

The Times Are a Changin’

By Ed Phelan, FSC

This year, alumni of the Lasallian Volunteers have married each other in record breaking numbers: four couples in as many months.

Since 1996, when Amy Smith and Mark Muller walked down the aisle on August 24 at St. Clement’s Church in Bankston, Iowa (population 30), there have been 60 young men and women volunteers who, in Lasallian terms, have exchanged permanent vows with each other in churches across the USA.

After graduating from college, young Lasallians promise to live in community for a year or two to help young people and their families realize their potential. In time, these young men and women, serving as Lasallian Volunteers, make promises to each other and their God “unto death do us part.” Over 90% of these couples have continued to work with at-risk children and families to this day. Having met in a community of service they have continued as a family of service. It is all about community and relationships. It is Lasallian.

“Our common experience of community prepared us for raising a family,” says Amy Muller. “It inspired us to establish a Midwest community in our family home with several LVs and freed us to share our home and table with new immigrants from Africa.”

In a speech to several hundred Brothers last summer, Superior General Brother Álvaro, said:

“We should above all strengthen and enrich our relationships. This will also help us discover the transforming value of love and to experience that the Kingdom of God is in our midst when we grow together, mutually care for one another, do common projects, pray in a united way, and share our suffering.”

De La Salle never imagined community members sharing marriage vows while deepening their commitment to the mission any more than he envisioned the project spreading across the world with 75,000 partners and over a million students. He simply realized the powerful transformational effect of a small group of men living together while “serving the poor.”

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We followers of De La Salle have taken his idea to new heights, all to better serve those in need. Brother Álvaro calls it “the new reality” with the words: “the Lasallian Educational Mission has

expanded globally in a manner unimaginable in the Founder’s time.”

If De La Salle was alive in our time, I believe he would be proud of what is happening. He would likely accept all invitations to officiate at LV weddings, and would give a rousing homily for each. He would be quick to realize their brief experience with the mission as LV’s, coupled with their love for one another, has greatly affected their vocational journey in life to be of service to youth and their families.

“If you build it, they will come.”



The Muller family, showcasing son George’s bottle cap collection. Alumni Mark & Amy married in 1996.

At Amy and Mark’s 1996 wedding, between the church ceremony and reception, several guests visited the local tourist attraction in Dyersville, Iowa: the famous Field of Dreams. It was built for the movie in 1989 (seven years before the first LV wedding) the same year the De La Salle Christian Brothers moved the nascent volunteer program to scale—with a staff, a new name and a national appeal for young women and men to share community with Brothers, all working together on the mission.

The program was finally built, and over 600 LVs have since come to the mission of education originally set forth by De La Salle. And even now there is no letup in sight as the program nears its 25th anniversary. Long live this extended Lasallian family... forever!

Ed Phelan is a 72 year old young Brother who has attended Lasallian weddings from Bankston to Boston over the past 16 years and has been known to give rousing homilies.

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world. Indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.”

— Margaret Mead

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FOR NOW AND FOREVER

In the Words of the Committed...

When I wrote to the LVs who married other LVs, they responded. Here's what I said:

"I am writing an article about people in Lasallian communities who have married one another — couples like yourselves. I would love to check some details and pick your brain for a minute. Since marrying, could you both share with me some of the activities you have been involved with at work, in your community or at home. I appreciate any help you can give! Ed"

"This summer Brett and I led two mission trips for high schoolers to DC and Nicaragua. Our goal was to help these privileged young people to see the world outside of the bubble that they live in and learn to see these needy people as individuals with dignity rather than just as a cause or circumstance- opening their hearts to the love of Jesus."

— Katie Adams

"I work with preschool age children in my work and have taken part in several service opportunities through my preschool: adopting families every year at the holidays, canned food drives, walk-a-thons. Chris has worked at DeMarillac academy since 2006 and has recently been appointed principal of the school."

— Kristen Corbal Giangregorio

"So Bill and I are both public interest attorneys. I serve the interest of families in the City and County of SF as a Child Support Attorney. Part of my job entails doing outreach to prisoners as well as parents that are struggling to gain employment and overcome their barriers such as criminal records, language, lack of GED, etc. Bill and I both also serve our local parish by teaching Faith Formation classes to 2nd grade children."

— Wendi Wrinkle

"Nikki and I volunteer in the children's ministry at church. Nikki is in her fourth year of teaching natural childbirth classes to expectant couples. She teaches under the Bradley Method, which focuses on exercise & nutrition throughout pregnancy, and then relaxation in labor with the husband being there every step of the way to help his wife. In a less formal way, our time as LVs really taught us to view all people with respect. Living on the reservation and working with the kids showed us the face and humanity of poverty. That influences decisions we make every day."

— Phil Schumaker

"We just had our 6 year anniversary last month. Time has flown! Things are good. Anthony is a Special Education High School teacher. I worked with older adults in a variety of settings, but I'm currently looking to find a position in the non-profit sector with dementia patients."

— Melissa Wasacz

"We often credit our time in Chicago and Kansas City for making our relationship stronger, it helped to shape

our values and taught us the importance of communication. We are both still in the field of education. Lisa is the project director of an educational non-profit, The Parent-Teacher Home Visit Project. The project trains teachers who work in lower income schools on how to effectively engage their families back in the classroom in order to bring about success for their child. She was a classroom teacher for 10 years. I am currently starting my 13th year teaching, and my 7th year at Christian Brothers HS."

— Dave and Lisa Levasseur

"Mark Muller directs the Food and Justice program at the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, which includes management of the IATP Food and Community Fellows. The program advocates for a larger vision of justice and encourages public policies that will contribute to a fair, just and healthy food system."

— IATP website,

"I got my Masters of Divinity in 2008 and I am seeking ordination in the United Methodist Church. We have two amazing daughters, Isabella (born 2008), and Jayme Grace (born 2010), and in two weeks we will add a third addition to our family! I am currently serving as the Senior Pastor of Linden United Methodist Church."

— Kim Montenegro

"Since marrying, I have continued to teach in a Roman Catholic School (9th grade world history and AP US History."

— Mark Robinson

"Life is crazy busy sometimes, but it beats the alternative. And I hope that our kids are picking up some decent values along the way. Service is really important to Mark and me, and I hope they see that it's a privilege to be able to serve. And it's darn fun, too."

— Shannon Robinson

"I have worked for the midwest district for 8 years...San Miguel Schools Chicago 3 years (total)...studied theology for 2 years...worked in alumni relations...now campus ministry... Lived in three different style communities in Chicago..."

— Karin McClelland.