



Heartbeats

A publication to share our accompaniment on the mission journey

Volunteers International for Development Education and Service

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Re-Entry Introduction: With an overflowing heart I present to you a glimpse of the Gifts of the Journey of our returning Volunteer Missioners.

At the **Re-Entry**, they “unpacked” their suitcases of stories and experiences; shared their journey, honored and celebrated what they lived. They reflected on how God touched them through others and how God touched others through them. They remembered the hurts and difficulties of the journey and where God was in all of this. They considered how they were accompanied and how they accompanied others; the impact the experience had on them and on others. They gleaned some understanding of themselves, others and the world; explored lessons learned from the experience; learned about transitions and how to cope with reverse culture shock. They decided what they wanted to hold on to from the experience and explored ways to integrate the experience into the different aspects of their life.

They discerned future life directions as a result of their mission experience and ways in which they can keep the VIDES legacy alive.

They extended their Vides membership for another year and received their VIDES+USA IDs.

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A special thanks to Gloria Drews-Vallecillos, Director of Incarnate Word Missioners who was a valuable presenter at our Re-entry experience.

On this Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary into heaven we ask her to continue to accompany our returning Volunteer Missioners and all of us all on our journey, to let us leap with joy as the Baptist did upon sensing the Presence of Jesus within her, and to help us to be open to follow her Son wherever He leads us.

Receive God’s blessing and continue to make ripples as our VIDES logo shows by being a blessing to others!

With our love and prayer,

Sister MaryGloria Mar, FMA
VIDES+USA Director

VIDES+USA RE-ENTRY REFLECTIONS



Lucia Aguilar (FSC year 2005) from CA

Mission: San Antonio, TX, Aug-Dec 2005

My experience working at St. John Bosco School and convent is one of the most rewarding experiences with which I have been blessed. Working with my students I found how special each one was and how God gave me little gifts each day through them: a smile, a laugh, an opportunity to work on my patience, and always many shared prayers. As their teacher I was able to teach them a lot, but I learned from them as well. Living in community with the Sisters was also a very rewarding part of the experience. Their dedication,

devotion, and hard work were a daily inspiration to me. We had so many great moments that I know I will never forget.

Joseph Ferreira (FSC year 2006) from CA

Mission: Westwego, LA, June 22-July 24, 2006

The kids in Westwego were a blast! Everyday brought something new. While in Westwego, I was in charge of sports and helping monitor the kids. The kids at the OLPS (Our Lady of Prompt Succor) summer camp have taught me so much! Re-entry was great! Re-entry has given me the chance to share my story with others, and to let them be aware of the great work being done in Westwego. Finally, re-entry has given me the chance to meet some other amazing people (volunteers) who have also made a difference in others' lives.



Val Gomez (FSC year 2006) from TX

Mission: Playas, Ecuador, Jan-May 2006

Ecuador will always hold a special place in my heart because I remember who I was when I took my first step (not confident, scared, reluctant, etc.). Now, I have complete confidence to serve God through my actions and to "roll with the punches." I will truly miss singing, dancing, playing and just being "Señorita Valeria." To me, Ecuador will always be home.

Re-entry was great to de-brief and process my hopes and worries. The support and knowledge from fellow volunteers was comforting as we shared our stories of love, happiness and joy.

Ella Harris (FSC year 2006) from CA

Mission: Kendal, England, Jan-May 2006

I worked at a retreat center for inner city urban schools in Northern England. One of my favorite memories was doing affirmations with a 10th grade group. A young girl who had been tough all week came up to me, gave me a hug and told me that she felt more at home and safe in the past couple of days than she had in a long time. I had a great time working with the retreat groups.

Re-entry has been a great experience. It has allowed me to process and share my mission. Hearing other volunteers' experiences has also been a highlight. I will always remember the people I've met and the stories I've heard.



Amanda Isaac (FSC year 2005) from TX

Mission: Tegucigalpa, Honduras, July 2005

I'm going to share my bicycle story because I like it a lot. At Las Flores, a little girl named Isis asked me one day to drive the bike for her. Now at Las Flores 24 girls shared four bikes; the older or taller girls would take turns driving the bikes while the smaller younger ones sat on the handlebars. This made me, 5th grade teacher and caretaker at recess, very nervous. So when Isis asked if I would drive her I said "No, no puedo." "No, I can't." It had been several years since I had ridden a bike. Besides, when I did ride I always fell. She looked at me and said "Ven, Tía Amanda. Ten confianza en Dios." "Come, Aunt Amanda. Have confidence in God." I said, "Okay" and got on. She climbed on and we started off around the 1½' high cement basketball court. Not even halfway around we crashed and fell off the side of the concrete. She got up and smiled. It was all worth that smile. Re-entry camp has been a wonderful time for me also to hear and share stories like this. This week has helped me to keep the memory of the girls and all those in Honduras alive in my heart.

Suzanna Kennedy (FSC year 2005) from CA

Mission: Rome, Italy, Sept '05-July '06 [VIDES+USA 7-9/06]

How can I summarize my mission in Rome? I can only give a glimpse of the activities of this year:

My time at the VIDES International office was primarily translating valuable documents for their website and for volunteers. The translation work never ends, everything in the office needs translating. I am learning so much; every page I translated taught me about the situations of women and children in countries around the world. I was also able to go to Geneva with VIDES International and see how VIDES collaborates with other NGOs at the UN to work on behalf of women, children, and development.

I would not have been able to hear the personal stories of volunteers passing through or projects being implemented without being in the office. I also know that the seemingly "monotonous" work that is done in an office is crucial in helping these volunteers get to their posts. It also helps make the projects a reality.

Encounters with volunteers returning from all over the world has created within me a strong desire to do another period of service. I don't know when and where, but it is in my heart. I also realize the incredible importance of sustainable development. Autonomy should be encouraged so that people can take the responsibility of development into their own hands, in their own cultural context, and into their countries so that it is sustainable and each person's dignity is upheld.

Teaching the kids at the Salesian school was great! Balancing the office work with teaching English to the "bambini vivaci" (vivacious kids) has been more rewarding than I could have imagined. I came up with the idea of throwing an end-of-the-year "party" as the last lesson for the 5-year-olds. The kids were divided into teams and played games at a variety of stations where they utilized their new English vocabulary. When the school year ended there was a summer camp held for 4 weeks.

I know I have been blessed in countless ways this year. Being "in mission", but still having food, hot water, transportation, internet, and all the other "extras" that come with living in a developed country, has made me more aware of what I have taken for granted, and of what I am called to do. It has made me feel more responsible for what I will have when I am back in the U.S.

Re-entry was a vital time to reflect on the experiences I had this year, to hear others' experiences, and to integrate them into my life: to integrate them in such a way that this mission never ends, that the things I have experienced this year continue to influence me, the decisions I make, and the path I will take in my future. My mission feels in many ways like a beautiful preparation for the rest of my life...

[Suzanna is continuing her mission July through September in San Antonio at VIDES+USA.]



Kerry Krempasky (FSC year 2006) from PA

Mission: Lusaka, Thornepark, Zambia, February-April 2006

While in Zambia, I taught English, computers and art to vulnerable and orphaned youth, ages 13-21. In the smiling faces and kind words of the people I encountered there, I witnessed a true expression of God's love. In them could be seen a joy so profound that it overcame obstacles of poverty and oppression, sickness and pain. Their joy touched me deeply and made me realize that its source came from one place—God's presence within them. I am blessed to have witnessed that revelation, and I desire to never forget that my own life is a great gift from God, a gift to be joyful about.



Coming to the re-entry camp has allowed me to reflect on my experience and how it transformed me, and to consider way in which I can honor who I have become. In connecting with the other volunteers and hearing their stories, I have come to realize the many wondrous and varying ways God calls each of us to serve Him and glorify Him.



Tarry Le (FSC year 2005) from OR
Mission: East Timor, Oct. 2005-Jun 2006

I was in East Timor volunteering as an English teacher. During my time in Timor God taught me the meaning of love through sacrifice. I was faced with many difficulties within my community, caught Malaria twice, and was overwhelmed with work. But I knew that I was there to love my students and I loved them despite the pain. As a result I was able to build very strong relationships with my students. My mission in Timor ended prematurely as violence broke out in the country. Over 13,000 refugees flocked to Don Bosco Technical School. At that time I helped pack rice, cut vegetables, and sort potatoes. Leaving Timor early left a wound within my heart for almost two months.

It was only after going through re-entry camp that I received the peace I needed.

Amanda Ziemba Randall (FSC year 2004) from TX
Mission: Lusaka, City of Hope, Zambia, Summer 2004
Amanda Ziemba Randall

I carry my experience of the people, faith, and culture of Zambia with me always. As I was welcomed into a very special Salesian community there, my first and most vivid memory of the City of Hope was the community rosary, not just recited, but sung, with passion, in various harmonious and rhythmic settings in the local language. It was a spiritual and sensory experience that reaches to the core. So powerful was it for me, that even today, two years later, I still return in my heart to that people and that place whenever I pray the rosary at home.



Though the memories have faded and changed over time, I relished the chance to tell my story once more, in the community of Salesians and fellow volunteers, because it helps me reaffirm my commitment to my mission place and the people I came to love there.



Allison Skinner (FSC year 2005) from TX
Mission: San Antonio, TX, June-August 2005

I spent my time of service working at the St. John Bosco summer camp hosted by the Sisters. I was in charge of arts and crafts, and I also assisted with the 4, 5 and 6-year-olds. Although the children brightened my days, the ones who impacted me the most were the Sisters with whom I lived. The joy in their hearts and selfless, simple lives they led inspired me in my own faith journey. They gave me memories I will cherish forever.

Having completed my re-entry a year ago, this experience took on a new dimension for me. I was able to reflect on how I have changed within the past year after completing my service. It was a time for me to evaluate my lifestyle and re-dedicate myself to living every moment in the love of Christ.

Eric Wooldridge (FSC year 2005) from IN
Mission: Petrolina, Brazil, Sept 2005-Mar 2006

I got a thorough education from the orphan boys that I worked with in Brazil. Theirs is a fun-loving culture that does not allow for too much regret over one's life situation.

Here at the re-entry I am remembering what it was like to leave those boys and the other friends that I made five months ago. The experience is a story that I cannot forget, and this re-entry gave me the important opportunity to share that story with others.





Back: SMGloria and Suzanna,
Front: Kerry and Joe



Happy Birthday, dear Ella!



Back: Allison Skinner, Valerie Gomez, Kerry Krempasky, Ella Harris, Amanda Z Randall, Tarry Le,
Front: Joseph Ferreira, Eric Wooldridge, SMGloria Mar, Mandy Isaac, Lucia Aguilar



Healing Ceremony
Standing: SMGloria, Joe (behind), Mandy,
Gloria Drews-Vallecillos, Incarnate Word
Missioners Director,
Not showing at right: Amanda, Val, and Kerry
Seating: Susan Elizabeth, IWM (center)
Kneeling: Tarry, Eric, and Ella



Val, Eric, Ella, and Amanda
Preparing their Mission Statements

ADVOCACY – FAITH IN ACTION

One way of keeping the VIDES+USA Mission and Vision Alive

From CRS Action Center: Here are some ways to help build peace in our world:

Take Action Now! Click on the action alerts listed below to find out how you can join us in advocating for issues in support of our brothers and sisters worldwide.

Middle East Crisis: Join with our Holy Father and our Catholic Bishops in calling for U.S. leaders to achieve deliver humanitarian aid and seek political solutions:

Haiti: **Urge the Administration to Actively Support Trade Preferences for Haiti**
Help Haiti out of poverty and towards stability and development.

Sudan: **Urge the President, Congress to step up their leadership on Sudan!**
Stop the violence. Provide the aid. Resolve the conflict.

Immigration Reform - Please contact your Members during this month's congressional recess and let them know that you support comprehensive immigration reform. Such reform includes substantive programs to address U.S. labor needs and reunite families, a pathway to earned legalization and citizenship, and effective border security. Click on the following link to urge your Members to enact comprehensive immigration reform now

Democratic Republic of Congo: Be involved in advancing *The Democratic Republic of the Congo Relief, Security, and Democracy Promotion Act (S.2125)*, sponsored by Senators Barack Obama (D-IL), Sam Brownback (R-KS), Dick Durbin (D-IL) and Mike DeWine (R-OH). It calls for increasing U.S. leadership to help end the crisis in the DRC. The bill passed the Senate the end of June, and is awaiting action in the House of Representatives after the August recess.

From Sojourners:

Politics & Spirituality: Outer Witness, Inner Faith

Join Jim Wallis, Richard Rohr, and Anne Lamott as they engage the vital connection between our inner spiritual lives and our outer public witness. [Learn more >>](#)

Minimum Wage Double-Cross Defeated

The Senate failed to pass a bill that would have raised the minimum wage, but only by also providing estate tax reform that would have cost America billions to benefit the wealthiest. [Learn more >>](#)

A Covenant for a New America

We need a grand alliance between liberals and conservatives that makes overcoming poverty a nonpartisan agenda. [Learn more >>](#)

Christians and the Middle East Study Guide

Sojourners discussion guides are designed to spark discussion and thought about how to live out God's call for justice in our world. Each includes four sessions with Sojourners articles, questions for discussion, and ideas for further study. [Learn more >>](#)

From the US Catholic Conference of Bishops - Catholic Communications Campaign

... Coming Soon in September ... "Personally Speaking" — available to ABC-TV affiliates



For more than 15 years, Msgr. Lisante has been interviewing prominent people in entertainment, sports, literature and other fields, and asking questions that most interviewers shy away from. With his genial manner, "Msgr. Jim" approaches the celebrity interview from a different angle and his guests talk openly about how faith and family intersect with celebrity and careers. Past guests have included comedian Dom DeLuise, singer Aaron Neville and best-selling author Mary Higgins Clark. Guests for this year's special will be announced soon.

... in October ... "Lives for Sale" — available to PBS affiliates



A new one-hour documentary on immigration and human trafficking, funded in part by the Catholic Communication Campaign, premieres on PBS this fall. "Lives for Sale," is the first documentary to go beyond the usual sensational media reports that fail to connect sex trafficking to other forms of human trafficking and addressed the larger root issues of economic and social injustice—poverty, globalization, educational barriers and ineffective and contradictory immigration policies—that support the existence of this abhorrent abuse of human life.

. . . in November . . . "Picturing Mary" — available to PBS affiliates



The Virgin Mary has been portrayed as much as any woman in history. For almost two thousand years, artist sought the image of the perfect woman, encompassing the virtues, joys and sorrows of the human race. *Picturing Mary* takes the viewer on an artistic journey through history, crossing four continents just as the image of Mary crossed the globe. In every medium, from tiny personal images to gigantic mosaics—masterpieces and works less familiar to the audience—the image of Mary has provided a mother figure that has protected cities and even become a national symbol.

VIDES+USA Heartbeats E-News is published to share glimpses of faith and love in action with all who desire to make a difference in the world.

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