

Carrie Kiskila Davis

Hitting Her Stride: Investing in the Lasallian Tradition

by Amy Kalina ('08-'10)

Carrie Kiskila Davis only intended on volunteering for one year. "I had thought that I might want to go into teaching after college, and [Lasallian Volunteers] sounded like a great way to try it out," she recalls. One year, however, turned into two, which turned into a third volunteer year, followed by two additional years as a paid teacher at her site. Hers has been a truly Lasallian experience, mirroring St. John Baptist de La Salle's story of "one commitment leading to another."

"I had gone into it thinking that I would stay one year, but I never figured on meeting such amazing people and having experiences that affected me so deeply."

The daughter of a former Christian Brother, Carrie was introduced to the Lasallian world at a young age. But her own personal connection to the mission first came as a student at Saint Mary's College of California. This was a stepping stone to the next stage of her journey – Lasallian Volunteers.

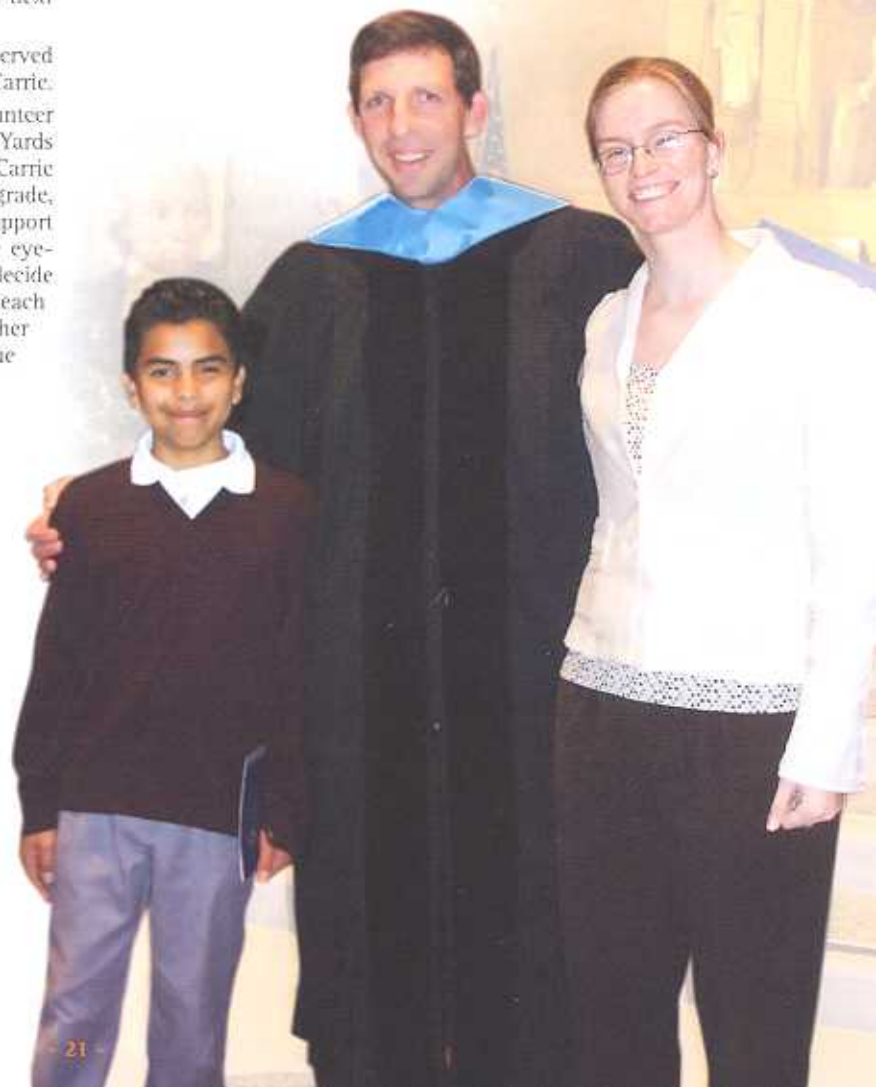
"I was struck by the work – teaching in an underserved community – and something about that drew me in," said Carrie.

Not having studied education in college, Carrie's volunteer placement at the San Miguel Schools Chicago-Back of the Yards posed new and exciting challenges. As a first-year teacher, Carrie remembers struggling through each day of teaching sixth grade, relying on fellow volunteers and Lasallian associates for support and encouragement. This support network, along with the eye-opening experiences her first year presented, led Carrie to decide to return to San Miguel. For the Integral Liberal Arts major, each of Carrie's five years in Chicago guided her deeper in her investment in Lasallian ministry, and closer to her true vocation.

"I find that the Lasallian Mission draws people who are kind, committed, energetic, and interested in the well-being of the whole child," said Carrie, who went on to receive her Master's Degree of Education after her years at San Miguel. "Those are the kinds of people I like to work with and who make me a better person."

Carrie's commitment to Lasallian service continued. Her path led her to another Miguel school – De Marillac Academy in San Francisco, where she has taught for the past seven years. Carrie's dedication has extended beyond the classroom as well, including her involvement in the 2001 Spoke 'N Word Bike Tour, an initiative sponsored by the Lasallian Partners for the Economically Poor to raise money for and promote literacy. ★

Carrie continues to be a strong Lasallian Partner, her example serving as inspiration for young Lasallians (and Lasallian Volunteers) across the country. "I think that Lasallian Partners are a large part of the future of the Lasallian mission," said Carrie, acknowledging the potential for Lasallian Volunteers to stay connected to the mission after their service. Carrie remains one of the longest serving volunteers in the program's history.



Marilyn Paquette

A Lasallian Leader: Building Community

by Amber Palmer

Sometimes the call to leadership comes with a feeling of *fit*.

For Marilyn Paquette, that sense of knowing she'd arrived where she needed to be began when she stepped foot on the campus of Saint Mary's College of California, transferring in 1995 as a junior.

"I didn't know how I was going to afford SMC, but I knew I was going to go there," said Paquette. "After graduation I wasn't quite ready to leave, so I became a hall director. A year and a half later, I applied to the Lasallian Volunteers and made a visit to the San Miguel School in Providence, RI. That same sure feeling that let me know I was going to attend SMC was there in Providence as well."

As a Lasallian Volunteer ('99-'01), Marilyn began developing the leadership skills she employs and teaches to others in the Lasallian family today.

"Each part of my Lasallian journey has taught and required the development of new skills including organization and planning, flexibility, time management, effective communication, community-minded thinking, problem solving, faith-based leadership, and even being able to laugh at myself and not take things too seriously. From teaching in the classroom to living in community to running a week-long service trip, each experience requires different skills. I am called to give more of myself in and to this Lasallian mission than I thought possible."

Forming leaders in the Lasallian community requires learning from others within the group and then passing along the lessons learned. For Marilyn, daily lessons have been learned through the leadership of others within this family.

"During my time in Providence, I lived with Br. Lawrence Goyette, FSC (or "Lars" as we called him), and Br. Charles Kitson, FSC. He taught me the importance of perseverance in a leader. Lars started the first San Miguel school. It wasn't an easy road, but he persevered alongside other volunteers in the community and the Lasallian family in order to get the school going. Now, I run a student leadership program in Lasallian high schools. We focus on participating as a team, building community and working toward a common goal."

In her role as Director of Lasallian Student Programs for the Office of Education at the De La Salle Institute in Napa, CA, Marilyn pays forward the leadership skills she learned beginning with her years of service as a Lasallian Volunteer.

Forming leaders who work on local and national levels is a hallmark of the Lasallian family. Marilyn encourages students and volunteers to have faith in themselves, the Lasallian community near and far, and the students and clients they serve.

"Trust that you are where you are for a reason," Marilyn says.

Even if the *fit* isn't as immediate as it was for Marilyn, the leadership lessons learned can be passed along in the Lasallian community. ★

Marilyn is on the San Francisco District Leadership team as the Director of Lasallian Student Programs for the Office of Education at De La Salle Institute.

“ St. De La Salle used to say that the Brothers' vocation was to touch hearts. It is evident that you have touched hearts, are touching hearts today, and will touch hearts tomorrow. And that is a major objective of the Lasallian Volunteer Program: to help people learn to touch hearts.”

— Br. John Johnston, former Superior General

Chris and Kristen Giangregorio **LV Marriage and Love of the Program**

by Jennifer Warnock

Chris and Kristen have given themselves to work in the educational field because of the children they teach. The two have dedicated their teaching careers to working in under-served neighborhoods, such as north St. Louis, Harlem, and San Francisco's Tenderloin. They wanted to help provide an "optimistic and hopeful relationship." They wanted to see first generation college graduates, and they wanted to see kids prosper and understand that they were "doing a good job."

Saint Mary's College is where Kristen Corbal and Chris Giangregorio first became involved with the Lasallian mission – separately.

As a Lasallian Volunteer, Chris served his first year in St. Louis, then moved on to Resurrection School in Harlem in 2002. Kristen was supposed to have taken a position as a Lasallian Volunteer in Brooklyn, but it was filled. So she was moved to the Resurrection School as well.

They may have attended Saint Mary's at the same time, yet 3,000 miles away serving in Harlem is where Chris and Kristen met. Chris and Kristen spent a lot of time with each other and their other house mates. During one night out in New York City, when they had both been stood up by their dates, they realized they were falling in love.

Through this time, spent among family and friends, they began to realize that they had more than just a friendship – they were falling in love.

Over Thanksgiving weekend 2006, Chris surprised Kristen with a dimly lit home, flowers, a luxe dinner, and music. He was on one knee, and Kristen, surprised, dropped her bag and said, "Are you really doing this right now?" This was quickly followed by her answer. "Yes!"

Within two years, they returned to California and, on June 14, 2008, Chris and Kristen became the 20th LV couple to be married in the 20 years of the Lasallian Volunteer program. They married outdoors in Santa Cruz, where they felt closer to God. To celebrate, Chris and Kristen made a donation in every guest's honor to the Lasallian Volunteers instead of purchasing wedding favors. Guests received information on the LVs and how they could volunteer.

And, officiating the wedding? Bob Sweeney. The couple felt that without Bob's help in bringing them both to St. Louis, they might never have married.

When asked how they felt their love was representative of their volunteer work, Chris replied, "It's about putting the needs of others before your own."

"[We] make sure we take care of each other," Kristen adds. "Our commitment to each other is like our commitment to the Mission. No one is forcing us to be together, we just want to be there."

When we think of volunteers, we think of a day or two a week at an animal shelter, or at a soup kitchen. In hearing Chris and Kristen, we are reminded what a healthy, positive relationship should be. You can tell from listening to them reflect on their volunteer work how passionate they are about making a child's life a little bit more hopeful.

You can only imagine the kind of effect the Giangregorio's have on the children who spend time with them 7 hours a day. They must feel the dedication, calm, and understanding these two former Lasallian Volunteers gave and continue to give.

This is exactly what these children need most – love. ★

Chris currently teaches at De Marillac Academy in San Francisco, and Kristen is enrolled at St. Mary's College, CA as a Lasallian Teaching Fellow.

