



MAKING A PUBLIC DEFENDER

A PILGRIM'S JOURNEY

BRANDON FELDMAN, LV 98-00

As a senior at Saint Mary's College of California, I knew I wanted to volunteer after graduation. I felt very privileged after receiving a quality education with the financial assistance of my parents, and I wanted to spend a year or two in giving back by immersing myself in volunteer service.

I asked Brother Dominic Beradelli, FSC, for suggestions, and we spent a month trying to find the right program before the opportunity slapped both of us in the face. I didn't know much about Lasallian Volunteers when Brother Dom first suggested it, but much to my delight, this opportunity changed my life.

I remember when Karin McClelland, then director of Lasallian Volunteers, called me in my dorm to ask how I felt about picking up and moving to Greenville, Mississippi. She asked if I was willing to teach Spanish and religion, and I believe my response was something along the lines of, "I'll do just about anything they need me to do down there."

I remember being so excited. It was like being on an adventure. Our first stop was Chicago for orientation. The energy the entire LV staff and my fellow volunteers possessed was amazing. It was this group of young upstarts, heading throughout the nation to lands unknown, to help, mend, assist and provide



Lauryn (14), Tanya, Carter (9), Lleyton (11) and Brandon Feldman

people with a daily affirmation that their lives mattered.

I never felt like it was my job to have all the answers. The Christian Brothers community was a fantastic composition of devoted men who led more with their actions than their words. Between their example, as well as community time—which was spent in reflection of how God

has touched our lives and how the spirit has filled us with the passion to help others—my fellow LVs (and fellow SMC grads) Mickey Clements, Kristi Lewis and I were reminded and called to lead by our heart, our effort and our youthful optimism.

My second year of volunteering, alongside Jesse Murray at Cathedral High School in Los Angeles, was an equally amazing experience.

I can recall our midyear retreat in Goshen, New York, over MLK weekend my first year, where we all gathered to reflect upon our first six months as LVs. **The stories that were told among the inspired young volunteers reminded us that we were making a difference. And that difference wasn't just for the individuals and communities we were serving. The difference was how these individuals and communities were changing us.**

The real world is not an easy place. The real world just isn't an arithmetic problem you can solve by sitting in the library with a study group. No, the LV experience taught me about myself and the need for an ongoing positive volunteering experience within our community.

Currently, my kids attend St. Matthew School in North Seattle, and my oldest will soon head to high school at Bishop Blanchet. I've been involved in many volunteer activities in their 10 years at the school, including coaching a basketball team and multiple soccer teams every season, serving on an advisory finance council, and sitting on the auction planning committee. **I firmly believe without my experience as an LV, I would not care about the needs of others as strongly as I do today.**

My experience as an LV almost convinced me to become a high school teacher. But when I realized I would have to go back to undergrad to follow that path in my state, I chose a different path that allows me to help the same individuals I was assisting while volunteering. I went to law school to become a public defender. I'm now "teaching" individuals in a different capacity—helping people learn to abstain from the addictive tendencies that have

temporarily derailed their lives. Helping my clients regain their licenses puts them in the fast lane to getting their lives back on track and becoming more productive members of society. I find my job to be most satisfying when someone moves on and I never have to see them in my office again ;).

Volunteering as an LV taught me so many things about myself and how to serve others. I am eternally grateful for all the Brothers, staff, and sites that make this opportunity possible.



Brandon and the boys at Stonehedge

Brandon Feldman, LV 98-00, served at St. Joseph High School in Greenville, Mississippi, and Cathedral High School in Los Angeles, California. He and his family now live in Seattle, Washington, where he is a public defender. As we celebrate the 30th anniversary of Lasallian Volunteers, this story is one in a series of reflections by LV alums on how the LV experience has impacted their lives. Additional reflections can be found at www.LasallianVolunteers.org.

