

## Updates from the RSHM Volunteers



### **Former RSHM Volunteer takes action with Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW)**

March 3, 2016 Dan Emerson, RSHM Volunteer '14-'15 participated in the Workers Voice Tour in NYC. Dan demonstrated with protestors against chain restaurant Wendy's, challenging the food giant to support farm workers. Dan is currently studying social work at Stony Brook University.

## RSHM VOLUNTEER PROGRAM NEWSLETTER



## Catholic Charities by Wanda Medina

In January of 2016, I started a new part time placement at Catholic Charities. I am teaching English to a group of women from Immokalee. The experience thus far has been quite challenging and rewarding.

In regards to the challenges, I find that it is difficult to cater to the needs of each and every student. I want each of them to excel and to learn as much as possible, but this is difficult. It is challenging because each student has different academic strengths and weaknesses. Despite the varying levels of understanding, each student has found the English language to be quite complicated, as do I. As a result, I translate everything in Spanish, in order to help the women comprehend the topic at hand. I have to admit that this is quite challenging for me, but I am receiving much more than I expected in return. These women are helping me to master the Spanish language. My written and verbal skills in Spanish have greatly improved. I truly believe that this is what the experience is all about- being able to give and allowing myself to receive.

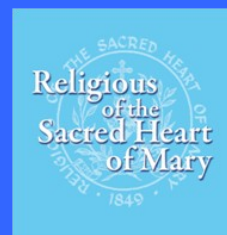
Although this position is difficult, I find it to be very fruitful. The groups of women I work with lift one another up. They help translate the topics presented in Spanish and collectively help one another when the topic is not fully understood. Essentially, they are each other's greatest fans and they empower one another to continue learning, despite the many challenges experienced. The most touching part of this position is being able to watch the children of the parents assist them with their class work. The parents show a level of vulnerability by asking their children for help, when they are unable to understand a topic. It is great being able to watch the children connect with their parents. In many cases the child can only understand the parents, but have lost his/her ability to speak the Spanish language. So I have to say the beauty of this placement is being able to watch the kids reconnect with those that they love most.



## Volume 3 Issue 2

### 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.



## *Lenten Reflection by Riley Duggan*

I am continuously trying to reflect on all that I am doing here and give meaning to it all. In the mornings I go to Catholic Charities in Immokalee where I help receive and sort the many donations that come in weekly for our clothing room and our food pantry. In the afternoons I go to an elementary school where I help in a few different classrooms and in their afterschool program. On Sundays, I teach Catechism to 3rd graders.

I recently taught my 3rd graders about Lent. There are three things Catholics are called to do during lent- prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. In Pope Francis' message for Lent, he advises us that this is a season to grow closer to God through practicing the works of mercy and being open to God's word.

Lent is a way to remind ourselves to grow closer to God through repentance, sacrifice, and service to others. Through almsgiving, we are able to reach those in need. Through fasting and prayer, we are able to reach the need within ourselves. We fast to internally grow closer to God. How are you being called to fast? We give alms to look beyond ourselves; to get out of the individualistic mindset our society encourages. We are called to a deeper prayer life during Lent. Prayer gives meaning to our fasting and almsgiving and gives us the strength to do both graciously and gratefully. How are you being called to pray?

At Catholic Charities, we start each day with prayer. All of the staff members, along with the volunteers join together for a few minutes each morning to give thanks for all God has given us and to ask Him to bless our upcoming day. We choose to do this every morning with the realization that we cannot serve God's children without first asking God to direct us and give us the guidance to treat each person we meet as He would. I am called to fast from any stress or anxiety I have about the future and fully rely on God and trust He will provide for me and has a great plan for my life. I am called to give of my time- to indirect service sorting clothes and to direct service through building relationships with the students. I am called to pray constantly. We are all in need of God's mercy and guidance. Just as I try to take time to seek God's direction before any interaction, let us approach all actions in our lives in the same manner. May we take time before Easter to reflect on our own sinfulness and seek repentance so we are more fully prepared to enter into the celebratory season of Easter.

## *January Retreat by Anna Maria Lionetti, RSHM*



In January I went on retreat in Lake Placid, Florida along with Sr. Ines Gizzarelli, RSHM with our RSHM volunteers and the Catholic Volunteers in Florida (CVIF). Our living facility for four days was a simple diocesan retreat center, Campo San Jose in Lake Placid, in a very tranquil area. On the first day of the retreat we traveled to Immokalee for a full immersion experience in the places where Sisters Maureen and Ines minister. The goal of the retreat was to learn more about social justice issues, services available for the immigrant population and how to take action on issues of injustice. During the four days some time was allotted to different prayer forms, reflection and journaling to integrate what we experienced. Our volunteers are in great form and count on our prayers as they continue to share their gifts with generosity and joy with the people of Immokalee. It was a privilege for me to visit Immokalee and share in the abundance of God's goodness among the volunteers.

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## Program Values

Simple Living

Social Justice

Community

Spirituality

Zeal



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