

# Missio Dei

Exploring God's work in the world

## Students Talk About Service

James R. Krabill and  
Stuart W. Showalter, editors

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*Missio Dei* is published by Mennonite Mission Network to invite reflection and dialogue about *God's mission* in today's world. Some features in the series focus primarily on the biblical and theological foundations of the mission task. Others present ministry case studies or personal stories of attempts to be faithful to Christ's call. Perspectives represented reflect the passion and commitment of the agency: to declare in word and demonstrate in life the whole gospel of Jesus Christ, "across the street, all through the marketplaces, and around the world."

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# Preface

The Service Inquiry Program (SIP) at Goshen College has its origins in the Ministry Inquiry Program, an internship program that was launched in 1988 as a joint effort of Mennonite Church USA and the five Mennonite colleges in the United States. In the 17 years of the program's operation, 295 students have tested their calling and gifts for congregational ministry by serving as pastoral interns for 11 weeks, usually during the summer.

In the year 2000, when the Lilly Endowment, Inc., invited a selected group of colleges to propose new ways to challenge students to consider religious vocations, the idea of a Service Inquiry Program emerged. As director of career services at Goshen College, I had frequently heard the representatives of church-wide mission and service agencies express concern about a declining pool of applicants and candidates who would take up the challenge of providing healing and hope in a needy world. So, SIP was proposed for a five-year period at Goshen College, and it was granted financial support by Lilly. SIP enables students to participate in a service assignment for 11 weeks with a church-related agency and to receive a \$2,000 scholarship, with funding provided in part by home congregations and the host service agencies.

Since 2001, when the Service Inquiry Program was first implemented, it has sponsored 24 Goshen College students, primarily sophomores and juniors, in summer service assignments. Ninety percent of these students have been affiliated with the Mennonite Church, with their home addresses being mostly in Mennonite communities in Indiana, Ohio and Pennsylvania. Without exception, students' home churches have contributed financially toward the \$2,000 SIP scholarships, strengthening the connections between students and their home congregations.

SIP placements have usually taken participants to large American cities such as Chicago and Miami, although five students volunteered with agencies in predominantly rural settings. Two SIP students have served internationally in Israel/Palestine and in Northern Ireland. Agencies sponsored by the Mennonite Church or agencies related to the Mennonite Church received 19 of the 24 SIP participants; two served with Jubilee Partners in Comer, Ga., and two with Catholic Worker houses (one in Houston and one in Los Angeles).

So what has been the impact of the Service Inquiry Program on post-college experiences? The table below shows a strong continuing connec-

tion to service. Of the 19 students who have graduated, 68 percent are currently engaged in some kind of service with a church- or community-based agency. In addition, two of the graduates who are working as teachers have done international summer voluntary service in Spanish-speaking countries.

### Service Term Completed

Type of Post-College Agency	Number of Students
Mennonite Voluntary Service	3 (15.8 %)
Community agency	7 (36.8 %)
International agency	3 (15.8 %)
Other work	3 (15.8 %)
No information available	3 (15.8 %)
<b>Total Number of Students</b>	<b>19 (100.0 %)</b>

The story of Elizabeth Miller, who went to Harlingen, Texas, in 2001 as a Service Inquiry Program participant with Mennonite Voluntary Service, illustrates the range of engagement of our SIP graduates. She is now a Spanish teacher at Mt. Lebanon High School in Pennsylvania. Elizabeth described her post-SIP related experiences in this way in September of 2004:

“This summer, through the University of Pittsburgh, I was part of a class called Leadership in Service Learning. There was a spring course at Pitt and the summer practicum in Peru. We were a group of 20 that worked in partnership with a small community in the Andes Mountains and ProPeru, a non-governmental organization. We helped the community to build a school/community center. Also, this fall I am beginning a graduate program at the University of Pittsburgh through the Graduate School of Public and International Affairs. I will be in the International Development program. Last summer I was teaching English at Betania Menonita [a school] in Puerto Rico.”

Is the Service Inquiry Program leading to the outcomes originally envisioned in the proposal to the Lilly Endowment? The data suggest that SIP has been a resounding success. However, the data do not reveal the heart and soul of the program. To get a sense of the subjective impact of SIP on students’ lives, one would have to engage the students in a prolonged conversation about their experiences. With the modest goal of at least beginning that conversation, I invite you to read and reflect on the short reports of students’ experiences that have been collected in this volume.

The rest of the story — the long-term impact of these experiences on students' vocational choices — will require years of patient waiting, because the story will continue to unfold as the Spirit keeps moving in the lives of these dedicated, compassionate students. With the support of several donors, a modest endowment for the Service Inquiry Program has been raised, inspiring hope that the program will continue at Goshen College in perpetuity.

Stuart Showalter  
Director of Career Services  
Administrator of Service Inquiry Program  
Goshen College (Goshen, Ind.)



# Students Talk about Service

James R. Krabill and  
Stuart W. Showalter, editors

The experiences recounted in the 15 stories presented here have been made possible through a partnership between Goshen College's Service Inquiry Program and several of the short-term mission and service programs of Mennonite Mission Network, the mission agency of Mennonite Church USA. The three programs most commonly referenced in these accounts are MVS (Mennonite Voluntary Service), DOOR (Discovering Opportunities for Outreach and Reflection), and International Internships. A fuller description of these and other programs available through the Mission Network is provided on pp. 42-43 of this booklet.

## **On computer camps, curriculum design and "computerfun!kids"**

Andrew Burkhalter (MVS, Seattle, 2001)

The specific work to which I was assigned focused on strengthening the Phinney and Greenwood sections of Seattle, through the Phinney Neighborhood Association. The grant-funded project called for developing a computer network, preparing the labs for a "computerfun!kids" program, assisting in the preparation of the curriculum, and then helping to teach the summer courses.

The assignment began with a lengthy orientation that focused upon the mission of the youth enrichment programs offered by the Phinney Neighborhood Association. My supervisor gave me a manila folder that included some general notes and offered a bit of information about the whereabouts and delivery schedule for the computers. This freedom and independence came as a bit of a shock — I was being given control over the happenings of Phinney's computer camps for kids. I developed a level of personal ownership in the project, which evolved into a gratifying understanding of my tasks. I had the opportunity to explore my own interests in the areas of web design and, in turn, relate what I had learned back into the curriculum for the Web Wonders course.

As the summer quickly progressed and the week of July 9 approached, the ensuing computer camps occupied my thoughts. As the camps began,

I quickly realized the extreme contrast in schedule that existed between my former “office-style” job and the task of team-teaching the computer camps. My prior roles involved a relaxed day of sitting in front of the computer creating web pages, but with the computer camps I was thrust out in front of approximately 10 kids, all competing for my attention. I was amazed at how much energy teaching required and how draining it could be. I was forced to quickly learn effective ways of presenting the topics of web design to children ages 8-10. The topic of discipline arose as another major learning area.

I also learned about the workings of one of the many non-profit agencies in the Seattle area. I learned to discuss options for improvement. Because of my involvement in developing Phinney’s computer camps, I was in a position to offer suggestions and communicate any needs that existed in the improvement of the computer camps.

In terms of my SIP experience, I was most affected by the relational opportunities that arose by volunteering in Seattle. I chose Mennonite Voluntary Service because of the existence of the unit house in Seattle. I learned the value of being challenged by housemates to live in an intentional way. I learned about the difficulties of inherent tension in a community living situation, because of the number of individuals who have invested themselves in its success. I learned to grow in new ways outside of the bonds that can sometimes exist in growing up in one’s home community. I learned to survive without family in an entirely new location. I learned how to take risks in developing new relationships with people of differing backgrounds

*Andrew Burkhalter completed 1-1/2 years in Mennonite Voluntary Service in Seattle and continues working as a program manager with the same agency, One/Northwest, which provides technology assistance for the environmental movement in the Northwest.*

## **Helping to bridge the digital divide ... while dancing *la salsa***

Rachel Koontz (MVS, Pilsen, Ill., 2001)

Life at work and in the home where I was staying was a blend of primarily Puerto Rican-American and Mexican-American cultures. “*Buenos días.*” “*¿Cómo están ustedes?*” Ranchero music. Learning to *bailar* (dance) *la salsa*. Going to *misa* (mass). Tamales from one of my students. Spanish everywhere.

I worked at Erie Neighborhood House, which was started as a settlement house. It is located on the northwest side of Chicago and offers preschool classes, an after-school and summer day programs, a program for teens, emergency food, adult basic education and ESL, job-readiness training, and a technology center where community people can learn about and use computer technology.

I was a project specialist on a grant to Erie Neighborhood House that places computers in the homes of women who provide accredited day care. I trained these Spanish-speaking women to use their computers, primarily the Internet (which they get free from America Online) and the Day Care Homes database. I was the primary writer of the curriculum, preparing the texts, coordinating the classes, training the technology promoters who were teaching the women, and teaching a group of the day-care *proveedoras* (providers) — all in Spanish. I also did unofficial tech support for the women.

Besides these official duties, I participated in many other programs at Erie House. I tutored ESL students for three hours a week. I went on a field trip with the teens to Cook County Jail. One of my non-work-related activities in the day was talking with Mario, a Cuban janitor who participates in the part-time employment program for the elderly.

City living was another aspect of my experience. Gunshots. Playing in open fire hydrants. A streetlight for the moon. Public transportation on the “L” (elevated trains) or buses. Talking with homeless people. Enjoying the one tree on our side of the block.

I lived at the Pilsen Mennonite Voluntary Service house with five other *güeras* (white women) in Pilsen, a Mexican neighborhood in Chicago. One of my favorite aspects of community living was the shared cooking responsibility and shared meals.

As I look at the big picture of my assignment, the work I did was helping to bridge the digital divide, where people of lower economic status and lower educational levels and minorities have been increasingly left behind in a technological world. Introducing these women to computers has challenged them to read and type, which will improve their literacy skills.

I learned how paralyzing it can be not to know something that people assume you know. In much of U.S. society, people are expected to have both computer and English skills. Because I have both, I can easily forget about those in a different situation.

I was reminded over and over to value relationships above personal goals. I found that the knowledge I had about computers was an excuse to

**City living was another aspect of my experience. Gunshots. Playing in open fire hydrants. A streetlight for the moon.**

build relationships with the day-care providers. I had to work in a flexible manner, always (or almost always) willing to make space for a conversation with someone who dropped by or called. The most valuable part of my experience this past summer was the relationships with neighbors, students, co-workers and housemates. I am immensely grateful.

*Rachel Koontz served as a volunteer with Jubilee Partners and now works with ADEC in Elkhart, Ind. ADEC helps people with physical and developmental disabilities and other challenges to live fuller, richer, more meaningful lives.*

## **Thrown into the fire of immigration complexities**

Elizabeth Anne Miller (MVS, Harlingen, Texas, 2001)

The three upstairs rooms of the large peach house on the corner of Madison and Third Street form the headquarters of the South Texas Pro Bono Asylum Representation Project (ProBAR). I escape the heat of the outside world to the heat of the legal world. I am thrown into the fire of complex immigration law, a mix of lawyers, motions, applications, hearings and detainees.

Every year in southern Texas, the Immigration and Naturalization Service detains thousands of men, women and children while they undergo deportation proceedings. Many are long-term legal permanent residents who have committed a crime, which may subject them to deportation from the United States. These people face separation from spouses who are U.S. citizens and their children and parents. Many detainees are asylum seekers who have exhausted their financial resources by the time they arrive in the United States.

The brief time I worked at ProBAR was an immigration law immersion experience. Many indigent people from Central and South America have to navigate a complex and confusing legal system. I was a fourth member of the office staff, working as a paralegal.

Every day at ProBAR offered new experiences. I answered phone calls from detained people; translated documents such as birth certificates, marriage certificates and contracts; compiled documentation packets for court hearings; completed and filed applications and motions; and called, faxed and wrote letters to help people leave the detention center. I also made weekly trips to the prison-like detention center to visit clients. These were valuable experiences because I quickly remembered for whom I was work-

ing. The phone calls were for two Ethiopian brothers who wept uncontrollably at the thought of returning to their home country. The application was for the young Honduran who was barely 19 years old. The translations were for the Guatemalan woman who had been severely beaten by her husband. The work is not glamorous — it is tedious and time-consuming.

Two mornings a week I walked the two blocks from ProBAR to the Harlingen Literacy Center, the hub for my English teaching. I helped with two conversation classes. After work, four nights a week, I also taught some of my own classes. I worked with several tutors who had been teaching at the center for a number of years. However, it was my students who gave me energy and excitement.

During this time at ProBAR, I have had to rely on some of my strengths to compensate for my lack of training in the law. First, I listened. I listened to clients on the phone. I listened to co-workers as they shared frustrations with the court, INS and bond representatives. I interacted with the lawyers who overwhelmed me with legal talk. I interviewed clients from Guatemala, Brazil, Ethiopia and Pakistan. I learned to read the anguish in their faces and eyes. Finally, I learned patience, which was needed in understanding the legal system and talking with the clients.

As a teacher, I became very fond of my students. They eagerly participated in the activities that I presented and encouraged me in my teaching. Many times I left in the evening feeling as if they had taught me more than I had taught them. They demonstrated the successes and failures of my teaching, in addition to sharing themselves with me.

*Elizabeth Anne Miller teaches at Mt. Lebanon High School in Pennsylvania and has begun a graduate program in international development at the University of Pittsburgh.*

**These were valuable experiences because I quickly remembered for whom I was working — clients from Guatemala, Brazil, Ethiopia and Pakistan.**

## **Inner-city Denver: The right place for me at the right time**

Landon Yoder (DOOR, Denver, 2001)

DOOR (Discovering Opportunities for Outreach and Reflection) is a not-for-profit urban immersion organization. During a typical week, we volunteer coordinators hosted two to four high-school youth groups. The

groups typically considered the week a mission trip, while a few referred to the week as a service project.

We began each workweek with a staff meeting at 3 p.m. on Sunday afternoon. At 6 p.m. the groups would arrive. Our first activity was worship at the First Mennonite Church of Denver. Afterward, we introduced ourselves as staff. Then groups had orientation about the expectations for the week. The final activity of the evening put two staff members with each youth group to provide participants with an opportunity to ask questions and relay concerns. When reflection time was finished, a final staff meeting was held to discuss first impressions of all the groups. Two staff members stayed at the church each week with the participants.

**I learned to address situations of conflict as points in a process of kindness, patience, and compassion rather than with a goal of persuasion to my point of view.**

Monday began four days of volunteer work for staff and participants. DOOR sends volunteers to 40 different organizations in Denver. Participants volunteer at soup kitchens, homeless shelters, halfway houses, food banks, day-camps for children, and clothing banks.

On Monday evenings the DOOR city director told stories of homeless and runaway teenagers through the medium of four graphic murals depicting the terrors in their lives. Most people are impressed with the artwork and quieted by its presence. Tuesday evenings, speakers shared a life story or described work in issues of urban poverty. Wednesday was everyone's night off. Thursday night was the culmination of the week — we drove into the mountains for a hike, cookout, worship and reflection. For worship we walked from the pavilion where we ate down to a clearing on the east side of the mountain. We sang into the darkness and then took communion together.

Our evening finished with a reflection on the week and possibilities for the future. On Friday everyone wrote a letter to themselves, which DOOR mailed to them later.

One very challenging aspect of working at DOOR was the theological diversity of the staff. Staff members ranged from conservative Mennonite Brethren to liberal Mennonite to Christian Reformed, Catholic, Presbyterian and Episcopalian.

I learned much simply from volunteering and observing. In one assignment, I spent four weeks working at Colfax Community Network, a day camp and after-school program for children living in motels. On my last day working at Colfax, my boss and I helped a family escape an abusive father and husband. Between the mom and four children, they took less luggage than I brought with me to Denver.

Living with people who think about God in very different ways, being a leader of high-school students, and volunteering for difficult, tiring hours were challenging. One particular learning experience occurred at the Love Kitchen, a small gathering place for people to get a free meal. The founder of the kitchen initiated a discussion with me because of my anti-death-penalty T-shirt. I learned that his brother had been a pastor and was shot by a man in his congregation one Sunday morning. The founder was in favor of the death penalty — he believed that the murderer needed to be held accountable for his crime. We disagreed on how to hold him accountable. I learned that winning the argument was unimportant, but addressing the pain he experienced from his brother's murder was important. I learned to address situations of conflict as points in a process of kindness, patience, and compassion rather than with a goal of persuasion to my point of view.

Overall, the summer was extremely worthwhile. I had intended to go to Oregon, and then Seattle when Oregon was no longer an option. I had no idea where to volunteer when Seattle was also not an option. I always seem to wind up in the right place for me at the right time. I have no idea why, but I am very thankful.

*Landon Yoder lives in Manhattan and serves with World Vision's United Nations office through Mennonite Voluntary Service.*

## **Learning about life (and death) on "The Border"**

Elizabeth Bontrager (MVS, Tucson, Ariz., 2002)

Four weeks into my summer in Tucson, I accompanied several volunteers with Humane Borders on a trip into the desolate Arizona desert to set up a new water station for Mexican migrants and refill two other stations. Only 10 minutes after filling a new tank, two young Mexican boys wearing sneakers worn out from two days of following makeshift trails through the sand and carrying empty plastic water jugs approached the station to fill their bottles.

These boys were a perfect example to me of how important the stations are to the survival of the migrants. The boys were clearly dehydrated and could have had serious trouble very soon without finding water, possibly meeting the same fate as the record numbers of migrants who have already died this year attempting to reach safety across the U.S./Mexico border. This experience also sparked my interest in the border issues of

the Southwest, which seemed to be related, directly or indirectly, to much of my work and my interests during the summer.

My primary position in Tucson was in the Home Health Department at St. Elizabeth's of Hungary, a clinic under the umbrella organization of Catholic Community Services (CCS) that provides medical care to patients who are uninsured and ineligible for government funding. St. E's does not turn any sick patient away, regardless of citizenship status, therefore providing an extremely valuable service to undocumented migrants. At St. E's I also helped uninsured families at school registrations and immunization clinics apply for KidsCare, a government insurance program for low-income families.

**It's easy to have idealistic dreams of volunteering one's time and energy to directly improve the lives of the poor and destitute, but in reality organizations have financial concerns and piles of paperwork to complete behind the scenes.**

Humane Borders brought border issues to life for me in extremely unambiguous terms. This relatively new organization was started in Tucson in response to the increased deaths of undocumented Mexican border-crossers in the past few years. As Border Patrol policies have changed and security has been tightened in urban areas, the only viable alternative for crossing the border is through the relatively unpatrolled, yet deadly, desert. Humane Borders' practice of placing water tanks along well-known migrant routes seeks to decrease the number of fatalities. I learned a great deal about the desert deaths and humanitarian efforts, and I have developed an interest in remaining aware of this issue.

I also observed and volunteered with the Migration and Refugee Services division of CCS. I learned about the process international refugees must follow overseas before resettlement can occur, observed the orientation sessions provided by the case managers of MRS to each refugee, and met several of the resettled families living in the community. A highlight of my time with MRS was the World Refugee Day celebration — similar to Goshen College's Ethnic Fair, but with a more culturally diverse audience.

Beyond border issues, another theme that ran through the entire summer was that of the organization and operation of nonprofit outfits. It's easy to have idealistic dreams of volunteering one's time and energy to directly improve the lives of the poor and destitute, but in reality organizations have financial concerns and piles of paperwork to complete behind the scenes. With a little assertiveness, I was given more responsibilities and began to feel like an important part of the clinic's staff.

By far, the most enriching aspect of the summer was learning to know many new people. I thrived in the Mennonite Voluntary Service unit. The unit in Tucson is closely tied to the only Mennonite congregation in the city, Shalom Mennonite Fellowship, which is a small church with an open, relaxed atmosphere. I always felt included in both unit and church activities. I developed several strong relationships, particularly with several women at St. E's and the case managers of Migration and Refugee Services. When I left, I told everyone that I'd be back someday, and I definitely expect that to happen.

Overall, the summer ran very smoothly, and I am grateful to have had the opportunity to live and work in Tucson through the Service Inquiry Program.

*Elizabeth Bontrager served in Mennonite Voluntary Service for one year with the Migration and Refugee Services Department of Catholic Social Service of Tucson, Ariz. She is now living in Germany and working with Christliche Dienste, a program of the German Mennonite Church.*

## **My love for my city and community has been renewed**

Tasara Redekopp (DOOR, Chicago, 2002)

A description of a DOOR/Chicago summer manages to be an account of 11 weeks of both routine activities and surprises that disrupted any semblance of routine.

Our week started a tad earlier than most typical work weeks — staff met for a meeting at 4 p.m. on Sunday evening to read through evaluations from groups participating in the program the previous week, to look over the schedule for the upcoming week, and to do last-minute preparations for groups about to arrive. The staff consisted of Jonathan and Kristin Friesen, the directors; David Taylor and Hilary Breeze, recent Goshen College graduates; Jen Grillo, a sophomore at Messiah College; and me.

Orientation sessions regularly lasted two hours, including general and youth/sponsor sessions. The beginning general orientation included a welcome from a member of First Church of the Brethren (the host church), introduction of staff and the week's participants, and sharing about the host church/community as well as the participating youth group's churches/communities.

The following four days were similar in each day's activities — breakfast at 7 a.m., leaving for work sites at 7:30-9:30 a.m. and returning at 2-4

p.m. Each summer staff worker accompanied one work team to a variety of different agencies each day (homeless shelters, children's programs, AIDS organizations).

We almost always took our groups on public transportation. Train rides were opportunities for participants to experience mass transit (occasionally at rush hour), see a variety of people through different neighborhoods, notice how public housing and lower-income neighborhoods differ from more expensive neighborhoods, and learn a little about navigating through Chicago Public Transportation.

Evening sessions ranged from hearing songs and testimonies from House of Daniel (a choir of formerly homeless men), to taking a tour of Chinatown or Pilsen, to eating dinner at St. Leonard's (a halfway house for men released from prison). Every Thursday we celebrated the end of the week with an evening reflection at a park on Lake Michigan.

I left the DOOR program at the end of the summer feeling very satisfied with the entire program and the role I played in it. While I certainly had my share of frustrations during the summer, I knew that by the end I would be glad I'd been a part of DOOR.

While I've often longed for the DOOR week to give a richer experience, I know that this is indeed a week of Discovery, as the acronym proclaims. I merely tried to be a catalyst for the venture, and somewhere in the 450 people coming through our summer program, I think I succeeded. In my longing I saw that I'm the one who needs a more complex understanding of Chicago, the people here, and the part my service can play within an existing framework. Although I came to work at DOOR with an expectation to learn about all of this, I'm astounded at the breadth of my experience, and how much more I've learned than I anticipated. My love for my city and community has been renewed, as has my spirit for continuing service and reflecting on its impact. More than anything, I want to continue to learn about the interplay between politics and people, service and justice.

*Tasara Redekopp is serving with Menmonite Voluntary Service in Washington, D.C., as a GED instructor with the Academy of Hope. The 20-year-old school serves mostly low-income residents.*

## **New eyes for the produce section at the grocery store**

Mary Short (DOOR, Miami, 2002)

Volunteer groups arrived at the First Presbyterian Church in Miami every Sunday evening. Group size varied from 15 to 33 people. We began

each week with an orientation, which included singing, learning about Miami's culture and people, and familiarization with work sites, dress codes, safety, public transportation, and many other details that facilitated having a great week at DOOR. Besides the major issues of Cuba and migrant workers, we also touched more generally on poverty, race, and finding God in the city. We encouraged talking to people and putting faces to words like homeless and HIV-positive.

Monday through Thursday followed the pattern of doing morning devotion, working at different sites, and returning to the church for various activities. Tuesday was a day to immerse ourselves in another culture, that of migrant farm workers. We wore long pants, long sleeves, and rubber dishwashing gloves just like the migrant farm workers do, and we weeded okra fields under the hot Florida sun just like the migrant farm workers do. A migrant farm worker and advocate spent the whole day with us.

Some of us were assigned other identities such as Juan from Guatemala, who was here illegally and had a wife and four children still in Guatemala. When we calculated how long Juan would have to work before he could afford to smuggle his family over and the conditions he had to endure, we realized the unfairness of the situation. After about 10 minutes of walking in a migrant worker's shoes, we wanted to leave those shoes as far away as possible. We looked with new eyes at what life for migrant workers is really like, and I know I will never look at the produce section in the grocery store the same.

I had the opportunity to work with a variety of people in a variety of settings, and there are a few instances that stand out. One such experience involves Kelvin. I worked with Kelvin at a summer program at the Miami Rescue Mission. He was such an angry and unhappy child and frustrated me to no end. However, after giving him love and attention, love and attention, and more love and attention during the course of several days, I was able to see a smile. When he relaxed enough to smile, I was able to catch a glimpse of the nine-year-old child that was beneath his hard exterior with all the cares of homelessness and poverty on his little shoulders.

Another unforgettable experience was working at homeless movie night, a program of a local Baptist church. I served popcorn, shared laughs, and shook hands and gave hugs to the dirty, smelly and forgotten people of the city. It was a great evening that opened my eyes to a culture that I had never experienced at such a close range.

**I do not think that there is any way that someone can have this experience and not grow or change or stretch herself.**

I do not think that there is any way that someone can have this experience and not grow or change or stretch herself. Every day was filled with opportunities to learn. As the only summer staff person and sole dweller at the church, I had to learn how to be independent. I had to develop self-sufficiency and rejuvenation. Flexibility was another growth area that was cultivated through necessity. Agencies were always canceling, and last-minute changes were the name of the game.

I just can't say enough about the DOOR program and the great time that I had this summer. I learned right along with the groups and was able to see and experience so much. I am truly grateful for this experience and the ability to enjoy and appreciate it. I was indeed humbled by each piece of evidence of God at work that followed my experience this summer.

*Mary Short taught fifth grade at a Christian school in Guatemala for one year and is now a first-grade teacher at Parkside Elementary School in Gosben, Ind.*

## **Helping families move from "crisis to community"**

Bethany Blough (MVS, San Francisco, 2003)

I spent my summer with Raphael House, which is a place to help families move from "crisis to community." The approach is holistic and the shelter is so much more than a place to stay. All families that come to Raphael House are paired with a social worker who supports them to help work through their needs. These needs include housing and money, as well as providing a safe place for residents to talk. There is also a daily program in place, which gives the residents daily chores and responsibilities. I realized the importance of structure while lives are being rebuilt.

My jobs at Raphael House varied throughout the summer. I helped with summer camp in June. We went to the San Francisco Zoo, Muir Woods, and our favorite spot, the beach. I had so much fun with the children and found myself smiling and laughing all day.

In July my job changed drastically. Summer camp ended, so I helped with the evening activities. The activities are more focused and educational during the school year.

During July I also spent time getting to know the parents who lived in the house. For me these relationships were the most beneficial aspect of my job. They made me feel more closely connected to the children, and I realized that in the future I would be best working with mothers and their

children. I made friends with mothers, and sometimes they felt comfortable telling me about their complex and important lives.

I believe that eating dinner together as a family is very important. At Raphael House this value is practiced daily. The dining room is beautiful, and I spent time getting to know everyone better by sharing meals with them. It was my favorite time of the evening. I usually sat with my best friend, Coco, who is six. Her little life has inspired me in ways I cannot even describe.

Before I left for the summer, my Grandpa said, "Just love those children, and that's how they'll know." He did not tell me to preach to them or try to convert them. He gave me instructions on how to be Christ-like in their lives.

One of the children at Raphael House named Kayla is three and has leukemia. She is currently in remission and is full of energy. One day she sat on my lap and gently stroked the side of my face. It was this simple act that enabled me to understand the beauty of touch for my life. Hugging a child or stroking her head means that you want to be close to her in a safe and appropriate way. Children respond to the truth, and they understand when you are sincere.

I learned many things while I was in San Francisco, but three things stood out as the most important. The first thing is the importance of love in everyday life. Second, we need to understand the power of action. Third, joy comes simply through living. These three principles are practiced every day at Raphael House.

At 7:45 p.m. it is story time at Raphael House. The children put on their pajamas and come into the Children's Garden with their parents to sing songs and hear a bedtime story. The first night I was there we sang "Peace like a River" in the dark room. My brand-new family sang, "I've got peace like a river, I've got joy like a fountain, I've got love like an ocean in my soul," and I understood that they truly do have joy and so do I.

*Bethany Blough lives in Cincinnati, where she is pursuing work and graduate-study opportunities.*

## **Developing close and God-centered relationships**

Charity Brubaker (DOOR, Denver, 2003)

I spent the summer of 2003 working with the DOOR program in Denver. In this program youth groups from around the United States come

**Before I left for the summer, my Grandpa said, "Just love those children, and that's how they'll know." He did not tell me to preach to them or try to convert them.**

to Denver to learn about and do service in the city for a six-day period, Sunday through Friday.

I worked at Colfax Community Network, which is a day camp for children ages 5-12 who were living or had recently lived in a motel and were considered homeless. Every day the children were divided by age groups and took part in an activity rotation that consisted of playing outside, doing crafts, or having a mini-lesson.

There were many experiences, stories or beliefs these children shared about their lives that shocked me. Many of them were abused in multiple ways, were homeless and got very little sleep due to noisy neighbors or parents. Some were not used to eating nutritious meals and were significantly malnourished. Some did not know their fathers. What I remember most about them is their resiliency. Many of them would run up to me every morning before going to play to give me a hug, and then at the end of the day remember to thank me in the gratitude circle and give me a hug before heading out the door. These children had very optimistic attitudes, which I found surprising when considering the challenges they faced every day.

My day did not end after leaving Colfax Community Network. During the car ride back to the church, I would often debrief the DOOR participants about how their day had gone and what sort of things they had learned from playing and talking with the children. I often asked whether they had heard anything that was shocking to them. The field service part of our day was normally finished at 4 p.m.

I also developed very close and God-centered relationships with the other staff members and the director who worked at DOOR. I had numerous theological and spiritual conversations with them. We challenged each other in the way we thought, and through this challenge, our beliefs were often strengthened and our understanding of others greatly increased. Through these conversations I learned how to express my opinion in a non-offensive, well-thought-out and patient manner. By the end of the summer I managed to stay calm and rational, which helped in my credibility.

One of our discussions centered on the use of the term “mission trip” versus “service trip.” We talked about the purpose of the youth groups coming to work in the city. Most of the youth groups were from smaller towns in the Midwest. One of the main objectives is for them not only to provide their services to those with need, but to learn about their own biases and misconceptions about the inner city and those living in it. Although groups may leave the week feeling they did something positive for others, short-term service projects are immediately most life-changing for the youth and their leaders. The groups ideally leave more informed

and with a better understanding about the work that still needs to be done. A large part of my job this summer was not only to play with kids, but to teach high-school youth and often the sponsors some of the truths of inner-city life. I do not consider myself an expert by any means, but I did learn a lot and developed some life-changing relationships with some of the people in Denver.

*Charity Brubaker works as a case manager for the Interfaith Hospitality Network in Gosben, Ind.*

## **A simple ministry of presence**

Emily Hershberger (International internship, Israel/Palestine, 2003)

My experience in the Service Inquiry Program during the summer of 2003 unfolded in unexpected directions and challenged me in many ways. The international location of my placement in Israel/Palestine added a unique nuance to my two-month term.

My activities were varied; my movements from place to place were often fast and furious. For a week in early June I lived with an Arab Baptist family in Nazareth, Israel, and visited the Mennonite Mission Network-sponsored Nazareth Village project, helping with simple tasks in this reconstruction of a first-century town and observing the ways an archaeological project serves as a form of local and international ministry. When I returned to Nazareth for a two-week stretch in mid-July, I arrived as a volunteer English teacher in a local English camp for Arab children. In terms of practical service, those two weeks were probably the most difficult. Lacking material resources and pedagogical know-how, I was wholly unprepared to be a principal teacher of English conversation to Arabic-speaking youngsters, ages 4 through 12. I suppose extreme circumstances garner extreme performances.

Perhaps most influentially, I also spent five weeks in the West Bank, living in Beit Sahour near Bethlehem with a Palestinian Greek Orthodox family for over four weeks and visiting Hebron with Christian Peacemaker Teams for most of one. Some of the service I did there was practical and tangible, editing the second-edition manuscripts of a book about the Israeli/Palestinian conflict for a professor at the Bethlehem Bible College and meeting with two staff members at a Mennonite Central Committee-sponsored conflict-resolution center for practice in English conversation.

But most of my service came as a simple ministry of presence in an often misrepresented part of the world — as a commitment to listening

to the stories of Palestinian experience, searching out numerous contacts, visiting as many peace and justice organizations (Palestinian and Israeli) and refugee camps and committees as I could.

Service meant learning about and recording the realities of life under occupation: the checkpoints, soldiers, tanks, psychological traumas, house demolitions, displaced people, unemployment, unjust and untimely deaths, daily denials of human dignity and deadly political absurdities. And in the end, such a commitment didn't really seem like service at all. It seemed like something that should be done just because justice demands it on the most basic level. It seemed a basic acceptance and reciprocation of generously offered friendships — friendships that meant relationship with a grossly mistreated people who need to be served by the world in ways one student from the USA can barely begin to attest to.

This summer stretched me further than I've ever been stretched before. I was thrust into a larger, more complex world and found that encounter invaluable. Yet I was also deeply troubled by the pain and suffering I encountered. In a way, it's still difficult to fully evaluate the meaning of this experience as part of SIP. Yet I have no doubt that the relationships I made this summer — relationships that forced me to think deeply about how I am called to engage this turbulent world — will have an impact on the directions I travel in life.

*Emily Hersbberger is living in Washington, D.C., where she is an intern with Sojourners Magazine.*

## **Leadership 101: The way a leader acts shapes the group**

Jesse Miller (SALSA, San Antonio, 2003)

I spent my summer with Service and Learning in San Antonio (SALSA), which gives church youth groups an opportunity to spend a week in San Antonio serving and learning from the people they work with. The program is based at La Casa de Maria y does this need a diacritical mark of some sort? Marta, a place for guests to experience service and reflection in a community setting.

From La Casa I took youth groups to service sites. The first part of summer I helped the Repair and Modification Project (RAMP), an organization that builds ramps for disabled people and does low-cost home repairs. The RAMP workers are excellent teachers — not only are they skilled wood-

workers, but they demonstrate compassion for the people they serve and the volunteers they work with. At the end of the summer I worked more at Positive Beginnings, a day-care center for children from low-income families. Since I had little experience working with groups of kids, I enjoyed the opportunity to learn new skills as I interacted with children of different developmental stages.

Three Thursdays during the summer, I accompanied groups to Nuevo Laredo, a border town in Mexico. Stopping at the community center and children's home I found that the trip helped me to reflect on the ways North American lifestyles and policies affect the international community. During reflections on Fridays, many group participants mentioned this trip as the most eye-opening experience of their week.

On Sundays and Thursdays, I helped an organization called Food Not Bombs (FNB) that met at the Mennonite church. Built on the principle that food is a right and not a privilege, FNB uses the leftover supplies from grocery stores and restaurants to cook vegetarian meals for the homeless and the hungry. My position was to act as a liaison between the church and certain peace organizations. I am not sure what could have been done to make that link stronger. However, I started that process by working with FNB. I have been inspired by the enthusiasm and idealism of FNB's radical youth. Their vision of simple actions for positive change is not far removed from what the mission of the church should be. I hope the Mennonite church and the many peace organizations in the building can find new ways to relate to each other beyond sharing physical space.

Being an introvert, I know that a leadership role does not always come easily. Yet, I adjusted. I learned that I needed to take advantage of the time I had alone. The bus ride to work in the morning was one time I could refocus my energy for the day ahead. Throughout the summer I became more confident in leadership roles. I learned that the way a leader acts shapes a group. When a leader asks good questions, the group probably will too. When a leader is willing to do the work no one wants to do, others will likely help out too.

I am impressed by the amount of amazing activity at La Casa and the Mennonite church in San Antonio. I enjoyed being surrounded by so many groups and individuals dedicated to working for peace. I hope to take this passion for peace, justice and creativity with me as I find my place in the world.

*Jesse Miller lives at Reba Place Fellowship in Evanston, Ill., and works as an intern in a Reba Place store called Plain and Simple.*

## **Finding God in the words and faces of the people of Chicago**

Angela Richer (DOOR, Chicago, 2003)

There are many places and ways to see and experience different cultures and to find God. I spent the summer of 2003 working for the DOOR program in Chicago, and it helped me to do those things in ways that I never expected. DOOR stands for Discovering Opportunities for Outreach and Reflection. All of the groups that I worked with that summer were of high school or junior high age and were church youth groups. The groups came for a week at a time to learn about the city and to do service. My job included leading these groups around the city to the various organizations and agencies that DOOR works with. We also helped to lead reflection sessions and process the groups' experiences with them at various times throughout the week.

I never imagined that I could learn so much or grow so much in just a few short months. My perceptions of urban issues such as homelessness were broadened immensely. I learned much about diversity, openness, and awareness. Even more than that, though, I learned about the importance of educating others about what I was learning. At the beginning of the summer, I wouldn't have told anyone that that would be the most important part of my job, but now I can say that I think it was. Breaking down some pretty deeply entrenched stereotypes turned out to be a challenge, but one that I embraced, partly because I had to learn to overcome them as completely as I could before I could help others to do the same.

Toward the beginning of the summer, I met a man in a small homeless shelter on the north side of the city. After I talked to him for just a few minutes, we discovered that we had something in common: he had attended Goshen College for one year. He said it was in 1971, and he was African-American, so it was a part of the college's affirmative-action program. That was one of the breaking points for me. At that moment, more than ever before, I realized that homelessness can happen to anyone, and it could be me just as easily as it was those men. The summer was full of realizations like that.

I could not have asked for a better support network in the DOOR staff, either. I thoroughly enjoyed meeting peers from other schools, states and denominations and getting to know some new, diverse people. Jon and Kristin Friesen, the directors, were extremely encouraging and kind, and more than anyone else, they helped to open my eyes to city dynamics and urban issues in Chicago. They were knowledgeable, helpful, wonderful

teachers and became good friends. I appreciated their support immensely. There is really no way to sum up this summer briefly, but I experienced God in many new and wonderful ways, and I probably found God the most in the faces and words of, or interactions with, the people of Chicago.

*Angela Richer is a senior music-education major at Gosben College.*

## **Overcoming hostilities between Catholics and Protestants**

Abby Nafziger (International internship, England and Northern Ireland, 2004)

I spent the summer of 2004 divided between two different locations and organizations. The first was the London Mennonite Centre (LMC) located in England. I volunteered and lived there for two weeks. I performed a variety of tasks, ranging from data entry and stuffing envelopes to weeding the garden and helping prepare tea. The LMC was a great place to be welcomed into, and much of what I was most impressed by was the way the people incorporated their work relationships into a communal atmosphere. I became accustomed to the simple joys of community coffee and tea breaks outdoors in the beautiful English garden.

The rest of my service experience was spent at Greenhill YMCA located in Northern Ireland. I participated with their Summer Adventure Camp, which consisted of both a senior day camp (for 12- to 14-year-olds) and a junior day camp (for 6- to 11-year-olds). Greenhill is located in the seaside town of Newcastle, at the foot of the Mourne Mountains and offers children a wide variety of outdoor activities from climbing and canoeing, to orienteering and navigating a low-ropes course can we explain a little more what this is? Along with the Summer Adventure Camp (SAC) staff, Greenhill also has some 10 or 12 residential volunteers who do terms of six months to a year. These volunteers come from all over the world, with a concentration on Europeans. This gives the camp an interesting blend of cultures. There were 12 summer staff, including me, and five different countries represented, which created an interesting international atmosphere.

My main job was to help lead and supervise the children, from their arrival in the morning to their departure at the end of the afternoon. Each day began with announcements and camp songs that helped wake up and energize the kids. This required lots of enthusiasm and a willingness to

look silly in front of the kids. It was always a blast to see their reactions to a group of “old” people acting so oddly.

The children who attended Greenhill Summer Camp were mainly middle class, split about 50/50 between Catholics and Protestants. SAC is not a program specifically designed for reconciliation work; however, it clearly expresses a neutral stance and provides an environment in which the sectarian issues of Northern Ireland become non-issues. Except for differences in name and home address, there was nothing available for the children to tell who was Catholic and who was Protestant, and no sectarian language was tolerated. By providing this safe environment, Greenhill helps discourage children from placing importance on the sectarian divisions, and it is hoped that those issues will fade as they grow up and the next generation will not have as much hate fostered between Catholics and Protestants.

My experience at Greenhill was unique in that I came into the situation knowing no one. This enabled me to learn a lot about my own strengths. Overall the experience underlined my own independent nature and my own ability to get to know new people and make friends. This was very reassuring to me, seeing as traveling is something I intend to do later on in life.

This summer proved to be a highly enriching one for me and helped me learn a lot about my own strengths and abilities while also learning about a very different culture. I can't really think of any way to improve the program as I experienced it this summer. While it proved difficult at times to be working through so many different organizations, the reward of the experience made it well worth it.

*Abigail Nafziger is a junior history major at Goshen College.*

## **Fittin' up mo' chili on the tray**

Rachel Wigginton (DOOR, Miami, 2004)

Upon arriving in Miami, a city that is renowned for lots of fun and even more sun, I feel like I am entering a whole new world of people and culture, but I am also entering a gate that I have never really opened before.

The summer at DOOR/Miami consists of youth groups coming in every week and going out into the city every day to work at agencies like homeless assistance centers, soup kitchens, food pantries and vacation Bible schools. During their week in the big city, the staff, consisting mainly of five girls including me, leads the different groups and joins them at whatever task they have to accomplish. The church groups arrive on Sunday nights

and the staff prepares an orientation for them consisting of get-to-know-you games and a brief history of Miami, along with the DOOR rules.

The staff takes turns preparing breakfast and a devotional every morning. Then the day begins with groups being led off in different directions with one common goal in mind — to see the face of God in the city. Monday I take my group to Camillus House and we see all the homeless people sprawled out in the shade along the entrance to the building. We are ushered in by a big man who yells at someone to give us a tour of the facility. By the end of the tour it is time to serve lunch to the residents and then dinner to people off the streets. I look into their faces as they ask for more and I wonder what story of anguish and resentment they have to tell. Instead of these stories, however, they say, “Darl’n, you know you can fit mo’ chili up on this tray.”

We walk to the metro mover and take it home after a long day of work and wash off all the grime of the city and the sweat acquired in the hot kitchen, and we can look forward to a nice meal now. We cater in some amazing food from Blue Sky, a Cuban restaurant, and I even go up for thirds. Later we have a reflection time where everyone can say what they did that day and enlighten us about what was exciting, what was different, and where *they* saw the face of God in the city. We pray over the experiences we have today and ask God to be with us tomorrow. Tomorrow comes bright and early and we awake for another day of service in the city.

I struggle with how I should relate to the other people on my staff. Even the ones that are like me in so many ways have differences that we have to resolve to become a cohesive team. It is hard to let the locals come in and take over a leadership position for a limited period of time knowing that we will be there the whole summer and they only have this one week or so. The spontaneity of the schedule is also a struggle, but I come to realize that things in life are never set in stone, either. So why should this be any different? Although I see these as weaknesses, they provide for growth and a patience that I could not have achieved elsewhere.

Our fearless leader, Heidi, is a great role model for me during the summer as well. Her smile, enthusiasm, and true heart for God inspire me like no one else before. The strengths that the program and I produce are also highlights of my experiences in Miami.

On Thursday nights we take the groups down to a secluded part of town with a good view of Miami’s skyline and its colorful lights. There

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we ask participants to explain the week in one word, and we are active listeners when they tell why they chose that word to encompass a whole week of service. I enjoy these nights, and I also enjoy the amazing change we get to see in some of these people. Sometimes as leaders and disciples of Christ we do not get to see change in the people we work with, but during DOOR we do, and it's very rewarding.

In this final evening of the week I come to realize that our vision to see the face of God in the city really does come through in the end with people telling their stories of how they see God at work. My word each week is different, but at the end of the summer Heidi asks us to pick one word for the summer. The word I choose is motivation. I am motivated and stretched to get to know people with whom I would otherwise not have even been acquaintances. I am motivated and strengthened to keep on being a leader. I am motivated and challenged to find where my gifts lie and encourage others to use theirs when they have been blessed to have already found them.

*Rachel Wigginton is a sophomore at Gosben College, majoring in Spanish and social work.*

## **I find God most when I am serving his people and his world**

Alicia Janzen (DOOR, Chicago, 2004)

I spent the summer of 2004 in Chicago working with the DOOR program. DOOR is an organization that brings youth to the city to expose them to things that go on in urban settings and to equip them to see God in the midst of all of it.

A typical day consisted of leading a group of four or five youth and one sponsor to a work site on public transportation (CTA). Work sites varied greatly, from visiting with men at a homeless shelter to pulling weeds at an urban gardening program to making and serving food in a soup kitchen. After working the majority of the day, we had a little time to rest before supper. We then had evening speakers who talked about issues affecting the people and neighborhoods of Chicago. Following this input, I led the reflection of the day with my work team and the rest of the youth group. We talked about things they experienced, such as what was challenging for them throughout the day, what was eye-opening, where they saw God and other observations or questions they had.

The majority of my working day was spent out in the city at different agencies with the youth that I was leading. I traveled to many different neighborhoods in Chicago and was immersed in settings of amazing diversity. The clients were mostly African-American. So I was the minority in most of my situations this summer. I loved learning about black culture and things that affect it.

I also built a strong community of relationships in Chicago. I lived in pretty intense community with the staff as we lived and worked together. I also built great relationships with the agency staff that I worked with, and I always felt extremely welcomed and included as part of their family.

I learned a lot about social issues and worked on trying to understand their complexity. It is hard to understand them and I don't know that I ever will fully understand any of them. But being exposed and immersed in some of them did great things for me. The program is great at getting people to think more deeply about the way they treat people and breaking stereotypes that they have.

Through DOOR, I learned a lot of things about myself, social issues and relating to others. I enjoyed seeing God in many places throughout the city and experiencing his presence firsthand. This summer I thought a lot about how my faith is immensely related to service and that I find God most when I am serving his people and his world. Sometimes I get caught up in thinking that there are certain ways to have strong faith such as Bible study, prayer, etc. This summer I realized a little more how I can find God in my own way: through service, just as others can find him in their ways which might be Bible Study, prayer, etc. I was blessed with friends who challenged me in the search to gain a better understanding of what faith means for me.

*Alicia Janzen is a junior social-work major at Gosben College.*

# Study Guide

## For Small Group Discussion and Individual Reflection

Del Hershberger  
Director of Christian Service  
Mennonite Mission Network

Perhaps as you have read the 15 stories recounted in this booklet, certain issues or questions have come to mind that demand further exploration and discussion. Why not gather a few friends together and do just that? Here are a few reflections to get the conversation started.

### 1. Attitude

**Read: Philippians 2: 5-11**

This ancient hymn records Jesus' approach to the world. What were the attitudes and adjustments Jesus made in order to be accessible and effective in ministry?

They say that "attitude is everything." Maybe that's an overstatement, but how you approach a new or uncomfortable situation has a lot to do with how that situation will turn out. What are some examples from the stories of these SIPers that demonstrated humility, servanthood and obedience?

- u Rachel Koontz says she "was reminded over and over to value relationships over personal goals" and "to work in a flexible manner ... to make space for a conversation." Where are the places in your life that relationships take precedence over personal goals? What is lost and what is gained by putting others first?
- u Mary Short relates the experience of living the life of a migrant farm worker for a day, and she says that "after about 10 minutes of walking in a migrant worker's shoes, we wanted to leave those shoes behind." How difficult is it to walk in someone else's shoes? How does walking in their shoes create an empathy that forever changes the way we look at normal everyday things such as a produce section in the grocery store?

### 2. Conflict

**Read: Zechariah 7:9-14; Jeremiah 5:21-31**

Conflict is essentially the discrepancy between what is ideal and what is real, and the intensity of the conflict will depend on how wide the dis-

crepancy is. Many of the SIPers experienced conflict — either with those they lived with, with those they served, or with a system they felt was unfair to people they served.

- u Mary Short was frustrated by Kelvin until she reached out in love to him and searched beneath his hard exterior to see a nine-year-old child to whom poverty and homelessness had brought pain and unhappiness.
- u Rachel Koontz writes about “helping to bridge the digital divide, where people of lower economic status and lower educational levels and minorities have been increasingly left behind in a technological world.” Folks on opposite sides of that divide are very likely to view the other as “the problem.”
- u Landon Yoder learned that winning an argument wasn’t important, compared to connecting with the experience of someone with another point of view. Points of conflict can be unique opportunities to show kindness, patience and compassion.
- u Jesse Miller and Elizabeth Anne Miller encountered situations where North American lifestyles and policies are in conflict with migrants and the international community.

How do you typically respond to conflict — avoidance? confrontation? compromise? Are there times when each response has merit? Are there times when a response is wrong or even sinful?

### **3. The relationship between teacher and learner**

**Read: John 13:1-16**

Jesus routinely turned the tables on the roles people assumed for master and servant, teacher and student. Repeatedly in these SIP stories, we hear about someone who went with the intention of giving and ended up receiving, and people who went to teach and ended up learning so much more. Each of these SIPers has gifts that should continue to be used, but in each situation the volunteers also learned valuable lessons from those they served.

- u Elizabeth Anne Miller acknowledged that “many times I left in the evening feeling as if they had taught me more than I had taught them.”
- u Tasara Redekopp was “astounded at the breadth of [her] experience,” and at how much she learned. She came to believe that she was the

one who needed a more complex understanding of Chicago, even though she was the one who planned to teach others.

It is said that we seldom learn anything while we are talking, that learning comes from listening. In these stories, the SIPers often used words like *inspired*, *welcomed*, *stretched*, *humbled* and *encouraged* to describe how the people they served impacted their lives. When and how have you learned something life-changing from an unexpected person or circumstance?

- u Charity Brubaker says that one of the main objectives of DOOR is to help rural and suburban youth face their biases and misconceptions about the inner city and those who live in it. What stereotypes do you have about the city or the poor? Would you be surprised to discover that you harbor misconceptions that would be hurtful to urban poor?

#### **4. Holistic ministry**

**Read: Matthew 9:35-38**

The church often struggles with the relationship between peace/evangelism and service/justice. In Jesus' ministry, he brought social, physical and spiritual wholeness to people he encountered. The good news of Jesus Christ should be proclaimed in both word and deed. They are really two sides of the same coin. They must go hand-in-hand.

- u Bethany Blough was grateful that Raphael House had a holistic approach to helping provide services to families in crisis.
- u Alicia Janzen reflected on how her faith was strengthened through her experience with DOOR in Chicago, and how she discovered how her "faith is immensely related to service and that I find God most when I am serving his people in his world."
- u Teaching computer skills and building relationships went hand-in-hand for Rachel Koontz in MVS in Chicago.
- u Jesse Miller expressed appreciation for the San Antonio Mennonite Church being so involved in peace and justice.

The church needs to focus on how Jesus brought salvation to people he met. It was never a one-size-fits-all approach, but it always recognized that God intends for salvation to touch every part of our lives. Jesus

restored relationships between people, he provided for their physical needs, and he paved the way for those who were estranged from God into relationship with God.

How is your church working to restore relationships, meeting physical needs and helping people find peace with God? What do you sense God doing in your community and world that you can join God in doing?

## 5. Ministry of presence

**Read: John 15:4, 9-17**

The great encouragement from the beginning to the end in Matthew's gospel is that God is with us. Jesus is called Immanuel (God is with us) in Matt. 1:23. And in the last verse of the book Jesus promises us: "I will be with you always."

Many of the SIPers reflected on seeing, feeling and experiencing God in fresh and unexpected ways. They were also the presence of Christ to many of the people they served along the way. Ministry doesn't always depend on high levels of activity. Sometimes it is simply "being with."

- u Elizabeth Anne Miller says that the simple act of listening in patience was the most important thing she contributed to the ProBAR clients in Harlingen. Can you recall a time that someone listened to you in patience that meant the world to you?
- u Emily Hershberger also says that "most of my service came as a simple ministry of presence." When people feel forgotten, they despair. Her commitment to listening to their stories, and recording what it is like to live under occupation, was a true gift of service. Even more than that, she says, "justice demands it." Whom do you know that needs to be remembered?

## 6. Cultural challenges

**Read: 1 Corinthians 9:19-23; Acts 10:9-23**

The early church encountered many cultural differences as it reached out with the good news. And even though the early Christians were strong in their commitment to Jesus, they often found themselves needing to let go of cultural practices and traditions that were not an essential part of Christian faith. If our 21st-century traditions and cultural practices get in the way of sharing God's love, or if we assume that we have a corner on understanding who God is, we need to repent and change just like Peter.

- u Angela Richer was challenged to break some deeply entrenched stereotypes in Chicago, and found how much she had in common with a homeless man. When have you had an “aha” moment that challenged one of your preconceived ideas of God and the world?
- u Alicia Janzen acknowledged that many social issues are very complex, but that by being exposed to and immersed in the lives of people who grew up very differently, she has deepened her appreciation and understanding of them. Do Paul’s words of “being all things to all people” scare you or energize you?

## **7. Integrating new experiences into life at home**

**Read: James 1:22-25**

Many of these SIPers will return to their home communities where people are more like them than the people they served with during the program. It will be important for the SIPers to keep learning and growing, but there will be a temptation to fall into one of two traps — isolating the service experience so that it doesn’t influence their further understanding of the world, or trying to imitate and reproduce the service experience at home. Ideally, they have learned principles for relating cross-culturally so that their Christian service is integrated into their lives, and they will be able to share God’s love with people in any situation.

The SIPers learned to take risks in building relationships with people of differing backgrounds, in learning from others’ life experiences, in respecting others’ understandings of God and the world, in giving blessing to others, in receiving gifts and blessings from others, in learning to be grateful, and in engaging the world, not only during the course of this short-term experience, but as a lifetime commitment.

As you reflect on the experiences of these college volunteers, make a list of principles for relating the good news of Jesus Christ cross-culturally. What makes it difficult to continue to integrate and live out the things we learn through our experiences? How much easier is it when we have someone else who also has learned those things and is willing to walk with us in living out that journey of faith?

## 8. Calling

Read: 1 Timothy 4:11-16

“Calling” is a word that has a feeling of mystery, but often one’s calling is found by simply following the interests and gifts that God has placed within you. Reading these SIP stories, how do you see God at work “calling” these people to pursue their faithful service?

- u Emily Hershberger comes to the conclusion that her SIP experience will impact the choices she makes in life, because it has forced her “to think deeply about how I am called to engage this turbulent world.”
- u Bethany Blough points to three things she learned at Raphael House — to love, act and live. How that gets played out in her life is an open question, but it seems her calling is being formed.
- u Repeatedly in the stories of Alicia Janzen, Charity Brubaker, Andrew Burkhalter and others, the refrain comes around: “I was challenged by the people I worked with to understand and live out my faith,” or, “We challenged each other and our beliefs and understanding of others was greatly increased,” or, “I was blessed with friends who challenged me in my faith.” In our individualistic society, we don’t often hear people depending on others to help clarify their call, but that is a very biblical approach — to discern one’s call in community.
- u Abby Nafziger and Rachel Wigginton reflected on how their gifts became more obvious to them through their service.
- u Elizabeth Bontrager sums up the way working for Migration and Refugee Services impacted her by saying that she definitely expects to return to work there someday. What are ways your church can encourage young adults to test a call to ministry?

## **Mennonite Mission Network** **Program Descriptions**

**DEO** (Discipleship, Encounter, Outreach) participants have the opportunity to spend a year discovering God in the incredible journey of discipleship. Adults, age 18-30, are invited to join this intimate, three-phase encounter with Jesus Christ. These segments of DEO include developing spiritually in a community of faith, volunteering in community-based organizations and serving in a ministry internship.

**DOOR** (Discovering Opportunities for Outreach & Reflection) offers organized urban experiences, service, worship and reflection for groups and individuals, age 13 and up, from all denominations. Participants serve in Atlanta, Chicago, Denver, Miami and San Antonio anywhere from one weekend to yearlong internships. Volunteers are immersed in city life where they encounter the living urban church.

**Group Venture** calls groups, high-school age and beyond, to learn about community and see what God is doing through service, worship and reflection. Groups choose the date, length of assignment and location from a list of 13 sites across North America.

**International Internships** help young adults, 21 and older, test their call to long-term mission by giving them experience in international service. Terms are preferably one to three years and match the gifts and interests of the individual serving. In past years, interns have served Argentina, Colombia, England, Israel, Northern Ireland and South Africa.

**Mennonite Voluntary Service** invites adults, age 20 and older, to join together in Christian ministry for one- or two-year terms in more than 20 locations in the United States. Living simply in a common household, volunteers walk with those who suffer from injustice and participate in a local congregation.

**RAD** (Reaching and Discipling) allows young adults, age 18-30, to experience intimacy with Christ that impacts the world. Following three months of discipleship training, teams of four to seven adults with a leader serve for six to eight months at ongoing ministry locations in North America and internationally.

**Service Adventure** gives young adults, age 17-20, a chance to make a difference in the lives of others. Participants live in a household community with a leader for 10 months in eight locations across the United States. Volunteers grow in faith through serving others and exploring spiritual and social issues within the context of a Christian community. Service Adventure Leaders, adults age 24 and older, provide spiritual guidance for the 17- to 20-year-old participants in Service Adventure. Leaders live in or near a household of four to seven Service Adventure participants. Terms are for two years.

**SOOP** (Service Opportunities for Older People) gives adults, 50 and older, a chance to invest their gifts in serving others. Participants bring healing and hope across the United States and Canada. By choosing their location and length of service, volunteers follow God's lead as they serve where needed. On-site coordinators assist in developing appropriate placements, which usually range from two weeks to three months, some longer.

**Youth Venture** provides opportunities for youth and young adults to join together for a one- to four- week service and learning experience. Individual participants between the ages of 14 and 20 join with a team leader to work on various service projects. International opportunities are available in such locations as Northern Ireland, Colombia, Bolivia and Canada.

**For information about mission and service opportunities, log on to:**

- ◆ <http://Service.MennoniteMission.net>
- ◆ [www.citymissions.org](http://www.citymissions.org)
- ◆ [www.d-e-o.org](http://www.d-e-o.org)
- ◆ [www.GLDC.org](http://www.GLDC.org)
- ◆ [www.groupventure.org](http://www.groupventure.org)

## For Further Reading

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- ◆ DEARBORN, Tim, *Short-Term Missions Workbook: From Mission Tourists to Global Citizens* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2003).
- ◆ EBY, John W., "Linking Service and Learning: Observations from the Service-Learning Movement," in *Mission Focus: Annual Review* (Elkhart, Ind.: MFAR, 3003 Benham Ave., Elkhart IN 46517-1999, 1998), pp. 137-147.
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- ◆ KRABILL, James R., *The Short-Term Experience: Current Trends/Future Challenges* [in *Mission Insight* series, No. 2] (Elkhart, Ind.: Mennonite Board of Missions, 1999).
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## **The *Missio Dei* Series**

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- No. 2 James R. Krabill, *Does Your Church "Smell" Like Mission? Reflections on Becoming a Missional Church* (2003).
- No. 3 Donna Kampen Entz, *From Kansas To Kenedougou ... And Back Again* (2004).
- No. 4 Alan Kreider, *Peace Church, Mission Church: Friends or Foes?* (2004).
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- No. 6 Craig Pelkey-Landes, *Purpose Driven Mennonites* (2004).
- No. 7 James R. Krabill and Stuart W. Showalter, editors, *Students Talk About Service* (2004).

# Students Talk About Service

James R. Krabill and Stuart W. Showalter, editors

“Thrown into the fire of immigration complexities.” “Developing close and God-centered relationships.” “Overcoming hostilities between Catholics and Protestants.” “New eyes for the produce section at the grocery store.” “Finding God in the words and faces of the people of Chicago.”

These are a few of the titles that capture some of the key learnings for 15 students who, over the past four summers, have participated in the Service Inquiry Program at Goshen (Ind.) College. Carried out as a collaborative effort between the college and the short-term mission and service department of Mennonite Mission Network, the placement of these students was designed to help participants test their calling, gifts and interests for congregational ministry by serving for 11 weeks as pastoral interns in widely diverse settings across the United States and in several international locations.

What will be the long-term impact of these experiences on students' vocational choices? That story “will require years of patient waiting,” says Stuart Showalter in this booklet's preface, “because the story will continue to unfold as the Spirit keeps moving in the lives of these dedicated, compassionate students.”

In the meantime, enjoy the stories offered here. They will encourage you and serve as convincing proof that God's kingdom work is indeed in good hands for another generation.

*James R. Krabill served with Mennonite Board of Missions from 1976-2002 in a variety of capacities, as a village Bible teacher in Ivory Coast, regional program director for West Africa and vice president of the agency's Mission Advocacy and Communication division. Since 2002, he has provided oversight to the Global Ministries division of Mennonite Mission Network, the national mission agency for the newly formed Mennonite Church USA.*

*Stuart W. Showalter is Director of Career Services at Goshen (Ind.) College. As a part of his assignment, he serves as Administrator of the Service Inquiry Program — the program responsible for facilitating the service-learning experiences described by students in this booklet. For 23 years (1976-99), he served as a professor of communication at Goshen College. He was also co-leader of the college's Study-Service Term in Haiti (1981-82) and in Ivory Coast (1993).*

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