

WESTMORELAND VOLUNTEER CORPS

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

SERVICE – COMMUNITY - SIMPLELIVING

2010 is the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Westmoreland Volunteer Corps (WVC). Each year Westmoreland Congregational United Church of Christ brings five young people to serve in agencies in the Washington, D.C. area, and to live in our volunteer house. They connect the volunteers with agencies that match their interests and talents. Their expenses are covered for housing, food, health insurance, and a small stipend. The WVC is affiliated with Americorps, which means the volunteers can defer payments on college loans and earn credits for further college education.

This year five dedicated young women have been busily serving in outreach agencies in the Washington, D.C. area since late August, 2009. Their work has been enhanced by several opportunities for enrichment. Sarah completed a certification as a doula at Pregnancy Aid. Eva is completing certification in AIDS testing;. The group, under UCC leadership, attended a conference in Arizona on immigration and the complicated issues that face that area of the country. They have been an inspiration to their agencies and the church.



Hannah, Sarah, Eva, Kara, and Laura

The following are the volunteers' descriptions of their experiences at the agencies where they work:

Bread for the City

Hannah Campbell Gustafson

My name is Hannah Campbell Gustafson. My parents live in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and I grew up in Michigan and Minnesota. I recently graduated from Carleton College in Northfield, Minnesota with a Religion major. This year I am lucky enough to be placed at Bread for the City as a case manager. Bread for the City works in a holistic way to provide low-income residents of DC with comprehensive services, including food, clothing, medical care, and legal and social services. I work in the social services department.

There are two main parts of my job. First, I help to cover walk-in shifts where people can drop in for more immediate needs. They might need to apply for food stamps or social security, or to get a referral to other food pantries or places that help them get a new ID, or they might be on the verge of eviction and looking for rental assistance.



Hannah Campbell Gustafson

Second, I have a group of case management clients that I meet with on a regular basis. Together we form goals to work on, such as obtaining housing, employment, health care, etc. For some of these clients I am their “rep payee”. This means that I receive their check from Social Security each month and pay their rent and bills.

I love my job. There is the challenge of getting to know a client in a short amount of time, but also the opportunity to develop longer-term relationships. I am learning about public benefits and the world of non-profits, and about how systems both help people and are themselves in need of reform. I am gaining a new understanding of the systems of inequality that affect the daily lives of many of my clients. My work is often exhausting and frustrating. But I feel invigorated, motivated, and fed by the balance of small changes that can and do happen every day, as well as by the hope that is brought about by all of these changes. I feel extremely fortunate in my placement at Bread for

the City, and I am excited for the new knowledge and experiences that I know will fill the months ahead.

Pregnancy Aid Center

Sarah Adamson

I'm Sarah, a recent graduate from St. Olaf College in Northfield, MN. I came into the Westmoreland Volunteer Corps because I was drawn to the work at the Pregnancy Aid Center in College Park, MD. The Pregnancy Aid Center (or PAC) provides pregnancy testing and counseling, prenatal care, family planning services, and general women's health care.



Sarah Adamson

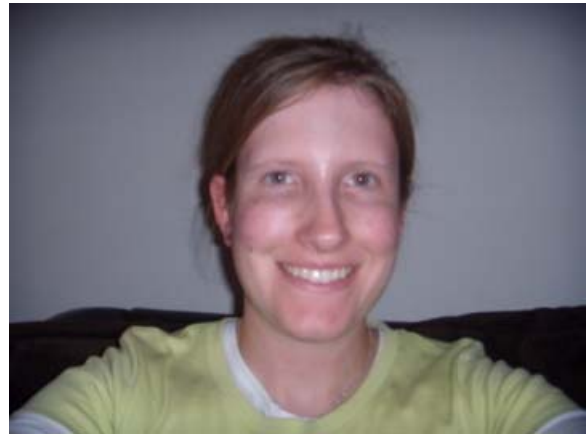
PAC operates out of a small yellow house and serves between 20 and 50 patients a day, making it a very

busy and fascinating place to work. Unfortunately, the current insurance situation in our country (and our county!) means that PAC is one of the only places for uninsured or underinsured women to receive prenatal care, so we have an extraordinary number of patients. They come from a variety of languages and backgrounds, and working in that environment is like an ongoing lesson in creative communication.

As the Westmoreland Volunteer, my job title is Medical Assistant Intern, but my actual job varies depending on the day. I work as a case manager, baby calmer, medical assistant, medicaid hassler, or receptionist as the need arises. At the core, my job is about communication: communicating with the patient to find out what her medical and social needs are so that we can meet them as quickly as possible. I am thoroughly enjoying my time at the PAC and am looking forward to what the year ahead will bring!

D.C. Rape Crisis Center

My name is Kara Johnson and I am from Bethesda MD. I grew up going to Westmoreland, however during my college experience I joined the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. I went to college at Brigham Young University and majored in Recreation Therapy and minored in Psychology. After college, I spent a year working with people with disabilities and then was thrilled to join the Volunteer Corps this year.



Kara Johnson

I am working at the DC Rape Crisis Center and am loving it. My job at DCRCC is to run clubs for adolescent girls in underserved schools and neighborhoods. These clubs are called Sister Action Sister Strength (SASS) and are intended to be a safe and open space for girls to talk about how tough it is to be a girl. We talk about topics like body image, self-esteem, dating violence, romantic relationships, family and friend relationships, sexual assault, and stress. The SASS clubs are for middle school girls and high school girls and often times these clubs are the first time they have had an open forum to really talk about and learn about these issues. I'm in charge of running seven clubs that meet weekly – five middle school clubs and two high school clubs. Even though SASS clubs are very popular amongst the girls, I always bring Domino's pizza as an extra enticement. Our motto: if you want the pizza, you have to stay for the club. We really want to reach out to as many girls as we can, but at the same time going for as consistent attendance as possible. I am learning so much from the girls that I work with.

I'm so thankful for this Volunteer Corps experience and working at DCRCC. I can feel it preparing me and strengthening me to go to grad school and pursue my dream of becoming a therapist. I start a Master's of Social Work program at Catholic University in Fall 2010, but it so clear in my mind and heart that I was meant to do the Westmoreland Volunteer program beforehand. Thank you for giving me the chance.

Bethany Women's Center at N Street Village



Laura Shatzer

It's Tuesday morning in Bethany Women's Center, and I am staffing our clothing closet – a mini boutique of donated garments from which women can choose one outfit each week. A woman walks by, proudly clutching her new blouse and pair of pants. I don't know why she is laughing, but I have soon joined in.

“See?” she says. “You aren't taking yourself so seriously. This is good.”

I work as a program assistant in the day center of N Street Village, a supportive

community that serves women experiencing homelessness and extremely low-income women. Along with food, clothing, and showers, N Street provides transitional and permanent housing, assistance with employment and education, and mental and physical health care. While N Street's services are structured to help women take on increasing responsibility within the community and in their own lives, the day center is a safe refuge open to any woman, 365 days a year.

In my interactions with women who live with mental illness, are in recovery from drug and alcohol addictions, and who have suffered physical and verbal abuse, it can be difficult to not take myself seriously. My primary task is to build relationships with the ladies — to earn their trust, and to affirm their identities apart from the 'homeless' stereotype. I do so in part by meeting immediate needs like hospitality, hunger, and hygiene, and in part by engaging women in conversation and activities. Sometimes I build a relationship by sitting in silent companionship.

The lack of visible progress in the women's lives can be discouraging, but my experiences in the day center so far have also modified my understanding of progress. Depending on each woman's circumstances, progress might mean volunteering in the community or obtaining a part-time job, or it might be manifest in the completion of an art project or a 100-piece puzzle. I find myself reveling in small victories along with the ladies, and I have learned a great deal from them about patience, faith, and finding joy and humor in the moment.

Mobile Medical Care



Eva Foegeding

My name is Eva Foegeding and I am from Raleigh, North Carolina. I graduated from Davidson College with a degree in Bioethics that focused on Public Health. My studies founded my desire to work within health care for underserved populations. I wanted to do an Americorps year because it allows me to work within my interests and provides me with invaluable experience.

Mobile Medical is a non profit that provides primary and preventative care to uninsured and homeless adults in Montgomery County. The name Mobile Med is deserved because the agency owns three large vans, such as a former Winnebago, that have been converted into mobile clinics. Each van is named (Moby, Hummy, and Arnie) and includes one or two exam rooms, storage for supplies, a printer and fax machine. Part of the mission is to bring health care to the patients' communities. A lot of the clients are immigrants or US citizens that have never developed a relationship with a primary medical care facility. By providing primary care, Mobile Med is able to help their patients prevent chronic medical conditions and forgo ER visits.

I love working at Mobile Med because it allows me to learn more about working with vulnerable populations and other cultures in a medical setting. My schedule changes by the day, but my favorite things are practicing my Spanish and working in the homeless shelters. I have an enormous respect for my co workers at Mobile Med and believe this experience will help shape my future. Westmoreland has provided me with this amazing opportunity and I am grateful for all of the support and encouragement provided my the church and surrounding community.

Former Volunteers

It is always a pleasure to hear from former Westmoreland volunteers, and to hear what they are doing today, and how their time at the volunteer corps affected their choice of profession today. **Shaan Hamilton** (1995-96) is Vice President of Finance and Operations at the Dakota County Technical College in St. Paul. **Kristi Medley (2007-08)** is a Montessori teacher at Christian Family Montessori School in Mt. Rainier, MD. **Reese Abenne (2004-05)** is the Director of Campus Ministry at Notre Dame High School in Sherman Oaks, California. **Carolyn Emigh, (2003-04)** under a Fulbright Fellowship, works and studies in Bulgaria, and teaches English at the American College of Sofia.. **Valentine Woods Breitbarth,** (2005-06) works at the DC Government Department of Health Care Finance, focusing on Language Access and making sure kids in Medicaid get adequate care .. **Laura Sauder** (2005-06) is in her residency at the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Saskatoon, SK, and then will be an intern at a church in Winnepeg for a year, before becoming ordained.. **Joni**

Podshun (2005-07) is preparing to enter seminary next year after serving at SOME (So Others Might Eat) for the last two years. **John Forrest Douglas** (2007-08) is continuing his studies at Wesley Seminary and is an intern at a downtown DC Methodist church.. **Rachel Cloud** (2008-09) is preparing to enter the graduate world after two years of intensive volunteer service with global and local non-profits **Rachel Birkhan-Rommelfanger** (2008-09) attends Westley Seminary and is active in United Methodist Church national advocacy work.

Plans for WVC in 2010-2011

The Volunteer Corps Board is busy interviewing candidates for the 2010-11 year. It is gratifying to know that there are many young people interested in pursuing a year of service in the DC area.

If you, or someone you know would be interested in more information about the Volunteer Corps, visit our website at:: [Westmoreland UCC.org](http://WestmorelandUCC.org), and check out the Volunteer Corps, or call
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