Sister Annella Bieniek, FCV Praying Sister, passes away

By Pat Flicker

This is my sixth group of volunteers with FCV. One of the biggest influences during this time with the Franciscan Sisters was Sister Annella Bieniek. Since the beginning of my time with the Franciscan Community Volunteers program in 2013, Sister Annella Bieniek has taken the role of Praying Sister for the program. The focus of her daily prayer was for the program, the past and present volunteers and the future volunteers. Her dedication to prayer was an inspiration to me as well as the volunteers.

The volunteers often talked about how Sister Annella would take their hand and hold it at the table while they ate. She would listen intently and then bless them and shower them with love. They would take turns sitting by her so she could shower them with her love—and make sure they knew how much God loved them.

My favorite memory of Sister Annella is when I visited her for the last time. We prayed together and talked about how ready and excited she was to meet her maker. At the end of our conversation I bent over to kiss her on her cheek and she reached up and blessed me one last time, making the sign of the cross on my forehead and telling me one last time how much God loves me. I hope that I can be as excited for my passing into the next life as she was.

We have an amazing angel watching over us now. Thank you, Sister Annella, for all your prayers and the gift of your wise words and faith in all!

Sister Audrey Jean Loher is the new FCV Praying Sister!

We are all excited to have Sister Audrey Jean Loher as the new Franciscan Community Volunteers Praying Sister. Sister Audrey Jean recently returned to Little Falls after many years of ministering to those on the margins. Welcome to our program—we are so excited to have you be a part of this amazing ministry!

FCV is a sponsored ministry of:
“Seeking” God in the ordinary
By FCV Heidi Hoslet

During this holiday season, I have been thinking a lot about a certain word. Seek. This word has been resurfacing through my mind over the past few months that I have been here in Minnesota. Seek. I think this word has been placed in my mind to remind me to seek Jesus in each day and in each moment. To seek Him in every person I encounter, to seek Him in the falling snow and the beautiful changing of the season, to seek Him in the silence, and to seek Him in the girls I work with at my service site, the Girl Scouts.

Girl Scouts of Minnesota is a new site this year and I have been blessed to be their first volunteer. Each day I get the opportunity to mentor young girls at school, or at the different Boys & Girls Clubs of Central Minnesota, creating programs and activities to do together, spending quality time, being a safe place for them to be after school and being that constant adult presence they can rely on.

One of my favorite programs with the girls has been one called Flavors of the World, where we cook foods from different countries around the world each week. We started in Australia, making our own butter to spread on the tasty sprinkle-topped fairy bread, to Africa where the girls cooked up homemade pitas with cucumber-yogurt dip from Egypt and fried Sambuca with a savory filling from Somalia. Along with cooking the delicious food, the girls also get the opportunity to learn facts about the country, showing what makes it unique.

Working with these inspiring and unique girls each day makes it so easy to find Jesus in my day. I don’t even have to seek Him out. He is always present in the smiles, the laughs and the lives of these children. My day is immediately filled with true joy being around these children, knowing that I am somehow making a difference in their lives, hopefully as much as they are making a difference in mine.

Small Acts of Service make a big difference
By FCV Kiera Reynolds

As I started writing this article, I looked at the calendar and could hardly believe how much time has passed since I started my year with the Franciscan Community Volunteers. The air was still warm and the sky still blue and full of sunshine when I first came to Saint Cloud. As I settled in, so did the crisp air of autumn, and the leaves changed from green to brilliant shades of orange, yellow and red. Now the world around me is covered with a blanket of snow, as the cold weather that Minnesota is so famous for begins in earnest. However, the most significant changes for me are not tangible, but taking place within my heart and mind.

I chose to spend this year serving in the children’s program at Anna Marie’s Alliance (a nonprofit that provides temporary housing and other services to women affected by domestic violence and their children). In the relatively short amount of time that I have been working there, I have learned so much. But the lesson that stands out to me most is the importance of small acts of service. The children that I work with and their mothers face many obstacles, which can leave me feeling powerless to help them in any way. Yet the one thing that I can always provide to them is my presence and a willingness to serve with love, if I allow God to guide me. I may not be able to change a child’s life, but I can give hugs, wipe away tears, talk to them, play with them, or simply just be with them. Mother Teresa said, “We cannot all do great things, but we can do small things with great love,” and I have decided that it should be this concept that defines my year with FCV.

A sponsored ministry of the Franciscan Sisters of Little Falls, Minnesota
CHRISTMAS BLESSINGS FROM OUR HOUSE TO YOURS!

When the song of the angels is stilled, when the star in the sky is gone, when the kings and princes are home, when the shepherds are back with their flocks, the work of Christmas begins: to find the lost, to heal the broken, to feed the hungry, to release the prisoner, to rebuild the nations, to bring peace among the people, to make music in the heart.

Home!
By FCV John-Caleb Vacheresse

As someone who has left FCV and returned for another year of service, I have realized how important each and every person involved in this program is. From each and every sister at the Motherhouse, the Associates, our community companions—without you there is no FCV community. It has become greatly evident to me that this volunteer program is one of a kind, and I am so glad that God directed me here.

My first year at FCV was 2016-2017. I served at the Boys & Girls Club-Southside. I came back to FCV this past August and went back to the Boys & Girls Club, where I was welcomed back with open arms. The kids are beyond excited to have me back. My first year with FCV I wanted to change the world, and I was the one that was changed. So much, that I wanted to continue to learn and grow as a Franciscan, as a caring person, and as someone who can help make a difference in the world.

I could go on and on about the hospitality of everyone that is a part of this program and all of you blessed people. I will keep it short and sweet. Because of you I am changed, my attitude, my way of living, my eyes with which I view the world…I am convinced that I have truly found my home. Thank you for creating a space for me and many others to flourish!

The Franciscan Sisters of Little Falls welcomed nine new Franciscan Associates in a ceremony at Sacred Heart Chapel, St. Francis Convent, Little Falls on Sunday, October 14. Franciscan Associates are women, men and families who proclaim their call from God to live the spirit, charism and mission of the Franciscan Sisters of Little Falls, Minnesota. They commit to a mutual relationship and live the commitment within their own lifestyles as they joyfully follow the Gospel values in the footprints of Saints Francis and Clare!

Two of the new Associates were FCV alumni!

Shown in the photo to the left: Sister Michelle L’Allier, FCV Alumna/New Associate Alison Swoboda, FCV Alumna/Associate Anna Taylor, FCV Volunteer (and Alumnus)/New Associate John-Caleb Vacheresse and FCV Program Director Pat Flicker.
Franciscan Community Volunteers

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You can support FCV

- Partner with us financially—your dollars go a long way in supporting the poor and marginalized.
- Check us out on the internet… Let other people know about our program by liking, sharing and commenting on our posts!

Franciscan Community Volunteers is based on three pillars: meaningful service, intentional community living and Franciscan spirituality. Volunteers make a year-long commitment to work full time in local nonprofit agencies that serve the needs of those who are poor and marginalized while accepting the challenge of living simply and in accordance with Gospel values.

Looking ahead

A VERY MERRY CHRISTMAS and Happy New Year!

Jan 21: Martin Luther King SCSU Breakfast/Day of Service
Jan 25-27: FCV Winter Retreat

SAVE THE DATE: 5-6-2019
Taste of St. Cloud at its new location: St. Cloud Convention Center! Downtown St. Cloud

Green tip

Did you know you can receive this newsletter electronically?
If you would like to save some trees, go to www.fcvonline.org.
On the right hand side of the homepage, you can enter your name and e-mail address to receive our newsletter electronically instead of through the mail.

I have done what was mine to do. May Christ teach you what is yours.
St. Francis of Assisi