

Letter from the Director  
Laura Folkwein, M.Div, MSW

Urban Servant Corps  
Spring 2009

Dear Friends,

January and February at the USC are times when the office (Linnea and I, to be exact!) is busy filing reports and requests for recertification by the groups who support our work. We have to report statistics on our volunteers, their service hours, their demographics, who they serve, where former volunteers are now, and more. Though it is less than my favorite task during the process, I'm always pleased to see the results of these reports in the end. The statistics we collect reveal the true work of the USC in very concrete ways. I'd like to share some of our numbers with you, because I think they are something to be proud of!

- We estimate that each year, USC volunteers serve *at least* 10,000 individuals with meals, case management, after-school and ESL tutoring, emergency food and financial services, and human compassion in their placement agencies.
- USC-ers volunteer a total of at least 27,200 hours each year. (This is a conservative estimate).
- Of last year's 15 USC volunteers, 13 remained in Denver, and six of those remained employed at their placement agency.
- Two of last year's volunteers went on to seminary, and at least three 2008-09 volunteers are considering graduate education in theology.
- Three more of last year's volunteers are pursuing further studies in the fields of nursing, public policy and school counseling.
- An additional two of last year's volunteers continued voluntary service, including one who signed up for another year of the USC!

The statistics and statements above indicate that the Urban Servant Corps is as important as ever to the Denver community we serve. Not only do our volunteers gain professional skills, develop their faith, learn about themselves and gain an understanding of and commitment to service and civic engagement, the organizations where volunteers serve gain full-time employees (and sometimes future staff members!) who are well qualified, motivated and dedicated.

I am cautiously encouraged by President Obama's efforts to sustain our economy during his first month in office. I, like many other directors of small non-profit organizations, am anxious, yet optimistic about our ability as organizations and communities to move through this crisis. Here's why. First, the USC has been supporting both non-profit agencies and full-time volunteers for over 20 years now. We've weathered tough economic times before, and we will again. Second, the USC is in a unique position today to support many people and organizations at times like this. When the job market is challenging, some job-seekers are drawn towards full-time volunteer opportunities instead. Already, we have ten promising applicants for the 2009-10 volunteer year! At the same time, many of our agency partners, where USC volunteers serve the homeless, at-risk kids, and immigrants, are cutting budgets and looking for ways to provide for an increased demand for services with fewer dollars. The answer to this dilemma, of course,

is to hire a full-time USC volunteer for only \$953/month in 2009-10! In this solution, everyone wins: job-seekers find employment and housing, non-profits receive fresh, energetic, and affordable staff members, and the USC continues strong for another year providing the means for living out faith and values in supportive, intentional community.

Depending on your perspective, this is a powerful example of supply and demand, or it's a beautiful demonstration of the Holy Spirit at work in our midst—turning shortages and anxieties into gifts and resources. As the nation goes through the pains of restructuring major institutions, I sincerely hope the President continues to promote the value of volunteerism in his policies, because I believe we will ALL truly benefit. In fact, I hope all of you will continue to support volunteerism through your support of the USC during a time when our volunteers' services are needed more than ever. Give us a call and ask about making a monthly donation through secure Electronic Funds Transfer from your bank account, participate in our Spring fundraising activities, or ask your congregation to take a special offering for the USC in the coming months. Together, we will build stronger communities in the midst of a weakened economy.