

## The Person Who Taught Me!

*Our brightest blazes are commonly kindled by unexpected sparks. — Samuel Johnson*

I was almost 50 years old when I gained a much deeper insight into the value of all human life. The person who taught me sat in a wheelchair, stared into space and said nothing.

For our annual school retreat, I brought a group of students from Notre Dame Prep to Gallagher Services to volunteer. It was my first time visiting, so I sat and colored with a woman for about an hour-and-a-half. Though I found myself quickly frustrated with her lack of any skills, I said all the things that I had taught my students to say when working with an individual with developmental disabilities. My problem was that I spoke from my head. I was going through the motions, but my heart was not in it. I had never had any contact with these “people,” and honestly they made me feel uncomfortable. It was one thing to lecture teens about the growth that happens when you move out of your comfort zone, but it was another thing to actually experience it.

At the end of the visit I stooped down and explained that we were leaving and thanked her. I thought that she didn’t understand me and that this had been a waste of my time. I began to question the quality and value of life for some of these people. I wondered what their days were like rocking, sitting, and mostly staring. Where was the dignity? As I stood up, the woman held on to my arm and looked up. I stooped back down as she brushed the side of my cheek and whispered ever so softly what I think was the word “pretty.” I am not sure what she was referring to, or even if I heard her correctly, but I am ashamed to think that she was referring to me. After all of my inner thoughts, I didn’t deserve any thanks. I realized then that the visit was not a waste of time: that the quality of life for people with developmental disabilities was what



*Patrick Hayden and Joan Carlson welcome parishioners at St. Francis Catholic Community of Hunt Valley. Patrick and seven Gallagher residents join the St. Francis community for Mass on the first and third Sundays of each month.*

we made of it; and that I had been a fool to think that these wonderful, unassuming and trusting people didn’t matter. Marie had touched my cheek and more than that had touched my life.

Years later, I am still visiting my friends at Gallagher Services and also inviting others to come along. These wonderful people continue to teach me the wonders of simplicity and how easy it is to laugh at life. It is not their mental capacity that makes them different from everyone else, but rather their capacity to love unconditionally. They accept you the way you are and they speak from the heart. Yes, sometimes I am still uncomfortable, but only because I realize they are more compassionate, caring and loving than I am. The Harrys, the Vickys, the Patricks, the Marys, and the Maries continue to teach me how to be a better person and I thank them for it!

Joan Carlson



# A Special Friends Reflection

*It is not the past that shapes who and what I will be, but my own attitudes, values, and actions.*

— Anne Kaiser Stearns

Being involved in the Gallagher community means so, so much to me. Every Sunday, I just can't wait to see all of my Special Friends. I love to see everyone and how their faces light up when we come to say hello to them. I love seeing the ladies in my apartment—doing crafts with them, painting their nails, listening to music, and just talking to them. Probably my favorite part of the day is going to the worship service and seeing Gallagher individuals from all of the apartments and many houses. I love to hear their greetings, prayers, and voices and see their many talents. It never fails to give me chills when Richard and Tony dance after Communion.

I am also so excited that the Special Friends program at Maryvale has been going so well. I cannot tell you how many students and faculty members have told our Coordinator of Community Service, Mr. Mike Vogrin, my Special Friend colleague, Caroline Brink, and me how much they enjoy coming to the events on campus. Our Special Friends from Gallagher Services have really become a staple of the Maryvale Community!

Gallagher holds a very special place in my heart. I truly enjoy every moment I spend with each and every individual. They have touched me in a very special way.



*Stevie McDonald & Natalie Ridgely*

My experiences have really reaffirmed my ambition to become a doctor working toward developing therapies for individuals with disabilities. I am blessed to have the Gallagher community as part of my life!

Natalie Ridgely

## Greenhouse Update

Spring comes early in the greenhouse! The Shamrock Gardens Greenhouse will be sliding its doors open once again this month in preparation for our Annual Mother's Day Sale. This year it will take place Friday, May 7th, and Saturday, May 8th, from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. each day. The greenhouse crew is very excited to get back into the flower business. After all it's what we do best! This year we have ordered some of your old favorites and some fun new arrivals too. We look forward to another successful spring season. If you have an interest in visiting our greenhouse, to see our tiny seedlings transform and grow into beautiful, colorful, healthy spring plants, please contact Cindy Clancy at [cclancy@cc-md.org](mailto:cclancy@cc-md.org) to schedule a visit.



# Cherishing the Divine Within

*I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these my brothers, you did for me*

— Matthew 25:40



*St. John's Life Teen Youth Group*

**A**s a youth minister, it's always challenging to pass on the idea of service to teenagers. Many teenagers want to serve, but don't know what to do. Others have the idea that service means shoveling your grandmother's walk, or helping mom bring in the groceries. And those activities "serve" someone, but it's not the only kind of service we are called to. Jesus challenged us to serve others as well as He has served us (John 13:14-15). Meaning that we should care for the people he took care of: the sick, the helpless, the alone, the afraid or, in other words, the "outcasts" of society. Gallagher Services provides a rare opportunity for our teenagers. It allows them to work one-on-one with individuals with various disabilities. Too often, these individuals are marginalized by society because of their condition. Visits to Gallagher

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others as well as He has served us.***

***(John 13:14-15)***

Services challenge our teenagers to confront their fears and to learn a valuable lesson—a person is a person regardless of sex, skin color, ethnic background or disability. Our teenagers leave Gallagher Services with a changed perspective. Even though they only spend an hour or so working with different individuals, in the end, they get "it." They start to realize that human life is sacred and that service is about reaching out of your comfort zones. It's about being Christ to another person.

Ken DeMoll  
Youth Minister  
St. John Westminster

**S**ince 2002, Gallagher Services has helped prepare over 300 candidates for Confirmation from St. John Westminster. Past volunteer experience has included helping 30 to 40 residents of Gallagher Services enjoy an afternoon of Bingo. On a brisk Sunday morning in December, just two days after Christmas, this year's candidates were about to embark upon a different volunteer experience: participation in our weekly worship service!

The morning began with the students visiting one of the four Timonium Apartments to meet the residents, and to invite them to a Christmas carol sing-along before the service. Spirits were high as a-cappella voices blended in, singing everything from "Rudolph the Red Nose Reindeer" to "Silent Night." As the rest of the congregation began to arrive, participation in the singing grew, and the joy was contagious! During the service the students helped with the readings, assisted individuals in lighting the candles, and with preparation for communion. After the service, the students accompanied the residents back to their apartments and regrouped for a brief reflection. For many, it was their first experience in hanging out with people with developmental disabilities. Comments were made about how rewarding it was to meet the individuals in their apartments, accompany them to the service, and to realize that they are just like us! As always, it has been a privilege for us to be a part of the faith journey of St. John's Confirmation candidates!

Kathleen Roberts  
Spiritual Development Coordinator

## Gallagher Services

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## Gallagher Services' Twenty-First Annual Golf Tournament Monday, May 3, 2010

Hunt Valley Golf Club • 4101 Phoenix Road • Phoenix, MD 21131

8:30 a.m. Registration & Lunch

10:00 a.m. Shotgun Start

4:00 p.m. Awards Dinner & Auction

\$250 per Player • \$1,000 per Foursome

Raffle for a \$5,000 cash prize drawn at the Awards Dinner!

*You don't have to be present to win!*

Only 300 tickets will be sold • \$50 a raffle ticket • 5 for \$200

For Foursome Registration, Raffle Tickets, Sponsor & Ad opportunities

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