



How Can I Help?

Spotlight On: Franciscan Volunteer Ministry and Jesuit Volunteer Corps Northwest: Staying energized while recruiting

By Alyssa Sickle, Executive Assistant and Events Coordinator

For recruiters who spend months on the road and visit dozens of college campuses to recruit new volunteers, fatigue and burn-out can seem like an inevitable end to the recruiting year. While such a unique job does present some challenges, the right routines and frame of mind can give a recruiter energy and stamina throughout the year. Matt Johnson, entering his second year as the Promoter for Franciscan Volunteer Ministry, based in Philadelphia, and Rachel Forte, who spent two years as Jesuit Volunteer Corps Northwest's recruiter, share valuable insights on how to keep energy levels high so that from the first to the last recruiting circuit, each visit is as successful as possible.

Keep your motivations in mind

For Matt, the highlight of traveling and recruiting is "seeing young people who want to impact the world in ways most citizens don't. Nothing makes me smile more than to see the initiative of students who want to get their hands dirty to help somebody else live."

When she attended the JVC Northwest orientation in August, Rachel saw how her work had paid off. "Being there to welcome the young people I met while on the road to their new lives as Jesuit Volunteers in the Northwest is remarkable experience," Rachel recalls. "To know that I played a role in their journey to becoming a JV makes all the late nights, early mornings, long road trips, horrible flights and being away from home for most of the year completely worth it. Seeing the new JVs begin to live out the values during that short week reminds me why I took the job of recruiter; because I wanted to invite others to become 'ruined for life.'"

Enjoy each conversation with potential volunteers

Matt says, "It is easy to talk about a program I have so much faith in, and have seen in action. I keep my enthusiasm up because I remember what it was like when I was looking to volunteer. I remind myself that the people I am meeting are students who have no idea what they want to be doing, and that that can be a very unsettling time. I also remind myself that they came to the fair for a reason and that the students *want* somebody to talk to them and help them on their journey."

Rachel would try to ask each potential volunteer questions about what they were looking for in a program and why they were interested in post graduate service. She found that this opens up a personal dialogue, allowing her to expand upon the predictable questions. She found that "many times there is more than one person at your table at a time. This is a great chance to answer basic questions or give out basic information about your program to a group of people rather than having to repeat yourself again and again. I also found that the enthusiasm from potential

volunteers was contagious, after talking with the first few people at each fair my energy level would be up and I would remain upbeat for the rest of the fair.”

Maintain a healthy lifestyle

For Rachel, she found that maintaining a healthy diet and finding time to exercise were two of the biggest challenges. “Eating out a lot was not something I was used to, especially after a year of living on a JV budget,” she notes. Since she often stayed with former Jesuit Volunteers or other friends during her travels, she would offer to buy ingredients and make dinner as a way to thank her hosts. She also made sure to pack walking shoes so that she could walk around the campus or a local park to stay active.

Stay in touch with your home community

Rachel says she often felt homesick and missed being a part of her community at home. “One thing that helped me to overcome this challenge was regular phone calls to check in with my supervisor at the office. It was great to be able to talk about what was going on back in Portland so that I felt like I was a part of the staff community even if I wasn't at the office very often. Another thing that helped me from feeling too homesick was planning events with my friends and family back at home while I was on the road so that I knew when I would be seeing them when I got back.”

Take care of your spiritual needs

If he's away from home on a Sunday, Matt tries to find a young parish for Mass. “There is nothing better than to be in a space with your peers when you are in a strange place. I also have found [it helpful] that I read just a few chapters of the Bible that is usually in the hotel/accommodation. I rarely ‘read’ the Bible when I'm home, but it is something I started to do when on the road.”

Balance work and personal time

While Matt finds it easy to maintain a high energy level on the road, he makes an effort to separate work and personal time in order to maintain a healthy balance in his day. “I am passionate about the program I am representing, so it is easy to stay fresh,” Matt says. However, he cautions, “It is very easy to get so engrossed with your work that you forget to enjoy life. Once I am done with a fair or a talk, I like to leave the work there. I know many recruiters will immediately write emails/notes to the people they just met, but I find that giving the prospective volunteers a chance to breathe and digest a fair is the best method. I like to walk around the campus or city I am in to get a better feel for the area I am in, and enjoy my time away from home.”

Find accommodations that will put you at ease

“I try not to worry about the price of my lodging much,” Matt says. “Not to say that I stay in the Four Seasons or anything, but if I am going to be living out of a suitcase for a week, I want to at least be comfortable. I realize economics are tough right now, but there is no sense in dreading where you are staying for the entirety of your trip. I make sure I stay in places I am comfortable in, and are close to things to do in case I get bored.”

Rachel had the benefit of staying with former Jesuit Volunteers (FJVs) who live across the country. “These kind, generous individuals opened their homes to me and I stayed with FJVs the

entire time I was traveling for JVC Northwest,” she recalls. “Staying with FJVs helped me to feel connected and kept me feeling whole and renewed personally and spiritually.”

Keep up with the everyday tasks

Sharing insight on keeping up with responsibilities beyond the volunteer fairs and visits, Rachel suggests, “I tried to schedule one day a week for paperwork and office tasks. Fridays are a good day for this because there is less happening on campus and there is less of a chance of students showing up to events on a Friday (Remember when you were in college? How many campus events did you attend on Friday afternoons?). Knowing that I had one day a week to make phone calls, send emails, complete paperwork and plan my next trips I felt a lot more confident that I would be able to get all my work done.”

Don’t forget – you have a traveling community!

“My best advice would be to make friends with the others on the circuit,” says Matt. “The road can be really fun if you allow it to be. Enjoy that fact that you are meeting new people every day because it is your reality.”

“Building community with the recruiters from all the other post graduate service programs is a great way to stay energized and excited about the job,” Rachel adds. “Grab coffee, dinner or drinks before or after the fairs and talk about the job and give each other support. We really became each others social and professional network while on the road. No one else at your organization or at home is going to understand the stresses and joys of the job better than the other people on the road with you.”

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