

STORIES OF POST GRADUATE SERVICE

from Stonehill Graduates

Margaret Bouffard '07
Andre House 2007-2008



After graduating from Stonehill in 2007, I did a year of service in Phoenix, AZ working at André House, a hospitality center for the poor and homeless. André House provides daytime services such as clothing distribution, showers, laundry, and serves dinner six nights a week. There is also a transitional home for people who are working, saving money, and need a safe place to stay before getting back on their feet. Our schedule consisted of working at the hospitality building covering the different services, spending one night shift a week at the transitional home, with one and half days off each week.

André House was founded in the charism of the Congregation of Holy Cross and the tradition of the Catholic Worker. Coming from a Holy Cross institution at Stonehill, it made it easy to fall into the community at André House. The André House volunteers live in a house together and the Holy Cross priests and brother on staff live in another house in the neighborhood. The staff begins each day with Mass where some of the guests we serve join, too. Not only is the staff a close and fun

community, but the local volunteers that help at André House are absolutely wonderful. About thirty volunteers help daily at André House and many invited us over to use their pools, have cookouts, or just spend some time with their family (which is really nice when you're thousands of miles from your own family). Now, three years later, I still keep in touch and visit people about once a year. I also formed close relationships with the guests at André House and enjoyed hearing their life stories. They're used to having new staffs come in and out each year and are eager to get to know us.

Although André House was very positive for my life, it was certainly challenging physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Many of the guests are mentally ill or drug addicts although some are merely out of work and pretty average. Their needs were often emotionally draining, but working with the guests day in and day out instilled many skills in me. I learned strong interpersonal skills, grew in maturity, responsibility, faith, and assertiveness. After being at André House for a year, I feel like I could do any job. I highly recommend André House as a volunteer opportunity for people look for a faith-based, community-centered program that has direct contact with the poor and homeless.

Logistically, André House takes good care of its volunteers. Housing, food, cars and gas, dental and health insurance are all taken care of. Plus we got a \$100.00 stipend each month which was more than enough for socializing. We also got a one-week vacation and two shorter retreats to take whenever we wanted during the year, except during December and January which were the busiest times of the year. All in all, I strongly encourage people to do a year at André House. For more information contact Margaret at boufalouf@yahoo.com. Submitted March 2011

Andrew Cutter '09

AmeriCorps NCCC 2009-2010



I participated in a ten month program with AmeriCorps*NCCC (National Civilian Community Corps) at the Southwest campus in Denver, CO. From Denver, I travelled with a 12-person team to various locations where we completed a two-month project with a non-profit organization. After the two months, we would go back to Denver for a "transition week" and then leave again for another project round. My projects were:

- Rebuilding Together New Orleans, New Orleans, LA (two project rounds): Work included housing reconstruction, deconstruction, salvaging materials, painting, finishing work. New Orleans is a fantastic city!

- Community Action Project, Tulsa, OK: We did free income tax preparation for low-income families. It doesn't sound glamorous, but it was a great project. We lived in an old community center that had a full size indoor basketball court, a pool table, and huge kitchen and separate bathrooms (these things matter when you're living with 11 other people).
- Missouri Department of Conservation, Williamsburg, MO: This was my favorite project. We lived in a small cabin in a conservation area in the middle of nowhere. On good days, we did prescribed burns on different areas of land in the region. These "burns" were used for prairie restoration. Some days we would leave early in the morning and not get home until 7 or 8 at night, but during the day we would have burned upwards of four or five hundred acres of land. On bad burning days, we did "invasive species removal" which is basically glorified weeding and we also removed barbed-wire fencing.
- My team also was part of a disaster response in Corinth, MS, due to flash flooding. This lasted only a couple of weeks, but we lived in a Red Cross center and helped residents of the town recover from the flooding. The people there were the most hospitable people I'd ever met.

My year in AmeriCorps, though frustrating and challenging at times, was the best year of my life. I'll never have the opportunity to do what did in that year again for the rest of my life. I made lifelong friends and memories that I'll never forget. If you're thinking about doing it, ask yourself, what's holding you back? For more information visit www.americorps.gov or contact Andrew at drewcutter@gmail.com.

Submitted March 2011

Katy Fallavollita '10

Bon Secours Volunteer Ministry 2010-2011



I am a volunteer with Bon Secours Volunteer Ministry in Baltimore, MD for the year 2010-2011. BSVM is a smaller program than many, with 6 members this year. My year has been an amazing experience so far. The program has 5 pillars it focuses on including service, community, spirituality, living simply, and God's justice. I really like all the ideals it combines and the importance it places on each of those pillars. Each pillar is challenging but also a huge learning experience throughout the entire year. My volunteer site is at Bon Secours Hospital in Baltimore in the

Vascular Lab. Bon Secours is a small community hospital whose mission is to provide good help to those in need. My main task each day is transporting patients from their hospital rooms to the vascular lab for their testing. I spend most of my day interacting with patients. I help run the clinics when patients come into see the Doctors and I also help at free health screenings in the community.

Overall I have absolutely loved my year so far. It has been a growing experience in many ways. I am learning a lot about connecting with patients as well as learning about many of the challenges people face that live in poverty. I definitely recommend doing a year of service after college. It has helped me grow in many unexpected ways and is also helping me with my future career goals. On top of all of that, it has also been a lot of fun! For more information visit www.bonsecours.org or contact Katy at kfallavollita@gmail.com. Submitted March 2011 (pictured l-r Sarah Wilson '10 and Katy Fallavollita '10)

Breanna Holland '10 ***Teach Next Year 2010-2011***

I am currently working as a Resident Teacher at the Community Academy of Science and Health (a BPS high school in Hyde Park) while also completing my M.Ed through the University of Massachusetts at Boston. During the first month or so I worked directly with my mentor teacher and observed many of her classes. When I was comfortable, I took over two of my mentor's classes with whom I had been working and I am now their full-time teacher. I am teaching a US History II and ESL Level 2 class. During this experience I am able to put my own ideas and theories about teaching, diversity, and hope; as well as the lessons and theories of my graduate classes to work. I work directly with students who are mostly immigrants or children of immigrants (mostly Haitian and Hispanic in this school). I teach content as well as life skills while trying to bring their academic skills and language up to grade level. Throughout the Boston Public Schools, students struggle with reading and writing as well as skills due to a multitude of reasons. I commit my time and energy to fighting that battle as well as instilling in them the sense of discipline, responsibility, and self-reliance they will need to graduate high school, go to college, and succeed in life. I feel this program is important because it forces each resident to combat diversity, prejudice, and teaching head-on, and through the masters program, sets you up to continue this noble work as a career. Every child deserves a good education and a dedicated teacher. For more information contact Breanna at breanna.holland10@gmail.com. Submitted March 2011

Heather Johns '10 ***WorldTeach Thailand 2010-2011***



WorldTeach is a non-profit organization that sends volunteers to teach in developing countries around the world. I am currently serving in the rural northeastern province of Nakhon Phanom (NP), Thailand. English is a required part of the Thai education system, but schools here do not have the resources to hire well-educated English teachers. As volunteers we have the opportunity to teach Thai students, but we also have the opportunity to share teaching strategies with Thai teachers as well. After our month-long orientation (where we learned language, culture, teaching strategies, and started our TEFL certification) we all headed off to our rural

placements. I was placed in Kut Chim, a village of about 1000 people an hour outside the provincial city. The villagers were mostly rice-farmers, and there was one small restaurant in the center of town. I had

my own small wooden house on the property of one of the co-teachers at my high school. For 2 months I taught English to about 130 students in grades 7-12, all with very limited English proficiency. It was a challenging but wonderful experience. The bonds that I was able to make with my students were amazing, despite the enormous language barrier.

In January, I was given the unique opportunity to move into the city of NP and work as the Assistant Field Director for my program. While I was sad about leaving my school, I was really excited about the new position. I work in the School District's office, and really enjoy speaking Thai (or trying to) with my co-workers. Each week I travel to a different school to do a site report and teaching observation. I work closely with the volunteers and assist them with anything they might need. I am also in close contact with WorldTeach's home office in Boston; creating teaching resources, planning for volunteer conferences, and researching new placements for next year. I am also able to tutor my old students as well as community members here in NP. Along with the district's English director, I am creating a teacher training conference for about 250 English teachers from northeastern Thailand.

In my experiences as both an English teacher, and field director, I have learned so much about Thai culture and the education system. WorldTeach is an incredible organization, and I highly recommend it to anyone looking to teach abroad. Check out www.worldteach.org for more info on their programs worldwide. Also, please feel free to email me with any questions you may have: heatherjohns87@gmail.com.
Submitted March 2011

Allison King '10 ***City on a Hill Charter School 2010-2012***



I have been completing a year of service at City on a Hill Charter Public High School in Roxbury, Massachusetts. I work as a full time tutor with students. I do a lot of the same work as teachers, but I work with students in groups of three or four. I create lesson plans in reading, writing, and math on the skills they need to be successful in high school, college, and the "real world". Most students come into the school several grades behind. I work with 10 freshman and three seniors. Nearly all of my freshmen came into school this year reading at a 7th grade or lower grade level. Their math skills are as inept. My job is to help

cover the ground they have missed. After school, my work continues when I either tutor sophomores preparing for the MCAS, or I work with a student who is failing one of his classes. Currently I work with a student who failed English and has only a cursory understanding of our language. Additionally, most tutors are involved in an extra-curricular activity. I am the co-advisor to the STEP team, and we practice after school for three hours a week.

It's definitely a lot of work, and I spend easily 11 hours each day at work. But no one gets into a year of service for the short days and the pay. It is the most rewarding thing I have ever done; in fact, I have signed on to do a second year. I will be working in a leadership position this year and serving as mentor to new tutors while still working as a tutor myself. It has changed my life in so many ways, and I encourage anyone who is considering post-graduate service to do it. I have learned so much about myself, the world around me, and gotten to know people from across the globe. The school was recently featured on NECN. For more information, visit www.cityonahill.org or email Allison at aking165@gmail.com.
Submitted March 2011

Marissa LaPointe '08
AmeriCorps NCCC 2008-2009



During my time at Stonehill, I had been very involved in the HOPE trips and really enjoyed all the service work. I knew that after graduation (2008), I wanted to spend some time doing service work full-time. I had heard of the program AmeriCorps NCCC and liked the different set-up of it from the other AmeriCorps programs. In AmeriCorps NCCC, members were put into teams of 10-12 people and travelled every 6-8 weeks doing new types of service work for an entire year. I applied with a friend and we were both accepted to the year-long program. We left for Sacramento, CA (where we were "stationed" for the year, kind of like a check-in between every project) in October. We were put into teams and prepared to ship out. I was sent to five different places over the course of my year: Austin, TX to work with FEMA and place mobile homes to people affected by Hurricanes Ike and Gustav; Sacramento, CA to be teachers' aides' at a K-6 elementary school; Silverton, OR to work on invasive plant species removal and wilderness clean-up;

Hattiesburg, MS to rehab houses that still had not been fixed since Hurricane Katrina; and New Orleans, LA to build new houses with Habitat for Humanity. I truly loved every one of the projects we did and still miss all the places I went to and all the friends I made along the way. I keep in touch with many of the close friends that I made, which is fun because we live all over the US, so they would have been people I never would have met if not for the AmeriCorps NCCC program. This really was one of the best experiences of my life and I would highly recommend it to anyone whose looking for adventure and doesn't mind getting dirty! For more information visit www.americorps.gov or contact Marissa at rissagurl18@aol.com. Submitted March 2011

Hilary Marck '10
Stonehill Extension Dominican Republic 2010-2011



Since the end of July 2010, I have been working at an amazing school in the Dominican Republic through Stonehill's International Extension Program. My experience has been absolutely life-changing, as I've learned and grown in more ways than I could have ever imagined. I don't think I have ever had a job in which I have believed *this much* in the significance of my work; a job where each day, I woke up and was truly looking forward to the day ahead. Since high school, I knew that I had a passion for service and travelling to far-away places to work with other communities and learn about their cultures. This fire within me couldn't be ignored, so I knew that a year of service after graduation was the right choice for me. Now that I am living in La Romana, this passion has been nurtured in such a way that I've never felt more alive.

There are a variety of programs that I work on at the Hogar del Niño School in La Romana. One of my favorites is a program that I started for 8th grade girls to address issues such as self-esteem, body image, and how to handle stress. I meet with the girls in small groups each week, and we do fun activities and have excellent conversations surrounding all of these issues. It is

enormously rewarding. In addition to this, I'm in charge of the school's extracurricular program, where I organize art, theater, and English classes for the kids. Lastly, I also co-direct a program with the high school seniors to help them accomplish the 60 hours of community service that is necessary for them to graduate. Teaching English to 5th graders on the side is another project that keeps me on my toes.

I've heard people say that their year of service was "the hardest work they ever loved", and I have found this to be extremely true. Initially, it comes with its own set of uncertainties, discomforts, and frustrations...but in the end, I wouldn't trade my time here in the Dominican Republic for anything else in the world. For more information visit www.stonehill.edu/extension.xml or contact Hilary at hilarymarck@yahoo.com. Submitted March 2011

Austin Matte '09 **Peace Corps 2010-2012**



Greetings from abroad! My name is Austin Matte, I graduated from Stonehill in May of 2009, and am currently serving in the Business Development Sector of Peace Corps, Nicaragua. My primary job is to plan and teach a basic business course, with my local counterparts, to high school students, ages ranging from about 15 to 22. Additionally, I take on secondary projects, which include everything from advising small business owners, to coaching the soccer team at one of the four high schools where I work.

After 11 weeks of training, I moved to site in August of 2010, and that is where I will be until July of 2012. Training consisted of everything needed to successfully adapt to living and working in a foreign culture. It mostly focused on language, though I also worked with a small business owner, a youth group, and even gave a few classes at local high schools. By the time I moved to site, I was ready to take on anything that could be thrown at me.

Since graduating, the Peace Corps has been exactly the experience that I wanted. It entails everything I desired to do; travel, better my Spanish, better my professional career, and of course help others. Aside from being able to use my degree and bettering my professional experience, I have been able to better my own personal experience too. I have a better understanding of culture, government, and people in general. Of course, I have had, and will continue to have, many hard times in dealing with such vast changes, including being apart from family and friends for such an extended period of time. My mantra has been, "This is not forever," and this helps to see the big picture. I have also met a lot of genuine people, and relating with them certainly helps to get through the harder times as well.

Advice to anyone thinking of taking on something different after graduation: do it. The timing could not be better. This will give you the opportunity to think about what it is you really want to pursue in this life. Not to mention it will be hard to find the opportunity to do anything comparable in the future, after having started a career. In the long run, the time that you think you may be missing out on things back home is so minimal, and you will be doing something worthwhile both for yourself and others. You have been given the privilege of being able to do most anything it is that you want to do at this point in time, so

why not try to do something that you will stay with you for the rest of your existence? For more information visit www.peacecorps.gov or contact Austin at austinmatte@gmail.com. Submitted April 2011

Robert Mercedes '07

AmeriCorps NCCC 2007-2008, 2010-2011



After graduating Stonehill College in 2007, I completed a ten month term with AmeriCorps NCCC (October 2007 - July 2008). I had already been accepted into graduate school but I wanted the ability to do some volunteering and traveling before I started, so it was the perfect program for me. While in NCCC, I had four major projects, which included environmental work in Portland, OR, helping low-income citizens file their tax returns in Sacramento, CA, working with Habitat for Humanity St. Tammany West in Mandeville, LA, and repairing homes affected by the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in the Lower Ninth Ward of New Orleans, LA. This program was so unique because of its ability to place me in four distinct neighborhoods literally

halfway across the country from each other, where I was able to learn and become proficient in these life skills (all of which were completely foreign to me).

After finishing my Master's, I have since gone on to do two additional AmeriCorps terms, a 10-week AmeriCorps VISTA position with the Community Building and Organizing Department of Neighborhood Housing Services of New Haven, Inc. and a 10-month term with Public Allies Connecticut, where I am currently placed as the Event and Outreach Coordinator for the Northeast Organic Farming Association of Connecticut.

I think a year of service is important for many people just graduating from college. Some people jump right into the work force and burn out after a couple years. Others graduate, eventually find a job they are content with and go on never getting to step out of their comfort zone. And yet others find the perfect job and couldn't be happier. All I know is that I feel honored to have been able to be a part of so many amazing experiences and meet some incredible people that will stay with me for life. For more information visit www.americorps.gov or contact Robert at rmercedeg@gmail.com. Submitted March 2011

Matt Mills '05

WorldTeach 2010-2011



After graduating Stonehill in 2005, I moved to Los Angeles, CA and after 5 years in the working world I felt compelled to take on a new challenge and devote some of my time and services to those less fortunate. I also had a strong desire to try teaching, and I found a wonderful organization called WorldTeach, which sends volunteers to developing countries for a year to teach English and other subjects. The organization just created a program in Tanzania in Africa, and I was more than

eager to sign up as one of the first volunteers for the program. I came to Tanzania in June of 2010 and am currently volunteering as an English teacher at local under-served secondary schools until May of 2011. To say this has been a rewarding experience would be an understatement. Not only has this experience taught me so much about myself, but it has also enlarged my worldview, developed my leadership skills, and inspired me to continue teaching when I return to the U.S. Through this experience, I have learned to truly appreciate all of the values and knowledge that I was fortunate enough to develop and foster during my time at Stonehill. For more information visit www.worldteach.org or contact Matt at mmills25@gmail.com. Submitted March 2011

Felicia Waldron '09

AmeriCorps Massachusetts Promise Fellowship 2009-2010



After graduating from Stonehill in May 2009, I did a year of service in the Massachusetts Promise Fellowship, which is a program set up through AmeriCorps that places Fellows who commit to a year of service at non-profit organizations, schools, and city agencies across Massachusetts to create, lead, and manage youth development projects. I served as Volunteer Coordinator at St. Stephen's Youth Programs in Boston. The job position at this site was a great fit and a wonderful opportunity for me because I'd had previous connections with St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, having worked at their summer academic program as a counselor for the past 2 years. The connection that I had with the youth and staff at St.

Stephen's was only one reason of many as to why I had such an amazing year during my fellowship.

The site at which I served was a wonderful place for me to work. As the Volunteer Coordinator for the LEARN at Lenox Afterschool Program set up through St. Stephen's, I recruited, supervised, and oversaw 72 volunteers from various schools, churches, and organizations in Boston who gave their time and effort to the elementary youth at our program. I had college students from Northeastern, BC, BU, and Regis College who would come in on a weekly basis to run activities and lead academic classes. I also had volunteers from various churches in the Episcopal Diocese who would host special events like our annual Turkey Wahoo or Holiday Extravaganza, providing meals, gifts, and activities for our 34 youth and their families. I also organized and hosted a day of service at the site, called "Restoring Lenox", which brought over 35 volunteers to our site on the AmeriCorps National Day of Service to do various restorative projects to the after school program's site and supplies. (Pictured is the mural painted for the LEARN at Lenox Afterschool Program, on this day of service).

Along with the service work that I did with volunteers, the most meaningful, fun, and rewarding part of my service was that I spent a great part of my time working with the youth themselves. It was rewarding to recruit volunteers and support them as they served the after school program, but the highlight of every one of my days during my year of service, was when I got to spend a few hours working directly with the youth. I was blessed to have the opportunity to serve as an additional counselor at my site, helping kids with homework, leading various activities and classes with them, and being an aide in behavioral management. These were my strongest points in the work that I did, for youth work is where my true passions lie. The interactions with the youth are where my strongest connections were made, and where the significance of my service work was shown.

The Fellowship itself also played a huge part in the meaningfulness and enjoyment of my year of service. It was comprised of 39 Fellows who were working at various non-profits throughout the Boston area, doing similar things to what I was involved in. We also had three incredibly supportive supervisors, who had completed at least one year of service themselves through the Fellowship. There was a very strong support system, and a genuine connection built between all of my fellow Fellows. People were there for you, to listen to and share your stories or challenges. And there was a genuine interest amongst the group in what was going on at everyone's site, and an overwhelming amount of help and support whenever it was needed. Along with this, the Fellowship did a great job of offering various trainings to its Fellows, in subject areas that pertained to our service work. We received trainings on issues such as social justice, childhood development, group management, and building partnerships. Along with that, MPF was invested in aiding its Fellows in deciding upon their post-service life, offering training seminars on interviewing guidance, and connecting Fellows to a plethora of job or education opportunities once their year of service ended.

My year of service was a wonderfully uplifting, challenging, and meaningful experience. It helped me to develop and grow personally, professionally, and spiritually. I learned more about my capabilities, my skills, and my passions. And most importantly, I made a real difference and positive impact on the inner city Boston community. I built relationships with the families in the neighborhoods in which I served which continue to flourish today, as I have returned to my host site to be a counselor at their after school program now. And I developed partnerships between my host site and various organizations which have carried on throughout the year once my service ended. My year serving through the Massachusetts Promise Fellowship is one that I will never forget, as it has led me to be the worker and person that I am now, with the passions and skills that I now possess. For more information about Massachusetts Promise Fellowship visit www.masspromisefellows.org or contact Felicia at felicia.waldron@gmail.com. *Submitted April 2011*

Jessica Wirth '10 ***Christian Appalachian Project 2010-2011***



My experience at CAP (Christian Appalachian Project) in Johnson and Martin County, KY has been one of great life lessons and growth. I have found myself growing not only personally, in my relationships and experiences, but in a professional manner as well. As someone who intends to find a job in the teaching field upon completion of my experiences with CAP, working at the Child Development Center has taught me lessons about what kind of a teacher I want to be; the classroom management styles I prefer, and how exactly to work with children to give both them, and myself, the best experience in

education. In my (almost) nine months with CAP, I have been given the opportunity to become a leader in my community, experience my Catholic faith in a new environment while also learning about other Christian faiths, and learn what it really means to live with people and a common goal. I have learned to stand up for myself, to advocate for myself and the children I work with, and to interact with people in a positive way. My experience with CAP has truly been a gift in my life, and one that I would definitely repeat. For more information visit www.christianapp.org or contact Jessica at jesswirth@gmail.com. *Submitted March 2011*