their understanding of living a life that is of solidarity “for and with others.”

“The ability to immerse oneself, with vulnerability and reverence, into another’s reality is essential for the prophetic task of ‘bearing witness’.”

Mev Puleo

by Sr. Ines Gizzarelli, RSHM

Immokalee is an agricultural town in southwest Florida. It is home to Mexicans, Haitian, Guatemalan, and Honduran immigrants and migrants who have fled the violence, disappearances, kidnappings, and the brutality of organized criminal groups in their countries, as well as the lack of justice and work to support their families. Their personal stories of why they fled their homeland, and for many leaving family behind, and how they got here, are heart wrenching. For decades this area has been legend for the abuse of farm workers. At the Legal Aid Office of Collier County where I volunteer, we assist the clients by getting them legal immigration papers. In that way, we keep them from being exploited. Sr. Maureen Kelleher, RSHM, the Attorney, has given literally thousands of men, women, and children the opportunity to create better lives for themselves. Dan Emerson and I are honored to work with Sr. Maureen and the two paralegals who work with her, Anna Rivera, who speaks Spanish and works with the Mexicans, Guatemalans, and other Hispanics, and Nadine Pierre who speaks Creole and who works with the Haitians. There is a profound sense of responsibility and compassion to use the skills each of us has to improve the lives of the most vulnerable members of our community.

*Edited by Susannah Bourbeau
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