



WESTMORELAND VOLUNTEER CORPS

Westmoreland Congregational UCC

2011-2012

December

Service in the Capital City

As we celebrate 125 years for the Westmoreland Community, we are closing in on 30 years of the Westmoreland Volunteer Corps. Each year five bright, young graduates come to the Washington, DC area and dedicate a year of service to a nonprofit business. The Volunteers interview in the spring and choose an agency to serve. The Volunteer Corps Board and Westmoreland Congregation have the rewarding experience of supporting the Volunteers as they engage in new challenges, learn, and grow.



in service, community, and simple living.

Criminology & Criminal Justice. She is working at Mobile Medical Care.

Scarlett Johnson is from Pahoehoe, Hawaii. She graduated from Amherst College in Massachusetts with a Bachelor's Degree in Neuroscience. She is working for Samaritan Ministry of Greater Washington.

Christa Heilman earned a double major in Sociology and Women's Studies from Loyola University in Illinois. She is originally from St. Paul, MN and is working at the DCRCC.

Ashley Crawford earned a Bachelor's of Science in Biology from Davidson College in North Carolina. She is from St. Louis, MO and currently working at Sasha Bruce.

Carla Bes is from Chevy Chase, MD. She went to the University of Maryland, College Park where she double majored in Psychology and

Matt Leasure went to the University of Oregon and earned a Bachelor's of Arts in Religion. He is from Eugene, OR and currently working for Bread for the City.

The 2011-2012 Volunteers are a unique group in their diverse backgrounds, educational studies, and geographic homes. We are excited they came together in common interest

**Westmoreland Volunteer Corps
Westmoreland Congregational UCC
1 Westmoreland Circle
Bethesda, MD 20816**

Applications for 2012–2013:

- Applications accepted from 12/15/11–2/15/12
- Information at: www.westmorelanducc.org/boards/Volunteer_Corps/
- E-mail: volcorps@westmorelanducc.org
- Service year beginning September 2012

Alumni News

An alumni newsletter will be released separately this year. Please send any alumni updates to Jean Lutterman at jlutterman@yahoo.com

Welcome! Yonce Shelton – Community Counselor

We welcome Yonce Shelton, the new Community Counselor for the Westmoreland Volunteer Corps.

I am a spiritual director, pastoral counselor, and mentor offering hospitality to individuals and communities discerning meaning in life's opportunities and challenges.

After a decade living in Washington, DC, my vocational focus shifted in the past several years from promoting systemic change to helping people with their inward journeys. I have worked on Capitol Hill, in faith-based policy, advocacy and organizing, and with bridge-building

among diverse political and theological stakeholders. My calling now is to help people with personal questions, energies, and frustrations.

Current leadership roles include counseling/mentoring two intentional communities in the Washington, DC area and providing leadership in my ecumenical, lay-led faith community.

I hold masters degrees in theological studies and pastoral counseling, have received training in spiritual direction, and am a National Certified Counselor. My clinical counseling experience includes seeing individual clients and leading

groups at a homeless women's shelter and a center for grief and loss.





Scarlett Johnson — Samaritan Ministries



I recently graduated from Amherst College in, MA with a major in Neuroscience. During this year I am also applying to medical schools.

The health and economic dis-

parities I personally witnessed growing up in rural Hawaii motivated me to do the Volunteer Corps in the hopes of learning more about the pros and cons of our nation's social system; I appreciate the opportunity that working as a case worker with Samaritan Ministry of Greater Washington provides to better understand the challenges faced by underserved and neglected populations.

My work as a caseworker is unlike anything I've ever done before. My mornings are spent assisting participants in forming goals and then deter-

mining appropriate smaller "next steps" they can then take to successfully reach those goals. Individuals' goals can be anything from obtaining housing to maintaining sobriety, finding emergency resources or applying for jobs or benefits. My afternoons are spent "computer mentoring" (teaching basic computer skills), math tutoring and conducting "outreach visits" in which I physically go to other DC agencies to inform them about Samaritan Ministry of Greater Washington's services and to discuss how we can be of use to one another to better aid those who come to us. I admire Samaritan Ministry of Greater Washington's emphasis on treating each participant with respect and courtesy.

Although it's only been a couple of months, I feel like I've learned so much- not just about government benefits but also about human interaction and about myself. I am continuously frustrated by the flaws of our public assistance system and dismayed to realize what those who fall through the cracks become. Despite having grown up a racial minority in Hawaii, I have at times encountered an unfamiliar level of racial tension in Anacostia, the predom-

inantly African-American community where my office is located. It's upsetting to desperately want to aid the people of this community and yet be thwarted by the distrust and anger the color of my skin provokes.

Every day I am amazed at the tenacity of the human spirit in those I meet with. I have encountered others who, despite having seemingly lost everything, still have the optimism and courage to face each day with a smile and to treat each person with respect. Fully understanding the magnitude of what our participants undergo on a daily basis will give me an awareness and empathy that will enable me to be a better medical provider in the future: one who is aware of the external and internal barriers that can inhibit a disadvantaged individual's efforts to address their health or to access health care, and one who is passionate and informed enough to successfully work around them.

I am immensely thankful for the experiences The Volunteer Corps has provided thus far and have greatly enjoyed the support and encouragement of the Westmoreland community!

Christa Heilman — DC Rape Crisis Center

The agency I chose to work with during my year at Westmoreland is the DC Rape Crisis Center (DCRCC). My interest in human rights work, specifically issues emphasizing gender studies and women's health, is largely complemented and challenged through my work at the DCRCC. As a Community Educator, I work in four Middle Schools and two High Schools leading the Sister Action Sister Strength (SASS) program. SASS is an extracurricular club for adolescent girls that provides them with an open, honest, and comfortable environment to share, discuss and learn. It gives the girls a place where they can explore relationships, challenge their views of femininity, and

engage in various means of self-expression and communication. We discuss a variety of topics affecting young girls including self-esteem, body image, friendships, relationships, sexual health, dating violence, and self-care. Working in the schools has its challenges and setbacks but it is without a doubt the best part of my job. Over the past few months I have seen great growth in how the girls interact with each other and respond to the topics. The level of trust and respect for one another has increased tremendously. After a tough day at the office answering hotline calls, I can count on a good laugh at SASS. The girls keep me on my toes and love to test me but I feel we are growing





together and reaching a great appreciation for one another.

In addition to SASS, one of my responsibilities as a Community Educator is to plan and facilitate Sexual Assault Awareness Month in April. Dozens of events are held throughout the city including workshops, self-defense classes, films and readings, and a Friday series providing educational programs for professionals working with survivors. I am also a counselor for the 24-hour sexual assault hotline and a rape survivor advocate at the Washington Hospital Center. This is the most ar-

duous part of my position. I get a variety of calls each with their challenges and rewards. Some calls I finish and feel defeated while others I feel the impact of truly helping someone and making a difference. No matter what, I know I have my amazing co-workers and supervisor to turn to. They offer emotional support, advice and guidance, and when its been an especially hard day, cupcakes and coffee.

Being part of the Westmoreland community, I have the support and knowledge of a diverse group of incredible individuals. It is important to have the support of a community especially when embarking on new

personal endeavors. My future goals are constantly growing and evolving. I am still discovering the career path I would like to pursue but I know I would thrive working in the scope of human rights and community organizing. My interest in women's rights is unwavering and even on the hardest of days I am still motivated by the fact I am working for and with women.

Ashley Crawford — Sasha Bruce Youthwork

The mission of Sasha Bruce Youthwork, Inc. is to use a competency-based approach to meet the needs of at-risk youth and their families in some of the poorest communities in D.C. We believe that young people already possess the strengths and abilities necessary to solve their problems and improve their lives, and it is just our job to help them utilize their own potential. Sasha Bruce has numerous programs all over the city, but the bulk of services include a teen mothers program, home-based counseling, a temporary emergency shelter, independent living facilities and HIV/AIDS and sexual health education program. I work as an intern at Project Safe Neighborhoods where the goal is to prevent incidences of community violence by establishing relationships with youth through street outreach and in safe "drop-in" spaces. The Richardson Youth Center is one of the safe "drop-in" spaces located inside Richardson Dwellings, a public housing project in Ward 7 that has few resources and high rates of youth crime and delinquency. I spend 4 days of the week at the Youth Center leading programs about college awareness and preparedness, financial literacy, and self-esteem and mentoring. I will soon begin teaching GED test prep classes at the Youth Center in addition to providing free HIV testing as a certified HIV Prevention Counselor and Tester.



The other day in my work week is spent doing street outreach where we drive a van to high-risk parts of the city, get out, and speak directly to youth about their lives, Sasha Bruce programs, and distribute condoms and information. The challenge of my job is helping me to grow in ways that I never knew possible while achieving personal goals I'd only previously dreamed of.

I chose the WVC because I felt that it would be the perfect space to grow in ways that I have wanted to for a long time but have not yet had the space or opportunity to do so. Prior to coming to WVC, I wanted to give back to communities by becoming a resource within the community itself, explore my spirituality, meet new people and build relationships with peers and mentors,

and have the space, time, and resources to plan out my future. So far, I have found that I am able to achieve all of these things while in the WVC. The community is so welcoming and genuinely interested in my interests professionally and personally, and I appreciate how invested all of the board members are in my success as an individual. I also appreciate getting to know my housemates and the ways each of us is able to grow by learning from each other.

My future goals include narrowing down my interests to determine which degree is appropriate for me to pursue in graduate school. Currently, I am open to public administration, public policy, social work, social policy, public health, and community development. I imagine myself working for another year at a community-based organization building my experiences before attending a grad school program, after which I plan to pursue a career in community development. My passions span the gamut, but I have always been fascinated by the social determinants of health and educational disparities and this is what I hope to fervently pursue in the future.

Carla Bes — Mobile Medical Care

I am spending this upcoming year working at Mobile Medical Care, a non-profit organization whose mission is to provide medical services to individuals living in Montgomery County who lack access to health care due to financial, geographical, and cultural barriers. At Mobile Med, we strive to fulfill this mission by offering uninsured and homeless patients medical care in their own communities through the operation of 15 health clinics located in community centers, places of worship, vans, and hospital outpatient centers. After spending the majority of my life living in Montgomery County, it has been exciting to join an organization committed to reducing health disparities in this area.

As Mobile Med's Patient Navigator, I help provide culturally competent care to some of the county's most underprivileged residents by co-coordinating the Women's Clinic and the NIH/Endocrine clinic, two specialty clinics within the organization. In this capacity, I schedule medical providers, prepare patient charts, sterilize medical equipment, and call patients to remind them of their appointments, among other preparatory tasks. During the clinics, I help the medical providers discharge patients, assist patients in filling out eligibility paperwork, and act as a Spanish interpreter and friend during intimidating medical

procedures.

I am also in charge of a program called "Emergency Department-Primary Care Connect" that aims to connect uninsured patients who have recently visited the Emergency Department of local hospitals with regular primary care providers at our Mobile Med clinics. I receive hundreds of Emergency Department referrals from various



hospitals each month and personally contact patients who are eligible and could benefit from our services. Lastly, I serve as a liaison between the organization and its patients, often acting as an advocate for patients who might otherwise get lost in the chaotic shuffle of a non-profit organization. I spend a lot of time communicating directly with pa-

tients in order to help them with whatever they might need- this ranges from helping them schedule appointments and track down missing medications, to helping them apply for expensive medical equipment or obtain a referral to a medical specialist.

I chose Westmoreland Volunteer Corps because I wanted to devote a year of my life to serving others and was also searching for a sense of community with others who share my passion for social justice. This program has exceeded my expectations and I feel incredibly blessed to be in the Volunteer Corps that receives such a constant influx of love and support from its board and from the congregation.

This experience has allowed me to better comprehend the numerous challenges faced by non-profit organizations and has tested my patience, empathy, and resolve. Although I am not interested in a medical career, my experiences so far have reaffirmed my interests in social justice engagement, multiculturalism, counseling, and vocational issues for women and minorities, and I am hoping to study these issues further in graduate school in the near future.

Matt Leasure — Bread For The City



Two months at Westmoreland Volunteer Corps and Bread for the City somehow seems like no time at all and at the same time like ages. The settling in is finished and the only thing that doesn't seem as if I've been doing it forever is the waking up in the morning. Of course, I was never much good at that....

My work at Bread for the City is every bit as challenging, eye-

opening, and invigorating as I hoped it would be, and I can't help but feel I'm getting far more from the organization than it is getting from me. Since day one, Bread for the City staff and supervisors have been endlessly patient, encouraging and supportive, and I've been the beneficiary of numerous public lectures and private tutorials on the subject of any public benefits program imaginable. In service of Bread's mission to provide comprehensive assistance to DC's most vulnerable residents, I've helped clients access food, clothing, medical care, and a host of other basic services, and I've helped them find personal growth opportunities such as job training. Specializing in housing issues, I've already helped dozens of clients begin the public housing application process, and I'll be working closely with at least seventeen of them in the coming months as they struggle to get off of the street and into stable living conditions.

I couldn't be more grateful to Westmoreland for supporting me

through this experience and making it possible. Already, this work has profoundly affected my understanding of poverty and our systems for fighting it, and I've made significant strides toward accomplishing my goal for the year of engaging the on-the-ground-struggles of our country's least-fortunate. Since the moment I began the interview process with the WVC board, I've experienced more care than I expected any organization could provide, and that care has allowed me to focus exclusively on these efforts toward needed social change.

I have no idea yet how this year and this experience will carry over into whatever comes next. I do know though that it will lay, and has already laid, a solid foundation for a career path and graduate study centered on hopes of alleviating poverty. Already there are numerous client stories I cannot forget, and I feel privileged to be able to carry those stories with me into the future.