

Tiffany Rodgers
Colorado Vincentian Volunteers (CVV) - Denver, CO
Holy Family Birth Center - Weslaco, TX

Basically I wanted to volunteer because it sounded like it would be a cool experience, and I had no idea what else I wanted to do after graduation. I never dreamed how much I would receive in return. The people I met, places we went, and things we got to do are some of my favorite memories. I fell in love with Colorado - it's home now, and my perspectives on everything from the effects of the sanctions in Iraq, to living in community, to how to make good compost for an urban garden have changed and grown more than I ever thought possible.

I ended up in Denver after looking through the RESPONSE magazine and reading that the CVV Volunteers lived in a house called "Woody's Place." It sounded homey. It didn't occur to me at the time that Denver is such a beautiful place to live with gorgeous mountains only an hour away. Or that I would have a chance to learn so much Spanish or befriend a Special Ed. Kindergarten class working in an inner-city elementary school as a Family Advocate. But then I wouldn't have been able to imagine it all if I tried. Lucky for me, I was given the grace to be open to a new experience and the many challenges and joys that came with it. An open mind, flexible attitude, and adventurous spirit are something I highly recommend you take with you. But if you forget them, you can be pretty sure they will be developed along the way.

Now, in my second year of volunteer work, my family of course is wondering if I'll ever get a "real job." I just smile and say maybe. I've come to the conclusion that volunteering is a great way for a single person to support herself. Many programs offer room, board, health insurance, a stipend, loan deferment and the Americorps grant. And for me, the lessons I'm learning and the opportunities I've had for personal growth are worth not having a huge savings account and stock options. The love and support I have at my current site are priceless.

The moment I heard about Holy Family I knew I would end up here. I wanted to come right after my first program, but realized I was too burnt out. So, I took some time off to work. After about 8 months in an office, I decided I could either run screaming from my desk, or look up that crazy birth center run by the nuns. It was one of the best things I ever did. Turns out they had been frantically praying for a volunteer to take over the soon-to-be-vacant groundskeeper/maintenance position. I am fascinated by birth and contemplating a career in midwifery. I just wanted to be there. It seemed like a good fit. Now, in between fixing doors, toilets, and mowing the grass, I get to witness a miraculous birth or two and hang out with some of the coolest women I've ever met. From nurses just out of college, to midwives with grown children, we are the most supportive, loving, accepting family I've ever known. I remember a specific moment in my first few weeks here when I realized, "this is exactly where I am meant to be right now." What a sense of peace and thankfulness I had!

I guess my advice to you is: Keep looking until you find a program that is right for you. This is one case where "if it feels right, do it." You'll know you've found it when things fall into place.