Ministry of Presence...

**DC SERVICE CORPS**

“Clients not only found something that fit; they liked the coat they ended up with. She has the ability to see Christ in each man who walks through the door.”

Kim Cox, PhD, Executive Director of The Father McKenna Center, about DC Service Corps participant Ali Sentmanat’s ministry with men experiencing homelessness.

**OFFERING MORE THAN A COAT**

Having completed its second year, the DC Service Corps has established robust relationships with multiple site partners. During the past year, three young adults served at Catholic Charities Refugee Center, Don Bosco Cristo Rey High School, and The Father McKenna Center, while two young adults worked for peace and justice as Communications and Program Associates in the FMS office. All of these remarkable individuals simultaneously embraced a life of simplicity, spirituality, and living in intentional community. Previously divided into distinct sections of the Nonprofit Servant Leadership Program (Office Associates and DC Service Corps), our domestic program has merged into one program: DC Service Corps.

Madonna Enwe, herself an asylee from Cameroon, West Africa, taught English as a second language to recent asylees at Catholic Charities.

“Working at this center has given me the opportunity to share my story with the people I serve and also be a source of encouragement to them during their transition period.”

**TAKING A STAND**

AliSentmanat, a missioner in Cochabamba, Bolivia, stands in solidarity with people seeking health care where medical resources are scarce. In addition to providing self-esteem classes for girls who have survived abuse, she sometimes arrives early in the morning, waiting for hours in line on behalf of families bringing their children from remote, Quechua-speaking areas of Bolivia to the under-resourced pediatric hospital.

“I stand at the patients’ sides. I experience the same confusion, frustration, and helplessness that they do. In bearing witness, I have seen that in the darkness, no one should have to stand alone.”

**ACCOMPANYING EVERYDAY HEROES**

Janice Smullen, serving in Kingston, Jamaica, teaches children with learning difficulties and prepares food for a soup kitchen. Jamaica’s people struggle with inequality, unemployment, and violence, but Janice’s ministries focus on individual strength:

“I see heroism, courage, and will to move forward in the 37-year-old woman I know who has just signed up for classes toward job certification. Dignity and patience radiate through the line of people waiting for food as they sing and join in prayers.”

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TRANSITION**

In September 2016, Kim Smolik departed FMS after nearly eight years of service for which we are extremely grateful. In April, we welcomed Liz Hughes as our new Executive Director. Liz was welcomed to the FMS community at the 2017 World Care Benefit and Celebration at which FMS honored Sr. Damon Nolan, MFIC, co-founder of the Unidad Académica Campesina in Carmen Pampa, Bolivia, along with Sr. Jean Morrissey, MFIC, and Sr. Chris Cullen, MFIC.

“A group visited again last year to meet families transitioning from homelessness at a shelter. Motivated wellness by working in an urban community garden, and met families transitioning from homelessness at a shelter. One student reflected: “The trip taught me how you can come to see and appreciate God’s light through our work and the people we meet.”

**FINDING A PLAYGROUND IN PRISON**

Catherine Sullivan’s ministry in Cochabamba, Bolivia, includes providing occupational and educational opportunities to women currently in prison and those who have recently been released.

Being comfortable on the margins means the borders begin to disappear. Catherine shared the joy at a birthday party for one woman’s daughter: “It is a beautiful thing when a space can go from restrictive and oppressive to free and limitless. For that afternoon, it felt like we could have been anywhere—a playground, a jungle, a zoo, a picnic in the park.”

**GROWING LONG-TERM PARTNERSHIPS THROUGH SHORT-TERM TRIPS**

DC Service Corps Program Associate Amanda Saunders played an important role in nurturing a new relationship between FMS and her alma mater, Neumann University.

A group joined FMS on a Short-Term Mission and Global Awareness Trip to Carmen Pampa, Bolivia, where they journeyed with FMS missioners and students from the local university, the Unidad Académica Campesina, for service immersion, prayer, and cultural exchange.

Alvernia University first joined FMS in Washington, DC, for a short-term trip in 2016. A group visited again last year to meet people living and serving on the margins in the District of Columbia. Participants visited a social service and literacy center to promote wellness by working in an urban community garden, and met families transitioning from homelessness at a shelter.
UP CLOSE WITH FRANCISCAN MISSION SERVICE

When lay missioners join Franciscan Mission Service, they spend three months in our formation program, grounded in the Franciscan charism and Catholic social teaching, preparing to embrace the ministry of presence and walk in solidarity with our sisters and brothers in marginalized communities overseas.

Over the past year, FMS prepared and supported 15 people as they entered into relationship with local communities in Bolivia, Guatemala, Jamaica, and Washington, DC. Following the model of St. Francis and St. Clare, they cared for children, coaxed plants from the soil, broke bread, reached across language and cultural differences, visited the sick, listened to the lonely, and prayed together. By virtue of transformative relationships, our missioners and DC Service Corps participants become lifelong witnesses to the beauty and gifts that marginalized communities already possess while advocating for a more just society.

Erin McHugh, serving at the Valle de los Angeles School in Guatemala, said, “I have been humbled so many times during my time here in Guatemala, but these beautiful people are teaching me what it means to be a true servant, and they are examples of what it looks like to open the door to welcome the stranger.”