



Christine Curran: Ignatian Volunteer Corps Transforming Lives

By Jeremy Langford

Christine Curran is regional director of the Ignatian Volunteer Corps (IVC) in Chicago. She has a background in social service leadership and administration. Christine earned a BA in philosophy and history of mathematics from Saint John's College in Maryland and an MA in religious studies from Yale Divinity School, in addition to further graduate studies at Catholic Theological Union.

WHAT DREW YOU TO IVC?

I've always believed in the power of volunteers to make a difference. IVC is unique: it is geared toward retired men and women, demands a robust commitment of two full weekdays from September to June, and offers Ignatian faith formation. With many new retirees seeking creative ways to "give back," IVC's time has come.

WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES AND JOYS OF LEADING IVC CHICAGO?

IVC is about transformation — of society and ourselves. It is a joy to empower lay leaders in our Church and watch volunteers grow through their service and faith-sharing experiences. Relationships formed with students, clients, or colleagues at their service sites help volunteers to connect with concerns that might

otherwise simply be items on the evening news. Through their volunteer experiences, homelessness, affordable housing, undocumented immigrants, and school closings in poorer neighborhoods take on new meaning. IVC volunteers know individuals in these circumstances.

The challenge is meeting growing needs across the Chicago metropolitan area. This year, the Illinois state budget impasse has hurt many of our service partners reaching out to the poorest and most vulnerable.

HOW DOES IVC INTEGRATE IGNATIAN SPIRITUALITY?

Our program's Jesuit roots set us apart. Ignatian volunteers gather monthly to share their faith and service experiences. These meetings include presentations, spiritual reflection, Eucharist, lunch, and book discussions. Each volunteer also meets monthly with a spiritual reflector. A highlight of our year is the community retreat at Bellarmine Jesuit Retreat House. We are privileged to have Fr. Jim Dixon, SJ, as our IVC chaplain.

WHAT ARE YOUR GOALS FOR IVC?

IVC is growing significantly in Chicago. Currently, there are 56

volunteers serving in four counties and three dioceses across the Chicago metropolitan area. We are expanding our programming into DuPage County and offering additional service opportunities in the near west and northern suburbs.

PLEASE SHARE A STORY THAT EXEMPLIFIES THE IVC EXPERIENCE FOR VOLUNTEERS AND THOSE THEY SERVE.

Ignatian volunteers have many profound experiences of finding God in all people and things. For example, a former police chief from the northern suburbs volunteered on the South Side in predominantly black neighborhoods. It was moving for him to develop deep friendships with his black colleagues, something he never realized was possible when growing up in a segregated city.

HOW CAN PEOPLE SUPPORT AND GET INVOLVED WITH IVC?

We encourage potential volunteers to attend an "Information Session," the first step to becoming a member. Donations make our work possible. Of course, we also always appreciate prayers for our volunteers and those they serve. ✠



Christine Curran



Ignatian volunteer Judy Coswell with staff and volunteers at Howard Area Community Center food pantry. Learn more about IVC Chicago at www.ivcusa.org/chicago or by calling 312-961-6206.