

PREACH THE GOSPEL
IF NECESSARY USE WORDS

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FrancisCorps
Young Adult Franciscan Volunteer Service Experience



**AN EXPERIENCE
THAT DEFINED A
PHYSICIAN'S CAREER**

Nicole Bonk Wahleithner, MD (FC6)

When I stepped through the doors of 1015 Court St. eight years ago, I did not know what

to expect. What would my roommates be like? How was I ever going to handle working with people with

developmental disabilities? What if I had made a mistake moving to Syracuse? Fortunately there were plenty of people around to quell my fears! We started out by visiting the Poor Clares and learning about St. Francis and St. Clare. We spent several weeks just getting to know each other and getting settled into our jobs. I was amazed by how the sisters, friars, former members and FrancisCorps Families welcomed us into their lives. At that time, I did not expect that eight years later I would still see the influence of FrancisCorps in my day to day life.

In FrancisCorps we were constantly being called by one another to be better people. And many of those reminders often echo in my mind. Every time I am at the grocery store I reflect on the choices I make and how we used to be able to feed seven people on \$110 a week! When I think about skipping over leftovers or being too lazy to make a good environmental decision, I hear my community members reminding me to be a good steward. When I am worried about something not

working out, I hear Brother Jim reminding us that the Poor Clares are praying for us!

Watching the Mother Marianne Cope coverage recently I had a chance to reflect on how fortunate we were to be welcomed into the lives of the sisters. The sisters invited us to join them the night Mother Marianne's body came home to rest. We were able to hear stories and appreciate how very palpable and real the life of a saint could be. Her story and reality make very true those words that we are all called to be saints.

Working at L'Arche opened a whole new world of possibilities for me. My first day there, I was incredibly nervous; I had never done anything like that before. My last day there, I did not know what I would do without L'Arche! When I moved back to Chicago I was fortunate to become involved with L'Arche Chicago. I came to UW Madison for my family medicine residency specifically for an opportunity to focus on working with patients with developmental disabilities. Some of the richest experiences of my training have been the time I have spent connecting with not only those with disabilities but being able to relate to their caregivers as well.

While my expectations 8 years ago were unclear, I now know that making the decision to join FrancisCorps was the best thing I could have done. I am incredibly grateful for all of the people that made it possible for us to be there, for the lasting friendships, and for the constant influence my FrancisCorps experiences still have on my life.



THE MOVE FROM "ME" TO "WE"

It's an amazing privilege to be part of the journey of discovery that sees a young woman or man, not too sure of why they've arrived in Syracuse or Costa Rica for this year of service, develop into a confident and empowered leader for the Church and society. For sure our volunteers come to us with many qualities from their families, their parishes and from their college experience. These gifts are then put to test in the real-life experience of FrancisCorps. This isn't college anymore. The volunteers live in their own house together as a community. Together they make decisions that affect one another. It's in community that hopefully they make the move from a "Me" to "We" mentality.

It's also interesting to be at the volunteers' side as they begin to serve in their ministry sites. They usually begin the year with tremendous enthusiasm which is often tested by the reality of the day-to-day grind, by the overwhelming poverty or needs of the people they serve and sometimes the challenges of navigating the red-tape of government and social service agencies. In the end though, through the interaction with the people around them, in reflection with their other FrancisCorps community members and with the retreats and conversations we offer, the volunteers are able to make sense of their experience. The challenges become opportunities.

It's only been just over a year since I've been with FrancisCorps and I have learned so much from our volunteers. They are a blessing to me and an inspiration. This year's group is no different. It's a privilege to journey with them as they become even more amazing young men and women who will serve the community, church and society as leaders. Thank you for being part of this journey. Thanks for your support!

Peace,
**Friar
RICK**



URGENT APPEAL

This summer we failed to raise enough funds to cover the program in Costa Rica. It's probably our fault in that we sent out the appeal later in the summer. It's our first year as the new directors and so we apologize for this. But we are really in a bind. We are in the red for \$5,545 just to cover the Costa Rica program this year. Can you help?

WHY WE DEPEND ON YOU?

Last year we had 28 people apply for FrancisCorps and we accepted 10 of them. We chose those who we thought had the best potential to make an impact on the communities they serve and also those who had the potential to then go on and become leaders in church and society. To find volunteers of this quality it means a lot of recruiting (this autumn we attended 21 college recruitment fairs) and it requires good training. We do not receive any financial support for the recruitment or training except from donors like you.

SEE WHAT WE DO

ALEXANDRA VEREAU

White Plains, NY. (The Catholic University of America / Spanish for International Service and German). Serves at Ángeles Custodios Day Care in San José.

Alex is an assistant at a daycare in San José that supports single moms, often economic refugees, who are at risk of falling prey to human trafficking. From playing games, changing multiple diapers and teaching basic skills Alex is like a big sister to these little angels.



“Working at the daycare has been incredible. After getting to know the kids and spending time with them, in the past few months, I have seen them grow and learn so much. A few diaper to potty transitions or them learning colors, shapes and numbers, these are simple little things, but when a single

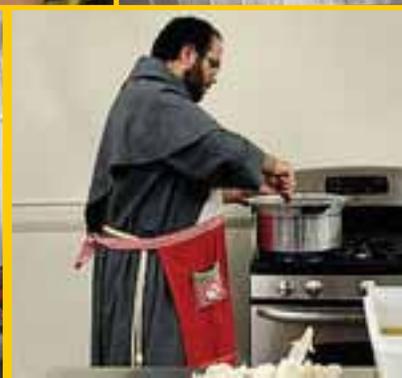
mother is busy trying to keep her family afloat, it’s nice to know that we can be the ones who make things a bit easier for them in regards to their young children and making sure that they are developing and ready for pre-Kindergarten.”

JEANNE MARIE CLEMMER

Jamesville, NY (Canisius College /Sociology and Urban Studies). Serves at Refugee Resettlement and Asian Apostolate of Catholic Charities in Syracuse.

JM supports refugees who have come to the United States from as far as Vietnam, Bhutan, Nepal, Burma and Congo by helping them find a place to live, negotiate with landlords, find a job and navigate through the complexities of life in North America. She also tutors young asian refugee children.

“This year the most exciting opportunity by far as the assistant job developer at the Northside CYO has been the chance to interact with young adults my age from Nepali refugee camps. Witnessing the humility and willingness of my clients to take on jobs of less than desirable work conditions just to achieve their personal dream and ambitions compels me to hold my clients in such high esteem. They have all been such a wonderful inspiration for me and the path I want to take someday.”





SEE WHAT WE DO

SIMON PEARSON

Duluth, MN. (College of St. Scholastica / English and Secondary Education). Serves at the Assumption Food Pantry in Syracuse.

Simon helps feed thousands of people on the Northside of Syracuse each month. His typical day can involve interviewing those who come for service, mopping floors, coordinating volunteers, and even baking our Fat Friar Cookies to raise funds for the pantry.



“So far, there have been many challenges—among them the volume of people that I serve at the Assumption Food Pantry and learning the reality of monetary poverty. Through understanding said reality, however, I have come to know and approach a poverty of spirit. By realizing that all that we have is a new gift born of God through

my experiences so far, FrancisCorps has become an excellent transition time in my life where I have come to know myself better. The truly awesome part of this realization is that the Lord is using me to serve His people and molding me into the person that I am meant to be in Him—all in one deft maneuver.”

MICHAEL HYDE

St. Louis, MO (University of Dayton / Religious Studies and Marianist Social Transformation). Serves at Syracuse’s Northside CYO.

Michael brings all the energy he has to animate a large classroom of mostly refugee kids in the CYO afterschool program. He teaches them, plays with them and helps them become more comfortable with life in this country. Michael also gets to coach soccer for the teen boys.

“My favorite thing about FrancisCorps so far this year has been community life. From carving pumpkins to playing laser tag, these activities allow us to have fun but also allow us to grow closer as a community. I also have learned even more from my kids at the Northside CYO. This has been my most rewarding experience during my time with FrancisCorps as I have learned about cultures that I had not experienced before this year. Every day is a learning experience with unique challenges and great rewards.”



RACHEL FEDDERS

Beckley, WV. (Wake Forest University / Biology and Studio Arts). Serves at the Bishop Foery youth center in Syracuse.

Rachel is one of the signs of hope in a tough neighborhood in Syracuse where she supports parents who seek to provide a safe afterschool environment for children who might otherwise be at risk of encountering crime. Activities, homework and running around are all part of her day.



“For me so far, FrancisCorps has been both a blessing and a challenge—a challenging blessing, we could say. My ministry at the Bishop Foery Foundation has definitely been a learning experience! These kids, many of whom come from

very difficult backgrounds, have taught me much more than I have taught them. I have gained flexibility, patience, and tolerance. I have had to stretch my creativity to deal with novel situations. I am learning that a welcoming and safe environment is more important than perfect order. I am learning that a child’s hug or crayon drawing is just as rewarding, if not more so than a complement from a coworker. I am learning that even when days don’t go as planned, God has my back.”

GERARDO GOMEZ

Philadelphia, PA (St. Joseph’s University, Philadelphia / Business Administration). Serves at Centeno Gúell Center for children with disabilities in Guadalupe, Costa Rica.

Gerardo assists at the national school for children with disabilities. In the morning he works with kids who each have multiple physical and cognitive disabilities. In the afternoons he helps teens with disabilities to acquire life-skills and have some fun too!

“FrancisCorps has been a great experience so far. I am learning a lot from my community and from Centeno Gúell, a special needs school in Costa Rica. The best parts of my day are making the students laugh and have fun while helping them accomplish things at school. Living in

community is helping me grow spiritually and gain perspective from the others’ experiences. FrancisCorps has changed my outlook on service for others; I am realizing that it does not take much to make a difference in somebody’s day, everyday.”





SEE WHAT WE DO

GLENNA KNAPE

Grand Rapids, MI. (University of Dayton / Biology and Spanish). Serves at San José' FUNDESO Breast Cancer Clinic.

Glenna assists women navigate the health care system in Costa Rica to obtain timely breast cancer screening, appropriate treatment and to connect with the right support systems to fight the battle against breast cancer. Sometimes her job comes down to simply offering a hug!



"Over the last few months, I have gained immense perspective volunteering at FUNDESO. The unique aspect of the clinic is that all of my colleagues are volunteers. Rather than providing medical advice, they serve as beacons of hope. Every patient that comes

into the clinic is provided with referrals, oncology appointments and support and most importantly with encouragement, prayers, and a shoulder to cry on. My coworkers' gentle encouragements to simply have faith and trust in God serve to remind the patients that they are never alone. Having the opportunity to be a part of this beautiful foundation full of joy and hope has shown me that patients need more than just treatment, something I hope I can provide as a doctor some day."

GEORGIE ASFOURA

Akron, OH (Boston College / Economics and Studio Art). Serves at the Dorothy Day House in Syracuse.

Georgie helps provide shelter for women in crisis. Her day includes listening to the stories of a diverse community of women experiencing homelessness, mediating conflicts, and even making sure a healthy meal is ready for the women in the house. Whatever it takes; Georgie is there!

"One of the most striking aspects of my FrancisCorps experience thus far has been how quickly relationships have developed within our community. I'm finding that our home is more than just a shared living space; it's really a place of common ground to connect over shared values and shared responsibility. We depend on each other and are engaged in our living situation in a more proactive way than any other living style I've previously experienced. As a result, I've found that we all seem to be developing closeness with one another on a much more rapid scale."



ELLEN CRAVEN

Culpeper, VA. (The University of Delaware / Foreign Languages and Literatures). Serves at St. Francis School in Moravia, Costa Rica.

Ellen helps make sure that every child in our Franciscan school from Pre-K to High School grows in awareness of social justice issues and has a direct experience of serving the poor. She also helps generate ideas for service projects, assists with fundraising and promotes the values of St. Francis.



"My favorite part of these few months has been observing how the staff, students, and friars at St. Francis integrate their faith and service with the everyday communal life of the school body. Taking an active role such as fundraising and solidarity projects aimed at naming and

correcting social injustices as recreational and educational are events that are fun for students their families and the community. In just two short months, I have gotten to witness and share in experiences with the students of St. Francis as they learn about fighting poverty, single parenting, or accommodating people with disabilities."



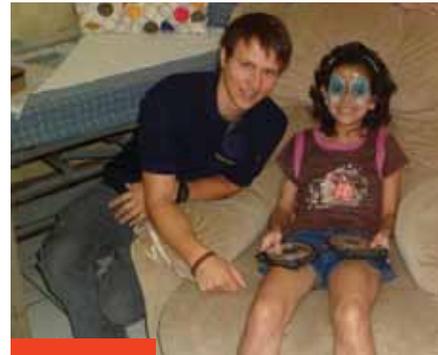
JEFFREY SASS

Clear Lake, MN (St. John's University, Collegeville / Biology). Serves at Alberque San Gabriel Pediatric Palliative Care Clinic in San José, Costa Rica.

Jeff's job is to be a big brother to the very sick kids who come through the doors of the clinic. In a typical day this can range from playing Wii to excursions at the swimming pool or helping run a party! Jeff also assists by visiting the kids at the national children's hospital and joining the "care teams" in conducting home visits.

"On arriving for my first day I experienced things that I probably never would have imagined doing when I was applying for the program. Getting to know the families and patients or helping the health professionals provide the most clear and beneficial support

makes the time fly by and wanting more. However the time with the families and patients that I encounter at the Albergue San Gabriel palliative care center challenges me on many dimensions personally and communally. But I am learning to find comfort in how these new experiences allow me to grow in ways that I had not contemplated before. The FC community has such an upbeat attitude between your fellow volunteers, friars, colleagues or those you are serving every day. Those relationships are really important and help me with challenges like house and work dynamics and seeing my spirituality develop."



- FC volunteers serve for 1 year in either Syracuse, NY or Alajuela, Costa Rica living in community together and caring for Christ in the poor they encounter.
- Our volunteers share at least one meal together every day.
- They take time for a simple prayer together, every day.
- Daily they share their life experiences while cooking for one another, as they share a leisurely dinner or between dance moves while washing the dishes.
- FrancisCorps volunteers are offered ongoing support with an orientation followed by 4 weekend retreats and a transition retreat at the end of their experience.
- Franciscan Friars, Sisters and Lay Franciscans are actively involved in supporting our volunteers.

Call today to learn how to make a difference to your life – and to someone else's.

Friar Rick Riccioli, OFM Conv. Director
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FRANCISCORPS IS MOVING!

In order to cut costs and to provide for room for expansion the FrancisCorps experience in Costa Rica will be moving from San José to Alajuela in August 2013. There the volunteers will live on the same grounds of the local friary and will have much shorter commutes to ministry sites. The types of service being considered include work with: abandoned disabled children, pediatric palliative care, seniors, single teen moms, daycare, and adolescent addiction treatment.

HELPING THE JERSEY SHORE



For many years now the FrancisCorps volunteers have been blessed with the hospitality of the friars of both the New Jersey Shore and at Staten Island, NY. These two communities are now suffering because of Hurricane Sandy. FC14 in Syracuse took up the challenge to be there for these communities by organizing a small collection of cleaning supplies for the recovery.

GRATITUDE IN ACTION



Earlier this year, after the August orientation, our FC14 Costa Rica volunteers also expressed their gratitude in action by helping clean and paint the chapel at the Alverna Heights Spirituality Center in Green Lakes, NY. The Sisters of St. Francis at Alverna are very generous to FrancisCorps and we just wanted to say thanks!

