

# THE COMPANION

*The newsletter of Bon Secours Volunteer Ministry*

Summer 2016

Issue 20



## Moving Towards God's Justice

By Alex Yeo, 2015-2016 Volunteer  
A graduate of College of the Holy Cross



Alex Yeo

As I serve in the Emergency Room, I practice a ministry of presence. It is a role in which a reassuring smile and conversation skills are far more important than knowledge of medications and medical procedures. I offer patients my time and a willingness to listen to their concerns. I enter into conversations out of a genuine concern for the patient's wellbeing, not a desire to fix his or her problems. What I take away from my interactions with patients are stories, moments of their lives that they choose to share with me. They may be lighthearted anecdotes or accounts of personal hardship and adversity. Each story I hear helps me perceive the community around me in a new way. These intimate interactions provide the catalyst for new insights to emerge and for new questions to form.

The comfort I feel around patients and my ability to converse with them did not come easily. Actually, it was a gift I received from my patients. On my first day of work in the ER, my only true emotions were fear and anxiety. I was afraid that I would not be able to connect with patients whose life experiences were so different from my own. I could not imagine what common language I would draw on to create relationships. Now, as I reflect on how I felt, my apprehension in the beginning of the year reminds me of God's Justice. This year, we have learned that the main focus of God's Justice is building relationships. There needs to be harmony in the relationships between you, other individuals, God, and the outside environment. Love is what exists when all relationships are right, when one is broken an outcome can be fear or anger.

Continued on Page 6

*Editor's Corner,*  
*Olivia Steback*  
*BSVM Program Manager*

*"One of the marvelous things about community is that it enables us to welcome and help people in a way we couldn't as individuals. When we pool our strength and share the work and responsibility, we can welcome many people, even those in deep distress, and perhaps help them find self-confidence and inner healing."*

– Jean Vanier, *Community and Growth*



Left to Right: Sr. Rosalinda Pajuelo Ureña, CBS, Alex Yeo, Nicole Odum, Mackenzie Buss, Shannon Curran, Elizabeth Modde, Sr. Rose Marie Jasinski, CBS

This edition of *The Companion* spotlights the many and diverse members of the BSVM community. From its heart on South Mount Street, BSVM radiates out, including our neighbors, site supervisors, staff of Bon Secours Baltimore Hospital, Bon Secours Retreat and Conference Center staff, alumni and friends located across the United States, benefactors, BSVM social medial followers, and many others. Our community grew from another community, the Congregation of the Sisters of Bon Secours. God's grace moved through these loving, dedicated women and birthed a new ministry that took on a life of its own.

*"Then Jesus asked, "What is the kingdom of God like? What shall I compare it to? It is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his garden. It grew and became a large tree, and the birds of the air nested in its branches."*

- Luke 13:18-19

In the pages that follow, Alex and Nicole both reflect on different aspects of community. Nicole describes a tiny mustard seed of love, simple loving words that sprouted and grew into the strong bonds shared by our 2015-2016 volunteers. Alex speaks to the vision God has for a just and peaceful world community, one in which right relationships form the foundation for justice. He echoes the words of Jean Vanier quoted above, describing the personal healing he has experienced as a result of being in right relationship with others.

The many branches of the BSVM community tree form a just and loving network of people, guided by the Spirit, which supports and nurtures others in ways that only God fully sees. We pray in thanksgiving for all the readers of *The Companion*, as you belong to this community as well. Your support and desire to participate in our ministry is greatly appreciated!

Left to Right: Hol Helena Anthony, Chief Clinical Dietitian Mackenzie Buss, Kimberly Morgan, Social Worker Renal Department







## Community: It's Just Us!

By Nicole Odlum, 2015-2016 Volunteer  
A graduate of Loyola Marymount University

We had been living in Baltimore for a week and the five of us had just begun to get to know each other when I first experienced the bonds of friendship forming in our BSVM community. We all committed to a year of service, not knowing exactly what was in store for us or who we would meet when we arrived. Our orientation to the city and to each other that week consisted of different activities and events designed to build community in a meaningful way. Before one of the more vulnerable activities, I talked to Gerard and Alex in the backyard and expressed some of the nervousness I was feeling. In the most sincere, casual, and reassuring way Gerard responded by saying, "It's just us."

At that moment, I realized how connected and comfortable I already felt with my four community members, and I was reminded that I didn't need to be nervous opening up to them. They were genuinely interested in learning more about me, and I could sense that we all cared about developing our relationships. Thinking about this moment later in the year, I was amazed by how profound his statement was and it really stuck with me for the rest of my service year. Even though we had only known each other about a week, it felt like we all had been friends for much longer.

Living in community has been one of the most rewarding aspects of my experience serving in Baltimore. My expectations for living in an intentional community were completely exceeded from the very beginning. The five of us came together mainly because we shared similar values, despite our differences we learned how to blend our lives together. At the beginning, it took us some time to learn how to appreciate each others' uniqueness, but we were able to communicate directly and lovingly with each other and to compromise when necessary. We learned how to compromise while being open about the things that were most important to each of us. Together, we created an inclusive, connected, and fun community that continues to challenge us and pushes us out of our comfort zones.

The support that we provided each other through all of our positive and negative moments this year felt different than any other experience I had before. For example, during medical school interview season, my community members were willing to help me prepare for my interviews and didn't let me doubt myself too much. When I got to my first interview and opened my suitcase, I found a note from them expressing their support and encouragement. My heart felt so full of love and appreciation for their thoughtfulness and I was so grateful to have them walking through this experience with me.

In general, we are unafraid to express how we are really feeling to each other and we rely on each other for guidance and support. I always know they will be there for me in times of need or celebration. Our commitment to living intentionally with each other has changed the way I view relationships because I understand how meaningful relationships can be when you invest in them completely as I have done this year.

Developing community has meant pushing myself to be more open and honest, accepting myself and others for who they really are, and learning how to deeply reflect on the things that matter most. Eating dinner, spending weekends together, and implementing intentional weekly check-in times has helped our community learn more about ourselves and one another and has given us the opportunity to express the important things on our minds. After having so many experiences together, we have become a family and have created bonds that will last a lifetime!



## BSVM Site Supervisors

In this edition of *The Companion*, we feature our Site Supervisors. BSVM is blessed to work with dedicated professionals committed to sharing their love, time, and talents with our volunteers. Year after year, our Site Supervisors welcome BSVM volunteers with open hearts and hands. They mentor our volunteers professionally, as well as, guide them in their personal growth. Below, our 2015-2016 Site Supervisors reflect on their experience of Bon Secours Volunteer Ministry. We are deeply grateful that they have chosen to journey with us!

### **Kimberly Morgan, LCSW, CNSW, CGSW** **Renal Department**

Mackenzie Buss and Kimberly Morgan



As the volunteers leave the program and embark on their next journey, I hope that they each have learned something from their supervisors to take with them. I told Mackenzie, as a future social worker, the one word I wanted her to take away from this experience is **EMPOWERMENT**. I told her empowering people, to me, is God's work and the best thing a social worker can do to help people feel proud of themselves. I wish all the volunteers continue to grow spiritually and understand that God is always there, working through them to help others remember His Love, His Grace and His Mercy, because we are here to, "Provide Good Help To Those In Need." Thank you so much for the opportunity to be a servant and join the 2015-2016 volunteers on their spiritual journeys.

---

### **Donna Stevenson RN, BSN** **Emergency Department**

It has always been refreshing seeing such young men and women volunteering their time in this capacity. Their care and genuine willingness to help is evident in their work.

Over the last year, Alex has continued to uphold that energy and enthusiasm. He comes in every morning smiling and eager to start the day. There has not been one project that he hasn't taken on with eagerness. In today's day and age of nursing, we aren't always afforded the time to sit and talk to our patients. At times, we get so focused on other tasks that we just can't find as much time to spend with our patients as we would like to. When I see Alex sitting with our patients and talking with them, uninterrupted, I am so thankful that we are blessed with our volunteers. I am very excited to see who our next volunteer is and the unique gifts they have to offer!

Donna Stevenson and Alex Yeo





## BSVM Site Supervisors

### Joe Ann Murphy, RN Bon Secours Tele-Heart Program

Nicole Odlum and Joe Ann Murphy



This year I have been blessed to have Nicole as my program assistant. It is my hope that through her experiences in the hospital working with our heart patients, faith communities, and with all of our seniors, Nicole will leave Bon Secours Baltimore Hospital with a broader knowledge base and understanding of the importance of being present. Meeting patients where they are has always been my focus. Understanding our communities' needs and building on that prayerfully will guide Nicole as she pursues her vocation in medicine. It is a gift to serve as a Site Supervisor and mentor each year. Every volunteer is unique in his or her service.

### Eve DeVaro Fowler, MA, CPXP Patient Advocacy

Eve DeVaro Fowler and Elizabeth Modde



Some of the memories I'm most grateful for are the unforeseen blessings of sharing a workspace. Elizabeth has a work station in my office, a space where I do a great deal of my work by phone, addressing patient and family complaints. The work can be draining, emotionally and spiritually. One day, after a particularly trying conversation, I hung the phone up and a few moments later Elizabeth said, "You have such a great way of talking with people. It's like the perfect mix of professionalism - so they feel they're issue is taken seriously, and humor - so they feel like they're talking to a real person." This touched me because it made me realize how isolated I often feel in my work, how unexpectedly good it feels to have another person enter into that space with me, and ultimately how gratifying it is to be seen, heard, and known.



Elizabeth and Eve greet each other  
at the Site Supervisor Luncheon.

June 2, 2016

# BSVM Site Supervisors

## Ayesha Fowler Service Excellence Coordinator

The volunteers played a vital role in making Bon Secours Baltimore Hospital's *Patient Experience Week* a success. They were able to engage the staff by taking over 250 "I Am the Patient Experience" photographs and creating a video comprised of these images. The finale of *Patient Experience Week* was the showing of this video, it showcased all the hospital departments. The video was so inspiring it brought tears to my eyes. It is this year's volunteer legacy and will be viewed by many others in the years to come. I am inspired by their enthusiasm and willingness to serve and be a part of our Bon Secours family!

Ayesha Fowler and Gerard Ondrey



Continued from page 1

I came into this year very aware of the brokenness that exists within West Baltimore. The dangers of living in the community are easy to see: poverty, gun violence, and drug addiction. These risks are reported on the news and captured in statistics. Less easy to identify are the hazards posed from living in an affluent community. In the book, *Not All of Us Are Saints*, David Hilfiker writes, "Though rarely stated, the hazards of the affluent neighborhood, while certainly different, are equally real: a covetous sense of entitlement, blindness to one's privilege, numbness to the pain of the poor, and estrangement from one's own vulnerability." I share Hilfiker's words not to minimize the life of the poor, but because it explains the source of my own brokenness. Because the dangers posed by living in an oppressed community are so visual, growing up, I was blind to the ways in which I was negatively impacted by a life of privilege.

When I reflect on my experiences in the beginning of the year within the context of God's Justice, I see how there was a broken relationship between myself and the patients. During this year of service, I have begun to witness and to come to terms with my own brokenness. Although I was initially afraid of interacting with patients, they were the ones, in the end, that helped me begin to heal.

One patient in particular stands out in my mind. When I first met James, I could not have felt more uncomfortable. Walking into his room for the first time I remember standing awkwardly in the door frame while James, hunched over in pain in his bed, told me he needed more pain medication. When I went to the ER physician, I was told that they could not give him any more medication until a specialized IV line was placed. I felt helpless going back to his room. I so badly wanted to be able to give him good news, to give him the medication myself, to do something to alleviate his suffering. When coming back to deliver the bad news, I expected the worst from him. However, instead of berating me or using me to vent his frustrations he politely told me thank you and fell silent.

In that moment, I realized how my fears had almost prevented me from creating a connection with him. I had been so afraid of his reaction, anticipating that it would be negative, that I had not considered an alternative possibility. From the moment I entered into the room I already had a plan for how to exit if the conversation turned hostile. So when James responded lovingly, I did the only thing I could do, sit in silence with him at his bedside. I ended up seeing James in the ER several times after our first meeting. We didn't always have a conversation. Sometimes we chatted about our lives, but mostly I sat silently by his bed. James passed away last December after a long battle with cancer. As I mourn his death, I also greatly appreciate the gift he gave me. The patience and love he showed me gave me the courage to reach out and form relationships with many other patients. Through the power of his love and kindness, my own brokenness began to heal. This healing is a lifelong journey to wholeness.

## Meet Alex Yeo

### **Favorite Food:**

Mac and Cheese!

### **Hidden Talent:**

I know how to play the Ukulele!

### **Favorite Book:**

My favorite book is Atul Gawande's book *Being Mortal*. The book raises important points on why, with life expectancy increasing, doctors should be concerned with gauging the quality of life patients want to have, especially for the elderly and those with terminal illnesses. Doctors should not run away from patients they are unable to heal, but instead empower patients and honor their dignity even when modern medicine cannot provide the solution to their underlying condition.

### **If you could talk to anyone in the world, who would it be and why?**

I would want to talk to my grandfather who passed away when I was 14. He is an example of someone whose strong faith fueled his desire to serve those in need. When he was still alive, I had no idea that I would one day hope to follow in his path to help people who are underserved. If I had the opportunity to speak with him, I would want to seek his guidance on how he was able to stay motivated and passionate in his desire to work in an environment full of adversity.



---

## **Enjoy this delicious dessert recommended by Elizabeth Modde, 2015-2016 BSVM Volunteer**

### **Lavender Lemon Bars**

#### **Ingredients**

2 cups white sugar  
2 teaspoons dried lavender buds (Use 3 for stronger flavor)  
1/2 cup butter, softened  
1/4 cup coconut oil, softened  
2 cups all-purpose flour  
1 dash salt  
1/4 cup all-purpose flour  
4 eggs, beaten  
1/2 cup lemon juice



#### **Directions**

1. Preheat an oven to 350 degrees F (175 degrees C). Grease an 8x12 inch baking dish.
2. Blend sugar and lavender buds in a blender to make lavender sugar.
3. Set aside 1 3/4 cups of the lavender sugar.
4. With the remaining 1/4 cup of the lavender sugar that is in the blender, add butter, coconut oil, 2 cups flour, and salt.
5. Blend until dough forms.  
Hint: If it is not perfectly even, do not worry! When you smooth it out in the next step you can break apart any clumps with your fingers.
6. Press dough into the bottom of the prepared dish.
7. Bake in the preheated oven until the top begins to turn golden brown; about 15 minutes.
8. While the dough bakes, mix together the remaining lavender sugar, 1/4 cup flour, eggs, and lemon juice.  
(Make sure your blender lid is on firmly before you do this!)
9. Pour lemon mixture over the baked crust and return to the oven to bake until the center is set, about 20 minutes.

**Cool and Enjoy (perhaps with some lavender lemonade!)** [allrecipes.com/recipe/178166/lavender-lemon-bars/](http://allrecipes.com/recipe/178166/lavender-lemon-bars/)



# Opening Remarks for Closing Liturgy

July 8, 2016

Shannon Curran, Director, Bon Secours Volunteer Ministry

When we gathered together 11 months ago to commission our volunteers, I shared the following words from Claiborne, Wilson-Hartgrove, and Okoro who write: “our society teaches us to move away from suffering, to move out of neighborhoods where there is high crime, to move away from people who don’t look like us. But the gospel calls us to something altogether different.”  
(*Common Prayer: A Liturgy for Ordinary Radicals*, 48)



After sharing those words, I said: *This group just took the first step in following that call. They just moved into suffering, they just moved into a neighborhood with high crime, they just moved into a neighborhood where, on the outside, they look different from many of their neighbors.*

Now, 11 months later, we are gathered for our closing ceremony and the volunteers will depart Baltimore this weekend. As they take their next steps, the volunteers will likely be moving into neighborhoods where, on the outside, they may look similar to many of their neighbors. They will likely be moving into neighborhoods with lower rates of crime. Yet, while they are leaving West Baltimore, they will not be moving out of suffering.

Because they responded to the call of the gospel, which is “altogether different,” their next step is also a different move. It is a different move because each volunteer is a little different now. They have been shaped and formed by our God who drew each volunteer here and who worked within each one of them and through their relationships this year.

They are different because, throughout the year, they moved, as Pope Francis has called us, from being spectators of suffering to suffering with (General Audience, 4/27/16). As they strived to suffer with, the volunteers were also surprised by the joy, the hope, the faith, and the love that they met in their patients, in their co-workers, in their neighbors, and in each other.

When we move from being spectators of our brothers and sisters to being with our brothers and sisters, we move to being more fully alive. We move closer to being who we are called to be.

While the volunteers’ journeys are now taking them out of West Baltimore, they are not moving out of all that they encountered this year. Today, we honor this journey.



Left to Right: Sr. Rose Marie Jasinski, CBS, 2015-2016 Volunteers, Shannon Curran



# Closing Liturgy and Appreciation Luncheon



Gerard Ondrey with Mother, Carolyn Ondrey



Joy Aker, BSVM Formation Assistant, joins the Volunteers



Left to Right: Eve DeVaro Fowler, Director, Patient Advocacy, Rebecca Schade Blank, Director, Behavioral Health, Sr. Mary Rita Nangle, CBS  
Seated: Elizabeth Modde, Sr. Mary Skopal, SSJ, Director, Pastoral Care



BSVM Staff and Volunteers gather together one last time!



**Beth Wood (BSVM 2006-2007)** began serving at the Sisters Academy of Baltimore in 2006 during her year of service. She found a home there and, to this day, continues to serve at the school as a fulltime teacher. For many years following her term of service, Beth remained in close relationship with BSVM, returning to help guide the volunteers in their formation. Below, Beth shares how her experiences with BSVM impacted her life and offers guidance to the current volunteers as they complete their time with BSVM. Thank you, Beth, for your deep generosity!

Beth Wood with Fiancé Edgar Lorete



### ***How did your experience with BSVM shape the years following your year of service?***

Before being contacted by the former Director, Kim Flash, I hadn't even given a thought to moving to Baltimore. Little did I know how much that email would form the next 10 plus years of my life. I learned and experienced a great deal during my volunteer year that made the decision to stay in Baltimore and at the Sisters Academy an easy one. I made connections that year that have brought me lasting friendships and a great professional support system.

### ***What advice do you have to offer former volunteers as they continue to process their BSVM experience?***

Stay connected in whatever way feels right to you. I obviously stayed very connected, working at the Sisters Academy and with the BSVM volunteers during their formation process. However, if former volunteers want to hold onto the lessons that they learned during their volunteer year, I would advise them to find their own unique way to stay connected. Many volunteers make connections with supervisors, co-workers, and friends in Baltimore. Keeping in touch with these people can keep the conversations going and remind former volunteers of the important work they were doing, as well as, the challenges and struggles that they worked through.

### ***What reading have you found to be informative and inspirational for volunteers in the BSVM formation or for those wishing to continue to explore the pillars of BSVM?***

There were many books and articles that I shared with the volunteers. Each one had certain passages or chapters that spoke to different volunteers at different times. So many great discussions, reflections, and questions were brought about from the reading material. One book that helped me to reflect on simplicity and to remember the purpose behind my service was *A Simple Path* by Mother Teresa, compiled by Lucinda Vardey. It is a book of stories and reflections that helped to remind me of why I volunteered in the first place, and why I continue to work at the Sisters Academy.

### ***What were some of the gifts you received during your time of service?***

One of the most lasting gifts has been the people. I made great, lifelong friends during my year of volunteering. I also met many strong women who have been both mentors and a great support to me as I continue my career as a teacher. I am very grateful for all of the wonderful people who crossed my path on this journey.





## 2014-2015 BSVM Community Reunion in Atlanta, Georgia

Have you ever been looking forward to seeing someone so much that you literally couldn't contain your excitement? Well, picture that feeling and multiply it times 4. That was how I felt as I anticipated the arrival of my fellow BSVM community members to Atlanta, Georgia on Valentine's Day weekend 2016. After finishing our time with BSVM, all five of us spread out throughout the country, going to school, applying to school, and living in Boston, Chicago, Baltimore, and Atlanta. It was by the grace of God that five very different schedules lined up and allowed for the BSVM '14-'15 reunion weekend to happen.

Co'Dale and I both live in Atlanta. It was really fun for us to be able to host Alexis, August, and Andy in Atlanta and to show them around the city. We spent a lot of time walking around seeing the sites, wandering in neat shops, and checking out a few local restaurants. Although we had some goals of what we wanted to see during the weekend it honestly



didn't matter where we were or what we did because just being together again was so much more than I ever could have hoped it would be. It was great to catch up, reminisce about our BSVM year, and to be reminded of the wonderful camaraderie that we all have with one another. It was so nice to be blessed with the gift of each of these fantastic brothers and sister of mine for the weekend. I can truthfully say that the joy that this visit brought me lingered in my spirit and through the smile on my face for many, many days after the reunion weekend came to a close. I can also honestly say that I have never been surrounded by so much love on Valentine's Day as I was this year.

**Meghan Krueger (BSVM 2014-2015)**



**Left to Right:**

**Alexis DiGasso, Co'Dale Cook,  
Andrew McAsey, August Kunkel,  
Meghan Krueger**



**The 2013-2014 BSVM Community** enjoy their time together at **Nicole Campion Dialo's (BSVM 2013-2014)** wedding.

**Left to Right:**

**Patrick O'Neil (BSVM 2013-2014)**

**Sydney Van Horn**

**Julianne Cozzetto (BSVM 2013-2014)**

**Yeti Olajide (BSVM 2013-2014)**

**Matthew Parra (BSVM 2013-2014)**



**SISTERS OF BON SECOURS USA**  
Bon Secours Volunteer Ministry  
1525 Marriottsville Road  
Marriottsville, MD 21104

Non Profit Org  
US Postage  
PAID  
Ellicott City, MD  
Permit #6

### Cover Photo

Alex Yeo

Photographer: Andres Gomez,  
Site Leader

### BSVM Advisory Board:

**Seán Bray**

Director of Campus Ministry  
Loyola University of Maryland

**Judith Carmichael**

Director, Marketing and Public Relations  
Bon Secours Baltimore Hospital

**Sarah Ceponis**

BSVM Volunteer 2011-2012  
Johns Hopkins, MPH 2015  
After School Director, Govans Elementary

**Sr. Elaine Davia, CBS**

Director of Formation

**Eve DeVaro Fowler**

Director, Patient Advocacy  
Bon Secours Baltimore Hospital

**Katie Mulembe**

Coordinator of Recruitment and Alumni  
Relations, Catholic Volunteer Network

**Amy Nee**

Catholic Worker

**Patrick Range**

MICU Social Worker  
University of Maryland Hospital

**Ted Walker**

Catholic Worker

### Our Mission

Bon Secours Volunteer Ministry, sponsored by the Sisters of Bon Secours, provides the opportunity for women and men to participate in the Sisters' commitment to justice in radical solidarity with the poor, the suffering, and those most in need. By sharing the Bon Secours charism of compassion, healing, and liberation, the ministry nurtures and sustains full-time volunteers in their personal and communal journeys towards transformation through service with others.

### Support Bon Secours Volunteer Ministry

**Share your time and enthusiasm.** Your personal presence is one of the best ways to support the program. Please consider sending a letter of support and interest, an invitation for site-seeing in Baltimore, or an invitation to dinner with your family.

**Support the program financially.** It costs about \$16,000 to support one volunteer for the year, including rent, health insurance, stipend and funds for community support. In addition, we are trying to make some improvements to the volunteer residence. Monetary donations or gently used furnishings for the volunteer house are greatly appreciated.

### Donations are tax-deductible and can be sent directly to:

Bon Secours Volunteer Ministry  
1525 Marriottsville Road, Marriottsville, MD 21104

**BSVM Staff:** Shannon Curran, Director; Olivia Steback, Program Manager;  
Andres Gomez, Site Leader; Marie Truffer, Administrative Assistant