

GRADUATING?

Thinking about a year of volunteer service?

Each year hundreds of JCU graduates leave campus for great jobs, exciting graduate school opportunities, or to begin families – but some depart for a unique year (or more) of post-graduate volunteer service. These experiences take them to locations near and far, engage them in work ranging from direct service to advocacy, and challenge them to grow in ways they never imagined.

Is Post-Graduate Service for me?

In considering this question, ask yourself the following:

What am I still trying to learn about myself and how I want to be of service to others in my life?

What experiences have been energizing or life-giving for me here at JCU?

What are my passions? What are my skills?

How can I use these to serve other people?

Do I see a year of post-graduate service as valuable toward other, future choices or life goals?



What are important things to think about when considering post-graduate service?

Where do you want to serve? International? Domestic? Why?

What type of service interests you? What population do you want to serve?

Do you have a geographical preference?

Have you shared the idea of post-graduate service with family and friends? If not, when will you?

What type of reaction do you anticipate from family and friends about this choice?

How important are their opinions in your choice?

Have you taken time to get away and think about the choices for your future? If not, when will you?

What resources do you have to help you in your discernment process? What resources do you still need?

Where are some recent JCU alumni doing a year of post-graduate service?

Name	Location	Volunteer Organization
Christopher Geraghty	San Antonio, Texas	Jesuit Volunteer Corps
Elizabeth Smietana	Massachusetts	Massachusetts Conservation Corps
Frank Bujanada	Duran, Ecuador	Rostro de Cristo
Jason Miller	Nashville, Tennessee	Jesuit Volunteer Corps
Jennifer Scott	Mount Union College	Americorps VISTA
Kathryn Stevens	Immokalee, Florida	Humility of Mary Volunteers
Kristy Calaway	Chillan, Chile	Humility of Mary Volunteers
Lauren Fraser	Baltimore, Maryland	Jesuit Volunteer Corps
Maria Khoury	Chicago, Illinois	Ignatian Alumni Volunteer Corps
Mary Ellen Madden	Bridgeport, Connecticut	Jesuit Volunteer Corps
Tom Albani	Immokalee, Florida	Humility of Mary Volunteers

Where can I learn more about post-graduate service?

JCU's Campus Ministry Post-Grad Service site:

<http://www.jcu.edu/campuslife/campusministry/service/postgrad.htm>

Catholic Network of Volunteer Service:

<http://www.cnvs.org>

We also invite you to contact JCU's Campus Ministry Office, Career Center, or Center for Service and Social Action

Take Time for Self - Reflection

(Taken from the Catholic Network of Volunteer Service <http://www.cnvs.org>)

Whether you decide to volunteer for a week or three years, committing yourself to service is a big step. Your volunteer year has a big impact upon yourself and upon others. Here are some questions we have compiled for you to help you reflect upon the decision to volunteer. The first set of questions will help you reflect on your motivations and expectations. The second set is questions you should ask prospective programs.

Ask Yourself

Why do I want to be a volunteer?

Everybody decides to volunteer for different reasons. Are you idealistic? Do you want to deepen your relationship with God? Are you committed to social justice? Do you anticipate personal growth? Do you want to change your life?

What are my expectations?

What do you expect from volunteering? What do you expect from your program and specific placement?

What do I have to offer?

What gifts can you share with others? What are your strengths/weaknesses? What professional skills do you bring?

How do I handle changes?

A volunteer year involves a lot of change. Not only will you be living in a new place with new people, but you won't be earning a salary. How do you handle change? Have you ever been far from your family and support system? How will you adjust to living simply?

How do I relate with others?

Many volunteers find living in community to be the most difficult part of their volunteer year. How do you interact with others? How do you deal with problems and disagreements? Do you have a sense of humor?

What gives me satisfaction?

At the end of the day, what makes you feel good? What do you find comfort in? What do you like to do with others? How do you spend your time when you're alone?

Questions to ask the Program

What type of placement does your program offer?

What work will I be doing? Do I need to have previous experience? Will you train me to do things I don't know how to do? How long is your program? Where will I be serving?

What type of living situation do you have?

Programs offer a variety of different living situations. Will I be living with others like me? Where will I be living? How much stipend will I receive? Can I bring a car?

What kind of support do you provide your volunteers?

Will I be trained? What do I do if I have a problem at my placement? Will there be retreats? How often will I interact with other volunteers?

How does the application process work?

How long does the process take? Do I need to be interviewed? What paperwork will I need to complete?

What are your program's benefits?

Will my student loans be deferred? Will I receive any training?

May I speak with former volunteers?

Volunteers who have gone before you are your best resource in learning about a program. Be sure to ask the program to put you in touch with these volunteers who can share with you their experiences.

The Basics

(Taken from the Catholic Network of Volunteer Service <http://www.cnvs.org>)

Where can I volunteer?

Catholic Network of Volunteer Service (CNVS) Member programs have positions available in all fifty states, the District of Columbia, and two overseas U.S. territories (Puerto Rico and American Samoa). Additionally, there are currently positions in over 100 countries across the world including Africa, Asia, Central America and the Caribbean, South America, Europe, North America, Australia, and the South Pacific. There are positions in every type of setting: large and small cities, suburbs, and rural areas. Programs that are NOT faith-based offer similar sites. For example, Americorps and City Year offer positions throughout the United States and the U.S. Peace Corps has hundreds of placements overseas.

How long can I serve?

That depends on you. Programs offer opportunities that range from a week to a three and half year commitment. There are programs for college students during the summer break as well.

Do I have a choice about where I serve?

Programs are highly skilled at matching applicants with placements that best suit their skills and interests. If you have particular geographic or placement preferences, please be sure to let the programs know in your application.

Do I have to be a certain age to serve?

It depends on the program. Short-term programs (e.g., week-long spring breaks or three month summer programs) offer opportunities for high school aged youth and students still in college. Most long-term programs require participants to be at least 21, but some do accept applicants as young as 18. Most programs have no upper age limit. In fact, some programs are specifically designed for older or retired applicants. Be sure to check out individual programs for more information.

What will be living arrangement/situation?

Different programs offer volunteers different living arrangements. Many programs have volunteers living together in community. Other volunteers live with religious sisters or brothers or priests while some live with families. In rare instances, a volunteer may live alone. You can search programs on this web site by the type of living arrangement they offer.

Do I have to be a United States citizen to volunteer?

No, you do not have to be an American citizen to serve in many of our programs. Use our RESPONSE directory of opportunities to determine which programs accept persons who are not American citizens.

Volunteer Placements

What type of work can I do?

Almost anything you can think of. Catholic Network of Volunteer Service placements include positions in social service, medicine and nursing, immigration, legal aid, homeless services, prison ministry, bookkeeping, community organizing, child care, agriculture, construction and housing rehabilitation, teaching, religious education, social justice ministry, and more. Programs such as Americorps, U.S. Peace Corps, and City Year also offer similar work sites.

Do I have to have a college degree to be a volunteer?

Many short-term programs do not require that volunteers have a college degree. Additionally, over 100 programs currently accept volunteers without degrees. Requirements vary from program to program so be sure to contact the program in which you are interested.

What type of experience or certification do I need?

Again, that depends on the program and the placement. Certain positions require someone who already has a specific job skill, but most positions are open to anyone with a willingness to learn. Opportunities in fields as varied as education, health care, and social service are available to those with no previous training or experience. A volunteer placement can be an excellent way to gain experience in a field and to develop your professional skills.

Money

How can I afford to volunteer?

Volunteering is a commitment on many levels—spiritually, emotionally, professionally, and of course,

financially. Volunteering by its very nature is not going to make you rich—at least financially speaking. Catholic Network of Volunteer Service (CNVS) requires that all programs provide for their volunteers. Most programs provide basic room and board and a modest living stipend, usually paid monthly. Volunteers are asked to “live simply” and to be conscious of how they spend their money.

Many programs offer student loan deferments and many also participate in the AmeriCorps Education Awards Program (AEAP). See below.

What about my student loans?

Many programs offer loan deferment. Additionally, many programs participate in the AmeriCorps Education Awards Program (AEAP) which offers volunteers an educational award of up to \$4,725 for a full year (1700 hours of service) of domestic service in the United States. This education award can be applied to your student loans. Be sure to ask individual program in which your interested their policy on loan deferment.

Religion/Spirituality

Do I have to be a Catholic or Christian to volunteer?

While not all programs require volunteers to be practicing Catholics or Christians, all Catholic Network of Volunteer Service (CNVS) member programs are faith-based. Programs vary in the level of religious or spiritual commitment they expect. Some programs require participants to be Catholic while others may ask that you simply be open to reflecting on spiritual matters and participating in group prayer. Some other volunteer programs will NOT require any type of participation in religious activities. Each program has different requirements, so be sure to contact the individual programs in which you are interested.

There are also many volunteer programs that are not faith-based. The ‘Resources’ section of this booklet includes some of these programs.

What happens after I volunteer?

You can volunteer with another program, or you can follow in the footsteps of thousands of other former volunteers who use the experience and skills gained from their time of service to help them in their next job or educational step. Your volunteer service is not “time off,” but a valuable step in your personal and professional development.