

# AMA UPDATE



MARCH 2022



## Letter from the Director

"Jesus Christ  
is the source  
of life.

Be a branch  
if you want  
to be useful!"  
-St. Marie Eugenie



Happy spring! It wasn't the worst winter on record, but I'm so happy for the longer days of spring. The Center is starting to green up, and Sr. Catherine has already begun some of the garden and yard cleanups. Around here, a sure sign of spring is to see her working around the Center!

Tori and Tyler continue to thrive in their service sites. It's a joy to see and hear about their interactions with their co-workers, community mates, and especially those they encounter at their programming. It's hard to believe they are just four months away from finishing up their year of service. But, for now, enjoy reading their reflections, and we will continue to pray and support them for what's to come!

- Sandy



## Tyler - Newcastle, England

Organizations live and die by the strength of their leadership and I think this is particularly true when it comes to charitable organizations. In my time in Newcastle, I have seen just how important strong and dedicated leadership is to the success of a nonprofit organization. I have been privileged to volunteer at Kids Kabin, a charity with leaders who truly care about the mission, not just in their words but more importantly by their actions. My first encounter with this was meeting Kids Kabin's chief executive officer—my boss—Will Benson, on my first visit to Kids Kabin. From our first meeting, I could tell how enthusiastic he was about Kids Kabin's core values of respect, creativity, and opportunity.

On my first day, he took me to a bike repair workshop where I saw him put these core values into action. It's easy enough for someone with as much experience as Will has with bike mechanics to just take a child's bike, fix it really quickly, and then move on to the next. However, Will sees each bike repair as an opportunity to empower the child by building up their confidence, unleashing their creativity to find possible solutions to the issue, and allowing them to fix their bike themselves. In the process, they discover that they have talent and skills -- and not just for bikes! He takes a similar approach to all the other activities of Kids Kabin, so it's not surprising that he always says that the end product is not important. What *is* important is that the process is enjoyable, inspires creativity within the child, and helps them gain confidence in their abilities.

While he is certainly dedicated to helping the children we serve to discover and develop their skills, Will is just as passionate about helping the staff and volunteers at Kid's Kabin develop theirs as well. Though he could easily fill a 40 hour work week just doing the background tasks that are required to keep the organization running smoothly, Will always takes the time to give us volunteers specific training in bike repairs, woodwork, pottery, and any other activity that we're struggling with. In addition to this, Will always takes the time to meet with each of us individually to discuss what is working well and what we think we need to do better to get the most out of our volunteer experience. Having a boss like this has made my entire volunteer experience so much more fulfilling. Will doesn't just care that we're completing our daily duties; for him, it's far more important that our volunteer experience is meaningful and helps us grow as people.

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Colin, Will and Tyler

Of course, charitable organizations have to have a team of leaders, not just one C.E.O. that does everything, and I have certainly seen the dedication and commitment within each of Kids Kabin's trustees that I have met. First, there is one of Kids Kabin's founders, Sister Kathy. Though Sister Kristine is in her 90s, she still makes the journey to Newcastle for all important matters and has taken the lead on the development of and fundraising for Kids Kabin's new kitchen.

Second is a trustee named John, who has taken the lead on painting our new kitchen and drama spaces. John has come to Kids Kabin almost every Friday since October to paint the newly renovated rooms, turning a complete mess into a beautiful space for the kids to enjoy. In addition to his work with Kids Kabin, John also dedicates his weekends to riding the Metro and staying in the city center, sometimes until four in the morning, to help individuals who have drunk too much get home safely. The third is a trustee named Rickard who occasionally volunteers at our after-school sessions and has also built most of the woodwork benches that we use across our various locations. All three of these trustees, and no doubt all the other trustees of Kids Kabin whom I have yet to meet, have in common that they are not satisfied simply being in the background attending their monthly board meetings. They not only care about Kids Kabin's mission but are also actively involved in ensuring that the organization fulfills its mission. Above all, they are people with a passion for service. Their attitude inspires me to give more of myself, both to the organization and to the whole world.

Will on a recent outing with the children of Kids Kabin



While all my interactions with Kids Kabin's leadership team have been meaningful, one interaction stands above the rest. The Friday before our Christmas break, Will enthusiastically took out a ladder and invited me to join him on the roof to clean the gutters, something I was more than happy to do, mostly because I enjoy climbing on roofs. Will was happily surprised with how willing I was to clean the gutters, as it's a dirty job that many volunteers in the past have not wanted to do. It was then that Will said something that will stick with me forever, guiding my perspective on all positions of leadership I may have in the future: "I believe everyone must clean where they s\*\*t." This simple statement that made me laugh at the time has stuck with me because, for me, it is the mentality that all leaders must have, especially within charitable organizations: the mentality that no one is above the dirty work. A good leader will step up to do the tasks that no one else wants to do; a great leader enthusiastically does these tasks before ever searching for someone else to do them.



## Tori - Worcester, MA

Change is a part of human reality. It is something that happens whether we are ready for it or not. It is something that is not always noticeable at first. It is a construct that sits on a spectrum of good or bad depending on how we perceive it. Change is not a construct that is unknown to me.

This year of service so far has helped me better my ways of understanding how to move with change. At the beginning of Mentoring, the students and I were strangers. As the weeks passed by I noticed the way they changed in their new setting. They came in eagerly instead of shyly. The students wanted to talk about their days and express how events in the day made them feel. They were no longer timid to talk or give the easy answer of "good". The change in a new school year and to new faces was a transition for them to grow as strong individuals.

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Currently, the unnoticed changes in themselves are that they have all developed great friendships with one another and are always inclusive of one another. The older students can adapt to a gentler pace when playing with the younger students. The younger students can do what they like as well as learn new skills from watching their older friends. The excitement to spend the afternoon with their mentors has increased as well as the mentors have developed connections and inside jokes with their mentees. The dynamic they have created has taught me more about the importance of creating a community where you are. It is a way to have comfort and fun in a very accepting environment. All the students and mentors have grown so much and it is great to see the changes in how they interact and grow within half a year.

The Mentors and the children  
enjoy a game of  
soccer at Mentoring.



Another community around me that has also prospered to be accepting and fun are my students in English as a Second Language class (ESL). The hardest part about starting is showing up. The students have shown up to every class eager to learn more. They practice when they are home and have shown such improvement from the first semester. The community dynamic in the classroom is very helpful for all of us. One or two students can understand the directions a little better than the others and immediately turn to help one another to create an understanding of a very difficult language. They even come in with little snacks or chocolates to share after class. To be a witness to change is a blessing in disguise. Day to day it does not look different but reflecting it all has changed.

In myself, I have noticed a change in the way of my living and of how I express myself. The adjustment of no longer being a student was blissful at first but has become a turning point in my life. There are new responsibilities and choices to make as a new adult. This year so far has allowed me to adjust in a way that lets me be the best version of myself. I have learned more about ways to help the Earth, for example: composting is now a new routine in my life. I have adjusted to living more simply and being content without needing most material things. The constant changes that happen in life are a necessary thing. Life would be boring without them; noticing the changes is one of the finest gifts to receive.



Tori pictured with her CANA community, Zack, Grace and Kelsey at a check-in dinner with Sandy and Sr. Catherine



## Tori and Sandy visit the Sisters in Chaparral, NM

Tori and I were very happy to meet our Chaparral Sisters during our March break. We enjoyed some delicious lunches together and shared in their community prayer in their lovely chapel in the desert. We also joined them on Tuesday evening and Thursday at the *Casa del Refugiado* refugee center in El Paso where they volunteer serving meals, helping with the laundry, organizing the wardrobe room and the dispensary. Tori and I were very impressed at the scale of this center and the dedication of the all-volunteer staff. If you haven't read Tori's blog of her experience, you can read it on our website at: <https://www.assumptionvolunteers.org/news-updates>



The Sisters also cook for another shelter in El Paso.



Doing laundry with Sr. Mary Ann



Tori and Sandy made up bedrolls for the new guests