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Cultivating Interior Hospitality: Passing the Vincentian Legacy through Immersion

JOYANA DVORAK
Introduction

The Vincentian spirit is “caught” not “taught.” DePaul University undergraduate students have been catching the Vincentian spirit through service immersions each spring and winter break for nearly twenty years. Host communities, including many Vincentian Family members, welcome students to share their reality and ministry.

The Vincentian in Action (VIA) Service Immersion program is housed in the Vincentian Community Service Office under University Ministry at DePaul. The vision of DePaul VIA service immersions is to create long-term, mutually beneficial partnerships with host communities who open their doors and hearts to students. In this welcoming, hosts and students build intentional relationships and respond to community needs. Short-term immersion experiences offer students a taste and glimpse of how to live Vincentian hospitality in their daily lives. Through the external welcoming of students into communities and a way of living, an interior space that embodies the Vincentian way and heart is cultivated. A mutual transformation unfolds through encounters, shaping students to be both guest and hosts for years to come.

During the spring of 2013 the coordinator of VIA performed a program evaluation from the perspective of the host communities. Methods used to gather data included: phone interviews with the main host community partners, paper surveys with community agency staff, and on-line surveys with DePaul undergraduate student participants. The study focused on the perceptions, objectives, needs, outcomes and expectations of host communities who partner with VIA service immersions. This research was intended to inform the effectiveness of the VIA curricula used with students before, during, and after their service immersion experiences. It also uncovered factors that contribute to a positive university-community partnership.

This article will focus primarily on the qualitative data about the role of Vincentian partners as co-formators. Voices from both community partners and students are shared. The research calls to light the incredible gift of Vincentian hospitality host community partners offer for transformational education of DePaul students. Through these immersion experiences concentric circles of hospitality are formed that deepen layers of community. The Vincentian legacy is passed in a meaningful way to the next generation through moments of Vincentian hospitality with their peers, Vincentian hosts, and encounters with the community during the immersion experience.

DePaul University Vincentian in Action Service Immersion Program Overview

Currently over 170 undergraduates participate in VIA to serve, live, and build relationships within seventeen marginalized communities throughout the United States and the Americas. Housed in the Vincentian Community Service Office (VCSO), Division of Student Affairs, VIA’s mission is:
…to provide students with transformational short-term service immersion opportunities that incorporate community, spiritual reflection, simplicity, and increased awareness of social injustice. Integrated throughout the immersion experience are the Vincentian in Action ways of awareness/appreciation, dialogue and solidarity. It is in these experiences that we hope to inspire growth and change in a way that resonates back home through the sharing of stories and action toward systemic change.

Students participating in seven to ten-day service immersions are introduced to the VIA reflective framework that provides specific learning outcomes for values-based leadership development rooted in faith and action. The model uses “The Way of Awareness, Dialogue, and Solidarity,” a document based upon the writings of Theodore Wiesner, C.M.¹ Vincentian values of community, spirituality, and service are integrated in a formation process which empowers students to make meaning of their experiences.²

At the heart of the VIA Service Immersion program is building relationships, especially with marginalized communities and persons living in poverty. Preparation emphasizes a paradigm of community service rooted in being versus doing, listening to the needs of communities before responding, working with versus doing for, discovering root causes, and reflection moving towards action. Beforehand most students do not know the people in their group. They practice cultivating spaces of hospitality first by building a community together during pre-trip meetings months before the immersion. This happens through group meetings and intentional ‘dates’ to get to know each other in a more intimate one-on-one setting.

Not designed simply to complete tasks, the VIA model values several key elements of Vincentian hospitality: presence, relationship building, and recognizing the dignity of every person. Students are invited to delve into the Vincentian virtue of simplicity to remove

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interior clutter and be ready to receive. During a week or more of immersion students practice the Vincentian virtue of humility as they patiently and deeply listen to another’s reality. By solidarity with their hosts and persons living in poverty they move beyond an ‘us’ and ‘them’ mentality. By ‘being with’ and building relationships before ‘doing’ and completing tasks they learn about various social issues with a personal face.

Kim Marie Lamberty, who works for Catholic Relief Services and is the author of *Eyes from the Outside: Christian Mission in Zones of Violent Conflict*, describes this new approach to partnership with a perspective that resonates with VIA values: “A spirituality of accompaniment begins with recognition of the dignity of the self as well as the other as created in God’s image. It is expressed in presence, relationship, community, and service. Accompaniment can also be expressed in a gift of material resources to assist a suffering community in rebuilding its future.”

Another goal of the program is to bring to life the legacy of Saints Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac, whose mission began over 350 years ago. Stories of Vincentian Family members are integrated into reflections throughout. Vincent de Paul believed we could learn from the poor and that we “can’t see someone suffering without suffering along with him, or see someone cry without crying as well. This is an act of love, causing people to enter one another’s hearts and to feel what they feel.” VIA embraces this philosophy and believes that the communities, who welcome DePaul students with Vincentian hospitality, as well as persons served, are co-educators during students’ immersion experiences.

Dynamic partnership is consistent with a Vincentian understanding that we form and shape each other; every person encountered, especially those living in poverty, contribute to making you who you are. Service learning can accommodate asset-based community development—the community has much strength to build upon. Community hosts are critical partners for a Vincentian education that opens up reality, including systems and structures that contribute to social injustice. VIA service immersions strive to build

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lasting partnerships with communities who usually host students only once a year. Each year different students arrive to renew DePaul’s commitment. As communities receive the presence and service of students they reciprocate by providing accommodations, site coordination, and educational or cultural presentations.

**Vincentian Connection**

Over the past five years VIA has strategically reached out to more Vincentian partners. This may be a Vincentian parish, the Daughters of Charity, or Sisters of Charity, or the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. The hope is that intentionally partnering with communities in the Vincentian Family will deepen younger generations’ understanding of the Vincentian spirit and charism. The study confirms that this approach is effective and meaningful for both the students and the Vincentian host communities.

Vincentian hosts spoke energetically about their desire to “share the charism with the next generation” and to “pass it on.” Their hope in welcoming is to widen the Vincentian Family, with an emphasis on serving the poor. The primary motivation to receive students is to infuse the Vincentian charism and pass on the legacy through their example and the encounter with the poor. One Daughter of Charity expressed that the mission “comes across in storytelling and it comes across in witnessing why we do what we do.”

Vincentian partners who also receive groups outside of DePaul’s commented on how there is a different sense of excitement, of being relaxed, when we join them. The opportunity to speak the same language of community and spirituality is refreshing when welcoming the “extended” Vincentian Family.

These folks are here because their hearts are open to learning, and I don’t know if I can even put words on some of this, but there is definitely just an ease of it. I think by the time they came this time, it was even like, oh, it’s DePaul! It is like some sense of they are our people.

In a post immersion assessment, students were asked: “After your VIA Spring Break Service Immersion experience, how do you hope to connect more deeply with the Vincentian legacy in your daily life?” Respondents reported wanting to learn more about their Vincentian identity. Immersions that had direct contact with the Daughters of Charity, or other Vincentian Family, noted how valuable it was to learn about Vincentian history: “St. Vincent stood up proud and confident to defend others and I want to be able to stand up for myself and actively take part in my life.” Another respondent said, “This trip made me more curious about the lives of Vinny and Louise, so I hope to continue to learn about their missions and about Vincentian values.”

The common language, foundation, mission, and values make Vincentian connections a natural partnering. Continuing programs such as the VIA service immersions are a key strategy to continue the over 350 year legacy of St. Vincent and St. Louise.
Entering as Guest

Another theme partners articulated was the importance of students knowing from the beginning that they will be guests in community for the week. One explained, “If they grasp that idea, that they are in somebody else’s house, then there’s a certain amount of respect that comes with that and it seems to keep everybody in good shape around here.” With that comes an understanding that “you come as a student; you don’t come as a bountiful person who has things to give to people.” Another partner also emphasized the importance that students are aware they are coming to a community: “they are not just going to come in and out of our house. We are living here and we are a part of your experience for the week.” Several partners stressed attentiveness to the context. This is especially important to avoid the trap of poverty tourism:

One of the things we talk to the group about upfront is that we’re guests [too] and we hope that they start to get comfortable walking through the neighborhoods, but as they get comfortable, to not let that have them end up singing and dancing and being loud through the streets. And still to be attentive to what their surroundings are, who’s there, and being a guest instead of being a spectator.

Setting some of these expectations and sharing particulars of the community before students arrive is helpful. Also reiterated is the importance of students anticipating what it will mean to live and work as a team for the week. Vincentian partners commented on how helpful it was for students to arrive with a common language of intentional community and reflection:

…when you talk about community, you are not starting from scratch…. The fact that faith is an element of this and that it is an important element is not new news to them. And I think their preparation and their openness to do whatever; ya know, we always say, ‘to do whatever presents itself…’
Host Community Hopes: Long-Term Integration

Community partners hope that students will not “relegate this experience to that one week of their lives,” but that their experience of receiving Vincentian hospitality will have a “lasting impact.” There is the hope that students will, “Connect their experience to the rest of their lives,” and “remain committed to service to the poor.” Long-term engagement could be realized through student’s vocations and on-going service and justice work. A partner commented that she hopes that by receiving Vincentian hospitality students “have some sense of their own giftedness” and realize the capacity they have to make a difference. Included in this is the importance of “just continuing to ask good questions about, ‘what did I experience and what am I going to do with it? How can I take this and make something of it in my life? How am I called to respond?’” Regardless of what vocation students choose, it is possible for them to continue to “look through Vincentian eyes”; this in turn can “help other people be aware that there’s a change that needs to be made.”

Continuing to volunteer and to live out a lifestyle that is “Not all about them, or selfish” was another hope for engagement. Through experiencing both the joys and challenges of service, there is a hope that students continue coming together for “a greater purpose.” Vincentian partners hope that students will “be willing to walk with the poor and love the poor” and “find God’s goodness even amongst the poor.”

Benefits of Hosting Vincentian in Action Immersions

Community partners were asked to identify benefits to them in welcoming DePaul students for a week, any positive or negative unintended consequences they witnessed, and if the relationship with DePaul is mutually valuable. Partners agreed that student presence for just one week is absolutely worth it, and is mutually beneficial given the impact on students’ lives. One partner was convinced that “if we can just change one person’s head and heart, you know, to say ‘I’m going to look for the poor, or maybe not turn my face when I see a homeless person in my area,’ then we’ve done our job.” Others recognized that the impact from the week may not be realized for years to come.

Vincentian Hospitality Deepens Layers of Community

The experience of Vincentian hospitality begins long before students get in a van to drive hours to their destination. Intentional pre-trip preparation creates a space for student leaders to offer Vincentian hospitality to new participants. Building intentional community is an explicit learning outcome for students. During pre-trip formation, students build community with icebreakers, setting safe space guidelines, sharing different spiritual practices, and taking the time to get to know each other. For some students it is their first time building authentic relationships and being appreciated for who they are. One student reflects, “All of my group members affected me strongly. The group would not have the same dynamic without each one of them. They inspired me and helped me to open up.”
Students are encouraged to live in the virtue of Vincentian simplicity, stripping back the layers that keep them from being their authentic selves and striving to practice honesty and transparency with those in their group.

Community partners also notice that “students get a great deal out of forming community” with each other and those they encounter, and also recognize how student presence opened opportunities to “deepen… [a] sense of hospitality” for students and hosts alike. One partner articulated the various facets of community that grow during the week:

When we talk about community we talk about how they will work with a community, they will live in a community, and they will be part of a larger Vincentian Family community. You know they will be on a team, and that’s community, they will go out to each service site and form community with those people at some level, and they will come home at night and have the total community.

Vincentian hospitality, therefore, deepens several layers of community, including intentional community living, encounters with the broader community, and home visits.

**Intentional Community Living: Role Models of Vincentian Hospitality**

Hosts who provided accommodations for groups reiterated the theme of students entering fully into their community living. Partners consistently mentioned not wanting to just be a hotel for students: “I decided that we didn’t have the capacity here to run a youth hostel.” The intention is to invite students to live in community with the hosts, and to share their experiences and reflection process. Several hosts are intentional about utilizing dinnertime as the space to build community with students. This often results in an exchange across generations. A community of Daughters of Charity emphasized the benefit of really getting to know young people:
I think that they are all very interesting, they come from diverse backgrounds. And you know the sisters are always interested in finding out who are you, what’s your major, you know that kinda thing. The diversity of them is kinda fun for the sisters.

Students also noticed the mutual gift of building relationships with the Daughters of Charity:

I believe that the sisters at the house that we stayed at are forever grateful for having us around. They seemed as if they were just so happy to talk to and be around young people. I think that they were excited to tell us all about their experiences and their choices in life to become Daughters of Charity.

Stereotypes about religious and young people are often dissolved. “Before this experience I had never actually met a religious sister before. I was surprised that they have a sense of humor and could actually relate with me.” This intentional space of hospitality results in deepening relationships. “Anytime where there is an intersection of generations who are committed to similar ideals or goals, there is a richness in that sharing [and] I think for us it is encouraging.” One student reflects on the difference the host community made in her life:

The sisters that we lived with gave me so much. Having the time to speak with the Daughters about everything and anything helped me… Their tenderness and care for all humans gave me a deeper appreciation… Their attention to us never stopped. Their love really did a number on me.

By sharing in this intentional community students learn the Vincentian way. When asked how community partners contribute to the formation of DePaul students, the most frequent response from partners was simply by their model and example. Students see the host’s motivations, their simple lifestyle in community, their faith expression, summarized by one partner as, “I think they see our heart.” “Just by being ourselves,” community partners transmit their value systems to students. Partners make it clear that they are “not there to preach to them… but to kinda just be another voice.” In return, this role modeling also conjures a deep respect in partners for the students, their backgrounds, and their struggles. One explains, “You know I think that they know that we are affirming them too, that we are thrilled that they are giving up their time in coming. I think they see our openness to them.” Another expresses what it means to walk with the students for the week: “Honestly I think part of it is we really try to love these young people, because… they are so good.”
Students too affirm the positive impact of role modeling and the hospitality of their hosts:

Staying with the Daughters of Charity was very impactful, their benevolence and kindness is something to aspire to. Their conversations, advice, and wisdom, were great things to experience all week. The Sisters made me more kind-hearted; they really did bring out the best in me.

We were living the lives of the Daughters every day doing service, becoming more aware and living inside of a community of women. I will never forget those women and all of the love and caring that they gave to me and taught me to have for other women—my peers.

Hospitality Encounters with Community & Home Visits

Through the relationships formed with those encountered in the broader community students also learn about generous hospitality, openness, and faith. A contribution the host’s offer to the students’ Vincentian formation is the particular access and trust the partner holds within the community. Because of this trust, students are immersed into the lives of those in poverty in an intimate way that ‘outsiders’ may not be welcomed to. “We open them to some of the lives of the poor, the lives of the poor that they might not get.” A partner declared, “there is plenty to be learned by the people here.” In one community, when visiting homes, students heard how a family functions on $12,000 a year. The host partner noted that because of the DePaul students’ backgrounds they find common ground with the families: “at the same time, college students are very poor… a lot of them struggle. It is like a reciprocal sharing.”

Home visits are one of the purest symbols of the Vincentian charism. Often in this home space people confide their stories of struggle and hope. In VIA formation students are encouraged to listen for the dignity found in every story they encounter. Parishioners at a Vincentian parish once requested, “when it is time, please ask me to host the students at my home.” The home visit is an opportunity for parishioners to bring their whole family together in preparation to provide hospitality for the students.
The impact these moments of Vincentian hospitality have on student’s lives is profound. One student reflected on her recent experience being welcomed into the home of a Vincentian parishioner:

No amount of money can pay for the amount of love, kindness, hospitality, and vulnerability that go into allowing strangers to share a meal with them. Maria warmly greeted us as though we were family. She opened the door, hugged us, and asked us to sit as she would serve us the meal. We insisted that we could serve ourselves and asked if she needed help with anything to just let us know… Doña Maria had put so much work into providing such a wonderful meal for us that I cried at the thought that this felt like a Christmas or Thanksgiving for their family, the one special time they get to splurge on food and eat something beyond the rice, beans, and potatoes.

After enjoying and feeling so at home with all my taste buds savoring every last flavor, Maria shared with us her story. She talked about her experience of living as an immigrant in New York, a place with one of the worst minimum wage and housing availabilities in the nation. I teared because I know that as a 1st generation Latina my family and I have been blessed. So many of my friends have family members who have been deported, who haven’t been able to attend college because of their immigration status, who go to work everyday and night in fear that they will not come back.

Doña Maria let us into a part of her life that is a blessing for me to have heard and push me through my future to help those in need. But, the sadness didn’t end up taking over me and I wanted to share how proud I was of Eduardo, Adrian, and Daisy for being honor roll students even after all their family has experienced. Living in a rough neighborhood, constantly seeing your parents struggle paycheck to paycheck, and seeing others get caught up by the system around them can be difficult, but they have managed to overcome all that and make their parents proud.

One Daughter of Charity exquisitely articulated the contribution of the community:

…the [students] bring the best out of us too, we are happy people… Even though situations could be looked at as impossible, we don’t think about that, our people don’t think like that... so I guess we bring hope, we are people of hope and people of joy and the people live out who we say we are… and we do that through storytelling. And just being who we are, and sharing what we have.

The heart of Vincentian hospitality and the immersion experiences are these invitations to share stories and life experiences, whether in the projects of New York, at a bonfire in the hills of Appalachia, or in a homeless shelter in Washington, D.C. Through direct service,
students learn to both receive and offer hospitality: “The quality time that we spent with the family we worked with was the most meaningful. It allowed for the roles of ‘server’ and ‘receiver’ to be challenged and for a community to be fostered.”

Often, as a culminating event at the end of the week, students will prepare a dinner and invite all of those they encountered throughout the week to join them. After receiving Vincentian hospitality, they feel compelled to offer it back as a way of saying thank you. In Tuba City, Arizona, this brought together both Navajo and Hopi people deepening the social fabric of the community. In East St. Louis a student taught her peers to make homemade perogies, an important tradition in her family. In El Salvador students invited their host families to experience an American meal of spaghetti and hot dogs. It is amazing how, in just a week, intimate relationships can be built with simple acts of hospitality.

**Spiritual Transformation & Discovering Brokenness**

Hosts also pass their Vincentian legacy by cultivating hospitable spaces for sharing faith and spirituality. If possible, students join the community for worship: “I was highly impacted by our first trip to a local Vincentian parish, where the congregation welcomed us with open arms and prayed over us. It was a great way to start the trip.” DePaul students come from diverse spiritual and religious backgrounds. The immersions are an opportunity for them to dialogue about how they create meaning in their lives. Host partners are very open to receiving students from all backgrounds, including different faiths, and support and believe in the youth no matter where they are on their journey. One host recognized the opportunity to connect across diverse faith backgrounds “in sharing our Vincentian faith, and I say faith, but I mean in a larger context really sharing, looking through Vincentian eyes.”

Partners contribute to student formation by affirming and encouraging students in their efforts to serve, and to wrestle with meaningful questions during reflection. When partners join students in reflection they sometimes contribute by pushing students to explore faith more explicitly, delving into the meanings of selfless service. “What I find with a lot of groups... is that the faith envelope is not always one that’s easy for them
“to open.” By openly sharing their perspectives on faith, partners contribute to students’ formation. One student reflects:

I learned quite a bit about the Daughters of Charity and I really appreciated their hospitality and loving open arms. They were wonderful women and I am so glad we had the opportunity to immerse ourselves into their lives for a week. Although I grew up in a church, I know very little about the Catholic religion so while we only touched the tip of the iceberg I am glad that my learning has begun.

Sometimes, students have profound spiritual experiences as communities of faith welcome them. They receive the building blocks they need to continue on their own spiritual journey and embrace their own brokenness.

My moment of spiritual enlightenment unexpectedly took place in the small town of Bladensburg, MD, right outside of Washington, D.C. Traveling around the country through my different service experiences I had interacted and connected with dozens of people. As each person opened up and shared their story, I was able to see their brokenness. At this point, I had just begun to see my own brokenness as well. Before walking into the Daughter’s home, I had been personally struggling with the question “What makes me feel most alive?” and “How was I centering myself in my everyday life?” I almost felt lost and disoriented, not fully knowing how I could connect with my spirituality. Experiencing the Vincentian hospitality of the Daughters of Charity offered a safe space in which I can explore my own spirituality and how I could, in fact, connect with myself.

Hearing the Daughter’s stories and their passion for social justice and life in general was so inspiring. I was able to see firsthand, how the Sisters pulled strength from their relationship with God. This awoke my own curiosity about
my own spirituality. After years of not questioning what God meant to me and what role I wanted Him to play in my life, I prayed, reflected, and ultimately recognized that the struggles of a broken family and the realities of needing to look for a different support system in my life was a part of my story. It wasn’t all bad and it wasn’t all good, but connecting with the Sisters helped me realize that I was grateful because those moments of brokenness were the ones that had gotten me to step through the doors of the Sisters’ home.

Embracing their own vulnerability invites students to connect in a deeper way with the brokenness of others they may encounter in our world. An interior space is cultivated and carried with them beyond the week immersion. This sensitivity and awareness results in students learning to provide Vincentian hospitality in their daily lives, and how to better connect in meaningful ways.

I feel that after talking with the various people in the communities we were in, I stopped to think about my own life and actions. One particular interaction that made a difference in my life was when I was washing a man’s feet. As soon as he sat down in the chair, we began talking as if we were old friends talking over a cup of coffee…. My whole interaction and conversations with this man made me begin to question and wonder about my own ideas that I usually have when I think about homeless people. This experience has gotten me to see all people, whether they are homeless or not, on the same level—as an old friend.

Because of the Vincentian hospitality they experienced during their immersions, students expressed a change in their worldview, their inner selves, and their understandings of their own identity.

I just developed this stronger sense of self-worth. Seeing people whose situations economically, physically, medically etc. were dramatically different than my own, and they had such strong faith and hope in themselves really showed me that I have the potential to do anything… my roadblocks may be considerably less daunting than theirs so I owe it to myself to be courageous and face my fears and anxieties because if they can do it, so can I.

Finally, one student’s recent experience of staying at the House of Charity sums up the gift of Vincentian hospitality and its ability to be a vehicle to pass on the Vincentian legacy:

I was really affected on my first service trip to New Orleans by the Sisters we stayed with. Their graciousness and love that they showed me really allowed
me to feel at home in a place that was completely new to me, with a group I was just getting to know. Them making sure I was comfortable from the moment we arrived was key in getting me to focus on the many social injustices occurring in New Orleans. Instead of worrying about how I was all by myself in a brand new environment with people I had just met I was able to focus on getting to know those around me and understanding I could make a difference in a community ravished by a hurricane and abandoned by the government.

I will also never forget the respect and grace with which Sister Monica engaged with the people she had us meet. And this only encourages myself to do the same, seeing how much more people were willing to open up to you when you don’t put yourself over them, but beside them. Sister Monica showed me how to be one with my community, both small and large. Knowing how welcome the Sisters in New Orleans made me feel, I know that providing such an environment will give those around me a chance to open up further and be themselves. Though stepping out of your comfort zone is important in growing, we as people can only learn so much as others are willing to give us. The more comfortable a person is, the more they are willing to reveal of themselves. I would like to take my previous service and make a sincere effort to create such an environment for my peers and those that I interact with. I will always strive to be as gracious to those around me as she has been to me and to our group.

Vincentian hospitality cultivates a space for students to feel at home with themselves and with the realities of our world. Because of these transformative experiences a new generation of Vincentians is being shaped and formed. The Vincentian hospitality offered to students during these immersion experiences is a way for them to catch the Vincentian spirit in meaningful ways. As one Daughter of Charity explains, “Because of these young people’s presence, I trust that the Vincentian charism will live forever. We may have fewer Daughters of Charity or Vincentian priests… but we have many Vincentians!”
The death of Vincent de Paul.


*Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online*

http://stvincentimages.cdm.depaul.edu/
Reflecting and building community on the 2011 Spring Break Service Immersion to Father McKenna Center in Washington, D.C.

Courtesy of the author
Conversation with civil rights leaders at an annual supper during the 2015 Spring Break Service Immersion to Resurrection Parish in Montgomery, AL.

Courtesy of the author
Home visit to listen to *la realidad* during the 2010 Winter Break Service Immersion to El Salvador.

*Courtesy of the author*
DePaul students serving breakfast at The Midnight Mission during the 2010 Winter Break Service Immersion to Los Angeles, CA.

Courtesy of the author
Sharing dinner and stories about life as a Daughter of Charity and DePaul student in Bladensburg, MD, in 2011.

Courtesy of the author
Dominic Buchmiller and Samantha Vela building a garage during the 2012 Spring Break Service Immersion in Cranks Creek, KY.

Courtesy of the author
2012 Winter Break Service Immersion to Tuba City, AZ. Learning the story of Margaret Louise Brown, D.C., and the St. Jude’s food pantry.

Courtesy of the author
Encounter during the visit to the Society of St. Vincent de Paul’s Elderly Center in San Salvador, El Salvador.

Courtesy of the author