

# AWAKENINGS

2022-27 Strategic Plan: Strengthening JVC's Future with Renewed Imagination



COUNTDOWN TO CHRISTMAS: DETACHABLE ADVENT CALENDAR







# JESUIT VOLUNTEERS...

Believe that diverse perspectives, in open and honest engagement with spirituality, contribute to the richness of our community and our faith;

Intentionally live in gratitude and acceptance, enriched by passions for the people and causes we care about most;

Build intentional communities, committed to developing mutual relationships across lines of difference and assuming goodwill on behalf of those around us;

Apply the Jesuit practice of discernment, analysis, reflection, and action as we pursue a more just world that honors the inherent, sacred dignity of all.



Forming **great-souled persons** who *dare to change!* 



# OUR TYPISSION

The Jesuit Volunteer Corps, through **SOLIDARITY** and **SERVICE** with **LOCAL COMMUNITIES**, fosters the formation of young people dedicated to a **FAITH** that **PROMOTES JUSTICE**.

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#### Cover Image

L to R: Kyle Kowalski (Detroit 2022-23), Megan Dedinsky (Los Angeles 2022-23), Bella Statnick (Los Angeles 2022-23), Daniel Casement (Tucson 2022-23), Eli Wild (Santa Clara/San Jose 2022-23), and Caro Woodard (Portland 2022-23), attending their Additional Year (AY) Retreat in Tuscon, Arizona. Photo credit Laura Strubeck (Syracuse 2008-09, San Diego 2009-10). JVC Magazine is published annually by the Jesuit Volunteer Corps. Readers may update address information online at: tinyurl.com/2f7z5y93

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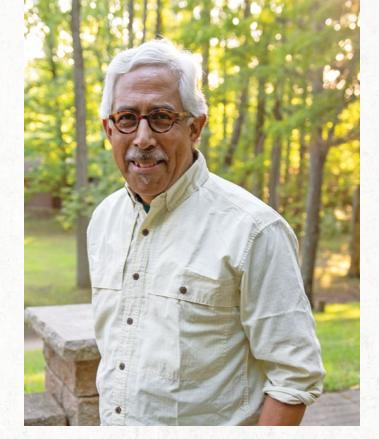
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#### **Dear JVC Community,**

There is awakened energy at JVC. Each year, we are inspired by the new cohort of JVs, and their desire to make meaningful change in the world. But what makes this year unique is a kindled enthusiasm and anticipation, sparked by our return to in person gatherings, and renewed imagination for JVC's future with the completion of our five-year strategic plan.

We are grateful and invigorated to have gathered safely in person after three years of pandemic distancing. This summer we held our first in-person orientation since 2019. There was a great spirit among the JVs that could only happen meeting face to face. It gave the volunteers the opportunity to see that they are part of something bigger than themselves and their community. It gave each community time to begin building relationships, setting expectations, and putting things in place as they prepared to embark on their JV journey. The JVC staff met in September for their annual retreat, with many colleagues meeting in person for the first time. We have come out of these physical spaces celebrating the deepened connections and appreciation of each other as individuals and as a community.



# "...WE HELD OUR FIRST IN-PERSON ORIENTATION SINCE 2019. THERE WAS A GREAT SPIRIT AMONG THE JVS THAT COULD ONLY HAPPEN MEETING FACE TO FACE."

TOM, SPEAKING ON JVC'S 2022 SUMMER ORIENTATION

Over the last eighteen months we have engaged in the work of collective and creative dialogue to develop our 2022-27 strategic plan. The plan is the product of diverse perspectives and valuable insights from you, our stakeholders, who participated in surveys, focus groups, and one-on-one conversations. It reflects the work of our staff who spent many hours sifting through the data and drawing on their experience to set measurable goals and outcomes that embrace our core values and Jesuit identity. The plan bears the stamp of our board who participated in our discussions to create and approve a plan that is ambitious, attentive to the fundamentals and that focuses on the consistency and quality of the Jesuit Volunteer experience as a cornerstone upon which we run our program.

The JV experience will drive everything. It will impact a JVs transformation from learning and living the core values, their willingness to stay connected to us as FJVs, and their openness to become a JVC donor to pay forward for others who will join JVC in the future.

I have begun my visits of JV communities, donors and agency partners and am eager and energized to share our plans for JVC's future. It is a privilege to accompany JVs on their journey this year, to thank donors who generously support our mission and to meet with our agencies who provide the JVs with challenging and fulfilling placements. It still fills me with great pride when I hear an FJV speak about the transformative nature of their time with JVC.

We look forward to having you read more about our vision and future in the pages ahead and walking with us as we look forward and grow.

TOM CHABOLLA,
JVC PRESIDENT

# "The man passed me the rose and said **De Dios**, gesturing to the sky."

BY MAGGIE REARDON (LOS ANGELES 2022-23)

WHILE ONLY A FEW SHORT WEEKS INTO MY JVC EXPERIENCE, I feel a slow, transformative awakening occurring in my life. Daily, I find myself pondering the immense suffering, extensive beauty, and deep complexity of the community I now call home: Boyle Heights, Los Angeles.

The community of Boyle Heights is situated in East Los Angeles, sitting only miles away from some of the most affluent communities in California. Every night, my bedroom is illuminated by the lights of the large corporate buildings downtown, which stand rigidly upright against the night sky. The structures, which hold the offices of some of the wealthiest power holders in the United States, exist in stark opposition to the marked poverty I encounter in my community every day.

Sometimes I find myself becoming discouraged by the seemingly endless suffering experienced by clients, neighbors and friends at the hands of unjust systems and unjust actions. Where is God in it all? Where is God when a client approaches you exhausted from spending a night in the hospital caring for a family member shot because of gang violence? Where is God when a coworker cries in frustration with the disease of addiction that claims the wellbeing and ultimately the life of her brother? Where is God when your housemate must evacuate her young students from the playground because of the threat of neighborhood violence?

A few weeks ago, I was on a walk home from Mass at a local parish. The feeling of restlessness from reckoning with the pain of my new community plagued my mind and heart. Near a crosswalk, a man affected by homelessness approached me. I greeted him and apologetically shared I had no money or food. He stared at me, smiled and shook his head. Lying in front of him was a single red rose. With a special devotion to St. Thérèse of Lisieux referred to as the Little Flower, roses have come to serve as a representation of God's goodness, grace, and presence for me. The man passed me the rose and said *De Dios*, gesturing to the sky.

De Dios translates to "from God" but another translation is "of God". In the gift of the rose, I recognized that God is here, among us, in us, for us. The beloved, we are both from and of God. I am restless because I am face to face with the suffering of my community, which is intrinsically the suffering of God. Christ is crucified every day in my community. He is crucified in the violence. In the poverty. In the fear. In the pain. Christ is too resurrected every day in my community. He rises in the people. In the love of the people. In the compassion of the people. In the work of the people. He seeks to awaken and rise in me. In my housemates. In other Jesuit Volunteers. What a gift that is. To be awakened to suffering and to hope. To be awakened to injustice. To be awakened to transformation. To be awakened to all of us being from God and of God.









































A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A JESUIT VOLUNTEER













## DONOR FEATURE

## A LASTING LEGACY OF RADICAL GENEROSITY

Lord,
teach me to be generous;
teach me to serve you as you deserve;
to give and not to count the cost,
to fight and not to heed the wounds,
to toil and not to seek for rest,
to labor and not to ask for reward
save that of knowing I am doing your will.

PRAYER FOR GENEROSITY

PRAYER IS OFTEN ATTRIBUTED TO ST. IGNATIUS, however there is speculation that it was not written by him. Regardless of its unknown origin, this beautiful expression of giving wholly in service and love is clearly inspired by Ignatius, capturing the spirit and experiences of his calling, asking for the grace of radical generosity.

Shevlin de la Roza understood and practiced this. Shevlin entered the Jesuit novitiate in 1962 and served as a Jesuit for 21 years. He committed his full heart and mind to being a Jesuit, and as a former Jesuit continued a life of service and love. Shevlin stayed connected with and loyal to his Jesuit family through the "Campaneros," or the Companions, a group of former Jesuits who would gather annually in fellowship, and band together to create programs to serve the marginalized.

Shevlin put his faith into action through his involvement with PACT (People Acting in Community Together), a grassroots organization based in San Jose, California, whose mission is to provide leadership training and experience to people from diverse backgrounds to address pervasive social issues. Shevlin was described by colleagues as "a man for others," who worked tirelessly on an array of social issues, including housing, education, prison reform, rent control, health benefits, and immigration.

When JVC had offices in Santa Clara, Shevlin would visit and made efforts to connect with the JVs each year to offer his support. Shevlin's first gift to JVC was in 2005 for \$12, and he continued to be a kind and consistent supporter, giving annually for more than 17 years. Shevlin always mailed his gift with a lovely, handwritten note, demonstrating his care and willingness to take time for others. His ongoing giving was a blessing, but his true generosity to JVC was his unwavering loyalty and his whimsical personality. Shevlin had a special place in our hearts, and we were devastated to hear of his passing on January 14, 2021.

What we didn't know at the time was that Shevlin had established a legacy gift for JVC in his will to ensure a future of committed Jesuit Volunteers making meaningful change.



Shevlin touched many lives and followed the example of St. Ignatius. Shevlin was said to have a "soft voice," but he knew that love is shown more powerfully in deeds than in words. Friendship was central to St. Ignatius, and Shevlin believed in the power of deep caring and connection with those he encountered and accompanied. In answering his call to serve wholeheartedly, Shevlin leaves a lasting legacy of radical generosity.

ved by law. To request a copy of JVC's current financial statement, Paul Street, Baltimore, MD 21202, or call (410) 244-1733. Jesuit Volunteer Corps is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization (tax ID: 26-1819306). Donations are tax deductible to the fullest extent allowed by law. write the Director of Development at

- DARE tO CHANGE

### JVC COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

Discussions led by like-minded presenters that address key topics of our time as they relate to our core values of spirituality, simple living, community, and social justice.



AFTER HOURS WITH TOM CHABOLLA

JVC hosted a springtime After Hours with Tom, part of a larger virtual trio hosted by JVC President Tom Chabolla. The series focused on three themes that emerged from strategic planning discussions:

- · Who is JVC?
- What do we want the JV and FJV experience to be?
- What will JVC look like in the future?

During the conversations, Tom and JVC staff members shared insights from internal discussions to engage participants in candid dialogue about who we are, and how we journey to become a future-ready organization.



A CONVERSATION WITH FATHER JAMES MARTIN, SJ

In June, JVC hosted guest speaker Fr. James Martin, SJ, for a virtual conversation about his LGBTQ ministry. Fr. Martin provided a loving and welcoming space for our 140+ attendees and answered some provocative questions about faith and the complex experience for LGBTQ Catholics. Fr. Martin is the author of The Jesuit Guide to (Almost) Everything, Building A Bridge and Learning To Pray, and is the editor at large of America magazine. His LGBTQ ministry has recently been featured in the documentary "Building A Bridge," which is available to view across major streaming platforms. Additionally, in May, Fr. Martin announced the launch of outreach.faith, an online resource and community for LGBTQ Catholics which operates under the auspices of American Media.



AFTER HOURS WITH DR. SHANA JONES

Dr. Shana Jones, JVC's Director of Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI), held a virtual space in August to share her personal and professional journey with JEDI. The conversation introduced the "hard parts" of showing up together with open hearts and minds to serve the JEDI work and each other. It's in these challenging, humbling, and necessary spaces that JVC can reach the just and hopeful world that we envision.

What joys and obstacles have you faced in journeying with the Church?



#### SYNOD LISTENING CIRCLE

In May, a small group of Jesuit Volunteers and JVC staff gathered virtually for a listening session to participate as a Catholic organization in the Synod on Synodality 2021–2023. JVs were asked to share about the joys and obstacles they've faced journeying with the Church, their hopes and dreams for the future, and how the Holy Spirit might be moving all of us to live as Church. The listening session concluded with a felt sense of gratitude and renewed hope, assurance that their sharing and listening is invaluable, and momentum to claim their participation in the Church.

The USCCB recently made their U.S. National Synthesis for the diocesan phase of the Synod public, which can be found at **usccb.org/synod**.

#### **PARTNERS IN MISSION**



Posing with Michele, Henry Lynett (Nashville 2022-23) is serving his JV year as a Client Advocate with the Tennessee Justice Center. [photo: Megan Cole]

# TENNESSEE JUSTICE CENTER PLANS FOR MIRACLES

91) CO-FOUNDED THE TENNESSEE JUSTICE CENTER WITH BORROWED MONEY in a friend's unfinished attic, she was already accustomed to simple living. The idea was simple too: everyone deserves access to food and healthcare. However, the next 26 years of justice and advocacy work would be complex and challenging, as she grew a legal organization that would secure over 2.5 billion dollars in health care and nutrition for people marginalized by the country's systems of oppression.

Michele is a lawyer by education, whose clear-eyed understanding of the dignity of every person is echoed in the work of the Tennessee Justice Center. In a world that dehumanizes people living in poverty, the organization must be constantly creative to combat the stigma of need. They disrupt the narrative that says,

"I'm not like these others," and invite communities to see those in poverty as whole people. Courageous clients are at the forefront of this fight, telling their stories. "We are the Robin to our clients' Batman," Michele quipped, highlighting what is already evident: she understands her call to accompany, never to save.

Michele was equipped for this countercultural approach through her time as a JV and recalls that living in community and practicing tools for resilience made this possible. Her service in Neighborhood Legal Services in Buffalo showed her the joy of accompanying the people that America's systems of oppression marginalized, seeing the face of God in their strength, resilience and love. Without this spiritual community, serving in spaces of suffering would have been too difficult. Michele remembers that their ability to serve was tied up in leaning on each other and believing in a higher loving force, multiplying the fruit of their own limited capacity. By the end of her time, her calling had cemented: she would study law and elevate the voices of the oppressed.

# Michele's staff interviewed and chose a prospective JV, who happened to be the son of her housemate during her time as a JV.

Almost 10 years later, Michele had her first opportunity to invest in the journey of another young JV, this time as an Agency Partner with her fledgling organization, Tennessee Justice Center (TJC). Since then, JVs have brought their compassion to client relationships, supporting the TJC to expand their reach and persist in difficult seasons. During one such season, God was busy creating poetic connection: Michele's staff interviewed and chose a prospective JV, who happened to be the son of her housemate during her time as a JV. Inspired by his father's experience in Neighborhood Legal Services alongside Michele, Henry Lynett now serve as a Client Advocate at TJC. God's infinite creativity work for justice.

"The best kept secret is that you really can rabig difference if you plan for the miracle, been sethroughout the last 26 years of doing this, the miracles have always shown up," she reflected. And they coming. In January, the Tennessee Justice Cent will move into its first permanent home, across the treet from the largest barracks-style housing project withe nation, exactly where they are called to be.

Learn more about the Tennessee Justice Center: **TNjustice.org** 

# TOMORROW'S JVs ARE GRATEFUL FOR YOU!

JVC is committed to growing a community of volunteers, former volunteers, agency partners, families of JVs, and friends to cultivate collective transformation, united in empowering the communities we serve, advancing equity and racial justice, and forming compassionate and courageous young people.

#### Get Involved

JVC could not continue to grow without the generosity of your time, talent, and treasure. We invite you to participate in ways to directly connect with future Jesuit Volunteers, and help shape their experience and transformation:

- Write a personal note to a Prospective JV as they journey through their discernment.
- ★ Partner with JVC Recruitment Team at campus events and activities.
- ★ Consider hosting a virtual "Coffee Chat" with prospective JVs to address questions about service, spiritual formation, and intentional community.

#### Refer a Prospective JV

We believe our network of JVC supporters possess a unique understanding of the commitment and discernment that we ask of our JVs. Do you know a young person who is seeking to do something different and be a champion for social justice? Build faith in action by inviting them to apply to be a Jesuit Volunteer!

#### **Application Deadlines**

★ Winter: February 6, 2023

★ Spring: April 11 and May 29, 2023



## 2022-27 STRATEGIC PLAN

# AWAKENING (1) In the second of the second of

**1N 2021**, JVC BEGAN ENGAGING IN A YEARLONG STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS to help guide our path forward for the next five years. Our team spent hundreds of hours surveying, interviewing, and speaking with the JVC community to better understand what makes this program so special. That feedback and each individual conversation shaped the critical questions that our Board and staff have tackled together this past year. And through that collaboration, we are excited to share with you what the future of JVC will look like as we do our best to support current volunteers, future volunteers, and former volunteers.

THE PLANNING PROCESS INVOLVED THREE KEY PHASES TO BRING TO LIGHT WHERE WE ARE STARTING FROM, WHAT WE DESIRE TO ACHIEVE, AND HOW WE WILL DELIVER ON OUR GOALS AND MISSION...







**DEVELOP**JAN 2022 — OCT 2022



IMPLEMENT NOV 2022 - DEC 2027

Listening to voices and discovering themes that reflect the diverse perspectives of our JVC community. We can't bring about lasting change unless we know our strengths and challenges. This phase included interviews, surveys, and focus groups that engaged more than 750 JVC community members. Four directional areas derived from this phase.

- ★ Establish a more robust and diverse JV pipeline, leading to growth.
- ★ Improve the quality and consistency of the JV experience.
- ★ Prioritize and activate our alumni networks.
- Create a JVC that allows staff and board to bring our best work to supporting the mission.

Leaning into discomfort and addressing the themes to lead us closer to our goals. The staff and Board collaborated across several months to ask candid questions and prioritize goals.

- \* How shall we review and refresh our vision and mission to accurately reflect our identity?
- ★ What makes JVC unique and how can we leverage this for growth?
- ★ How do we lift all voices, perspectives, and experiences?
- ★ What long-term goals and short-term objectives are required to deliver on our mission?

Turning our plans into action and delivering on our promise. Operational plans are designed with established metrics and evaluation processes to measure how we are advancing our mission forward.

- Establish resources, systems, and practices that lead to operational success.
- Commit to a culture of ownership, momentum, vibrancy, and accountability.
- Embrace an ever attentive and flexible approach to review and revise goals, as necessary.
- ★ Communicate and celebrate milestones throughout the journey.

# our VISION (1)



Grounded in the values of Ignatian spirituality, intentional community, and social justice, the Jesuit Volunteers Corps envisions a just, inclusive, and equitable world that honors the dignity and diversity for all.

# OUR MISSION



The Jesuit Volunteer Corps, through solidarity and service with local communities, fosters the formation of young people dedicated to a faith that promotes justice.



Strengthen our financial foundation to serve our community's growing needs.

JVC commits to growing awareness of, demand for, and size of our programs by investing in programmatic and donor partnerships that meet the emerging needs of all volunteers.

THROUGH OUR STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS, WE IDENTIFIED THREE STRATEGIC PRIORITIES THAT ESTABLISH A FRAMEWORK FOR THE FUTURE OF THE ORGANIZATION...



Invest in the transformative, lifelong connection of all Jesuit Volunteers.

JVC commits to establishing and growing the culture, systems, staffing, and practices that lead to operational excellence and enhance the JV experience, while also building a longer-term connection with and among alumni.



Increase diversity, lean into our values, and expand our future footprint.

JVC commits to strengthening a foundation of inclusion, leading to a more diverse, geographically broad, and well-known "JVC of the Future," with deeper ties to our Jesuit identity.

"NOW, MORE THAN EVER, YOUNG PEOPLE ARE SEEKING CONNECTION AND UTILIZING EVERY OPPORTUNITY TO BUILD A COMMUNITY. THIS IS WHY JVC IS SO IMPORTANT AT THIS POINT IN TIME. WE WILL CONTINUE TO HARNESS THAT ENERGY IN NEW WAYS TO CREATE A FORMATIVE EXPERIENCE FOR ALL VOLUNTEERS PAST AND PRESENT."

TOM CHABOLLA, PRESIDENT OF JVC

#### LEARN MORE AND READ THE JVC STRATEGIC PLAN AT: JESUITVOLUNTEERS.ORG/STRATEGICPLAN

A special thank you to all who participated in the strategic planning process, especially our Board and staff who worked tirelessly and collaboratively to develop a plan that will ensure a bright future for our organization and the entire JVC community.

#### **BOARD UPDATES**

## **AWAKENED IN GRATITUDE**

THEIR FAITH INTO ACTION by providing a strong foundation to navigate their journey and carry out the JVC mission. This foundation is built in collaboration with a supportive and committed group of Board members. We are especially grateful to our Board of Directors, who have accompanied JVC staff on the strategic planning journey these past 18 months. Their steadfast partnership throughout this process guided creative and candid conversations, resulting in an ambitious and inspiring framework that will bolster our pursuit of a just and equitable world.

#### PASSING THE TORCH OF LEADERSHIP

JOAN HOGAN GILLMAN steps down this year as JVC Board Chair. Joan has served as Chair since 2018 and has been a member of the Board for over seven years. We greatly appreciate her enthusiasm to promote an energized and engaged board, always with a committed focus on JVC's mission

and values. We thank Joan for contributing her time and expertise to navigate sound governance, encourage innovative thinking, and identify opportunities for JVC growth and sustainability.

Joan refelcts, "I am so thankful that the greater JVC community assisted Tom, the staff, and the Board in reflecting on our strengths and weaknesses, in examining our vision, mission, and our future, and in coming together to discuss and resolve to align around a new strategic plan. We are a stronger community for it and are committed to building on what we have learned."

Joan is succeeded by **DENISE BENNETT-WALLS** (Tanzania, 1997-98), who has served on the Board since March of 2021. Denise brings her personal and professional passions and expertise to accompany JVC in transitioning from strategic planning to delivering on the promise of our plan.



individuals that have contributed to JVC's success and growth over the years. Thank you. For years to come, we want to provide hundreds of young adults the opportunity to serve, live simply in community, promote social justice, and ensure we live in an inclusive and equitable world that honors the dignity and diversity of all. We want to welcome FJVs, donors, and individuals in the community to engage and continue to experience the gift that JVC offers. Together, we can bring JVC to all nations. As St. Ignatius declared, 'We are created to share in God's love and life for eternity.' Committed to faith in action, I look forward to serving with you.

#### BOARD MEMBERS CYCLING OFF

The valuable contributions of Former Jesuit Volunteers **JOHN CARRON** and **ABE GRINDLE** leave a lasting impact on the organization as they cycle off the Board. Both will remain active members of our JVC family.

John shares, "I was a JV in St. Louis in 1993-94. I came to JVC to serve, and received so much more in return.

After leaving, I thought I'd always keep JVC close. Then 20 years passed. Thanks to Kate Haser, John Mullman, and Lisa Grattan for inviting me back, More thanks and congratulations

to Tom Chabolla, the staff, and the Board for approving an ambitious new strategic plan. To all the FJVs that may be waiting for their own invitation back: WE NEED YOU! Together, we can be a collective force for good in the world. Hope to see you soon.

Abe comments, "As an FJV, it's been an honor to serve on the Board these last 6 years. Tom and the staff have done great work to strengthen the organization's foundations in many places, and with this strategic plan, JVC is now ready to do even more in

the years ahead. It is now up to us as an FJV community to each chip in, as our means allow, to allow JVC to support the next generation to be 'ruined for life' and go forth to help change the world."

# Last Valentine's Day, we celebrated stories on social media from FJVs who found love through JVC. We received such an outpouring of beautiful testaments to discovering love along the JV journey, we wanted to share a few more!

#### **DEIRDRE WALSH-CROWELL** (LOS ANGELES 1984-85) + RICHARD CROWELL (LOS ANGELES 1984-85)

DICK AND I MET during our JV year, fell in love, and are now celebrating our 37th wedding anniversary! I was in the Santa Monica house working for Ocean Park Community Center/ Turning Point Adult Shelter while Dick was teaching seventh grade at Delores Mission Grammar School and living in East L.A. We spent many sunny days with JV communities in the greater Los Angeles area, and remain friends with a number of the volunteers we met (especially Angela King-Horne who is a committed pen pal with one of our daughters!). We hold wonderful memories of our JV experience and were thrilled when our niece, Rose O'Brien (Arizona 2018-19) joined JVC.





DONNA KELLY ROMERO (JERSEY CITY 1998-99; BROOKLYN 1999-2000) + NICK ROMERO (BROOKLYN 1998-99)

**NICK AND I MET** at the JVC East orientation at Blue Ridge Summit in August of 1998. We lived in two of the four New York City-area communities (Bronx, Brooklyn, Jersey City, and Newark) that hung out that year, sharing community dinners and finding free things to do in The Big Apple.

Nick and I wound up teaching together at Nativity Mission Center on the Lower East Side. Our students were very persistent and overjoyed when we started dating! We were married in 2002 (by another FJV, Steve Katsouros, SJ), surrounded by FJV friends. Twenty years later, we have two children and two ridiculous dogs.

JVC provided us with an incredible foundation for a happy marriage. We consistently rely on the four values when deciding where to spend our energy, money, and time. We foster open communication and deep listening with our children, urging them to consider others first. And we do a mini Examen every night, challenging each other to find God in the most difficult of times. It is not always easy, but neither was JVC, and the hard work was/is well worth it.



PATRICIA RIDGE (ATLANTA 2003-04) + DREW RUSSO (DETROIT 2003-04; JVC EAST STAFF 2004-06)

**TRISH AND I MET** briefly during our JV year. She was at Central Presbyterian Outreach and Advocacy Center in Atlanta, and I was with the NOAH Project in Detroit. Although we were in different regions, we both made the pilgrimage to Columbus, Georgia, for an Ignatian Family conference and a School of the Americas vigil. Fortunately, we made enough of an impression on each other in a 30-second conversation after the liturgy to remember it when we were reintroduced at an FJV mass and potluck in Boston several years later.

Our shared commitment to the four values and active engagement in Boston's FJV community resulted in our monthly carpools to various FJV potlucks and events over the following year. We will be forever grateful to our late friend Roberta Fitzhenry Kiley (who served in Fairbanks in the early 60s) who started us on that journey by suggesting we travel together because we all lived nearby on the North Shore of Boston!

At first, Trish and I were just friends. But over time, our friendship evolved into love, and fifteen years later we are still together, married now for nine of those years, and deeply grateful that JVC allowed us to find one another and a lasting community that sustains and enriches us both.





## FJV FEATURE

# AWAKENED BY ACTION: AN UNEXPECTED JOURNEY

AS A MEMBER OF THE DOMINANT CULTURE IN HER NATIVE CALIFORNIA, then-college student Kacie LeCompte Renfro (Atlanta 2003-04) sensed that her white privilege prevented her from deeply experiencing "otherness". She longed to be of service to people whose cultural contexts were different from her own. And she was ready to go across the world to do it. However, when she confidently applied to the Jesuit Volunteer Corps International (JVI) just after college, she wasn't accepted.



Kacie with her husband and children.

"In their great wisdom, they decided not to accept me." Kacie chuckles remembering, but it was far from funny at the time. The rejection bruised her ego and cracked her self-described naivete. When Kacie reapplied, this time to JVC [domestic], it was with careful discernment. The American South had called out to her as a complete departure from her own experiences, and her JV placement at the International Community School in Atlanta, Georgia, promised work with refugees from around the world. If Kacie couldn't go to the world, the world would come to her.

JVC transformed Kacie's ideas about being of service into actual experiences of accompaniment with refugee children and their families. Far from finding broken people in need of her service, she encountered miraculously generous people thriving with strength and force of will. Walking together with Kacie, the refugee families shared their wisdom and love, serving her as much as she served them. Never did she fully experience "otherness" as she once imagined; instead, she saw her own whiteness and privilege more clearly when she followed the gaze of another.



"THIS BOOK RENEWED MY FAITH
THAT LOVE AND HUMAN CONNECTION
CAN OVERCOME EVEN THE MOST
DESTRUCTIVE FORMS
OF TRAUMA AND PREJUDICE."

CHRISTOPHER WHITE
PROFESSOR OF RELIGION, VASSAR COLLEGE

Kacie turned shifts of perspective into a career. As a writer and human rights advocate, she serves organizations that work with refugees and others on the margins. Her second novel, *The Bridges We Will Build*, is a multi-perspective narrative loosely based on her experiences and an expression of the JVC core values she embraced. Spirituality, community, simple living, and social justice continue to shape Kacie's path. For Kacie, the latter three values flow naturally from her spirituality, her belief in a powerful Creator, whose call continually invites her to be a minister of social justice and to be in community with others. She believes that this way of living clears the way for hope to grow in the world.

When she originally applied to JVI in 2003, Kacie was sure that her life would unfold in a certain way. "And then it just doesn't...and it ends up being such a blessing. You thank God that you had the curiosity and willingness to give it a try. The experience of JVC awakened a new way of being and set the tone for the rest of my life."

THE LAST WORD

JVC STAFF RETERIEAT



fter two years of meeting solely in virtual spaces, JVC staff were finally able to gather in person for the annual staff retreat. Many staff members had not yet met their fellow colleagues in person, so it was a welcome and much needed connection.

The four-day retreat took place at Wellspring Conference Center in Germantown, Maryland. JVC staff participated in various team-building activities to foster better communication and strengthen connection and collaboration. The beautiful, wooded grounds provided the perfect setting to recharge and refresh during intentional downtime and silent meditation.

JVC is grateful to our Staff Retreat Committee (Katie Dorner, Maggie Odigie, Anissa Rose, and Kate Seibly), our guest speakers, Kessuda Boonngamanong and Nicholas Collura, Fr. Harry Geib, SJ, for celebrating Mass with us, and to Wellspring facilitators and staff for the delicious home-cooked meals!



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The retreat was meant for staff to get to know one another and spend time together on a spiritual level. For me, this was met. I got to see a side of some that they otherwise chose to keep hidden in the name of professionalism.

We let our hair down, so to speak, and the bonding that resulted will

forever be with me.

I entered the retreat a bit apprehensive, not knowing how I would connect with others in person. But I immediately felt very comfortable once meeting everyone, and the sharing that occurred felt natural.

> JESUIT VOLUNTEER

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This is a strong organization with a dedicated group of people who share the same goals. Now we must continue to bring those feelings to our day-to-day work.



DARE tO CHANGE

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