



April 20, 2015

Dear Parent(s) and Loved Ones of JVC's International Program Class of 2015 Jesuit Volunteers,

On behalf of the staff of the Jesuit Volunteers Corps (JVC), I want you to know how happy we are that your son or daughter responded to the call to service by joining JVC to serve internationally for the next two years. We are delighted to have a tremendous class of 2015 volunteers, and we are grateful that your daughters and sons are joining the JVC family.

Our program, in operation since 1984, currently sends volunteers to serve two years in six countries: Belize, the Federated States of Micronesia, Nicaragua, Peru, Chile, and Tanzania. In their service, we hope that each Jesuit Volunteer (JV) learns from the culture and reality of the people in their new locale, and allows oneself to be open to the transformative power that being in mutual relationships with those with whom they serve can bring. Jesuits and/or local support persons provide accompaniment to the volunteers and a needed cultural perspective that JVs cannot gain from dialogue with other JVs alone.

As the JVC International Program staff, we provide

- **Accompaniment to JVs throughout the application and placement process.** We have ongoing communication with our new international JV class in the weeks and months leading up to their departures. In collaboration with another overseas volunteer corps we design and facilitate their two-week summer orientation.
- **Support to volunteers while they are in the field and facilitate their connection to local support.** Our Program Coordinator team has the primary responsibility of communicating with JVs, Jesuits, and other local support persons at the sites they manage. JVC staff visits each country once a in order to connect with the JVs, strengthen local support relationships, and assessing the JVC program as it is functioning in each locale. In collaboration with local in-country support, JVC staff also facilitates an annual "ReO-DisO" retreat for the JVs, to support the first-year JVs' transition into their second year (ReOrientation) and the second-year JVs' reentry transition back to the U.S. (DisOrientation).
- **Provide resources to facilitate JVs' continual formation.** As part of their Covenant, JVs are expected to have weekly community and spirituality nights to facilitate their ongoing learning about the other JVs with whom they live. They commit to taking time to make meaning of the social, political, cultural, and economic realities they are seeing every day in their neighborhoods and worksites. JVs also plan their own in-country retreats, which provide them with opportunities to reflect further upon their experience of service in light of their faith. JVC staff support this formation by providing resources for JVs, both individually and as a community, and encouraging them to engage local resources and perspectives, which are critical in enriching the JVs' ongoing reflection on their service and immersion experience.

We realize that it is not only the JV who is making a commitment to JVC; rather you also are making this commitment in support of your son or daughter. As we welcome you into the JVC family, we extend to you our prayers and support. We have received many questions over the years from family and friends interested in knowing more about the values the volunteers are living. Some ways to further affirm an international JV's commitment could be to support her/his decision to stay present to the experience in the locale where s/he serves.

JVs and their families often find that their relationship grows in deeply profound ways during these two years, despite the geographic distance between them and the JV's choice to intentionally forego certain resources and choices. Since Jesuit volunteers commit to remain in-country during their two years of service, unless there is an emergency, often times this means they miss being physically present with family for celebrations, special events, and even funerals. We fully recognize the challenges in this choice, and encourage the JVs and you to appreciate other ways of being present to one another in those moments. If you have the opportunity to visit your son or daughter at their placement, we encourage you to talk with him/her about the type of travel and vacation in the country or the region where s/he serves that would be consistent with the cultural context in which they are living out their commitment to live simply during these two years.

We recognize the importance of these months of preparation leading up to each JVs departure for the two years of service overseas. It is not only a huge transition, but also a great honor and gift to be received as a guest and stranger in a new culture. We hope that each JV humbly acknowledges the responsibility they have in being holistically prepared to be received by the host culture and Jesuit community among whom they will live and serve. Both in research and in our experience, we know that how one prepares oneself in the weeks and months leading up to immersing in another culture is a significant factor in how successfully one adjusts in a cross-cultural environment. We hope that as a parent you are able to extend your support to your son or daughter in these days of transition, and also grow in your understanding of what her/his personal call to JVC's International Program means to her/him.

We look forward to being with your son or daughter and the other 20 new international Jesuit Volunteers at our Summer Orientation, held from July 8-23 at Scranton University in Scranton, PA. On **Thursday, July 9**, in the afternoon, parents and family are invited to join us for a welcome mass, information session, and dinner. This will be an opportunity for you to meet the JVC staff and other Jesuit Volunteers and their families, to learn a bit more about JVC, and to share together in this joyous occasion. **Please save the date!**

In peace,

Elizabeth Hughes
JVC International Program Director

With:
Patrick Cassidy, Program Coordinator
Billy Hood, Program Coordinator
Paige Katzfey, Program Coordinator