New location for Taste of St. Cloud overflows!

By Pat Flicker

The annual Taste of St. Cloud has become a well-known fundraiser in the St. Cloud community for the Franciscan Community Volunteers. For eight years the event was held at the Coyote Moon Grille. We outgrew that space and held it on May 7 at the Best Western Plus-Kelly Inn. To our delight, we once again filled the space to capacity!

What a wonderful problem to have! Many ideas are being passed around—different seating options, a new and even bigger location...this is all great news! The bottom line is that it is a success! This past spring we had to LIMIT our restaurants at 19. The food was fabulous! Alison Swoboda, a Little Falls native, played the harp for the evening. Games were added to the night and, needless to say, lots of fun and laughter was heard all evening long!

I would like to take a moment and thank Charlie Spanier at the Kelly Inn for donating the space for the evening! Also, thanks to all the restaurants and sponsors for the event!

And, of course, thanks to all who came and celebrated the Taste of St. Cloud with us. Next year will be the 10th Annual Taste of St. Cloud. I am honored to be a part of FCV. When I see how many lives are touched each year through our program, I realize this is truly what being Franciscan is all about. Living the Gospel...each and every day!

Taste of St. Cloud Highlights

- 19 participating restaurants
- 650+ attendees
- 18 corporate sponsors
- 82 baskets for our silent auction
- 77 gift cards sold at the “Grab-N-Go” Gift Card area
- 48 volunteers helped at the Taste of St. Cloud event

The gorgeous handmade raffle quilt made by Sister Mary Obowa was won by Bishop Donald Kettler.
I never imagined myself moving thousands of miles away from home to a small city in Minnesota. I never imagined throwing myself into a corn pit or finding a giant spoon in the Cities.

I also never imagined myself falling in love with the small community of children and staff at the Boys & Girls Club. I did expect falling leaves in fall, snowy winters and the gorgeous transformation of Mother Earth in the spring.

But, like the seasons, I felt a transformation in my spirits. I reunited with my creativity and authenticity during my months here. The children at the Boys & Girls Club have helped me embrace the goofiest parts of myself, and the staff have encouraged me to be bold and to think outside the box. I felt uncomfortable...A LOT. But those uncomfortable moments have taught me that if things don’t go right one way, then try again. It’s okay to fail, and just because we succeed at some things doesn’t mean we can’t fall back down. We’ll fall many times but it’s truly how we get back up that matters.

It’s a treasure to have the whole Franciscan community for support. I get to go home to six amazing individuals who accept and love me, and whom I accept and love. I feel like I’ve learned how to love better through the gifts of each volunteer. The companions are also a treasure. Each pair of companions that the volunteers have also companioned me in different ways. They genuinely ask how each of us are and wish the best for us.

My own companion, Moe (Maureen Spanier), cared for me like any mother would for a daughter. Our love for food and good conversations about spirituality became a bond I hold dearly in my heart. And how can I forget about the beautiful spirits of the Franciscan Sisters? I am forever grateful for the gift of this program—the sisters, Pat, the Advisory Council, organizations and nonprofits where the volunteers do their service work and our supporters. Thank you for making this program what it is for young adults everywhere!

The year of the dragon fly
By FCV9 Stephanie Luna

A fun Monday evening at the Welcoming House with all the volunteers, their companions and sister companions celebrating springtime with a luau! Pictured from left to right: Sister Carolyn Law, Roger and Sue Linz, Sister Michelle L’Allier, Sister Jan Kilian, Jo Hennen, Tom and Cathy Rudolph, Gary Hennen, Pat Flicker, Stephanie (Luna) Luna, Anna Taylor, CJ Pettinger, Sister Rose Mae Rausch, Jeff Odendahl, Sister Gloria Haider, Maureen Spanier and Anthony Scheip.
Peace, winter and soccer
By FCV9 Anthony Scheip

May the Lord give you His peace. Throughout this epic endeavor in the middle of the Midwest, I have been lost and found, froze and sweated profusely, hurt and most importantly loved. As most adventures begin, I seemed blind to where the Spirit was leading me. Although, through awareness of God’s grace, I have been able to recognize to a certain degree why I was sent to Minnesota. For one, it has been an invitation to renew my relationship with Jesus while bringing comfort to the afflicted.

For the past four years, I have had the awesome opportunity to serve in various locations with different lay communities. I play recreational soccer with the local community everywhere I go. This simple action has been one of the most effective means for uniting and understanding those around me. Playing with the local Somali population here has allowed me to charitably see within their eyes. Even though our cultures and language are drastically different, we are able to find common ground while competing. We effectively collaborate to have fun and win!

Anna Marie’s Alliance domestic violence shelter is another compelling location where I have the availability to apply my gifts and talents to the multi-cultured community of St. Cloud. Most of the children and teens I serve are those of color; this is an ongoing blessing since there is an exposition to such unique qualities, personalities and cultures. To illustrate this, I enjoy casually conversing with a Japanese mom about the authentic cuisine of her native country. I am a white young adult male from Florida suburb with beaches. This brings upon the temptation to assume that there lacks any common ground between this woman and me since she is from such a diverse upbringing and background. Yet she was the supportive and caring mother who came to my rescue when she saw me struggling to bake homemade cookies in the kitchen. It was a simple but valuable opportunity for her to act motherly toward me because I was resembling a son seeking relief while creating a disastrous mess.

The transition to St. Cloud was not the smoothest relocation I have experienced, and I blame that mostly on my own shortcomings. Although, I believe I have the liberty to assume that there will always be a struggle when you relocate from pleasant 80 degree weather to frigid -20. Being the solo male within a household of bold woman was not a breeze either. Yet again, this was another gracious moment of growth with those who are different than me, especially when they are biologically different. As the Holy Father stated, “Women had a distinctly different way of looking at things than men. I have had consultant meetings about a given problem with male members and then with female members. The input of the women is extraordinarily rich! It’s necessary…” A fruitful manifestation appears when working, worshiping and communing with women, even in the direct moments of clashing because of differences!

Thank you Minnesota and the Franciscan Community Volunteer program. Arriving in January certainly manipulated my perception of this state, but this refreshing spring/summer has transformed my outlook upon your beautiful community. Happy days and Jesus be with you!
I have struggled the last few years of figuring out how to “see” God. In college, I took theology courses which helped me identify the issues of the common imagery associated with God being an older white man with a beard (think Sistine Chapel) and the usage of different religions to cause harm both to other religious groups and within a religion. Throughout this year, I have been able to explore the idea of God as relational: God as being love between others. This idea is easier for me to relate to (pun intended) and experience in both intentional community and in my service site.

The growth of our intentional community, both between volunteers and with the sisters, has been amazing to be a part of the development of our group relationship. I’m a believer in growing community through mutual experiences and conversation, which this program has helped me see. Our community has only grown through conversations surrounding our faith, perspectives on the world and reflections from both our life experiences and our daily experiences. God can easily be found in the growth of our community in how we have all been challenged to be more patient with each other and trying new experiences.

Through service at the Catholic Charities Youth House, I have been exposed to so many different stories, life-experiences and perspectives that it can be overwhelming. The more I have been able to work with each person on the individual level, I am reminded that most people are more similar deep-down than different; we all want to be heard, understood and have enough resources to support ourselves. Often it is small details that become what we relate to each other most with; the need for coffee in the morning, the frustrations with being on hold while waiting to talk with someone for a paperwork detail and the joy of warm weather. However, it is on a deeper level when I have experienced true change in how I process the daily life at the Youth House. Most of the work I do is not giving youth resources I know the complete process of, but rather working with individuals to try and help them work towards their goals. We often end up learning together how different resources in St. Cloud and Minnesota work. We learn together what works best for an individual’s mental health. Through this kinship, I truly find that I have grown in how I perceive individuals both at my worksite and in the world.
A year discovering peace
By FCV9 Anna Taylor

Last summer, when it became certain that I would return for another year at FCV, I was excited, but I also felt a tinge of guilt. I was walking out of last year’s program with so many seeds of curiosity and learning planted, but no direction yet. I needed more time to figure out how I was being called to approach the world, and if I had gone back to Kentucky after FCV last year, I would have lost the budding understanding I had. I knew that if I left FCV at that point, the Franciscan values that I had started to embrace and make my own would wither and fade because they still needed to grow stronger in a nurturing space. What had started to grow in me was too precious to lose—I knew I had to come back. But I struggled with some guilt too, that maybe I should move on to a “real” job—I was even told (by some people outside Minnesota) that my choosing to stay another year was “avoiding the real world.” This stung, but I’ve come to realize and internalize that the “real world” isn’t the final reality, at least it shouldn’t be for Christians. What American culture tries to teach us is “real” is not on par with the joy of God’s world. Growing up, American culture taught me that success is money and power. Here I’ve learned that success is joy, success is fully inhabiting the being that God created you to be. My two years here at FCV have transformed me from an adrift, purposeless youngster to—dare I say it?—a woman with conviction and far more clarity than I thought possible.

FCV has given me the space, opportunities, safety and resources to grow in my faith, grow in my awareness of God in the world, and take those first confident steps toward finding my path in life. I am so grateful to have been allowed back for a second year, because it entrenched values that were still buds at the end of last year. People do not flourish when they are trapped in molds made by others. I found freedom this year because FCV and the Franciscan Sisters gave me the space I needed to explore, struggle and find peace at my own pace. I wasn’t told to fit myself into a mold made for another, rather I was encouraged to discover what God has already molded me to be. And the Franciscan lens has been so nourishing for this journey. God is infinite, God can be found in many ways, but the Franciscan lens is the one I chose to explore myself and the world around me because it rings true in my soul.

My time at FCV has been a beautiful journey for me, made richer and complete by all the sisters, fellow volunteers and Pat who accompanied me through my questions, shared my joys and showed me theirs, and taught me that we are all on our own journeys to God, and I shouldn’t be hard on myself if mine doesn’t go at the same pace as theirs. The Franciscan spirit understands, as Sister Michelle would say, that “we are made for relationship.” I reflected in an article last year how I used to think I wanted to be a loner, but my time at FCV had helped me realize how much I love being in community. My additional time with FCV has strengthened this awareness and made me appreciate how integral relationship is to Franciscan Spirituality. Even though I will soon be moving on to other things, I can say with much gratitude, the Franciscan charism will still be my soul’s home.
You can support FCV

- Send a note to one or all of our new volunteers.
- Volunteer to cook at the Welcoming House on a Monday night for the group or for other special occasions.
- Partner with us financially—your dollars go a long way in supporting the needs of social service agencies in the St. Cloud area.
- Check us out on the internet... let other people know about our program by liking, sharing and commenting on our Facebook and Blog posts!

Looking ahead

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>June 22</td>
<td>Last day at service sites</td>
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<tr>
<td>June 23</td>
<td>Big clean at the house. Anyone want to help?</td>
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<tr>
<td>June 25-27</td>
<td>Closing retreat—please keep us in prayer</td>
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<td>June 28</td>
<td>The next adventure begins for FCV group</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aug 7</td>
<td>FCV 10 starts!</td>
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Save the date: Taste of St. Cloud
Monday, May 6, 2019
4:30-7:30 p.m.

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.