



Rachel Harding  
&  
Megan Dedinsky

## Volunteering with a heart

Megan and Rachel, with Matthew, a Saint Joseph's Center resident, celebrate Saint Joseph's Feast Day at the Main Center in March. Both Megan and Rachel are Jesuit Volunteers, who chose Saint Joseph's Center as their service mission for 2022. Jesuit Volunteers spend up to two years living and learning within the community they are serving with the understanding that each person is a unique creation of God. Rachel is from Kalamazoo, Michigan and Megan is from Phoenix, Arizona.

### Why is being a Jesuit Volunteer important to you?

**Rachel:** In my sophomore year at Holy Cross I felt a calling to a year of service, to live out my faith in an active way in terms of bringing spirituality and action together. I also love the model of Jesuit Volunteer Corps: living in community with other volunteers and learning really important life skills, especially in communication.

Having open conversations about faith and race as well as being open and honest about how you are doing strengthens our trust in one another. We strive to create the best interpersonal relationships with each other while being centered in Jesuit Values. Even though we are only a little over halfway through the year, I could not imagine having jumped right into working, as I am realizing how much I need this intentional time to grow and understand realities of life. I want to live my life and future career with my greater community as well as justice and fulfillment in mind, considerations I would most likely not have thought about if not for this year.

“In these moments, I feel really special and lucky to be here.” -Megan

## What brought you to Saint Joseph's Center? Was there a part of the mission that resonated with you?

**Rachel:** My future career goal is to go into nursing, and the chance to work at Saint Joes and work with individuals with special needs has enriched my understanding of the incredible value and importance of all individuals no matter their abilities. **I resonated with Saint Joe's mission to enrich the lives of those who live here, the concept of human flourishing really speaks to me, and with that at the heart of what Saint Joe's aims to do, I am excited that I am able to be at a place that promotes the growth of the whole person.** While it is not always an easy thing to accomplish as it requires sustained energy and commitment to growth, striving for flourishing is a goal that drives me each day to work to give my best for all of the people I am working with at Saint Joes.

**Megan:** In college, I volunteered with people with disabilities at The ARC. When I applied to the Jesuit Volunteer Corps and was matched with Saint Joseph's Center, I thought this would be a great place to continue working with this population. I also am inspired by Saint Joe's dedication to trying to create fulfilling and meaningful lives for each of the clients.

## What is your Mission Moment? The moment of "Aha! This is why I am here..this is who I am helping".

**Rachel:** There was one day I was walking with Nick [a Saint Joe's resident] and **I looked into his eyes, and he looked up into mine and there was a moment that I could just feel how awesome and special he was.** That while he, and all of the men I work with cannot speak or do much on their own, they have so much dignity and value and strength to live each day despite ever present challenges they have to overcome. But looking into his eyes, as well as the eyes of all of the guys, I feel like I can see some of their souls, their beauty and uniqueness. Even though I have days where I question if what I am doing is enough, if I am really helping them to be their best selves, I know that it at least starts in little moments of care and compassion I can give them.



**Megan:** Each day I am filled with awesome moments of connection with people whether that is through reading together, baking something for other people in the building, going on walks, or getting a spontaneous hug from a client. **In these moments, I feel really special and lucky to be here.**

## What are you working towards while here? What do you hope to get out of the experience at Saint Joe's?

**Megan:** I think I am working towards understanding others and myself more fully. I think that's really a life goal, but it is also what a lot of this year has been about for me. **I'm not sure what the future holds for me, but I think valuing other people and myself is what will guide me in life.**

**Rachel:** I hope to end the year with a better understanding of individuals with disabilities so that in the future, no matter who I interact with I enter with an open mind and an appreciation of what an individual is dealing with but also all of the things they are capable of. I try, during my days, to give space for the men I work with to direct their days as they wish and allow them to have as much agency as they can, adapting my care to them, building patience not trying to make them work into my schedule for the day. This agency piece is big, especially as I go into nursing- making sure that I am helping people in a way that honors what they can do as opposed to doing everything for them.



Megan front row center and other Adult Day Service staff celebrate Saint Patrick's Day with Raubin and Joe, both clients receiving services through Saint Joseph's Center.

## Do you have any special projects you are working on while at Saint Joe's? Something with or for the residents you serve?

**Megan:** YES! I started a book club about race at Saint Joe's for the staff. For the clients, I am hoping to get more involved in outings coming up—hopefully taking some people to fish and to parks. I really want to get the clients outside more. Maybe a field day when it gets warmer!

**Rachel:** Hopefully as the weather starts to warm up we can be more involved in the community again and take advantage of the outdoor spaces in Scranton.



“Shout out to all the clients! You are the reason why this has been a great experience.”  
-Megan