

COLORADO VINCENTIAN VOLUNTEERS

Newsletter - December 2020

A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends of CVV,

I hope this finds you well and taking good care! In this season of transition, especially amidst the pandemic and all our country and world are navigating, St. Vincent de Paul's call for an "ongoing conversion of the heart" resonates deeply. As we shared in June, our commitment at CVV this year is to review and renew our work in light of racial justice, and we are dedicated to individual and collective reflection and action. We are immensely grateful for the voices who have shared their energy, insights, and recommendations to push us forward. As we build upon our foundation, I look ahead with hope, excitement, and a steadfast commitment to a more equitable and inclusive future of CVV. Read on for updates on the work so far, a message shared with our alumni community earlier this fall, and ways to join the journey!

*In gratitude and hope,
Haley*



UPDATES

BUILDING ON THE FOUNDATION

- We've contracted with Building Bridges, a consultant agency focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion. They have facilitated education and training for Board and Staff, a listening session with our Alumni of Color community, and additional consultation and guidance.
- Staff is learning from and with many others, including:
 - Catholic Volunteer Network
 - Crossroads Antiracism Program on Implicit Bias
 - National Conference, with feature presenter Fr. Bryan Massingale
 - Many faith-based service programs locally and nationally who are committed to racial justice
- As we recruit for 2021 in the virtual world of COVID19, we have begun revising our application and interview process as well as exploring additional university and community partnerships. These are beginning steps in our commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion.

CVV HOUSE PARTNERSHIP



- In a time of housing insecurity for many, we are partnering with Family Promise of Greater Denver for families experiencing homelessness to reside at CoHo. We see this as a commitment to living our Vincentian mission in this time. Four families are currently living at CoHo and 3 others have already transitioned to stable housing.
- Interested in providing meals or groceries?
tinyurl.com/CVVfamilypromise

SUPPORTING VOLUNTEERS

- Staff navigated new paths with the young adults who planned to volunteer with CVV this year. Most are serving with another volunteer program, others settled into graduate school, and some selected different plans given decisions around personal safety and family priorities during the pandemic.

A LETTER FROM THE BOARD + STAFF

SHARED WITH OUR ALUMNI COMMUNITY IN OCTOBER

Dear CVV Alumni,

We are writing to follow up on our June 15th letter and the communications we have received from many of you about racial inequity within CVV. We write today to acknowledge and apologize for our mistakes, share our commitment, and humbly ask for your help moving forward.

We recognize that systemic racism and white supremacy are now and always have been pervasive in our culture, including within CVV. White supremacy culture has impacted the way we recruit, hire, communicate, and operate. Specifically, we did not make adequate progress or give critical priority to our 2017 Strategic Plan goals related to diversity, equity, and inclusion. We recognize past efforts that have been performative rather than proactive. We have not adequately listened to the voices of color in our own community, including those who have served on our Board.

Some of you have vulnerably shared hurts, neglects, and injustices that you experienced as part of CVV. These experiences are part of our shared truth, and we must hear them in order to move towards healing and wholeness as an organization. We apologize that you had these experiences, especially within an organization seeking to work for justice. We regret not understanding sooner the presence and impact of these issues within CVV. We are deeply sorry for the hurt both our actions and inactions, individually and collectively, have caused.

We are extremely grateful for the July letter signed by many CVV Alumni of Color and white alumni. It demonstrates a clear love of CVV, concern for its future, and a desire to help overturn its culture of white supremacy. The considerations and recommendations contained in it are our priorities this year.

We have also heard from several individual alumni and appreciate this input. We hear the CVV community challenging us with tremendous energy. We see our commitment this year as an opportunity to build a more inclusive and equitable future of our mission at CVV. We hope you will join us to collectively address these critical issues in ways we have not before.

Our Alumni of Color are voices central to the work we want to undertake. We bring a sincere desire to listen better and hope that you will join us in collaborative partnership in this process. In this spirit, we invite all Alumni of Color to join us for a dialogue (held via Zoom), facilitated by our consultant, Building Bridges. This Zoom session will take place Nov. 9 from 5-7pm MST.

CVV is committed to confronting these issues and taking appropriate corrective action. We suspended the program for new volunteers for the current year to dedicate our full resources to reviewing our program and our organization in light of racial justice. We contracted with Building Bridges and have had several helpful training and consultation sessions.

We have begun and commit to reviewing and renewing our policies and programming including:

- 1. Recruitment of volunteers*
- 2. Volunteer experience, including the formation program*
- 3. Service sites, including our process and criteria for selection of and working with agency partners*
- 4. Administrative processes, including board and staff recruitment, selection, and responsibilities*

We recognize that these steps are the early stages of a long, intentional journey to better understand how white supremacy culture impacts CVV and the crucial work we must do to address it.

In acknowledgement of process-related inequities in hiring, all members of the staff are open to resigning their positions or reapplying for positions after an equitable and inclusive hiring process is put into place. Specifically, the Director is open to serving in an interim capacity and resigning or reapplying through an equitable and inclusive process.

The Board of Directors recognizes that our past failures to address issues of racial inequity and our complicity have led to recent board resignations and experiences of tokenism. Our current board is all white, disproportionately older, and has only one alumni representative. This is not the board composition we want now or in the future. We want and need a board that is diverse and more representative of the CVV community, the communities that CVV serves, and the larger community of Denver. In light of this, each current board member has expressed an openness to resigning or being part of a reselection process that serves the best interest and future of CVV, including transition of institutional knowledge.

Our hope is to add several Alumni of Color to the board in the very near future. We need your voices and experiences in our leadership to chart a path that helps us build the future of CVV as an antiracist organization. Your familiarity with the mission and programming of CVV and with the Vincentian charism would bring valuable and needed insight.

This expansion of the board and committees is a first step in a restructuring process. The newly expanded board will work to develop equitable processes for future transitions and needs. We also invite our Alumni of Color and additional voices who are committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion as well as our Vincentian charism to serve on committees informing our review.

We ask all alumni to prayerfully discern your own interest or nominate others who would serve CVV well as a board or committee member. Please note that new board or committee members do not necessarily have to be local to Colorado or Denver. Most meetings are held virtually, and CVV can reimburse travel for in-person meetings when necessary.

The form for self-nomination or to nominate someone else for the board or a committee is: <https://tinyurl.com/CVVNomination>

Our Vincentian charism calls us to attend to present day realities and commit to continuous conversion. We commit to these values as we engage in the work ahead. As people of faith with a shared love of CVV, we trust that the Holy Spirit is leading us forward. Please reach out to us through the CVV office (cvv@covivo.org - 303-863-8141) with any questions or concerns. We are happy to listen and to discuss. Thank you to each of you for your love of CVV, and for your past, ongoing and future involvement.

With gratitude and humility,

The CVV Board and Staff

*Haley Todd, Director
Chris Lane, [Former] Chair of the Board of Directors
Kristi Gonsalves-McCabe, Board Member - Present Interim Chair
Brian Bates, Board Member
Paul Burson, Board Member
Fr. Paul Golden, C.M., Board Member
Annie Green, Board Member
Adrienne Havey, Accountant
Alanna Kimmel, Board Member
Margaret Mailander, Program Coordinator
Ryan Martin, Assistant Program Director*

Join the journey!

Learn more about how to be involved on the next page.

JOIN THE JOURNEY!

• JOIN A COMMITTEE

- Interested in supporting our **recruitment, formation, agency partnerships, or policy and procedure review**? We invite voices in our community committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion and the Vincentian charism to serve on committees in each of these areas. Meetings are held virtually and include a commitment of a few hours per month. Nominate yourself or someone you know through December: tinyurl.com/CVVNomination

• ALUMNI

- **CVV Alumni** are invited to **facilitated listening circles** for white-identifying folks to grow in their racial equity journey, **learning and reflection** around Faith and Racial Justice through JustMinistries curriculum, and **community prayer**. Staff and the Alumni Committee are committed to supporting alumni with a lens for diversity, equity, and inclusion. Learn more, get involved, and share your ideas at: tinyurl.com/CVValumni

• SHARE YOUR VOICE

- We are committed to building a more inclusive, equitable future of CVV and welcome your ideas and feedback. We are happy to listen and discuss! Don't hesitate to reach out through the office.

• PRAYER

- Please hold this work in prayer and know we hold you in ours.

We hope for your continued companionship on the journey!



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COMING UP:

- JAN. 18th - Peace and Justice Virtual Mass through the Archdiocesan Office of Black Catholic Ministry

- JAN. 24th - CVV Community Breakfast

Stay tuned for more details on these physically distanced, socially close events at www.covivo.org!



covivo.org/ways-to-give