

Assisi Center  
 800 N. Salina St.  
 Syracuse, NY 13208  
 315-426-0481 or 882-1955  
 francorps@aol.com  
 www.franciscorps.org  
 Bro. Jim Moore, OFM Conv., Director



a new way to

# Serve

**FrancisCorps**

a newsletter of ideas and support for lay volunteers

December 2005 - January 2006 - vol.8, no.1

BELOW LEFT TO RIGHT:  
 QUANG AT ASIAN APOSTOLATE,  
 MEG AT THE DOROTHY DAY HOUSE,  
 KATHERINE AT VINCENT HOUSE,  
 MIKE AT FRANCISCAN NORTHSIDE MINISTRIES



Start by doing what is necessary, then what's important and suddenly you are doing what is impossible. St. Francis of Assisi



ABOVE LEFT TO RIGHT:  
 DAN, SUSAN AND ADAM WITH JENNY IN COSTA RICA  
 ANDREA AT BISHOP FOREY FOUNDATION,  
 BRIAN AT NORTHSIDE CYO

*We worry too much. It's as simple as that. But it's autumn. And autumn trees ask us not to worry. They, like Jesus and Francis and Clare, suggest trust rather than worry. Autumn trees lose it all, and then wait to be refilled at Springtime. I wonder what it feels like to lose so much, to be so empty, so detached, and then simply stand and wait for God's refilling. It isn't easy. It's hard. But it is possible. Autumn trees teach us that. I'm listening...*

**WE ARE ALL AUTUMN STURGLLERS**, aren't we? We all try hard not to worry and wear discouragement and disappointment. We know that worrying only makes us unfree. We need to learn to empty ourselves and our worries like our autumn friends and be free and open. The fact is that it takes a long time to get as far as even wanting to be empty, doesn't it? We need to *let go*. We need to discover that trust which begins to form in the center of who we are and what we are all about. We need to trust God and stand empty and vulnerable and eager to receive



God's next gift whatever that may be. **OUR FRANCISCORPS VOLUNTEERS** are like autumn trees. They are in the process of letting go. They are letting go of expectations, prejudices, possessions, all in search of a freedom to trust and to receive the spontaneous love of the poor and the unconditional love of our God. These young women and men teach me to let go every year. Let us pray for the volunteers and for one another. Emptying and letting go is painful...and the Body of Christ that we are demands that we support one another in this autumn effort. Together, let us wait for and support the new life that only trust can bring.



## A DREAM COME TRUE FrancisCorps expands program to Costa Rica

Thursday, September 1, 2005 marked the beginning of new life for the FrancisCorps volunteer program, and new life for three courageous, adventuresome and faith-filled college graduates. Supported by their families, the Franciscan community, numerous benefactors and friends, and the prayers and good wishes of their six Syracuse counterparts, these FrancisCorps “pioneers” boarded a Delta Airlines jet for San José with Brother Jim to become the first volunteers to minister in Costa Rica. Less than a year from the time that Brother Jim and FrancisCorps alum Ben Desiderio (FC5) returned from their fact-finding trip to Costa Rica last October (*see A New Way to Serve, Fall, 2004*), Susan Beddes, Dan Menendez and Adam Morales started to make Central America their home. . . The FrancisCorps community we only envisioned had finally become a reality.

Dreams do come true! But experience tells us that in order for dreams to come true, we must “let go and let God” take charge on our journey of faith into the unknown. Seven years into living ‘the dream’ in Syracuse has proven that our path has been guided by God. We continue to be open to what God will reveal to us each day. Our excitement about Costa Rica, then, is natural! Our Costa Rican volunteers know that letting go and learning to live in a new country, with new friends and uncertain ministry obligations, challenges both their minds and hearts. Their witness and continued openness to learning new things is a true gift to FrancisCorps. We have been blessed once again.

*Below Left:* September 1st - Syracuse FrancisCorps volunteers bid *hasta luego* to Costa Rica FrancisCorps volunteers; Layover in Atlanta: reading good luck wishes from our many benefactors; Costa Rican Friars welcome dinner; weekly BBQ at the Friary with Fr. Victor and Fr. Francisco; Orientation and Training with Fr. Jorge at the Friary in Alajuela.

*Below Right:* Adam Morales outside his ministry site at San Gabriel’s.



Prediquen el



Surrender  
is yielding  
to God’s  
dream  
for us.

James Krisher

# FrancisCorps Costa Rica



evangelio! Si es necesario usen palabrá! San Francisco di Asis

**A Note from Susan:** “Pioneers. Adam, Dan and I are the pioneers of FrancisCorps Costa Rica. No matter how many times we’ve heard this word since we arrived, it continues to acquire new meaning. I came excited for the challenge of paving the way for the FC community in Costa Rica, but I didn’t realize just how much of our mission would be introducing the concept of long-term service to the people we meet. It’s a lot of pressure! But it’s also a great challenge. The Friars here asked Br. Jim to bring the ‘footprint’ of FrancisCorps to Costa Rica. I pray that the three of us can rise to this challenge and not only leave lasting footprints here, but also allow Costa Rica to leave its own impression on our hearts. While I settled relatively easily and happily into my job at St. Francis College, I’ve watched Dan and Adam struggle to make their way at their placement sites. We’ve all felt the strain that puts on our community. There have been good days and bad days for sure. But I realize that I need to learn to live with the uncertainties we inevitably face as a new mission, and to trust God to lead our community. And I’m still learning.”

**Above Left to Right:** Susan Beddes introducing her FrancisCorps housemates to the students at her ministry site - St. Francis High School; Primary school students dancing a traditional dance for Independence Day celebrations; Primary school students prepare for Mass at the school chapel.

**Below Left to Right:** Dan Menendez with two of his boys at Don Bosco school; Dan and Sister Maria at Paz Y Bien clinic; Dan with Sr Maria and two clients at Paz Y Bien.





COMMUNITY



Blessings by Meghan Flick

I don't believe in coincidences; I believe in blessings. Looking back I can see now the small, seemingly insignificant blessings which have led me to this point in my life: living, loving, praying and working in Syracuse, NY. I have always known that I wanted to do some type of service after I graduated from college. I have felt a glimmer of something deep in my heart for a long time. It was always present to me to some degree. When I was young, I was confused as to what exactly it meant, but later I realized that it was the presence of God in my heart. It was the Spirit calling my name to come follow Him. Fortunately, He also instilled in me the courage and strength to answer Him. Little did I know that by saying "Yes" I would land in upstate New York, far from my Midwestern roots.

It is amazing to me that by simply opening my eyes and heart to God, and accepting His will in my life, how many opportunities were awaiting me, beginning with Brother Jim and FrancisCorps. Over the past two months, I have been blessed with myriad experiences that I could have only encountered by being a part of this wonderful program. Giving one's time and talents to serve the poor is not an easy task; however, the rewards received far outweigh the temporary pain and frustration that many times result. Being in contact with the less fortunate also brings a daily reminder of the enormous amount of gratitude I have for the little (and big) things in my life.

One of the most crucial elements of this program is the strong emphasis on community support. Because of our quite diverse backgrounds, Susan, Brian, Danny, Andrea, Quang, Adam, Katherine and Mike have not only shown me new perspectives on different issues, but have given me the strength and encouragement that I need to thrive in my ministry site at the Dorothy Day House for women and children and grow as an individual. The support of the outside community from the Sisters and Friars and our FrancisCorps families continually renew my faith and passion to serve.

From working one on one with women and children in need, to praying and enhancing my faith through my community, to being blessed with the continuous generosity of our benefactors and witnessing first hand the natural beauty of our retreat sites, I have been given the opportunity to show my gratitude walking in the steps of Francis of Assisi. Each day I am filled with a sense of pride and appreciation for being called into this community. The choice to answer "yes" can be difficult, but by following your heart and His voice, the blessings and rewards are endless.

FrancisCorps Syracuse



## PRAYER



## MINISTRY



## Community by Andréa Cook

Community life with FrancisCorps has been an enjoyable thus far. No amount of discussion or description could have ever prepared me for what I now experience. While living with six people can be hard for anyone, I think “community living” is a unique concept that is ignored or misinterpreted by society. Many people assume that it’s difficult or even impossible for us - for FrancisCorps - to live together peacefully. What they don’t know is that we’re not six people living in six separate apartments. We’ve made a *commitment* to communicate, to be honest, and to be understanding. I’m not saying that it’s easy all the time, but we all want to be there for one another; we all want to make community work, and we all accept that it is definitely a learning experience. Community living also has given me a chance to live with people I might not have chosen on my own. Everyone comes to the house with a unique history and perspective on life. When I’ve had a hard day I know I can count on coming home to a house full of supportive people. We are six people working at different placement sites and dealing with different problems but our commitment to eat, pray, and spend time together has formed us into a real family...the FrancisCorps family.



## Everyday Miracles by Michael Flores

The other day, as I stood in line at a local coffee shop, I overheard a couple discussing God. It was not, by any means, my initial intent to eavesdrop on them, but the couple was so adamant and fervent and just plain loud that I could not help myself. Simply put: they would not be ignored. So, hesitantly, I listened to what they had to say. Well, I think God would be shocked if He knew what they were saying. For a brief moment I toyed with the idea of running to God that instant so as to tell Him that there’s a snotty couple somewhere out there badmouthing Him behind His back. But then I considered what they said.

They said that God had stopped working in our world – that there just aren’t anymore miracles being performed today. God’s divine presence is no longer as strong or as apparent as it once was as is portrayed in the Bible or even spoken about in mass. In the end, the couple came to the very definite conclusion that God had abandoned us completely. And if one were to pay minimal attention to current events of the world, with constant warfare, political conflicts and catastrophic natural disasters, one would be inclined to agree with the couple and sooner argue that God is angry with the world and is either punishing or ignoring us. And for a brief moment, I did what I suspect the average person tends to do when confronted with such seemingly “compelling evidence”: I submitted to the validity of their argument and deemed it “true.” The submission lasted all of two seconds.

I then began to think back on all my experiences I have had in just the past two months. In that very short amount of time, I had come to witness, first hand, just a handful of the impoverished and downtrodden here, in Syracuse. I had witnessed people, good people, living in conditions that no human being should ever have to endure. However, I have also witnessed the relief that sweeps over a person’s face when they are given bags of free food from the Assumption food pantry and can rest assured that their family will not starve that night. I have witnessed radiance in a number of children who are able to enjoy the safety and security that the Northside CYO, Vincent House, Bishop Foery, and Asian Apostolate organizations have to offer. I have also witnessed these children being able to partake in movies, Halloween parties and other festivities under the guidance and presence of outstanding and devoted volunteers. I have witnessed and continue to witness these people be able to face the next day with a sense of hope.

And perhaps that is a sign or even the very heart of any true miracle. And although it may not be as impressive or as awesome as, say, parting a sea or raising someone from the dead, I am led to wonder and ask: can’t these acts, however miniscule and insignificant they may seem, can’t they be considered miracles as well? Even small ones? I believe they can be. Moreover, I believe they are. So, to that couple, wherever they may be, I offer them *my* definite conclusion: God is alive and well. Look for Him, and He will find you.

## Volunteer Profiles 2004-2005



**SUSAN BEDES** is a 22 year-old native of Worcester, MA and is a recent graduate of The Catholic University of America where she majored in Spanish. She was also a member of the Alpha Phi Omega Service Fraternity and an active member of Campus Ministry. Besides her experience in on-campus activities, Susan studied abroad in Seville, Spain and worked at a bilingual elementary school in Washington, DC. Susan will minister as Assistant Outreach Coordinator at St. Francis School in Moravia, Costa Rica.



*"The hardest, but I believe to be the most rewarding, part of learning to live simply is to learn to slow down and appreciate the small moments in life, which we often overlook in our busy North American lifestyle."*



**KATHERINE CANNER-O'MEALY**, 21, is from Belle Harbor, NY and a May 2005 graduate of Fairfield University where she received a BA in Sociology and Religious Studies. Katherine was very active in the University's "Students for Social Justice Program," and also participated in a mission trip to Ecuador. She studied abroad in Ireland and has spent several summers with some family members on a Navajo reservation in the West. She will



bring all of these experiences to Vincent House where she will minister as a Youth Mentor. *"It is hard to relate to people you are trying to serve if you don't understand where they live and what they go through. I think being a part of FrancisCorps and working at Vincent House will make me a better person, Catholic and social worker."*



**ANDRÉA COOK**, 22, comes to FrancisCorps from Dansville, NY and SUNY Oswego. She graduated with a BA in French and Political Science in May. While in college, Andréa was an active participant in the Newman Club (President and retreat coordinator), and the resident life program. She has visited France and Ecuador, and spent a summer in Québec, Canada as part of her French major program of studies.



Andréa will be a Youth Mentor at the Bishop Forey Foundation on Syracuse's South Side. *"I came to FrancisCorps because I liked the placement sites and the variety of opportunities offered to the community. I want to be challenged to try new things, especially community living and sharing our spiritual lives."*



**MEGHAN FLICK**, 23, is a May 2005 graduate of St. Mary's College, South Bend, IN where she earned a BA in Psychology. She is originally from Fenton, Michigan. While at St. Mary's, Meghan worked at a homeless youth and residential crisis center and was also an active member of Circle K (volunteer organization). Like many of the other Fran-



cisCorps volunteers, Meghan studied abroad. Her studies took her to Perth, Australia. Meghan will bring all of her talents and experiences to the Dorothy Day House where she will minister as a Case Worker for women and children. *"I am not looking for an effortless way to spend my year between my undergraduate studies and graduate degrees. I am searching for the place and opportunity to use my God-given blessings and talents in ways that will benefit those in need. I hope to gain a deeper insight into my faith and myself."*



**MICHAEL FLORES** is 22 years old. He is from East Syracuse, NY where he was an active member of our Franciscan parish of St. Mary in Minoa, NY. Michael graduated from LeMoyne College in May with a BA in English and Philosophy and has worked with UPS as a part-time supervisor. Mike's travels have led him to experience both Paris and London. This year,



Michael will serve his local community in Syracuse as Assistant Outreach Director at both the Assumption Food Pantry and at Franciscan Northside Ministries. *"What matters most to me is what I can learn from others and what they can learn from me. Ideally, I would like to grow and evolve while constantly inspiring people and while they constantly inspire me. Giving back to the community is the least I can do."*



**DANIEL MENENDEZ** is a 22 year-old native of Peabody, MA and graduated from Providence College with a BA degree in Political Science. Throughout his college career, Dan has been active in service work, combining both his love of people and his skills in Spanish. These activities include Urban Action, Circle K and working as an Assistant to Women's Health Network.



He has also worked as an Assistant to the Latin American Studies Program at PC. Dan will be serving as an Assistant at the Don Bosco School in San José, Costa Rica. *"My family and my friends have smothered me with love. I am the luckiest person to have the support that I do from my family and friends. I will share my love and faith with the new culture I live in and I will offer my best qualities to them."*



**ADAM MORALES** comes to FrancisCorps from the Bronx, NY and Syracuse University. Adam graduated in May where he earned a BS in Psychology and Philosophy. While at SU, Adam was active in Campus Ministry, president of his fraternity, Phi Iota Alpha and manager of a residential dining hall. His volunteer experiences included tutoring youth at the International Student Center.



Adam will apply all of his varied skills as an Assistant at San Gabriel's, a home for terminally ill children in San José, Costa Rica. *"Together with prayer, com-*

# Alumni News

*munal living and the ideology of St. Francis, I believe that I can attain a service-filled experience. This will become my beacon, so that I may always love and respect simplicity in my life."*



**QUANG NGUYEN**, 22, was born in Viet Nam (Kontum Province) and his family moved to Springfield, MA just under five years ago. He recently graduated from the University of Dallas where he majored in Biochemistry. Quang was active in Campus Ministry and a tutor both in chemistry and math at the Health Career Opportunity Program at UD. His future plans include a career in medicine.



Quang will volunteer this year with the Asian Apostolate and with Catholic Charities' Refugee Resettlement Services. *"I am grateful to know that there will be others who share my interest in doing volunteer work and helping the poor. Even though we are from different places in the country and with different backgrounds, we come to FrancisCorps with one good interest of being the agents of God for the poor."*



**BRIAN RUELL**, 22, is also from Springfield, MA. He attended Fairfield University where he graduated in May as a Biology and Peace and Justice major. Brian actively participated in Fairfield's Campus Ministry, and in New Student Programming. He has volunteered in Mexico and Haiti as well as in Bridgeport and Norwalk, CT. He has also participated in World Youth Days in Italy and Canada.



This year, Brian will serve as a Youth Mentor at the Northside CYO. *"The ability to learn to persevere, work hard, and just put our faith in God's hands are lessons that I learned from traveling and volunteering abroad. That is what has driven my decision to apply to the FrancisCorps program. The program is structured in a way which allows me to extend myself to the poor, while maintaining the spiritual connection and devotion of a faith-filled community. The energy of this program provides me with passion and hope to empower myself and those with whom I work."*

*"I consider you a co-worker  
of God Himself  
and a support  
of the weak members  
of His Mystical Body."*

St. Clare of Assisi



## 2004 - 2005 FrancisCorps Alumni:

**Standing L to R:** Nicole, Matt, Melissa, and Huy  
**Seated L to R:** Abby, Lea, and Sinéad



**Nicole Bonk** is home in Chicago and is in her first year of medical school at Loyola University; **Melissa Davey** stayed on in Syracuse and is teaching History at Bishop Grimes H.S.; **Matt DiBiase** moved to Manhattan where he is in his first year at New York Law School; **Huy Huynh** also stayed on in Syracuse and is teaching math at Christian Brothers Academy; **Sinéad O'Doherty** is a first year law student at the University of Virginia; **Abby Riewe** works at the YMCA in Forst Park, IL and **Lea Rosemurgy** is currently seeking employment in the Chicago area.

## WHAT'S NEW WITH OTHER GROUPS? Here's what we've heard from some of our other FC alums:

**2003 - 2004 Don Partyka** is in his first year at Albany Law School; **Kat Bucciantini** moved to Chicago is a grad student at Loyola University, Chicago. **2002 - 2003 Congratulations to Jennifer (Drew) Coelho** and their new son, Paul Joseph (left) who was born on October 9th in Philadelphia;



**Kristin Zipple** is a 3rd year law student at Loyola University, Chicago where she is also pursuing an MSW. **2001 - 2002 Joanna Keltos** has returned from seven months ministering with L'Arche in Honduras. She is currently working with L'Arche in Syracuse; **Congratulations to Jennifer Stewart** who graduated from Law school at Gonzaga University, Spokane, WA and who passed the Colorado Bar;



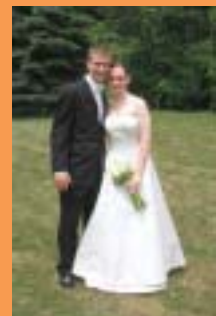
**Congratulations to Monica Thielmann** who married Peter O'Brien (left) on October 8th in Webster, NY. Monica also graduated from the University of Akron Law School in May. **2000 - 2001 Congratulations to Sarah (Athman) Thompson**, her husband Chris and their new son, Benjamin Saxe (right), who was born October 7th and



to (Brother) **Will Doyle** who professed his first vows as a Conventual Franciscan Friar on August 6. Will (pictured with



Brother Jim left) is now working on an MA in Pastoral Studies at Washington Theological Union, DC. **1999 - 2000 Congratulations to Mike Huynh** who recently became the Director of Campus Ministry at SUNY Oswego, NY; **Congratulations to Mel (Maykuth) Burgett** who recently completed medical school and is an



pediatric intern in Vermont. And finally **Congratulations to Sean Gaw** (above) who married Sarah Resig on July 16 in Fayetteville, NY.

## FrancisCorps Families

Two years ago my husband and I had the good fortune of first meeting some of the FrancisCorps volunteers at a Franciscan evening of reflection. What an engaging, spirited, talented, grounded, funny and outgoing crew! We left there so impressed by these well rounded young men and women and their commitment to a year of service in our community. We knew also that we wanted to support their good work and Brother Jim provided us with the opportunity to become a FrancisCorps family.

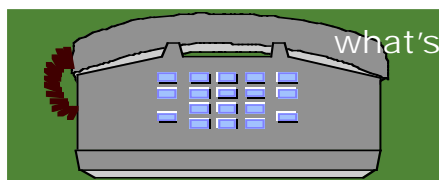
One of the most compelling reasons for our involvement and interest is our four year old son, Ryan. Many of the other charity boards or organizations which we have been involved with necessarily have us attending meetings and events which take away from our time with him. With FrancisCorps, Ryan is invited to participate in our gatherings and made to feel special. It is our hope, as he grows older, that he will see the volunteers as role models for his own future.

Thinking about the difficult decision each of the volunteers makes to go off their career/educational paths to live simply and serve gives us pause to reflect on the pace and direction of our own lives and commitments. In talking with different volunteers, it is amazing to hear how much they feel they have learned and received during their year of service. There is no doubt that every one of these special young people will do great things with their lives after their transforming experience with FrancisCorps.  
-M.J. MacKenzie



FRANCISCORPS FAMILY M.J. AND SCOTT MACKENZIE AND THEIR SON RYAN POSE WITH BRIAN AND MIKE AT A RECENT FRANCISCORPS FAMILY DINNER.

*Each FrancisCorps Family is a support partner with a particular FrancisCorps volunteer. Families express this partnership in a variety of ways: a welcoming presence to the Syracuse community, a partner in their volunteer's ministry site, a social support, a spiritual support as well as a financial support to the volunteer and to the program. For more information, contact Brother Jim at [francorps@aol.com](mailto:francorps@aol.com) or 315-426-0481.*



## call us

315 - 426-0481

### More information?

If you would like to receive more information about FrancisCorps or wish to add a friend or colleague to our mailing list, send their name and address to us at the address below or e-mail us at [francorps@aol.com](mailto:francorps@aol.com). If this issue was mailed to you, you are already on our mailing list.

**CONTACT US:**  
**FrancisCorps Volunteers**  
**Assisi Center**  
**800 N. Salina St.**  
**Syracuse, NY 13208**  
**315-426-0481 or 633-9694**  
[www.franciscorps.org](http://www.franciscorps.org).



### Mission Statement

The mission of FrancisCorps is Gospel Service. As brothers and sisters to those in need, FrancisCorps volunteers share their gifts and talents in a year-long, faith based community in the spirit of Saints Francis and Clare of Assisi. FrancisCorps volunteers share a process of personal and spiritual growth with one another and the local community in collaboration with the Conventual Franciscan Friars, Sisters of St. Francis and Catholic Charities, Asian Apostolate and L'Arche of Syracuse, NY.

We're looking for Catholic volunteers who have recently graduated from college and who are willing to live simply in community with other volunteers, sharing prayer, working hard and reflecting on their experiences with other volunteers. If you're on this journey, give us a call or drop us an e-mail and let's talk!

### Volunteer Opportunities

In August, 1999, FrancisCorps volunteers began ministering in a number of direct service programs including the following: youth and young adult programs, day care and after school care, social service programs, programs for developmentally disabled adults, community outreach, refugee resettlement, and women's programs.

### Member Organization

FrancisCorps is a member of the Catholic Network of Volunteer Service. The Catholic Network of Volunteer Service is located at 6930 Carroll Ave. Suite 506, Takoma Park, MD 20912. Phone: 1-800-543-5046 or [volunteer@cnavs.org](mailto:volunteer@cnavs.org). FrancisCorps is also a member of Franciscan Collaborative Ministries, Syracuse, NY. Phone: 315-473-0952.

### Our motto

St. Francis summed up volunteer ministry well when he said: **"Preach the Gospel! If necessary, use words!"**