



175 MERCY MOMENTS

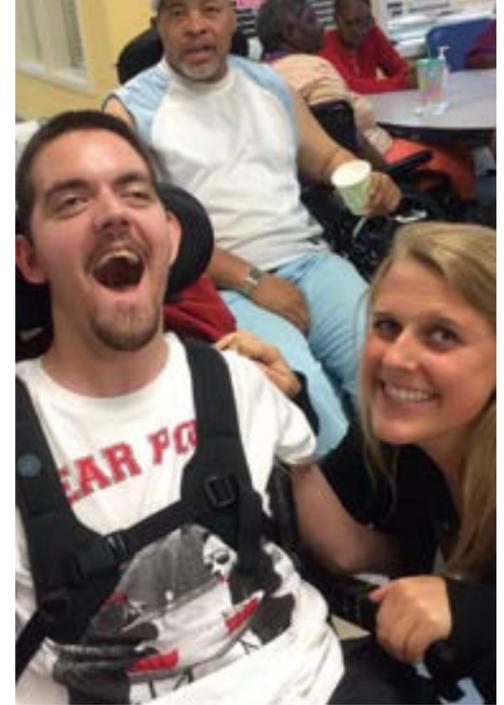
Mercy Volunteer Corps presents 175 photographs, quotes, and stories of Mercy moments to celebrate the 175th anniversary of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas.

“The Sisters of Mercy always guarantee a good laugh, a warm smile, and a genuine gratitude for all. Despite having accomplished countless works of Mercy themselves, the Sisters always make it seem as if the work we do at our service sites is the most phenomenal thing they have heard. Their generosity is boundless, and they enfold all they come across with a love that fills your spirit. I wonder at the countless role models I have in the Sisters, and find that just sharing time with them leaves me feeling inspired and at peace.”

-Alyson Barra '18: Pittsburgh, PA



Thank you Sisters of Mercy for your endless support and love!





A TRANSFORMATION OF HEART

Meg Eckart '11-12 Guyana, South America

My experiences with Mercy Volunteer Corps in Guyana, '11-'12, transformed my heart and irreversibly changed my life. It affirmed values that I held close to my heart and clarified my discernment of my vocation. As a volunteer, I taught at Bosco Academy, a primary school attached to St. John Bosco Orphanage, home to about fifty boys between the ages of four and sixteen. The boys I encountered taught me so much about love of neighbor, patience, and forgiveness. Every day, they were so eager to share their love by presenting gifts and treasures from nature (sometimes beautiful flowers and sometimes not so beautiful snakes or insects), offering their sweets, sharing their smiles and laughter, and continuously inviting me to join their games or movie nights. I was always so

mystified by their ability to love so freely when in the reality of their lives, they had been rejected by parents, families, and systems so many times. It challenged and stretched my personal call to accept and in return give this merciful love to others. My encounters with the Bosco boys, in addition to learning to live and minister in the different ways of speaking and doing things in another culture, collectively drew me to a moment of realizing that I was falling in love with loving God.

Through my experiences of ministry and community as a Mercy Volunteer, I deepened a yearning to serve with persons on the margins of society, a yearning to live in, learn from, and love a diverse community, and a yearning to grow in my relationship with our God of Creation and Mercy. Interacting with the Sisters of Mercy in Guyana, and the experience of physically living in one of their communities during my second year as a volunteer, developed a desire within me to grow in Mercy spirituality – one that was both contemplative and also very active in the needs of the world today. These experiences led me to discern a calling with the Sisters of Mercy, where I now find myself as a Candidate in ongoing discernment. A large part of my discernment has been the freedom to enter the Sisters of Mercy through CCASA (Caribbean, Central and South America) versus the U.S., feeling a strong inner desire to live the values of Mercy in a more diverse community and to practice simplicity in a more intentional way. When I reflect on my journey to Mercy today, I cannot help but wonder with gratitude how different my life might look like if I had never dared those first formational, transforming experiences as a Mercy Volunteer.







“Thank you for being the leaders of the peace movement rooted in the charism of Catherine McAuley. She truly would be proud and in awe of the many facets of injustice that you, as the Sisters of Mercy, work endlessly with unconditional love to eradicate.”

-Megan Lavelle '17: Baltimore, Maryland





MEETING THE SISTERS OF MERCY

Kaitlin Dinkelacker '17: MercyFirst, NYC

Before I attended Mercy Volunteer Corps' orientation, the only encounter I had with religious sisters was through movies (*The Sound of Music* and *Sister Act* to be exact!). When I arrived in New York, "Sr. Maureen" was scheduled to pick me up for my first day of work. At the time, I thought maybe "Sr." stood for "senior" or was an abbreviation for her job title at the agency. Since that day, my encounters with religious sisters have completely changed and this year certainly would not be the same without the sisters that I work with, especially Sr. Maureen.

I work in the Youth Development department at MercyFirst foster care agency in Brooklyn. There are three Sisters of Mercy who work at the agency: Sr. Margret, Sr. Linda, and Sr. Maureen. These sisters have gone above and beyond to make my community member Nicole and I feel welcome at MercyFirst. They take us out to lunch once a month, which is always something Nicole and I look forward to, especially being on a tight budget. They are always introducing us to other sisters, inviting us to events, and checking in with us at work. Through the time I have spent with them, I have been able to see their compassion, willing spirits, and mercy shine through at the agency. They carry on the rich history of MercyFirst and the Sisters of Mercy by caring for each person that crosses their path, no matter the circumstances, and they are a unifying force within the staff at MercyFirst.

I would like to say thank you to the Sisters of Mercy for supporting us throughout this year and especially thank you to Sr. Maureen, Sr. Linda, and Sr. Margret for supporting Nicole and me on our New York adventure! Not only has it been an eye-opening and life-changing year, but my experience with religious sisters has certainly changed forever!





“My experience with Mercy Volunteer Corps has allowed me to engage with many different perspectives and backgrounds. It has been a joy to follow in the steps of Catherine McAuley and to take full part in our Gospel call to serve the most vulnerable.”

-Claudia Brock '16: New York City, New York





A JOURNEY IN MERCY

Conor Brennan '15: Pittsburgh, PA

Throughout my years at Misericordia University, I fell in love with the charisms that were at the core of the school's ethos. One of these charisms that Misericordia promotes is service and while attending this Mercy school this value quickly became part of my being. I took advantage of the many facets of service the school offered from service trips abroad in Jamaica and Guyana to leading the local Habitat for Humanity. As my time began to dwindle down at Misericordia and graduation was soon approaching, I needed to figure out the next step in my life. It was at this time that Mercy Volunteer Corps was introduced to me by my Campus Ministry Director and it seemed like the obvious choice. Being uncertain of my time ahead, Mercy Volunteer Corps gave me an opportunity to gain real life experience and follow my passion of service.



After the interview process with Mercy Volunteer Corps, I found myself accepted to volunteer at my current service site, FOCUS Pittsburgh! FOCUS stands for Fellowship of Orthodox Christians United to Serve, and/or Food Occupation Clothing Understanding and Shelter. I serve as a Human Services Coordinator seeing to the issues of anyone who enters the doors of FOCUS and offering triage. I listen to their life stories and try to address the issues to the best of my ability with the resources available. The services I provide include food distributed from the food bank; clothing; vouchers for ID's and Birth Certificates in order for people to get employment or any type of further assistance from the government; and local resources for any additional help. FOCUS Pittsburgh also has a free health center that people are able to attend if they fall between the gap of making too much money yet not enough to have health insurance. Being the point person for all who enter, I assisted the Health Center in various tasks contributing to the growth of more patients attending dentists, counselors, and physicians. The end of my week consists of working with the backpack feeding program, which helps feed over two thousand children five meals each weekend. FOCUS partners with the food bank to supply the food, and then FOCUS organizes the packing and distribution. The children FOCUS serves through this program are those who have unstable homes and are in need of a stable food source for the weekends.



Overall, I am beyond grateful to have the opportunity to spend a year in solidarity serving the community of the Hill District in Pittsburgh. My time in this primarily African-American community was, I hope, of equal growth for both the community and myself.

I would like to especially thank The Sisters of Mercy who are truly a blessing in my life from my first year at Misericordia University to my time of service with Mercy Volunteer Corps, and now to my future studies as a graduate student at Carlow University! Thank you to all of the sisters, associates, and all those who dedicate their lives to helping us Mercy Volunteers serve. And to Mercy Volunteer Corps, thank you!





“Today Catherine McAuley’s mission of spreading mercy to the marginalized in society continues to influence us, right here, right now.”

-Alex Pierlott '14: Hartford, Connecticut



“We are overwhelmed by the support of the Sisters of Mercy. They always invite us to events and even call when we are sick!”

-Nicole Fusco '16: San Francisco, California



“The year has opened my eyes to many of the injustices in our own country, but it has also helped me realize the ways that I can fight injustice. Through compassion and care and treating everyone with human dignity, we can each make the world a more merciful place.”

-Kalene Weber '16: Baltimore, Maryland