

Celebrating **26** Years of Service to Chicago

AMATE HOUSE

N E W S L E T T E R

The Young Adult Volunteer Program for the Archdiocese of Chicago

Fall 2009

Largest Group of Full-Time Volunteers EVER Begins Work at Amate House for the 2009-2010 Year



5 additional Amate House Volunteers will contribute 9,000 more service hours in 2009-2010

9,000 More Hours, 3 Brand New Sites!



9,000 more hours of volunteering in 2009-2010 means that Amate House has also been able to reach out and serve more sites and areas of the city than ever before. Camp of Dreams, St. Dorothy School and Girls in the Game are three new sites for us in 2009. Meanwhile, Erie Family Health Center has created a new position in its Development Department for an Amate House Volunteer, and Mercy Housing Lakefront, St. Angela School and Schwab Rehabilitation Hospital have once again taken Amate House Volunteers after a short hiatus. This year our services are

touching so many in Chicago!

One of our new service sites, Girls in the Game, provides and promotes sports & fitness opportunities, nutrition & health education, and leadership development to enhance the overall health & well-being of girls. As an organization, they have emerged as a leading girls' health & fitness organization in Chicago. Every year, Girls in the Game empowers more than 2,000 girls to make healthier choices and develop the confidence and leadership skills they need to succeed on and off the field. Amate House Volunteer Kate Shaughnessy (above left) serves at Girls in the Game as a Volunteer & Community Relations Coordinator. She recruits volunteers to assist with programming and provides mentorship and coaching to the girls involved with the program.

It can be easy being green!

We will soon move to e-newsletters. If we do not have your email address, you may not receive our newsletter! Register your email address, view Volunteer testimonials and donate online at www.amatehouse.org.



Inspired by the social mission of the Catholic Church, Amate House supports and develops women and men rooted in faith, dedicated to service, and committed to building a more just and loving society.

For information please contact:

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**A LETTER
FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

Dear Amate House Supporters, Friends and Family:

As Amate House enters its 26th year, I would like to offer my sincere thanks to all of you who worked so hard with us on the entire 25th anniversary year, including the 25 Ton Food Drive, the Challenge Fund and Amate Magic. What we together have accomplished is now a historical fact that will inspire others for many, many years to come. We are now prepared to head straight into the next 25 years beginning with the 36 full-time 2009-2010 Volunteers. (An Amate House record!) They are an exceptional group of young people who have already made a huge difference to their communities in Chicago and to each other.

After seventeen years of being sheltered under the Amate House wing, I am proud to share with you that the Vincent & Louise House at DePaul University has begun to fly on its own. As the house is now fully supported by the Vincentian community, it no longer needs the parenting of Amate House. Though our formal relationship has been dissolved; however, our longtime relationships are still intact and our program staff will continue to collaborate to bring our shared mission to the young adults and poor of Chicago. We wish the 2009-2010 Vincent & Louise Volunteers well, and continue to count them as members of the Amate House family.

The other members of our family whom I would like to recognize are the Alumni. We are so proud of the love they continue to share, and the support they provided to the Challenge Fund. Collectively, the Alumni supported the Challenge Fund with triple what they usually contribute in a year. We also had alumni from all over the country join us for our milestone anniversary at Amate Magic. It was good to have you back!

And of course, I would be remiss not to mention the elephant in the room: the economic crisis. I am painfully very aware of how it has affected our neighbors the world over. I ask you to remember Amate House when you have resources of any amount and kind to share. In the next pages, you will read about one of our sites, the Blessed Sacrament Youth Program, that could not exist without Amate House. Please also help spread the word about Amate House when you can. When you have a few moments, visit our website, and encourage others to do the same. You will all remain in our prayers for the year to come and please know how much we appreciate your overwhelming generosity.

Finally, our Development Coordinator, Steffanie Triller, was offered a position as a faculty member at DePaul University and she accepted. We applaud her work here and we wish her all the best at her new opportunity at DePaul. Please join me in letting her know how much we appreciate her being with us. She has contributed to Amate House on a number of different levels.

God Bless

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PRAYERS AND INTENTIONS

Please remember to pray for all Amate House Deceased Benefactors and Our Fallen Soldiers along with the following

In Memory of:

Mary Adams
Alex Michael
Bagdonas
Clarence Cummings
Marilyn Emmenegger
Deacon Julius Frazier
Ed Hanrahan
Edward Hess
Rev. Francis Jenks
Mary Kelly
Bernice Konopasek
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In Honor of:

Chafin Family
Thomas Lee
Christopher Murphy
Jeannie Mulcahy
Robertta Muoio
Carrie Myatt
Megan Nelson
Our Lady of Perpetual
Help Parish
The unemployed
Pillai Family

For Improved Health of:

Carl Goodmonson
Dan Reidy

In Honor of the Following Occasion:

Rev. Thomas Dore - Service to the Archdiocese of Chicago for 48 Years
Lincoln Lillwitz - Safe Journey to the USA to Join His New Family
Pauline Stastny - Birthday
Jonathan Wittig - Birthday

Volunteers' Wish List

Twin Beds
Cars
Computers
Crock Pots
Lawnmowers
LCD Projector
Pots & Pans
Vacuum Cleaners
Vans
A Million Dollars

Please call 773.376.2445 for pickup of your items. We are so grateful for you!

Welcome Ryan!



Hi, my name is Ryan Lents, and I am thrilled to join the Amate House staff as a Program and Recruitment Coordinator and North House Coordinator! I'm originally from Indianapolis, IN, and have been living here in Chicago for about three years. I had been seeking an opportunity that would allow me to serve the community, work with young people, and walk with others on their faith journey. When I became familiar with Amate House's mission, I found it to be a perfect fit! As a staff member, I'm energized by the joys and challenges of our work, and I feel truly blessed to be part of the Amate House family.

Amate House Stole My Heart, and Now It Won't Give It Back

Becca Muder reflects on her choice to return to Amate House for a second year



So there I was, a w k w a r d l y waiting for the nurse to call my name in the humid, uncomfortably crowded waiting area. I only had a few moments before I would be considered late to my second Amate covenant signing ceremony, a celebration designed to mark the beginning of my willingness to embrace the tenets of Amate House and my commitment to living in solidarity with Chicago's underprivileged.

I suppose it couldn't have been more fitting that I had already spent close to three hours that afternoon waiting for my turn on the same day I would symbolically renew my desire to embark on another challenging journey.

I was a sweaty, frustrated wreck as I waited, as it was in this space that I was experiencing, if you will, an existential crisis of sorts. Although I had scheduled my appointment a few hours before I needed to arrive at the ceremony, I had naively entered this clinic on the South Side of Chicago expecting to quickly be administered a tuberculosis test, a formality for Amate House, and leave; in and out, so to speak. It didn't take me long to realize this was not going to happen.

The clinic was clearly under-funded and the low staff-to-patient ratio was glaringly obvious. As I sat there, a wave of emotions ran over me. First of all, I was the only white person in the building. Second, I have had nothing but positive medical related experiences growing up; visits marked with professionalism, efficiency and undivided, speedy attention. As the waiting room filled, I realized that most of



Election night in Chicago: Becca is already considering what then-President Elect Obama can do for healthcare.

the clients there had been waiting even longer than I. Even the television spouting health talk in the waiting room was particularly of interest. A majority of the health tips it offered struck me as ridiculous. The last time I checked, poor people can't afford yoga or

Pilates instruction to lower their cholesterol.

Most of the emotions I experienced that afternoon surrounded the guilt I still struggle with associated with having an upbringing of such privilege. I spent a lot of time this summer watching President Obama talk about health care reform on CNN and absentmindedly wishing the issue wasn't so complicated. As I sat in the clinic, I was alarmed at how much of a disconnect there was between my once distant, nonchalant musings and how I felt actually experiencing a small, temporary bit of the frustration and loss of dignity most of my waiting room companions, I



Becca ran the SMART after school program at Catholic Charities West Suburban during her year one at Amate House.

assume, experience each time they visit a clinic where they can receive care without insurance.

As I quickly drove home, I felt like the wind had been knocked out of me. I even (almost) ran a red light. And the biggest revelation of the afternoon occurred: I can't do anything anymore without realizing how much my Amate experience has changed me.

The strengths of Amate are many, but in writing this reflection, I have decided that the greatest gift Amate has given me has been that of awareness. This past year, I grew to more deeply understand the world. I also grew to intimately know myself and to understand others through a whole new way of thinking.

To explain more clearly, Amate, in a million little ways, changed my life. This program, I would argue, has become an inseparable part of who I am as a person. The growth I experienced last year, I'll readily admit, wasn't always easy. In fact, I would say last year was one of the most challenging experiences of my life. However, the reward of this challenge has been one of the most beautiful opportuni-

ties my heart might ever have the chance to experience.

Service and the desire to fight for social justice is no longer a year-long temporary choice for me. It has become a lifestyle. Amate House has helped nourish what I have termed as "good discomfort," a feeling that makes me eager to do whatever I can to examine the gap between how the world is, how I think it should be, and what I can do about it. This discomfort has produced more motivation, compassion, and hope in my previously cynical soul that I imagined I was ever capable of.

Another strength of Amate is that it meets you where you are. As a friend reminded me, you don't have to be some sort of perfect advocate for change, ever. You can just be who you are as you transform throughout the year. I learned a lot about being loved for who I am by the seven women I lived with in Little Village last year. As I was simultaneously accepted and challenged by this group, I grew to understand on a whole new level how I was someone with unique gifts and talents who could be loved intensely and who had value. As I grew in this awareness, I experienced a depth of personal healing and contentment through these friendships that still astounds me.

As I write this, I am already grateful for what is to come during my second year in this program. My new community has already been a source of joy and I am continually surprised by our deep and growing sense of commitment to each other and willingness to share and expose our vulnerabilities. In addition, I just finished my first week of work at WomanCraft, a non-profit in North Lawndale that serves women facing barriers to employment, and I have already been touched by the gentle generosity of the women there as they worked to make me feel welcome.

Yesterday, I volunteered at a Catholic Charities health fair in Cicero, excited for the chance to visit my former work site. As I was there, I was reminded of how much love was shown to me last year by all those I encountered in Chicago and all those who support me from far away, particularly, my wonderful family. It is in this space that I have come to know the world, myself, and my place in the world, and I am thankful that I have the opportunity to learn even more this year, occasional existential crisis and all.

The Power of Amate House: Blessed Sacrament Youth Program Would Not Be Able to Exist Without the Services of Amate House Volunteers

Before they even showed up at Amate House, Meghan Krantz and Linda Maier had an assignment from their site supervisor: the weekend before work actually began, they would spend all day Friday, Saturday and Sunday working the



Linda and friends serve concessions.

Blessed Sacrament Parish Carnival. It is an August tradition in McKinley Park, as well as the parish's main fundraiser for the year. (Blessed Sacrament Parish is a conglomerate of three separate South Side churches: Sts. Peter and Paul, Our Lady of Good Counsel and St. Maurice, where Amate House South is located.)

Meghan and Linda's site is the Blessed Sacrament Youth Program, an after-school program that serves teens in McKinley Park. The center, located at Our Lady of Good Counsel church, is a refuge from gang recruitment and violence for more than 60 young people every weekday afternoon. It is one of the only centers of its kind in the neighborhood. The

parish carnival raises around \$35,000 each year for the parish, and some of these funds support the youth program.

"These are the three hardest days you will work all year," site supervisor and Amate House board member Jim Kozy always tells his Volunteers. As per usual, he is joking. Because of budget constraints, Jim is currently only serving part-time as the parish's youth coordinator, and because of this, he has very little time to supervise the youth program. "I turn it over to them [his Amate House Volunteers] every year," Jim said. "They get thrown into the water every year."

But perhaps this year the water is deeper than most. "We're in charge," Meghan and Linda said, "we're the ones running it."

However, after serving for an entire weekend at the carnival, Linda and Meghan have met many youth from the neighborhood and the youth program, and are ready to dive in. Linda's love of all sports and Meghan's desire to work with inner-city high school youth, plus their boundless energy, will allow them to give



South House helpers try Tom-Tom tamales, a Chicago favorite.

their kids a great year. "We had a huge number of teens helping us throughout the weekend. Kids came to help set up

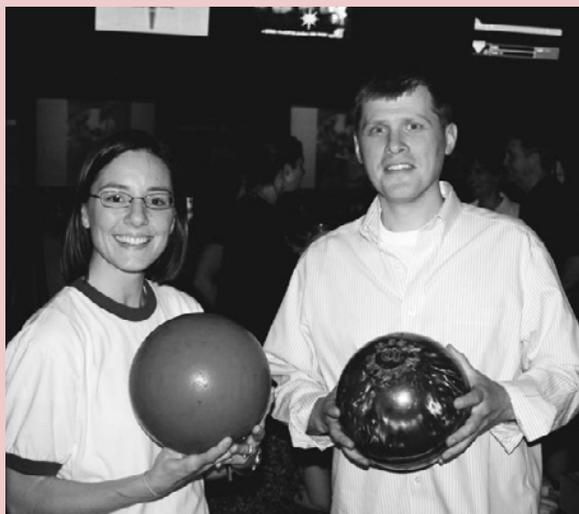


While Meghan worked the shaved ice booth.

booths, others worked alongside myself and Meghan, and some of them were even there for nightly clean-up," Linda said.

Meghan added, "It helped me realize what a great community we are a part of and made me feel more comfortable being in the neighborhood and getting to know parishioners, neighbors, kids, local businesses, etc." Some of their South House Amate roommates even came to the carnival Sunday night to help clean up. And every year, Amate Alumni who have served the youth program in the past return to lend a hand.

The relationship between Amate House and the Blessed Sacrament Youth Program is rich and longstanding. It is also vital to the survival of the youth program. "If Amate House ended tomorrow," Kozy said, "so would Blessed Sacrament Youth Program. It could not continue in its current form."



Massachusetts Alums and Friends Support Alumni Challenge Fund!

Maria (Boucher) Morgan ('01-'02) and Matthew Whelton ('94-'95) did not know one another, but both were Amate Alumni living in the Boston area. Maria wanted to support the 25th Anniversary Alumni Challenge Fund, so she decided to hold a bowling party for some of her friends. She negotiated a deal with the bowling alley, and asked her friends to contribute to a night of fun in June. She also reached out to other Boston Amate Alums, through the Amate House offices. Matt Whelton brought some of his friends to the party, and they raised over \$800 for the Challenge Fund! Thank you MA alums and friends!