



Assumption Mission Associates

AMA UPDATE

October 2019

AMA Year
2019-2020

Director Letter

Dear AMAs and AMA Families!

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ST. MARIE EUGENIE QUOTE OF THE MONTH:

"God gives
to everyone
all that is
necessary to
carry out
one's duty."

Welcome to the first newsletter of the 2019-2020 AMA year! As the first of many Updates, it includes two full reflections by Sammy and Conner with short reflections from our other volunteers on their experiences so far in their service sites.

In many ways, this year includes continual transitioning, discerning, and growing: to a new culture, a new community, a new ministry, and the emotions that change with the seasons of a volunteer year. To help recognize these changes in yourselves and your community, I have enclosed the "Life Cycle of a Volunteer Year." I hope it will help you identify with the common feelings and questions that arise during a year of service. You are not alone!

Remember to be gentle with yourselves as you continue to transition to your new "home" - whether it is the Assumption Center in Worcester, Casa Maria Eugenia in Chaparral, Newcastle or the Philippines.

Stay tuned for our next AMA

Update in six weeks! Wishing each of you all the best and thanking God for your enriching and enthusiastic presence in the Assumption!

- Peace, Sandy



Sammy Kominiarek, Chaparral, NM — Walking Together

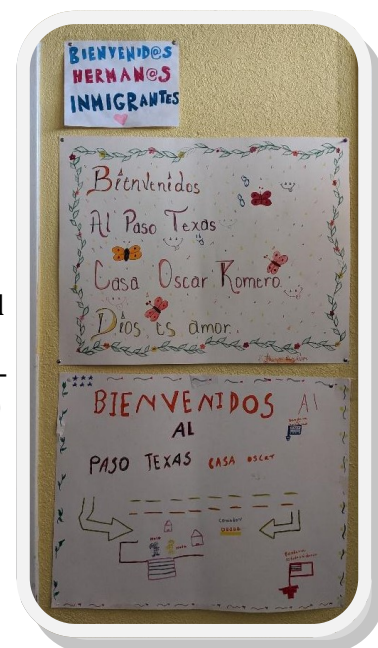
During my first week in Chaparral, New Mexico, I noticed that I was getting about 4,000 steps less than my daily goal of 10,000 steps on my Fit Bit Activity Tracker. Due to the dogs that roam the streets, the heat, and the toritos, which are little pricklers that get stuck in the bottom of my shoes, I have been driving everywhere and infrequently walking around. However, I have realized that I have been given the opportunity to walk with many people, although it is not the type of walking that I get credit for on my Fit Bit. Throughout my first month here, I have been accompanying people on their journeys by being present with them and walking alongside them.



Sammy with some of the students she is tutoring in the middle school

The seventh graders at the middle school allow me to walk with them as they learn and grow. Many of them are learning English, just as I am learning Spanish. We learn more about these languages from each other. The students are twelve or thirteen year old teens and preteens, so they have the typical drama with friendships and relationships. When they invite me into these conversations about their personal lives, I feel touched to be able to listen and offer suggestions about handling different situations with love and kindness. My students have unique challenges too, such as living in Chaparral with relatives during the week to be able to go to school here and then returning to Ciudad Juarez, Mexico on the weekends to be with their families. I am still learning about my role in the middle school, but I feel grateful to be able to show up for my students and walk with them as they learn about themselves and how precious having an education is for their lives.

The refugees at Annunciation House allow me to walk with them on a small part of their journey. This is a program in El Paso, TX that I have recently begun volunteering at where they combine the spirit of service and solidarity to accompany migrants through hospitality, advocacy, and education. During the Monday 6:00 am-2:00 pm shift at one of the Annunciation Houses, Casa Romero, I am present with the guests while we serve and eat meals together, welcome new refugees to the home, send guests to their sponsors in other parts of the United States with bags full of yummy snacks. I also notice the way that the refugees walk with each other. There is such a beautiful sense of solidarity in this house. The guests work together to cook their delicious meals, keep their space clean through shared chores, and are even eager to help me hang the clean laundry on the lines outside to dry. I know that when I return the following Monday, many of them will be in other parts of the country, but I will still hold them in my heart as we got to walk together for a short, but significant and beautiful time.



Welcome sign at Casa Oscar Romero, El Paso

While this walking with others has been beautiful and meaningful, I have noticed that I have been left feeling a little lost and alone. I have wondered where I could seek support and who would want to join me on my personal journey. With the most perfect timing, Sister Nha Trang arrived! During our first meeting together, she said, "I am here to walk with you and accompany you throughout your year." I instantly felt a wave of peace wash over me. We also had the chance to go for a spiritual walk together to chat and watch the sunrise at the park (no wild dogs or toritos on the paved path here!). As we were walking together, she had us turn and walk around the loop from the opposite direction. Sister Nha Trang said that sometimes we actually need to turn ourselves around to notice life from a new perspective. I am thankful for this beautiful reminder.

I will continue to walk with the people here in Chaparral and El Paso on their journeys. Our time together makes me feel excited to learn and grow more. Additionally, I did become a member of Planet Fitness so that I can meet my step goal more often and have the space to exercise, which I believe is necessary for my physical and mental health. This time of movement allows me to process the events and interactions from the days with a clear mind. I feel hopeful to continuously discover more ways that I will be able to walk throughout this next year.



Sammy and Sr. Nha Trang enjoy a beautiful sunrise together!

Conner Morgan, Worcester, MA

I've tried to make it my business to join the community here in Worcester, particularly where it concerns St. Peter's Church. This has been an easy task for me given the warmth with which I've been welcomed. The Sisters and the people of St. Peter's have a way about them that draws one in and extends both friendship and membership to the newcomer. I had barely unpacked and I had already been invited to meetings, lunch, and brought up to speed on the local news--and given several opportunities for further involvement, such as helping at the food pantry and teaching religious education classes.

ESL

We've commenced with our English Second Language (ESL) classes for the fall season. Truth be told, teaching English to adults for two hours at a time was one of the things that I was most anxious about when coming to Worcester (that and the knitting, of course). However, I am pleased and relieved to report that it is going very well. The students are eager to learn and lots of fun. I've even begun to help with private tutoring sessions outside of class.

The only difficulty is that the classroom that I teach ESL in is directly across from the classroom that I teach Religious Education in on Sundays; it can be confusing. The other day I started lecturing about the Annunciation instead of pronunciation!

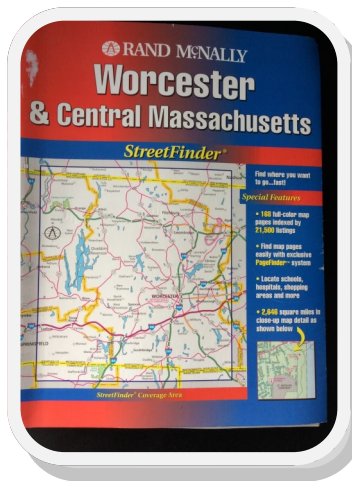
Mentoring

The after school mentoring program at St. Peter's has finally begun and we couldn't be more excited for the year ahead. Myra, our new director of youth programs and AMA alum, Sister Nuala and I have spent the last couple of weeks earnestly recruiting both mentors and mentees. It's been gratifying to see the fruits of our preparations finally borne out in a score of children running about madly with mentors in tow. The other day one child and I worked on making a cardboard house for her small figurine. Before long, we were working on carpeting one of the rooms with a piece of felt paper; safe to say I'm still adjusting. I look forward to the months to come.

Exploring Worcester

I've finally begun to be able to navigate around Worcester a little. I've spent many hours exploring my new home--albeit sometimes inadvertently. I remember one such "inadvertent exploration" early in my Worcester residency that had me driving around aimlessly for nearly an hour late at night. Disoriented and dejected, I

finally
ask for
Minnes
back



A driving necessity in the WOO!

finally decided to stop and ask for directions back to Minnesota when I found a book in the back seat of the car: *The Rand McNally Worcester and Central Massachusetts Streetfinder*. I was saved. I had been spared a Twilight-esque fate of perpetually wandering the poorly marked Worcester streets by the generous gift of Sister Nuala only a day earlier.

CANA

Getting to know Joyce--the other half of the Cana Community--has been a real joy. I've benefited greatly from her organizational skills as well as her culinary prowess. She wears well the mantle of Assumption Center Security Guard. If not for her prudently locking doors and closing windows we would be running an Air B n B by now. One critical part of my role at the Assumption Center is that of Rodent Management. Recently rodent/human relations have deteriorated to such a degree that we have found it necessary to terminate the residency privileges of many e-mice-eries. All we can do now is watch and pray.

Labor Day

On Labor day I had a wonderful opportunity to accompany a group of young men and Fr. Ron from Assumption College for a day of hiking. We journeyed to Whiteface Mountain in New Hampshire. Though it was not what many might consider *ideal* weather for hiking, we persevered in spite of the wind and rain and the looming shadow of hypothermia. It served as a great chance to get acquainted with some of the Assumption gang that I don't often cross paths with otherwise.

I feel very privileged to be an AMA in Worcester. Sandy sees to it that I'm well cared for and well photographed. The Sisters have yet to protest my walking into their house at will. I even get the opportunity to work on a car now and then. I say it often and I think it more: I could not have asked for a better volunteer arrangement. "It's early days, Conner. Let's talk in a year."



Conner keeping warm on his first hike in New Hampshire!

Messages from the Field!

Kathryn Sullivan— Assumption Socio-Educational Center, Barrio Obrero, Iloilo



Kathryn with two of her preschool students.

How to sum up my snapshot view of the Philippines so far? It seems impossible to do in a few sentences because I have seen and felt more in a month and a half than I ever could've imagined from within my comfort zone. I have witnessed immense suffering and tremendous generosity here. I learn at every turn a new heartbreaking truth of life here, such as the number of malnourished children in this neighborhood, and yet have been surprised by the outpouring of love, like the amount of gifts and flowers

I received from children I have come to know on

National Teacher's Day. This time has been anything but easy and many are the days I don't feel strong enough, but I am not walking alone: God, Blessed Mary, the teachers, AMAs, and 288 precious children are walking with me. -Kathryn

Kathryn went to a baptism with a fellow teacher!



Serafina Bon Tempo—Municipal Environment & Natural Resources Office (MENRO) San Jose, Antique

My time in the Philippines has made me hold St .Marie Eugenie's philosophy on simplicity close to my heart. "Live simply so others may simply live." I'm reminded of these words everyday in my service to the environment. - Serafina



Serafina hanging out in her office with a new friend!



Serafina with a young student during one of her school visits.

Kimmy Mariani —Kids Kabin, Newcastle, England

I have been at Kids Kabin for a little over a month now and I'm absolutely loving the work here! Since being here I had been given the opportunity to dive back into my love of art, as well as, learning new skills like woodworking, bike repair, and cooking! I am very grateful to be on this journey forming new relationships in the Walker community and look forward to the rest of my time here.

John Killian—Kids Kabin

The whole experience has been incredible. The kindness of the people I meet and the creativity of the kids are inspiring to everyone.—John



John, with fellow volunteers June and Jude during Orientation

Mattie Carroll —Chaparral, NM



Mattie, with fellow AMA Sammy at Annunciation House.

We have our weekly schedule down here in Chaparral, and it is packed with learning, service, and time with community!

On Mondays we go to Annunciation House, where we serve as shift coordinators and assist with organizing volunteer responsibilities around the Casa Romero center. Tuesdays are spent with Las Americas, a nonprofit organization that provides legal assistance to immigrants and refugees.

Wednesday through Friday you can find us in Chaparral Middle School in the morning or eating lunch with the Sisters come afternoon! In addition to all of these great opportunities, we also help out with the Church youth group, attend Mass at St. Thomas More Parish and other community events, and of course host our weekly Nacho Nights here at Casa Maria Eugenia.

We are grateful to the community for welcoming us so far and for all of the experiences that have already pushed us to grow and learn. This past week we were very excited to welcome Sr. Nha Trang to Chaparral, as well!

Our latest adventure included a road trip to Albuquerque to attend the Balloon Fiesta, the annual Hot Air Balloon Festival which has over 500 balloons each year! We look forward to many more meaningful and memorable moments. - Mattie



TAKE NOTE! IMPORTANT DATES!

October 18th—First group Face Time!

October 21st-24th—New England area post-grad volunteer fairs.

One-on-One's with Sandy—week of November 11th! Look at your calendars and get in touch with her to set up your date by November 1st.

October 31st—Happy Halloween! Be sure to take pictures at your sites if you are celebrating the holiday!

November 1st— All Saint' Day

November 3rd—AMA Appeal Mass at Assumption College 10:00 am & 7:00 pm

Sandy will be at the **Catholic Volunteer Conference** in Cleveland from Tuesday, November 5th until Friday, November 8th.

November 28th—Happy Thanksgiving! We are grateful for you all!

Look for our **Friend's Newsletter** to be sent out early December!



