

May 2014

AMA Year 2014-2015



The AMA UPDATE

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Letter from the Director

Dear AMA's, RA's, and AMA Families!

Happy Spring and Easter Season!

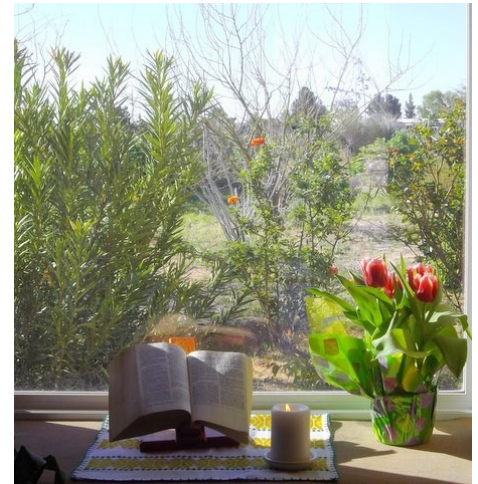
We have much to celebrate and be grateful for at this time. We are thankful for Sr. Akeneta, who, as the "youngest" of the Assumption Sisters, turned "1" on April 30th!

The Assumption Sisters of Chaparral have shared their reflection on pages 2-3. They communicate the many ways that having AMAs in Chapa is a gift for the community as well as the young people. This includes the gift of uncertainty and growth. They also sent the picture to the right, taken from their chapel.

We thank Coreena for her reflection on her time as an AMA— her article on pages 4-5 includes a quotation that is strikingly similar to this month's quote from St. Marie Eugenie to the left.

We welcomed Lila Abed, a new short-term AMA'ti from France in late April to the Worcester community. You will read more about her and her desire to serve, practice English, and share French cooking on page 5. We thank the French province and the AMA program for sharing her gifts with us! The picture above is of Sr. Nuala placing Lila's AMA cross over her head at her commissioning prayer service.

In gratitude,
Michelle



St. Marie Eugenie Quote of the Month:

"I want to give myself, not lend myself, to Jesus Christ."

Celebrating the Year of Consecrated Life!

Sr. Akeneta completes her first year as novice on April 30th, The Foundation Day of the Religious of the Assumption

Sr. Akeneta recently completed her first year as a novice with the Religious of the Assumption on April 30th, the feast day of the foundation of the congregation. AMAs in recent years will know her because she has participated in some of the Orientation programs and has been a friend to the AMAs in Worcester. We celebrate what a gift she is to the Assumption and wish her the best in this second year of her novitiate. She will travel to Chaparral, NM this summer and then on to Iloilo in the Philippines before returning back to Worcester just in time for the winter snow! We are praying for you, Ake!



Having AMAs here in Chaparral. Some Reflections from the Assumption Sisters on the Border

Srs. Diana, Chabela, Evelyn, and Maria Teresa

Gradually, they begin to add a third significant ingredient to their mission here, love.

Having AMAs here in Chaparral is beneficial for all concerned: the young people that generously come to give of their time and talents, our RA community, and the wider community of Chaparral. In the beginning, it is a time when they open themselves to a totally new experience and environment, to a people of a different culture, lifestyle and language. It is beautiful to see how over time they embrace this new reality and are changed by it. Gradually, they begin to add a third significant ingredient to their mission here, love. They bond with families and individuals, discovering new friends. Daily experiences make them see and realize the complexity of immigration here at the border, the problems and hardships that so many of our people have to face each day. We value the AMAs in our midst for the wonderful role models they are to the young, for being the channels that connect us, the RA community, with the young generation. At Casa Maria Eugenia, the AMAs provide a fun and safe environment for our kids to enjoy. Tutoring, helping with homework, or guiding them through the process of applying for college or jobs, has been another blessing for so many. Games at the park, and day- and summer camps add to the spectrum of having fun together. By simply sharing their own experiences, the AMAs awaken new hopes and possibilities in the hearts of our young people. Through our AMAs, we are able to reach out to so many more people than would otherwise be possible, were we on our own. Reaching out in friendship and solidarity, and sharing our faith, **together**, we are better able to change and impact the lives of our people, giving them new hope and enabling them to build a better future.



The Chaparral community is very grateful to have AMAs

The community embraces wholeheartedly the mission of receiving AMAs in Chaparral. M. Marie Eugenie loved young people and we want share a small part of our lives with them. The AMAs are invited to share our prayer life. Once a week, we listen together to what the Lord says to us in the Sunday Gospel. This Lectio Divina helps us to know one another more in depth.

We are also happy to share our main meal with them. When the girls were here we also went to Casa Maria Eugenia to eat whatever they had prepared for us.

The most important aspect of having AMAs in our community is that they participate in our mission with the children and young people of Chaparral. The AMAs offer their youth, joy and many other talents. The Chaparral community is very grateful to have AMAs. The children are tutored, have fun together and learn many things in Casa Maria Eugenia and always enjoy the presence of the AMA.

The Gift of Uncertainty - AMAs

Currently there's quite a bit of talk among religious women about the challenges facing us today. Words such as imagination, creativity, uncertainty, transformation and freeing ourselves to think in new ways are ever present.

In the Winter 2015 edition of LCWR Occasional Papers, Fr. John C. Sivalon, MM even calls "uncertainty" a gift! He said that we have to allow our own structures of thought to be shattered and to free ourselves to think in new ways.

In a way that's what happens to us when we accept AMAs, and especially when we accepted our first male AMA. Up until now we had received only girls. We had also always insisted that there would be two AMAs. So accepting Kevin Molyneux, in spite of the fact that he would be alone was definitely breaking some of our longstanding mind sets!

Accepting our first male AMA in Chaparral certainly brought us into a new era! And the fact that we were not going to receive two AMAs, as usual, posed some questions.

For me, the newness of our situation has led to some interesting discoveries:

Yes, young men can be part of a community of "senior citizen" religious woman provided there's a strong sense of mission which is definitely the case this year.

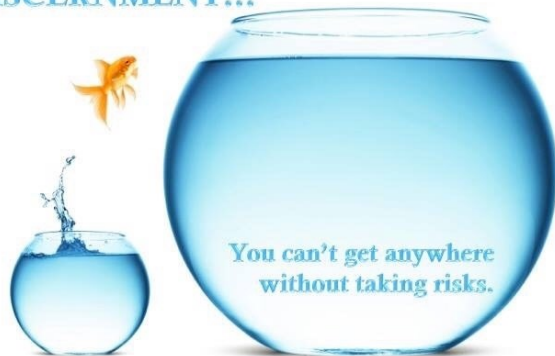
Yes, "inter-generational" table talk is interesting. Technology in the form of Kevin's "smart phone" helps answer many questions: "What's the Spanish for tarragon?" "What's "Dropsy?" (a disease mentioned in the NT) A twenty-two year old can also get us up to speed on good comic TV shows and good old and new movies!

But even over and above the inter-generational mix that Kevin provides for our community, is the amazing connection that he has with kids of all ages, especially the boys. His contribution to our mission here is most important for us. Casa Maria Eugenia, where we have Friday Night Fun and Games, has become "Kevin's House." As for him being alone.... I think that's a rare occurrence!! There's always someone in Casa Maria Eugenia: from a university student cramming for a chemistry exam to a fourth grader learning how to type (a requirement that's hard to fulfill when you don't have electricity in your house let alone a computer!!!) someone is usually around.

Uncertainty and risk have definitely led us to "higher" ground and I'm not referring to Kevin's height, which is also by the way a great asset in our kitchen!



DISCERNMENT...



Especially delighted

The great consolation for us in having AMAs is when these young people stay in touch with us and the wider community, when we have tangible proof that their presence among us although "temporary" has enduring effects....on us, on them and on the people whose lives they have touched. We always love hearing from them and are especially delighted when they can't seem to stay away and return for visits, to help with the summer camps, to attend graduations of some "special" friends like the friendship between Adrian Yanez and Kristin Prinn or between Elie Stonecash and the "Doritos" or between Emily Szelest, Becca and the Martinez Family. It's then that we know that the connection is deep within us and that we are part of one another's lives. We are happy too when we see that the time here has helped the AMA to grow and develop their special talents and to know how they can contribute in building a more fraternal and just society.





“It is essential to create an environment where life can flourish.”

Coreena Garcia (Worcester, MA)

As my year as an AMA draws nearer, I can't help but feel overwhelmed with emotion. This year has been a mixture of emotions, that can't be described in just one word. When considering a year of service, my ultimate goal was to serve and give back to community by sharing my gifts and talents. However, little did I know that I would be given so much more. God has a way of tailoring every experience to be life learning and worthwhile. My year in Worcester has been life changing. I've grown so much from the people, places, and experiences I have had in my year of service.

One particular service experience that has opened my eyes and touched my heart has been working with immigrants and refugees as an English as a Second Language teacher. Teaching ESL to adults has been one of the most challenging and rewarding experiences in my life. No matter how much I doubted myself as a teacher, they always reassured me that I was doing a good job. In teaching others, I was also learning from them. I learned the stories behind the lives my students lead. Many came from highly acclaimed backgrounds. However, coming the United States, many of my talented, intelligent, and motivated student's level of English limited their ability to pursue career opportunities, to be engaged in their children's education, or to better understand complex U.S. systems such as health care. I also learned just how dedicated these individuals are. Despite these challenges, they continued to attend class eager to learn and beyond grateful for the opportunity to learn English, even if the teacher wasn't exactly qualified to teach English (Me). As a teacher, there is no measurable amount of pride I have in my student's perseverance to learn and the amount of love they shared with others. I will forever hold my students in my heart and will terribly miss the community we built as a class.

It may be simplistic, but if the books are set on the table, if there are enough snacks for every child, and if the supplies are replenished, then the program becomes a place where good work can naturally happen.



In addition to the gift of being an ESL teacher, I have received the gift of understanding. In doing service, you really learn that service is not always the cliché image of doing “big things” that make you feel like your making a difference, such as building a home from ground up. I've learned that service is beyond doing a “big things” to make a big difference. Sometimes, it is the little things that make the greatest difference. As the mentoring co-coordinator, my role consisted of purchasing and budgeting for healthy snacks. Although this may seem like something “little,” it had meaning and it was a form of service. I've learned that service does not always have to consist of

doing something “big.” It is essential to create an environment where life can flourish. It may be simplistic, but if the books are set on the table, if there are enough snacks for every child, and if the supplies are replenished, then the program becomes a place where good work can naturally happen.

Among the many gifts I’ve received in my year of service, the gift of self-growth has to be one of the greatest. I have learned so much about myself and have truly “looked into the mirror” into who I really am. I am gifted and challenged, virtuous and sinful, strong and weak, all at the same time. This year has really taught me to be vulnerable, open, and humble. I never imagined how difficult it would be to practice these three virtues and how gratifying it would be. I realized that the obstacles that I had, such as being open, were really opportunities to grow in reflectiveness. These virtues served as a welcoming to become more empathetic. Furthermore, I learned that I want to continue to serve others throughout my lifetime. Just as Jesus offered his whole life as a gift, I would like to return my life to him as a gift. May he fill it with his spirit and transform it so that it somehow contributes his larger plan for our planet. “This is the mystery of life: by total self-giving, we can give life to others and have it for ourselves as well.” In working for others, my life has been enriched by the relationships I’ve made (the Sisters, Michelle, my community, and the community I served) and the realization that I have experienced life through the eyes of those I have served.

Photos: (opposite page, top) Coreena with a mentee making a play dough hot dog! (opposite page, bottom) Coreena and her Fall ESL Class (right) Coreena with the *Third Day* Literacy Group and the Worcester Sharks hockey team mascot, Finz!

*Just as Jesus offered
his whole life as a gift,
I would like to return
my life to him as a gift.*



Worcester Community welcomes Lila Abed, AMA'ti from France!

The Worcester community welcomed another AMA'ti this month! Lila arrived on April 27th and will be with us until July 23rd. She will be a wonderful addition to the Cana community and will be serving with the Girls with DREAMS program, the *Semillas de Vida* community garden, St. John's Food Pantry, Knitting Circle, and many other events with the Assumption— including the Worcester Walk for the Homeless on May 17th! Welcome, Lila! We are so happy that you are here!



She writes: *Hello dear AMA, my name is Lila Abed and I am 19 years old. I am French and I live in Tours (3 hours from Paris by car), Tours is my hometown. I am the second daughter of my family, my big sister will turn soon 30, so I am already an aunt. I have two nephews Shanaell, 5 year old and Tyron, 3 year old) and soon I will be aunt for the third time! I have a very united family. I have mixed blood, my mom is French and my dad is Algerian. I am very excited to go to Worcester! I hope I can be useful to the community, that I can make some friends and improve my English as well. I hope that everyone will love my French cooking!*



More AMA Updates: Pictures and Stories

This month, we wish Happy Mother's Day to all mothers of AMAs and share two pictures of AMA mothers visiting Chaparral and Worcester!

Kevin Molyneux (Chaparral, NM) Kevin welcomed his mother, Greta, to Chaparral in late March. They spent time visiting the different ministries where Kevin serves, including the parish and Casa Maria Eugenia. They also visited White Sands National Park. Happy Mother's Day, Greta!



Caitlin Goodhile (Newcastle, England) Over Easter Break we took our boys group rock climbing! Here is a picture of me climbing up one of the walls. I set the bar by climbing the highest at first but was soon beaten by one of the boys who was determined to climb higher than me!

Kate Carew, Jordyn Faron, and Coreena Garcia (Worcester, MA) all received Assumption College

T-shirts during April's Cana Community Retreat.



Rachel Recolcolin

- (Iloilo City, Philippines)

1. Year End of AMA: Immersion Trip in Ajuy, Iloilo. Me with the children of Ajuy and my host sister on the far left and 2. PHINMA University of Iloilo students and I visit man made Mangroves near the city of Leganes on Outreach



Coreena Garcia (Worcester, MA) Coreena and the Worcester community welcomed her mother, Bertha Garcia, to lunch at the Sister's house. Bertha, Coreena, and Coreena's sister Celeena explored Boston and stayed with the Cana community in late April. Happy Mother's Day, Bertha!

Lila Abed (Worcester, MA) As the newest member of the Cana community in Worcester, Lila enjoys time with Donna, during Assumption Center's Knitting Circle.



