



Diocese of Davenport Volunteer Program

In Support of Global Solidarity and Social Change

In 1961, Bishop Ralph L. Hayes combined the needs of the universal Church and local initiatives to create the “Diocesan Volunteers and Latin America” collection. It addressed the spiritual needs of our neighbors to the South and partially funded the efforts of volunteers with connections to the Diocese of Davenport, principally in Latin America. Today, the spiritual needs of our Southern neighbors is supported by the Church in Latin America collection, while a new effort, the Diocesan Volunteer Program will encourage global solidarity and social change through small grants to Catholics in the Diocese volunteering for mission work. Initial funding will be residual funds from the Diocesan Volunteer and Latin America collection.

Pope Francis’ Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*, challenges us to go forth as a community of missionary disciples. To whom should we go? The Gospels are clear that we should go to all the earth, to the poor, the oppressed and marginalized.

The Volunteer Program has no rigorous limits on the type or length of program eligible because we want to encourage innovation. Efforts that seek to work with people, providing them with the means to improve their own situation, are superior to simple charity in providing goods or services. We seek to help people take the next steps in their own betterment. For example, educating nurses to form a local cadre of health workers could provide a greater benefit providing medical services for a time.

A volunteer’s experience with an ongoing mission effort can provide the volunteer with the inspiration to establish a similar organization or service at home. Our modest support enabled a law student to intern at a worker justice center in a distant part of the country. Upon return, the student was instrumental in establishing a local worker justice center. Working with mission organizations can provide volunteers with skills that return with the volunteer to inspire others to that type of work here or elsewhere.

Parishes already perform service trips that provide a valuable initial exposure to others in need as a part of their faith formation programs. The whole parish participates in the financial and prayer support of trip. Some parishes have long-standing relationships with parishes or missions in other countries supported by their parishioners. The Diocesan Volunteer Program will not replace or modify these, but seeks new initiatives by individuals or parishes to become actively involved with our global church. Receiving such support, volunteers will educate and inspire us all through sharing their experiences and helping to translate them into further action.

The attached application form, or questions for additional information, can be submitted by any Catholic or parish in the 22 counties of the Diocese to:

Diocese of Davenport
Social Action department
780 West Central Park Avenue
Davenport, Iowa 52804-1901

Or electronically to guerrero@davenportdiocese.org