



## Walking with Others



**Armel Mignondje** | 2022-2023 Volunteer | A graduate of the University of Notre Dame

I remember reading through the pillars of Bon Secours Volunteer Ministry online and coming across the pillar: Learn through Service with Others. I thought, “Yes, of course I understand what this pillar is trying to say.” I believed it was the idea to stop condescending behavior towards those I would serve. I would be equal with them, coming as someone wanting to enter their world and walk in their shoes. Although this is part of what learning through service with others entails, which I understood, I also found myself trying to grasp more fully the “with” portion. What does that mean? Of course, it means being equal, but in my mind, I wondered how learning through service could be “with” others.

When I have imagined service, I see two people facing each other with one helping the other, but for me, the word “with” does not fit this image. “With” carries connotations of solidarity that I believe is lacking in my initial image of a simple, short exchange between people. In my opinion, “with” suggests more togetherness. After more thought, the “learning with” language now makes me conjure images of two people side by side facing the same direction, striving and walking towards a common goal and gaining something out of the experience. It unites those involved, which makes more sense to me. The two people give themselves to each other through the gift of their prolonged presence while they journey together. Although I still do not fully grasp what it means to learn and serve “with” now, my experiences with the program have deepened my understanding of it and helped me to grow.

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## Editor's Perch



By [Emily Thrush](#) | BSVM Site Manager

*“How do we awaken from the dream of separateness, from an abiding sense that the chasm that exists between us cannot be reconciled? For it would seem that the gulf in our present age could not be wider between ‘Us’ and ‘Them’. How do we tame this status quo that lulls us into blindly accepting the things that divide us and keep us from our own holy longing for the mutuality of kinship—a sure and certain sense that we belong to each other?”*  
(Fr. Gregory Boyle, *Barking to the Choir*, 9)

Fr. Greg Boyle, SJ suggests that when we move to the margins, we erase the distinction between ‘us’ and ‘them’, and we become “just Us” (*Barking to the Choir*, 7). This movement towards kinship and community animates multiple BSVM pillars, including two on which Axell and Armel reflect in this issue. Armel shares his growth in service inspired by a short preposition with expansive application, and Axell shares his movement from ‘me to we’ that he has encountered through life in community. Whether we are reflecting on relationships in our ministry sites, in our home, in our faith journey, with our resources, or amidst structural dynamics, God is consistently inviting us into relationships marked by compassion, healing, and liberation.

This issue of *The Companion* marks the end of one BSVM community who has lived and grown in the sisters’ charism, and it lands in your hands as we prepare for our future community. You’ll see highlights from our outgoing Ministry Volunteers’ experience and read insights from supporters who have invested in multiple BSVM communities over the years.

These reflections include the closing meditation from our Director, Shannon Curran; observations from Teresa Crist, one of our current Site Supervisors in Richmond; and a note from Sr. Nancy, who shares about her experience as a prayer partner over the years. You’ll also hear the candid thoughts from Chris Dethlefs, an alum who shares about his jarring and lonely transition out of community and into medical school. We are grateful for his courage to share and know that it will resonate with many who have faced the end of one season marked by connection and the beginning of a new context with starkly different values.

In a world that constantly wants us to disconnect from one another, we have the invitation and calling to choose community, prioritize connection, and grow *with* others. Using the imagery from Teresa Crist, may your faith, values, and commitments give you roots that provide depth, sustenance, and strength to you, “that the beauty of who God created [you] to be shines for everyone.” May it be so!



Emily with the 2022-2023 Ministry Volunteers at their Earth Day Action

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### Walking with Others

Serving on the behavioral health floor at Richmond Community Hospital, I have encountered firsthand what “with” means. During a social worker’s group, which tends to deal with processing feelings, a patient opened up about his relationships, expressing his frustrations and confusions. As he processed his feelings while the social worker provided support, I deeply resonated with him, understanding his feelings because I had experienced similar thoughts of frustration and confusion. Even though I was there to serve and support him by assisting in group, he served and supported me by pointing out our common human experience, breaking down walls I had built separating myself from those I served by seeing them as simply patients. He built an unexpected connection with me, and through his thoughts and emotions, he revealed to me the universality of feelings, validating my experience, and helping me to validate his experience more fully. Amid me trying to serve and pour myself out for him and others, he gave me a drink, filling me up.



**Anna, Axell, Armel and Julianne walk ‘with’ one another throughout their ministry year**

This experience exemplifies the “with” imagery of facing the same direction. We both were looking and walking towards healing and liberation from the harmful notion that we were alone in our experiences. Furthermore, standing side by side shows how easy it would be to switch places. It would just take a step for both of us. That “step” could just mean we were born into different circumstances: it could be me being born in a different environment, lacking access to education or even the belief that education was for me. It could have been him being born into conditions that fostered different ideas, encouraging him to believe that opportunity was for him. All this shows that few things separate us outside of uncontrollable factors. Despite these superficial things, we all still experience similar emotions and thoughts. Even though I may never go through the exact same situations as the people that I meet, I can still connect, knowing our common humanity gives us a chance to relate.

Learning through service “with” others includes more than just the people I serve. It includes my housemates. As all four of us walk and navigate serving others this year, we draw from each other’s stories and support one another. We discuss the ways God has been present in our placement and is teaching us, which is part of the hope that motivates me amidst the pain and the darkness. When the load gets heavy, we share and then encourage one another. This usually happens at the dinner table where I and others have talked about our encounters with injustice at the hospital, such as poverty, sickness, abuse, addiction, and homelessness. Conversation has encouraged processing and helped me keep hope alive. In addition, this learning includes my coworkers. This year, I have needed the support and insight of those around me in this new environment. When situations arise where my previous experiences and knowledge failed to help me navigate challenges, I have needed to turn to and learn from colleagues with years of understanding. All in all, I have gained a lot from everyone, and hopefully, I have given something to them as we travelled together during these months.

This year, “with” has taught me a lot, helping me to grow and realize that my desire for pure independence and self-reliance misses the mark, denying how everything I have has been a gift from God given through others, and how dependent I am on God moment to moment. My isolated efforts won’t bring about the greatest good for others, especially the people I am serving. “With” means that I work alongside others, contributing my small part in the great mosaic of what God strives to accomplish. Furthermore, this interdependence shows that I am not alone, which reveals God to me through my neighbors, housemates, and coworkers. This reveals another truth. Fundamentally, my learning this year has been “with” Jesus, who promised, “I am with you always.”





## The Sufficient Grace of Community

[Axell Komlan](#) | 2022-2023 Volunteer | A graduate of the University of Notre Dame

This past year, I have had the unique privilege of living in an intentional community with Bon Secours Volunteer Ministry. One pillar (of the five) that has particularly struck me during my time as a volunteer has been developing community. Admittedly, out of all the pillars that were outlined for this year, “develop community” was the one that I was the most skeptical about. Coming into the year, while I was optimistic about the riches, wonders, and beauties that could be in a Christ-centered community of like-minded peers, I also found myself wary and skeptical. Underlying this doubt is a deep-rooted fear surrounding what I have observed from previous personal relationships (both in my own life and those of others): how people reject loving your truest, most authentic self once you decide to share it with others. It is hard to know who will be there for you at your worst moments, who will endure with you to the end, who will choose to stay with you in the hardest of moments instead of leaving, who will love you in the moments where you seem unlovable. Apart from family and loved ones, it is hard to discern who purely has your best interest at heart. Little did I know that I would be invited to confront these deep-seated insecurities through an encounter with the grace of shared life.

Grace has been a persistent teacher for me, not only through Scripture, but also through family, through loved ones, through friendships, through strangers, and this year, through community. One of the most significant passages that I have encountered in the Bible is from 2 Corinthians 12. St. Paul candidly describes his excruciating suffering in service to the Lord, which he likens to a piercing thorn. Although he asks God for the thorn’s removal, Christ Jesus responds in the most direct yet heartwarming way: “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:9). Interestingly, this response speaks directly to the heart of the Gospel, which calls us to recognize our deeply human need for the overwhelming, never-ending, and reckless love of God.

This love, which is the chief characteristic of God (1 John 4:8) and is manifested as unconditional and unearned grace, sees us not as our worst mistakes, vices, or impulses, but as children who are made in the Image and Likeness of God (Genesis 1:26). If God’s interior life (by way of the Trinity) is inherently defined by community, then it is not unreasonable to conclude that community allows us to encounter the grace that Christ Jesus deems as sufficient in weakness. Through our shared life in community, I have both given and received moments of unearned grace. In humbly opening ourselves to one another and becoming vulnerable, we have shared in the transformative and redemptive work of Christ, whose wounds reconcile and unite his lost sheep in the midst of difference and division. In saying yes to communal life and becoming image-bearers of this radical, divine grace, we have invited the resurrecting power of the Holy Spirit, by whom our weaknesses and insecurities are no longer stumbling blocks of desolation, but rather the building blocks of consolation.

Through the pillar of community, I have come to understand the beauty of God’s proclamation in Genesis that humanity should not be alone (Genesis 2:18). As a member of the Richmond community, I was surprised at the subtle ways that the grace of shared life has touched my heart through radical acts of kindness, understanding, and compassion. One such example that comes to mind was from this past fall, when I got a parking ticket (albeit from a CONFUSING East Coast city parking sign, at least for a West Coaster like me) as I was making a stop in downtown Richmond. Upon receiving the notification on the windshield, my heart sank with disappointment and fear, wondering how I would be received by housemates. Would I be judged and shamed for this one mistake? How could I even bring myself to face my community members? When I returned to the house later that day and let them know about what had happened, I mentioned that I wanted to pay for the violation myself because it was a mistake that I personally made. Yet, what I found from my peers in response to my mistake was not quite what I expected. Not only did they show a great deal of empathy and understanding for my situation, but they were also generous enough to help me cover the hefty cost of the parking ticket!

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What could have been a moment where I bashed myself for my mistake instead became one where my housemates entered into my situation and shared the burden of it with me. For me, it was our first true foray into what it meant to live out the ideal of community as a group; for me, it gave me the confidence to officially buy into the notion of moving from “me to we.”

Through the shared life in community, I have come to see how salvation cannot simply be reduced or cheapened to the individual imagination (even though a personal encounter with God is absolutely essential); rather, it is a deeply communal process of sanctification on our road toward eternity with Christ Jesus. In the words of Pope Francis, “No one is saved alone, as an isolated individual, but God attracts us looking at the complex web of relationships that take place in the human community. God enters into this dynamic, this participation in the web of human relationships.” I’ve seen this dynamic in the way in which we are open to each other’s differing faith journeys.



Axell shares a laugh around the table on Community Night

Although we all identify as Christian, we each have a unique faith journey that is informed by our differing life experiences. Even as the only Protestant and non-denominational Evangelical in the group, I have appreciated how open my Catholic peers have been in receiving my unique lens on the Christian faith tradition. Not only have I been able to share my love of the Bible (particularly the Psalms), but I have also been able to share my love for shows like *The Chosen* (which we binge-watch every other weekend) and contemporary Christian music (like the positive-encouraging-KLove radio station)! In a similar vein, I have also been just as blessed (if not more) to uncover different lenses of the Christian tradition through the eyes of my housemates, whether it be the linkage between faith and social justice (Julianne), the importance of the Rosary and spiritual practices like the Examen (Armel), or the significance of finding God in the midst of the daily bustle of life (Anna). This underscores the notion that even though we are each denying ourselves, taking up our crosses, and following Jesus, there is still so much that we can learn from one another’s walks. In fact, who is to say that we should carry these crosses alone? Are we not called to, in the vein of St. Simon of Cyrene, journey with and bear the crosses of those in our midst, all of whom bear the image of our dearly beloved Christ?

Through the pillar of community, I have come to realize how much we belong to one another as brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus. We read the words of Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. this year, and his words resonate with my experience of community:

***“In a real sense all life is interrelated. All men are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be, and you can never be what you ought to be until I am what I ought to be...This is the inter-related structure of reality.”***

One memory that speaks to this idea comes from the numerous instances where one or more of us have come home tired, frustrated, and/or demoralized from a long and busy day at work. This could mean that someone in the house is more withdrawn, has a noticeable difference in body language, or is saying less words than usual (or no words at all). Whenever we notice that something is off in one’s normal behavior, we intentionally make space (either communally or individually) to follow-up and check-in with the person who may not be feeling like themselves that evening. Even if this doesn’t always involve a long, heart-to-heart conversation, it could simply include acts of extraordinary kindness: maybe a walk in the middle of the night, a short

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## Alumni Profile: Chris Dethlefs



By Chris Dethlefs | BSVM 2018-2019

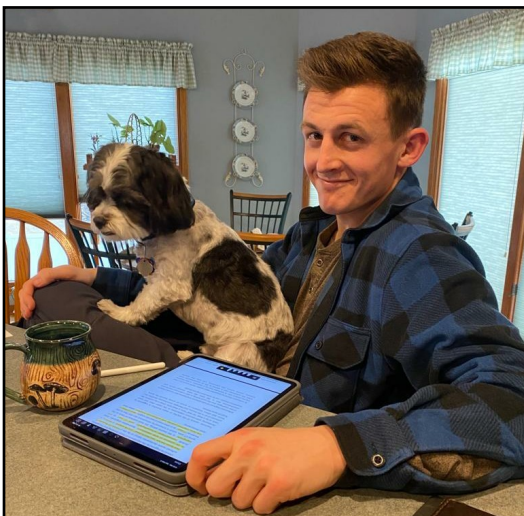
### How did your experience with BSVM shape the years following your year of service?

Following my year in Richmond with BSVM, I returned to my home state of Nebraska to start medical school. This had been the plan all along, but the person who emerged from my service year was in many ways a stranger to the one who had committed to pursuing medicine a year prior. My mind and spirit, it felt, had expanded – and I don't mean this in a strictly positive or sentimental way. I felt simultaneously more connected to all the beings around me, and more alone in my consciousness than ever before. It was a strange space, and one that made my transition into the linearity of medical school jarring to say the least. It was a lonely time. I also found that the disciplines of my service year – routine prayer and reflection, community building, simple living, environmental consciousness, and the pursuit of social justice, among others – had little space among the commitments of medical training.

I'll admit that I found relief and shelter behind a shield of scientific knowledge and concrete tasks of medical training that provided some distance from the inner lives of many of my patients. I often found myself retreating from that space of uncertainty and vulnerability that I had inhabited during my service year. But there were moments of stillness where my months of listening and accompaniment were brought back to life, in which I leaned on the skills I had built during that time. At my institution, a group of medical students regularly go on "Sunday Rounds" – a time to visit patients in a non-clinical capacity to offer conversation and companionship. When I began joining this group, memories of my year with BSVM awakened. Just as I had at Richmond Community Hospital, I was able to build a longitudinal relationship with a patient trapped in the hospital by his medical and social circumstances. Seeing his face light up when I came to visit on the weekends reminded me of the healing power that friendship and presence bring to soften the pain of infirmity and abandonment. Similarly, as I became more competent in my clinical abilities, I was able to offer more of my presence to my patients, to see into their lives more clearly and thereby offer more holistic care.



Chris hiking at Black Elk Peak in South Dakota while doing his rural family medicine rotation in Chadron, NE



Chris with his dog, Oliver

Another realm of connection to my service year has been continued concern for Creation. I worked with a group of medical students to advocate for the integration of climate change health impacts into our medical curriculum, and to advance sustainability initiatives at our institution. During this past Lenten season, I took up our BSVM practice of picking up trash in my neighborhood for a short time each day. It was a restorative practice both for the local environment and for me. It made me slow down and pay attention to the ground at my feet. This simple practice is a sign of respect for my home, one that resists a culture of waste, separation, and consumption. I am grateful to BSVM for instilling a commitment to our common Home – our world needs it more than ever.

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

I would encourage you to be candid about where you are at emotionally and spiritually as you move forward from your experience. I found that being vulnerable with my classmates early on when I was struggling – even those who I barely knew - opened space for authentic conversation and new friendships. There is simply no time for superficiality. Be patient with yourself, and with your new environment, as you process your experience. Sometimes all you can do is wait when things are strange and uncertain. If you hope to continue some of your BSVM disciplines, allow yourself to focus on just one or two practices. Your new environment likely will not be as conducive to these commitments as the structured volunteer program. Keep in touch with your BSVM community – it can be a source of strength and guidance during your transition.

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

- “What to Remember When Waking” – an audio series by the poet David Whyte that explores the “disciplines of the everyday life,” vulnerability, and navigating times of change. Great to listen to when starting new things.
- *Letters to a Young Poet* – a short collection of correspondence between the poet Rainer Maria Rilke and one of his readers – gifted to me by my BSVM Site Leader. This has been a source of consolation and perspective during a time of turmoil.
- *The Overstory* – a breathtaking ode to trees and exploration of both human and non-human relationships.
- *Braiding Sweetgrass* – a wonderful melding of Indigenous wisdom with Western scientific disciplines that may shake your epistemology and make you pay closer attention to the world around you.
- “The Marginalian” - newsletter produced by Maria Popova.

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

By far the greatest gift I received during my time with BSVM was the friendship of my community members and my Site Leader. It is so special to have another family who shared the experiences of that year of service. I have stayed in touch with my Site Leader, Steve, who continues to be a source of wisdom, encouragement, and friendship. Similarly, I know I can always reach out to my community members for conversation (or commiseration) as we enter our work lives.

I have also valued the *Common Prayer: A Liturgy for Ordinary Radicals* book that our community used and that we were gifted at the end of the year. It is a grounding guide to reflection and prayer, especially during times of wandering in matters of faith and religion.



Chris with his Richmond community in 2019 at a protest about gun violence



Chris with the full BSVM community in 2018-2019 on retreat

# Sisters' Corner

By Emily Thrush | BSVM Site Manager

For the past several years, BSVM staff has paired individual Ministry Volunteers with a Sister of Bon Secours to become Prayer Partners. Each year, the shape of the relationships shift as they reflect various seasons. We are grateful for the pairs, however the partnership “evolves.” This issue, we’re highlighting Sr. Nancy Glynn, CBS, who has been a Prayer Partner for the past 3 years. She shares her connection and the fruit that has emerged with each partnership:

“It has been a privilege to be a prayer partner with our ministry volunteers. I have been privileged to serve in this capacity for the past three years. It has been an experience of evolution.

During the first two years I prayed daily for my prayer partner, had a photo of her in my prayer corner and enjoyed meeting her at Marriottsville gatherings. This year, thanks to Axell’s initiative, we are not only praying FOR one another but praying WITH one another. Each month we meet via Skype, choose a scripture passage, and pray with it.

This has been a rich experience and I am most grateful to Axell for his openness and willingness to share. I thank God for each of our ministry volunteers and promise a continued remembrance in my prayers.” Axell was also grateful for the opportunity to pray with Sr. Nancy. He said: “Her testimony, spirituality, and heart for the Lord has led me closer to God in my own spiritual walk. Love you, Sister Nancy!”

Thank you to all our Sisters of Bon Secours for your faithful, prayerful sponsorship of this ministry!



Volunteers enjoyed a special lunch with sisters at the end of their Contemplative Retreat in February. (Sr. Nancy is in the back row, 3<sup>rd</sup> from left)

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yet warm embrace, a (tasty) surprise dessert to celebrate one’s hard work, a heartfelt and genuine word of affirmation, or willingness to sit in the silence of one’s suffering by way of small yet frequent (one-on-one) check-ins.

One of the most practical graces that my fellow volunteers and I have offered to one another in our hardest moments is related to the notion that Mother Teresa expressed of doing “small things with great love.” Why? It is because of the simple fact that, as different members of the same body in Christ, we are called to unveil the beauty in one another, reminding ourselves of our inherent value as a unique piece of the larger puzzle. For our group, Julianne is the thoughtful, considerate, and intentional planner; Armel is the wise, courageous, and morally-convicted root; Anna is the selfless, tenderhearted, and down-to-earth center; I am the diplomatic, tenacious, and steadfast stem. In the vein of Ruth, where one of us goes, we go; where one of us stays, we stay; when one of us suffers, we all suffer.

Community is not an abstract theory that one can magically conjure up and bring about overnight, nor is it something that is incumbent on the strengths and efforts of just one person; rather, it is a conscious decision to remain in the way of love, taking on the mistakes, setbacks, insecurities, and burdens of others and making them your own. Does this mean that community life will always be 100% perfect, that you will always see eye-to-eye with each and every member of your cohort? Absolutely not! To say that a community must always be devoid of problems is to purposely live in a fantasy of your choosing! Rather, being in community is to say that even when things get hard, I am here to love you and be with you to the end. It is to say that we are not ends in ourselves, that God’s grace is more alive in us when we choose to live as one with one another.

Father, may we be one as You and the Son are one (John 17). Father, may the grace of community be sufficient for us, for when we are weak in ourselves, we are strong in and with each other.



# Thank you, 2022-2023 BSVM Volunteers!



By Shannon Curran | BSVM Director

*This reflection was delivered at our Closing Liturgy to begin the service and thank the volunteers.*

This morning we honor our 2022-2023 community of volunteers. In our first reading today, we hear God call Abraham by name: “Abraham!” And Abraham responds: “Here I am.” Julianne, Armel, and Anna: here you are.

Today we celebrate the commitment to spiritual growth that — through service, simplicity, justice, and community — each of you and Axell shared with us and with your ministry placement sites and community in Richmond this past year. This commitment began with God’s call and your response of “here I am.”

For eleven months now, you have intentionally practiced a ministry of presence with each other in community, with your neighbors in Church Hill, with your fellow parishioners at Holy Rosary, and with patients and co-workers at Richmond Community Hospital and Bon Secours Hospice. Each day throughout these months, and in many ways throughout each day, you have shown up into that “here I am.” Through all this showing up — through the ups, the downs, and the curve balls — you have each demonstrated what it means to be faithful.

One way we’ve witnessed this is seeing you open yourselves to practicing a ministry of presence. At the beginning of your year, I shared that the biggest learning curve for volunteers (and really anyone) is understanding what it means to practice a ministry of presence.

As it is much easier to do than to be, to fix than to sit and visit, to distract in the name of productivity than to be still and share, it can be difficult to trust in the power of presence. It can be difficult to trust that God is there — right there — more fully present than we can ever imagine — there — in the middle of one’s life, in the middle of one’s day, and in the middle of one’s relationships.

Yet over and over again, each of you astounded us with your openness and faithfulness to trusting in and practicing presence. It has been beautiful and hopeful to witness how, in your own unique ways, practicing presence with another allowed each of you to recognize God’s light and to receive God’s love.

Truly, as we will hear in Psalm 115, you have “walk[ed] in the presence of the Lord.” When our walk is a ministry of presence, and in those steps we notice the Lord walking with us, then we open ourselves to truly believing that, because God is fully present, God is the one leading us.

Today, we see this in your choice of our second reading where Fr. Teilhard de Chardin, S.J. asks us to reflect on patiently trusting in the slow work of God and recognizing that it is God’s hand that leads us. Volunteers, with a blessing after communion, we will honor your journey of “here I am” — your journey of practicing presence and meeting God all along the way.

Thank you, volunteers, for the courage and hope that your walk with Bon Secours Volunteer Ministry has provided us and so many others.



Volunteers during Closing Liturgy



Volunteers with Fr. Joe Muth



Volunteers and BSVM Staff



## Friend of BSVM: Teresa Crist

### Interview with Teresa Crist

Program Manager, Formation Programs & Volunteer Ministries

*Teresa Crist currently serves as one of our Site Supervisors for our Ministry Volunteer with Spiritual Care Services. Below, she reflects on how she got connected to BSVM and what she has observed in the various communities who have served in Richmond, VA. We're so grateful for Teresa's initial support helping us navigate our new location, and we're thankful for her continued support over the years!*

#### **How were you first introduced to BSVM?**

I've been with Bon Secours a long time, but when I started with the Mission Department in 2017, the process had worked through that Bon Secours Volunteer Ministry was coming to Richmond. Some of the groundwork was already in place, but getting it operationalized wasn't quite set. Our Richmond mission leader Dave Belde and BSVM Director Shannon Curran invited me to come to Baltimore, and I spent about 2.5 days there. I visited the Volunteer house, had dinner with everyone—it was wonderful! I got to meet the Volunteers, walked to their places where they were serving, and had an amazing quick immersion into the program, which helped me really understand it, and I just fell in love with it. My piece of helping in Richmond was getting the program operationalized, for example: making introductions, helping with job descriptions, helping to navigate how to get ConnectCare access, and helping the Baltimore people work through a local person to help us get up and going that way. Other colleagues worked directly with the hospital and helped with housing.

#### **What gifts have you observed from the Ministry Volunteers over the years?**

While I'm not with them every day, they participate in staff meetings and continuing education, and sometimes even special projects, where I'll have more direct access, so I've had different opportunities that way. I would say from the ones that have been Spiritual Care volunteers, as well as my long-distance observation of the other young people, the sense I get is humility, a growth-mindset, and service. Those are the 3 things I seem to consistently see.

It's like they soak new knowledge up. As their year goes on, I see them share more and more of their learnings. But when other volunteers are speaking or chaplains are speaking, I witness an intense desire to learn from that situation. They offer good feedback questions and observations, and that has been across the board.

#### **How has your department been impacted by BSVM's presence?**

In several ways! The first is, they are coming into their ministry formation program with BSVM at the same time they're starting to join our [Spiritual Care] training program, which includes other lay people from the community, so they're in their own cohort of volunteers in this special training. As they share with the other volunteers (who typically are either retirees or people who are more 'seasoned' adults) – I see so much hope and excitement from the other volunteers when they are learning and growing in this new ministry with a young person. Over and over every year, you hear them say, "oh my gosh, it's so nice to see the next generation of people here" – it's been really encouraging to older adults to see young people that are so focused in faith and ministry and service. So that's always the first thing they contribute, that they don't even realize they contribute.

Then as the year goes on, and particularly for our office, our chaplains do not get to see the bulk of the patients because they're busy responding (rightfully so) to crisis or units that have a whole lot more restrictions (like Behavioral Health or Covid patients), and so there's a large number of patients that don't get visited by a chaplain. This is true at Richmond Community Hospital, particularly if patients are there for extended stay or they're coming in for Outpatient Infusion. By having the Bon Secours Volunteer Ministry volunteer there, they're representing the chaplains' portion of healthcare. When we look at mind, body, spirit, I truthfully see it as mind *and* spirit, because they're there for emotional support and spiritual support. And Ministry Volunteers are there on an ongoing basis, especially with the extended stay patients. They've built those relationships and can learn

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to get deeper into conversations and offer a level of support that a chaplain just is not able to do. They offer a consistent presence and consistent name, and you develop relationships that way. Regardless of how long a patient stays, we're a faith-based health care system; it's important, not only to the founding sisters but to those of us who work for Bon Secours. It's important to us that we meet the spiritual and emotional needs of our patients.

*What is your hope for young people who participate in this year of ministry?*

My first hope is that they grow; that they use this formation process as well as everything they're going to continue to go through in life, just like all of us, to grow deeper and stronger in their faith and their values. You think of a root of a tree or a plant, and it grows strong and deep and it sustains you, whether it's bad weather or not. My hope is for that to grow deeper, stronger—their faith, their commitment, their values—so that they have that to lean on always.

The second hope is that, like a plant grows towards sunlight, they would grow up towards the Father. That their growth and their faith be established, their practices be established—like their prayer life and their meditation—and things that continue to enhance them as an outward person would help them grow.

And then, lastly, just like a plant or tree blooms – that the beauty of who God created them to be shines for everyone. You think of trees dropping acorns or flowers (called 'seeding'); the volunteers develop gifts as they grow deeper and stronger towards Christ up and down, and their gifts and their beauty is going to grow out and help seed others. I watch my perennials come back every year and get larger and larger. That's exactly what these young people are! They're growing deeper and stronger and blossoming and growing outwardly larger. That is my hope for them.

DO YOU KNOW A YOUNG  
ADULT WHO IS R.E.A.D.Y.  
FOR A YEAR OF  
TRANSFORMATION?

- **Reflective** on community & justice
- **Eager** to build relationships
- **Able** to live simply
- **Dedicated** to spiritual growth
- **Yearning** to grow through service with others

REFER THEM TO BSVM FOR OUR  
2024-2025 MINISTRY YEAR!

Send contact info to  
[volunteer@bonsecoursusa.org](mailto:volunteer@bonsecoursusa.org)  
or fill out contact form at [bit.ly/joinusapply](https://bit.ly/joinusapply)





## Bon Secours Volunteer Ministry

Sisters of Bon Secours, USA

1525 Marriottsville Road,  
Marriottsville, MD 21104

### Cover Photo

The 2022-2023 Volunteers and sisters following the BSVM Closing Liturgy. Taken by Liz O'Neill, Director of Communications, Sisters of Bon Secours, USA

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### 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 individuals in their personal and communal journeys towards transformation through service with others.*

*To nurture this transformative journey, Bon Secours Volunteer Ministry supports individuals through a year of spiritual formation. The ministry is structured with five pillars that support this growth. Volunteers commit to: grow spiritually, develop an intentional community, live simply, practice God's justice, and learn through service with others. Throughout this year, volunteers discover that by sharing the charism of compassion, healing, and liberation with others they, in turn, receive the charism from those they serve.*

### Support BSVM

Share your time and enthusiasm. Your personal presence is one of the best ways to support the program. Send a letter of support, or schedule a time to visit our community outside or over Zoom. Contact [BSVMoffice@bonsecoursusa.org](mailto:BSVMoffice@bonsecoursusa.org).

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. Monetary donations or gently used furnishings for the volunteer houses are greatly appreciated.

### Donations are tax-deductible

**BY MAIL** Make checks payable to Bon Secours Volunteer Ministry & mail to:

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

**BY VENMO** @bonsecoursvolunteer

**BY PAYPAL** Visit our website:  
[bonsecours.us/volunteers/donate/](https://bonsecours.us/volunteers/donate/) & click the Donate button