Friendship
Pope Francis has been reminding us that the core of our faith is not primarily a set of doctrines or practices but an encounter with the Lord Jesus. It’s this encounter and the resulting friendship with Jesus that has the power to transform our lives. Anything else pales in comparison; and in the end does not stand the test of time and the turmoil of life.

Action Over Words
We are called to express our experience of friendship with Jesus in radical hospitality and unconditional love for those around us. It starts with the people with whom we live day-to-day and extends to those in our community who are most in need of God’s compassion and mercy. Talk is cheap. Pope Francis challenges us to walk the talk!

A New Ecology
Saint Francis of Assisi is the patron saint of ecology. Many young adults are drawn to his stance of care for creation. But now Pope Francis has revealed the deeper truth of St. Francis that we too are part of that creation. We are called to mutual love and interdependent care for one another especially those whom the world sees as marginal and not important.

Pope Francis challenges our FrancisCorps volunteers to develop a deep friendship with Jesus and to bring that friendship to others through generous service. This call of Pope Francis is meant for us all, the pilgrim people, until we come to the new and eternal Jerusalem.
I am blessed with the opportunity to serve at Asociación Al Niño Con Cariño for this coming year. The site I serve is, for all intensive purposes, a girl’s home for 30 young at-risk girls who stay there during the week. The girls range from 4 to 15 years old. I get to help with whatever needs to be done around their home. I usually help with their laundry, as well as in the kitchen preparing their meals. Once they come home from school we all eat and play around for a while. Once all their energy is out (which is nearly impossible), I then help them with their studies. Although it is tough work to maintain a home for so many little messy ones, I see it as a way of making sure their home is somewhere they can feel safe and be healthy. The best part of my job is that I am a hand to hold when they are upset, a hug waiting for them when they come home, and someone to challenge them to become strong young women.

My worksite has consisted of transporting patients to and from the cafeteria to the clinic, moving patients from their wheelchairs to a treatment bed, assisting patients as they walk along parallel bars, and occasionally treating patients with ultrasound, pressure therapy, or radio frequency. Not only have I enjoyed helping the patients on a physical level, but emotionally it has been a rewarding experience as well. Although I sometimes struggle with the Spanish, it amazes me how much I can still connect with others. I believe as human beings, we all seek love and relationships--it is what gives our life fulfillment and value. Working at Hogar Santiago Crespo has given me an unlimited opportunity to build those relationships and connect with others.
ERIN TWIEHAUS
Home: Carmel, IN

Rostro de María is a ministry with a great need for compassion, flexibility and an attentive ear with the women and children of an underprivileged neighborhood of Alajuela. As a preschool teacher, tutor, helping hand in the kitchen and day care registrar, the daily challenge is being attentive to each relationship that I have begun to build. These relationships have undoubtedly been the most rewarding, frustrating, joyful and challenging ones that I have experienced until now, but they are why I look forward to returning each day.

JUSTIN Oloriz
Home: Laguna Niguel, CA

My site is the Hogar Buen Samaritano, a shelter for displaced men. Some are here as recovering addicts, while others have been brought in as they have mental or physical disabilities and would not make it on their own on the streets. My tasks include helping to serve their daily meals, shaving and cutting the nails of those who can’t do so themselves, and taking the men out to the park to keep them active (I get to play A LOT of checkers). My favorite part about working here is the greeting I get from all the guys everyday, they are so happy to have me just being here with them. The most challenging part of it all is seeing some of the younger residents come and go back out on the streets. I run into them walking to and from work every so often and can tell that they have returned to their vices.

WHITNEY WILLIAMS
Home: Colorado Springs, CO

I work at Manos Abiertas, a place for people who have disabilities and need a home. The hardest part is knowing that death is an inevitable reality I will have to face while here. I help take care of the kiddos by preparing food, doing nebulization, going for walks, and a lot of physical therapy. Working at Manos allows me to shower others with love and to share a piece of my heart with not only the kids but also the other workers. This place is definitely a blessing.
SYRACUSE

Central New York with its spectacular forests and lakes is also home to the FrancisCorps base in Syracuse, NY. The “Salt City” is home to an astounding diversity of immigrants and refugees from around the world who are helping rebuild what was a city in decline. The friars and sisters and many young adults have been working intensely over the last 15 years to help rebuild the community. These efforts are finally paying off and our volunteers play a key role in making this adventure a reality.

ASHLEY DISTEFANO
Home: Ballwin, MO

The kids have gone back to school and things are in full swing here at the Assumption Food Pantry and Soup Kitchen. Since I have started working here we have provided over 500 households with meals for the month from the pantry and 1000s with soup and sandwiches at the window. I enjoy working with the reliable volunteers daily and have noticed the different personalities. Thus far I have learned how to do intake of clients, take clients through the pantry and work the window in the evening. I have been fortunate to be learning the ways of the Assumption Food Pantry and Soup Kitchen alongside my new director Br. James. I look forward to the coming months as I continue to get more acquainted with my new role while keeping in mind that; “a life not lived for others is not a life” ~Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta.

SYRACUSE / SEE WHAT WE DO

BETH MEISINGER
Home: Omaha, NE

Francis House provides a home and extended family for those who are terminally ill. As a FrancisCorps volunteer, my role is to assist wherever needed in the house, which includes cooking, cleaning, reception and office work, as well as spending time with residents. My favorite moments so far have been hearing the residents’ stories, as well as getting to know the amazing staff and volunteers. It has been difficult to see many residents come and go in the past couple of months but it’s inspiring to experience the atmosphere of love, acceptance, and peace that exists for the residents at Francis House during their final days.
Brittany Wilcox
Home: Westmoreland, NY

I am working at Downtown Emergency and Practical Assistance. For half the day on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday I help out with the food pantry interviewing clients to get them some food or to connect them to their local pantries and other services available to them. During the rest of the week I am in the office referring people to different social services offered at our location or throughout Syracuse. Some of our services include furniture donation and delivery, housing assistance, and caseworkers upstairs. So far I have really enjoyed all that I am learning about the poor and homeless culture in our society. It has been very eye opening. Although this is also what I find challenging at the same time. It is very hard to hear a situation and not be able to help someone. However when you can see on a person’s face that you have just helped them in a great time of need it is very rewarding.

Brendon Foley
Home: Binghamton, NY

Northside CYO Refugee Resettlement Services provides essential support to individuals and families who were forced to leave their countries due to unsafe conditions. There, I serve the Employment Department by teaching necessary skills for the working world, preparing clients for interviews, searching locally to develop jobs, and by simply being a resource to help refugees earn their first job in America. I am blessed to be able to help these refugees as they work toward getting a much-needed fresh start -- something they will remember for a long time. What often makes this work challenging is a combination of helping refugees overcome cultural differences and language barriers, while trying to find the right job with employers who are willing to work with them. They are an incredibly diverse, hardworking community and have already taught me a lot. It takes tremendous perseverance to start from scratch in our much different world and I’ve been reminded daily of how fortunate we are to live in our country, and to have access to all that we do.

A Permanent Home for the Volunteers

A donation has been received enabling FrancisCorps to purchase a permanent home for the volunteers in Syracuse.

For most of the last 16 years our FrancisCorps volunteers in Syracuse have resided during their year of service in a house rented from the Sisters of Saint Francis. (The volunteers in Costa Rica live in a house provided by the friars). The house in Syracuse is on Court Street and is located directly across from the former mother-house of the sisters. In the past year the sisters made a bold move to sell this mother house and the houses which they owned around it in order to participate in the Franciscan Villa project which provides for an innovative way for the sisters to live and age-in-place with increasing services as they need them.

Last year the sisters offered FrancisCorps the possibility of purchasing the house on Court Street. Although the sisters’ offer was very generous, FrancisCorps did not have the means to purchase a house; that is until a very special donor was found. The purchase is still in process at this time but we feel confident that we will close on the house by the New Year.

Home ownership will be new for FrancisCorps. We have relied on the Sisters’ wonderful lay employees for the maintenance of the building in the past. Now we will have to look after the house ourselves and also make sure we have the resources in place to do the necessary maintenance. In other words we are going to need your help and advice as we go forward. Stay tuned!
Emily Petrie
Home: Needham, MA

My name is Emily Petrie and I am the Volunteer Coordinator at Catholic Charities’ Vincent House Neighborhood Youth Center. This is a place where children ranging from ages 5-12 can go to after school to get help on homework and to play with their peers. All the kids are so wonderful and even though they really push my buttons sometimes, I look forward to coming to work every day because it means I get to spend more time with them. I love hearing about their day or their weekends, not to mention seeing the look of accomplishment on their faces once they figured out a difficult homework problem. I love belting out various Disney songs with them and watching their faces light up when I tell them we’re going to a park. I think right now the most challenging aspect of this placement for me is making the children see me as an authority figure, but also showing them the care and support they need from me. I am loving my time here at Vincent House, and I cannot wait to see what the rest of the year has in store for me.

Claire Thibodeaux
Home: Saint Martinville, LA

The Bishop Foery Foundation is a center run by Catholic Charities of Onondaga County which offers an after school program from 2:00-5:15 p.m. Monday through Friday for elementary-aged children. The key components of the program are education, recreation, and behavior built into what is known as The Bear Program. This program is a point-based system that reinforces the completion of homework, use of manners, and the participation in educational activities, among other things. The program allows me the opportunity to interact with children and provides with me with the chance to reinforce education, which can be a challenge at times. I am also challenged to plan program activities that incorporate education, as well as, recreation. The center is a place where children come to spend time with their friends, build social educational skills, and prepare themselves for bright future.

Kristen Rayfield
Home: Eatonton, GA

Health Home is a care coordination program that provides the best care plan involving health and social service needs for their clients. It is a new program at St. Joseph’s Hospital and a new site for FrancisCorps. Therefore, my biggest struggle has been finding my niche. However, I believe it can be molded into becoming a great site for future FC volunteers, especially those interested in health. My ministry, so far, has involved traveling with the Care Managers to nearby counties, either doing outreach or assessments with potential clients. My favorite moments are when we “gown up” to meet Health Home clients that are in isolation at the hospital. Above everything though, I feel blessed to be working alongside the Care Managers, who not only care about their clients but also want to make a difference for them.
The vision of FrancisCorps is that our volunteers will move on from their experience and become leaders in their communities, families and careers, bringing with them the spirit and values of Saints Francis and Clare of Assisi. Here’s how we do it...

**It’s an experience not a program**

So for starters we would explain that FrancisCorps is not just a program that has a beginning and an end. It’s an experience meant to form young adults and assist them for life. Young people are invited to share in the life of over a million Franciscan lay men and women, sisters and friars and to experience the spirit of Saint Francis of Assisi; the most beloved saint in the world.

**More than just service**

There are many organizations that can offer an opportunity to serve. FrancisCorps does that and a lot more. FrancisCorps was founded as a way for young adults to discover, not just how to serve, but a new way of living.

We propose to them a vision of life that is grounded on the key insights of St. Francis of Assisi and of his friend St. Clare. Namely that: we are interdependent with one another and with Creation, the secret to living the Christian life well is by living in community where people find support, challenge, forgiveness and joy and ultimately everything we have is a gift from God. Our volunteers live this in FrancisCorps by sharing a home with like-minded young adults who share a meal together every day and weekly take time to reflect on their experience. They also participate in 4 weekend retreats (besides Orientation and the closing Transition retreat) where they reflect on their life together.

**Faith-lived not just faith-based**

The Christian faith and spirit of Saint Francis are not only founding principles of the FrancisCorps experience; they are also a part of the daily life of the volunteers. Every day they take time to pray together. They take turns offering creative and meaningful prayers for one another that help them recognize the face of Christ in the people whom they serve and in one another. During the 6 retreats offered they also explore spiritual themes such as community, finding God in service, prayer and one’s purpose in life.

**We are family**

Saint Francis of Assisi saw early on that not everyone was going to be a Franciscan Friar (The 1st Order) or one of St. Clare of Assisi’s Sisters (2nd Order). So Francis founded the Secular Franciscans or 3rd Order who are men and women, married or single who live the ideals of Gospel in the Franciscan tradition. Our volunteers also are part of this family, sort of like an unofficial 4th Order. The FrancisCorps young adult volunteers benefit from the presence and support of the Friars, Sisters and Secular Franciscans in their day-to-day life. One of the Franciscans come over for dinner once a week. They participate in the volunteers’ retreats and are there for guidance, friendship and prayer! Together we are the Franciscan family!
Michael Huynh (FC 1): Life is Good! PS God is smiling!

Julie Trujillo (FC 2): We have probably topped the charts on number of children for FrancisCorps with 5! Silas Benjamin Trujillo was born on May 10th this year. We also had an impromptu gathering of FC2 on July 5th.

Monica O’Brien (FC 3): Is expecting baby #4.

Nathan DeCock (FC 4): Nate from FC4 here. Big news in our house this year is the birth of Oskar in August, William!

Kat Bucciantini (FC 5): I just moved to Portland, OR from Chicago IL and started working as a Nurse Practitioner in a small community clinic that works primary with uninsured and under-insured folk.

Kassie Murphy (FC 5): I’m moving from Boston to the Hartford CT area in January to be closer to family. I’m leaving behind a busy practice of 1000 patients here at a public hospital in Somerville MA to join the Veteran’s Administration as a PCP in Newton CT.

Melissa Davey (FC 6): Just wanted to share with everyone that Robert Landini and I got engaged on August 8, 2014 and will be married on September 12, 2015 in Annapolis, Maryland.

Andrea Cook (FC 7): I’m excited to announce that I got married on August 31, 2014 in Upper Marlboro, MD! My husband’s name is Jay (Saravanan) Jayavelu; I’m still getting used to saying: Andrea Jayavelu!

Liesl Schumacher (FC 8): I changed jobs back in February and now work for Google, where I led the launch of Google Express (a brand new same-day delivery service) here in Washington, DC. Check us out if you live in the city! I’ll be moving to San Francisco in early 2015, and look forward to connecting with any alums who are out in that area.

Courtney Campbell Endwright (FC 8): I got married on October 11, 2014 to Adam Endwright in Bloomington, Indiana. I am about to start my third year as an associate attorney at a small labor and employment law firm in Indianapolis where we do mostly employee based litigation / advocacy.

Jocelyn Collen (FC 8): In September 2014 I joined the 2014-2016 cohort of Contemplative Leaders in Action with the Jesuit Collaborative in Boston.

Nathan Drahms (FC 9): My big news is that Angela and I welcomed baby #2, Lukas Nathan, into the world on April 24.

Ed Smith (FC 9): Mandy and I are expecting our first child, Francis Edward Smith, on November 14, 2014. I recently opened up an estate planning law firm.

Laurie McComas King (FC 9): In September I started as Vice President & Director of Corporate Relations at MCO Transport, Inc. in Wilmington, NC.

Mary DeVito (FC X): I recently got engaged (Sept 17th)! woohoo!

Ashley Downing (FC X): I started a new job in August as the Volunteer Services Coordinator at St. Lawrence University and loving being back in New York :) 

Meghan Rohrbaugh (FC 11): Married Steve Miller on October 25, 2014.

John Doughton (FC 11): I am now living in Chapel Hill, NC and working as a Family Medicine Resident at UNC. I also have the pleasure of seeing my former housemate Kelli Finch in Chapel Hill when she comes to work with her new job, which she performs from Costa Rica but is based out of Chapel Hill.

Molly Leblanc-Medeiros (FC 12): I’m in a Fellowship program at Merrimack College, working toward a Master’s Degree in Community Engagement. I’m also in my 4th year as a L’Arche assistant.

Brittany Buckner (FC12): I just moved to Chicago to start grad school for speech language pathology :)

Jelly Snyder (FC 12): Same old for me. Still in a Psy.D program at Loyola, MD. Currently an extern at Kennedy Krieger Institute for Child and Family Therapy.

Luke Morgan (FC 13): I graduated with my Masters in Public Administration this past May and I started my job as a Research Analyst in Kentucky state government in April.

Carolyn Berlandy (FC 13): I got a new job at New England Center for Children in Southborough, MA. I’m moving there at the end of November and starting my new job December 1. I’m sad to be leaving the L’arche community after 2 years and moving out of Syracuse after 3 years but I’m excited for the opportunity!

Jeanne Clemmer (FC 14): I earned a promotion to administrative assistant moving up from direct care provider at Bethlehem house Inc; a faith oriented home for individuals with disabilities in DC. Celebrated my one year anniversary with the company in September.

Simon Pearson (FC 14/15): Buenos dias desde Nashville! I am teaching Spanish at Pope John Paul II High School here and loving every minute of my ministry. Basketball coach is among my new titles, as is trip leader for the school’s summer mission trip to West Virginia.

Mairead Rauch (FC 15): In late September, I started my new job at L’Arche Syracuse.

Josellin Garibo (FC 15): I’ve been working at Casa Marianella with immigrants in Austin, TX for a little over a month now as a case manager. I’m also volunteering at Sunday school as an assistant teacher and doing a lot of other things.

Taylor Shorten (FC 15): Our charity Sharing America’s Marrow will be attending 180 events in 2015 in all 50 states to sign up bone marrow donors. We set out on January 19 and will hit our last state (Hawaii) on Dec 21, 2015.

WELCOME OUR NEW ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

We are very happy to welcome Mr. Alexander “AJ” LaPoint as the new Assistant Director of FrancisCorps. AJ is an alum of our program having been part of the 10th group of FrancisCorps in 2008-2009. AJ is a native of Plattsburgh, NY (which Friar Rick tells him is a suburb of Montreal) and attended Siena College in Albany. AJ also attended Boston College where he obtained a Master’s degree in Higher Education and Catholic University Leadership. Most recently AJ was a campus minister at Mount St. Mary College in Newburgh, NY. AJ and his wife Rebecca are happy to be back in Central New York where they are closer to family.

Both the Director and Assistant Director’s positions are fully funded by the Franciscan Friars Conventual of Our Lady of the Angels Province. None of our donor’s contributions go to salaries. All funds received go to recruit, train, house, feed and support the volunteers.