

United We Serve

from



to



United We Serve: A Talk to Corpus Christi Parish

September 10, 2009

1. "We are all Connected"
2. We are all Called
 - Biblical Foundations
 - Creation of humanity in the imago Dei and the social dimension
 - Incarnation – God becoming human in Jesus (all of humanity is good; No aspect of being human is separated from God's love and grace)
 - Social responsibility (Matthew 25:31-46)
 - Theological Reflection: Dignity of Human Person and the Common Good
 - We are created in the image of God (starting point)
 - We are social – called to be in relationship
 - God embraced our humanity by becoming one with us (Inalienable dignity not earned)
"The glory of God is the human person fully alive" (St Irenaeus – 2nd century)
 - Human beings are called to do justice (Common Good)
 - Catholic Social Teaching – treasure of tradition
3. We walk in the footsteps of Jesus (2 feet of social action)
 - Charity (direct service) and Justice
4. We have the right attitude for service
 - True service versus helping/fixing
 - Compassion can be habit forming
5. We are schooled in discipleship

Handouts for the Talk:

Matthew 25; Catholic Social Teaching (common themes); Walking in the Footsteps of Jesus; The Two Feet of Social Action; True Service is Belonging; We are all Connected; Outside Yourself (volunteering); 9 Things you Can Do to Fight Homelessness; About GlobeMed (change.org)



Matthew 25:31-46 (New International Version)

The Sheep and the Goats

³¹"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. ³²All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ³³He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

³⁴"Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. ³⁵For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, ³⁶I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'

³⁷"Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? ³⁸When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? ³⁹When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'

⁴⁰"The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'

⁴¹"Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. ⁴²For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, ⁴³I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.'

⁴⁴"They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?'

⁴⁵"He will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.'

⁴⁶"Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."

Catholic Social Teaching – common themes

The Catholic Church's social teaching is a rich treasure of wisdom about building a just society and living lives of holiness amidst the challenges of modern society. Modern Catholic social teaching has been articulated through a tradition of papal, conciliar, and episcopal documents. The depth and richness of this tradition can be understood best through a direct reading of these documents. Highlighted here are several of the key themes that are at the heart of our Catholic social tradition.

Life and Dignity of the Human Person

The Catholic Church proclaims that human life is sacred and that the dignity of the human person is the foundation of a moral vision for society. This belief is the foundation of all the principles of our social teaching. In our society, human life is under direct attack from abortion and euthanasia. The value of human life is being threatened by cloning, embryonic stem cell research, and the use of the death penalty. Catholic teaching also calls on us to work to avoid war. Nations must protect the right to life by finding increasingly effective ways to prevent conflicts and resolve them by peaceful means. We believe that every person is precious, that people are more important than things, and that the measure of every institution is whether it threatens or enhances the life and dignity of the human person.

Call to Family, Community, and Participation

The person is not only sacred but also social. How we organize our society in economics and politics, in law and policy directly affects human dignity and the capacity of individuals to grow in community. Marriage and the family are the central social institutions that must be supported and strengthened, not undermined. We believe people have a right and a duty to participate in society, seeking together the **common good** and well-being of all, especially the poor and vulnerable.

Rights and Responsibilities

The Catholic tradition teaches that human dignity can be protected and a healthy community can be achieved only if human rights are protected and responsibilities are met. Therefore, every person has a fundamental right to life and a right to those things required for human decency. Corresponding to these rights are duties and responsibilities--to one another, to our families, and to the larger society.

Option for the Poor and Vulnerable

A basic moral test is how our most vulnerable members are faring. In a society marred by deepening divisions between rich and poor, our tradition recalls the story of the Last Judgment (Mt 25:31-46) and instructs us to put the needs of the poor and vulnerable first.

The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers

The economy must serve people, not the other way around. Work is more than a way to

make a living; it is a form of continuing participation in God's creation. If the dignity of work is to be protected, then the basic rights of workers must be respected--the right to productive work, to decent and fair wages, to the organization and joining of unions, to private property, and to economic initiative.

Solidarity

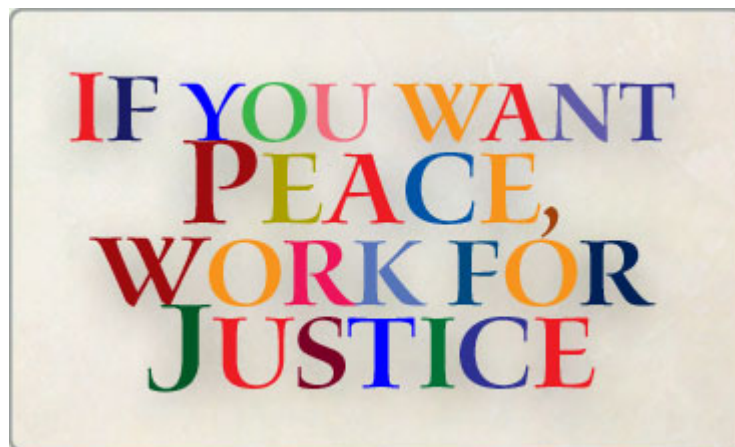
We are one human family whatever our national, racial, ethnic, economic, and ideological differences. We are our brothers' and sisters' keepers, wherever they may be. Loving our neighbor has global dimensions in a shrinking world. At the core of the virtue of solidarity is the pursuit of justice and peace. Pope Paul VI taught that "if you want peace, work for justice."¹ The Gospel calls us to be peacemakers. Our love for all our sisters and brothers demands that we promote peace in a world surrounded by violence and conflict.

Care for God's Creation

We show our respect for the Creator by our stewardship of creation. Care for the earth is not just an Earth Day slogan, it is a requirement of our faith. We are called to protect people and the planet, living our faith in relationship with all of God's creation. This environmental challenge has fundamental moral and ethical dimensions that cannot be ignored.

Social Justice (The Bottom Line)

Love of God and love of neighbor cannot be separated. To help us keep these two connected, Catholic social teaching promotes justice and dignity for all human beings.



Walking in the Footsteps of Jesus

The following text is excerpted from In the Footsteps of Jesus: Resource Manual on Catholic Social Teaching from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

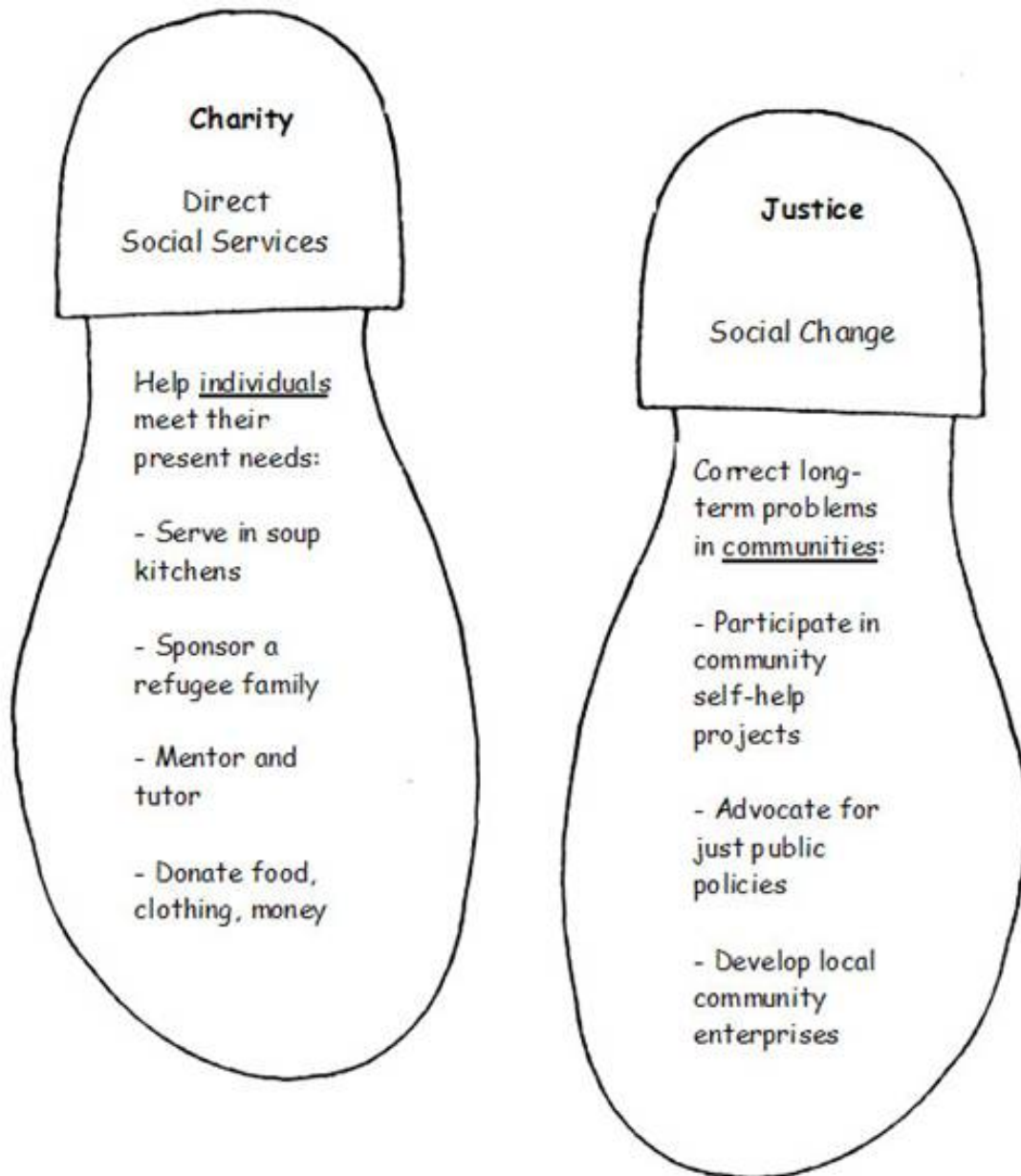
There are a number of ways we can walk in the footsteps of Jesus today. We can help in a soup kitchen, visit someone in prison, or help a refugee family. We can contact legislators, work for peace, or support a local community organization that empowers low-income people to do something about the issues that impact them. These examples illustrate two distinct yet complimentary ways to put Catholic social teaching into practice as it works for justice. These two types of responses have been called the two “feet” of Christian service. We need both feet – charity (direct service) and justice – to follow in the footsteps of Jesus.

Catholic social teaching calls us to both charity and justice. Charity meets the immediate needs of persons and families; but charity by itself can not change the social structures that attack human dignity, oppress people, and contribute to poverty. Pursuing social justice helps us change social structures: but we cannot ignore the urgent needs of persons while we work for social change. Charity and justice are incomplete without the other; they are two sides of the same coin. Charity calls forth a generous response from individuals; justice requires concerted communal action to transform institutional policies, societal laws, or unjust social situations. With our emphasis on individualism, we Americans tend to emphasize charity over justice. The challenge for Catholics is to appreciate the demands of both charity and justice.

Charity and Justice (How Both are Needed)

	Charity	Justice
General Responses	<p>Focuses on the needs of individuals, families and all creation.</p> <p>Looks at individual situations.</p> <p>Meets and immediate need.</p> <p>Addresses painful individual symptoms of social problems.</p> <p>Relies on the generosity of donors.</p>	<p>Focuses on the rights of individuals, families and all creation.</p> <p>Analyzes social situations or social structures.</p> <p>Works for long-term social change.</p> <p>Addresses the underlying social causes of individual problems.</p> <p>Relies on just laws and fair social structures.</p>
Responses to Homelessness	<p>Shelter homeless persons.</p> <p>Find jobs for homeless persons.</p> <p>Provide emergency assistance to prevent evictions.</p>	<p>Reduce housing costs through tax credits or low-income housing.</p> <p>Increase wages of working poor to make housing affordable.</p> <p>Reform laws to protect tenants' rights and enforce building codes.</p>

The Two Feet of Social Action



True Service is Belonging

Fundamentally, service is about taking life personally, letting the lives that touch yours touch you. These days, many people seem to think that being touched is a form of weakness, even if the life that touches you is your own. Many of us desire to “be cool” and seem totally self-sufficient. Should I live to be very old, I expect that I will not remember the times when I was “cool” but will be warmed only by the times when I cared passionately, risked everything to make a difference and knew who I was.

Not only have we disconnected from life, but many of us have disconnected from each other as well. Such qualities as self-reliance, self-determination, and self-sufficiency are so deeply admired among us that needing someone is often seen as a personal failing. We still perpetuate, in our American culture, a mind-set left over from the frontier times. Self-sufficiency was critically important when you lived a hundred hostile miles away from your nearest neighbor. However, many of us still live in this way today, three thousand people to a city block. Needing others has come to require an act of courage. Is it surprising, then, that so many people are secretly lonely and afraid to grow old?

Perhaps it is this striving for excessive independence that is a weakness that makes many of us so vulnerable to isolation, cynicism and depression.

It is doubtful that independence and individualism will enable us to live the deepest and most fulfilling way. In order to live well, we may need to know and trust one another again...to touch and be touched by those around us. Service is the way that this world can heal.

True service is not a relationship between an expert and a problem; it is far more genuine than that. It is a relationship between people who bring the full resources of their combined humanity to the table and share them generously. Service goes beyond expertise. Service is another way of life.

Often when we “help” we do not really serve. Those who merely focus on helping see life and people differently from those who serve others. When you focus on helping, it is hard not to see the person you are helping as someone weaker than yourself... someone who is more needy. When we help, we become aware of our strength because we are using it. Others become aware of our strength as well and may feel diminished by it. But we do not serve with our strength; we serve with ourselves. WE draw from all our experiences. Over the years I have discovered that everything I know serves and everything I am serves. I have served people impeccably with parts of myself that embarrass me, parts of which I am ashamed. The wholeness in me serves the wholeness in others and the wholeness in life. The wholeness in you is as worthy as the wholeness in me. Service is a relationship between equals.

As I serve, I become aware of my wholeness and more accepting of it. I may come to see and understand its power. Many times my limitations have become the source of my compassion, my wounds have made me gentle with the wounds of other people, and able to trust the mysterious process by which we can heal. My loneliness has made me able to recognize the loneliness in others, to respect that place where everyone is alone and meet others in the dark.

Most humbling of all, I have found that sometimes the thing that serves best is not all my hard-earned knowledge or expertise, but something about life I may have learned from watching ordinary people reaching out to others.

A helping relationship may incur a sense of debt, but service, like healing, is mutual. Service is free from debt. The wholeness in me is as strengthened as the wholeness in you. Everyone involved is fortunate to have had the chance to participate. In helping, we may find a sense of satisfaction; in serving, we have an experience of gratitude.

Serving is also different from fixing. One of the pioneers of the Human Potential Movement, Abraham Maslow, said, "If all you have is a hammer, everything looks like a nail." Seeing yourself as a fixer may cause you to see brokenness everywhere, to sit in judgment on life itself. When we fix others, we may not see their hidden wholeness or trust the integrity of the life in them. Fixers trust their own expertise. When we serve, we see unborn wholeness in others; we collaborate with it and strengthen it. Others may then be able to see their wholeness for themselves for the first time.

Perhaps fixing is only a way to relate to things. Relating to another human being in this way is to deny and diminish in some profound and subtle way the power of the life in them and its mystery.

I have in my life been helped and fixed by a great number of people. I am grateful to them all. But all that helping and fixing left me wounded in some important and fundamental ways. Only service heals.

All who serve, serve life. What we serve is something worthy of our attention of the commitment of our time and our lives. Service is not about fixing life, outwitting life, manipulating life, controlling life, or struggling to gain mastery over life. When we serve, we discover that life is holy.

Service is closer to generosity than it is to duty. We can give thanks to God for the ways that we find to connect ourselves with one another and to life itself. When we experience our connectedness, serving others becomes the natural and joyful thing to do. Over the long run, fixing and helping are draining but service is renewing. When you serve, your work itself will sustain you, renew you, and bless you, often over many years.

The best definition of service I have come across is a single word, BELONGING. Service is the final healing of isolation and loneliness. It is the lived experience of belonging to the family of humankind.

An example of a “This I Believe” paper: Outside Yourself

I believe that volunteering is the way to look outside yourself. I believe that looking outside yourself is the only way to understand and accept differences in others.

Volunteering has been an important aspect in my life for a long time. I was part of an after school program for seven years. Those seven years have changed my life in numerous ways, but none as much as one kid that touched my heart.

I grew up in a two parent home in the suburbs. The school was about five minutes from my house, but it was like being in a different world. After the initial culture shock wore off I realized that these kids were growing up in difficult situations, and surviving the only way they knew how. I tried to be as open, supportive, and disciplined as I needed to be to make a difference in their lives. One day during the team meeting the school representative told us that we were getting a new student today. She said that the child was slightly developmentally challenged, and there were problems at home. She implied abuse, but never said it directly. The kid was in my class, and stood out among his peers.

He was tall for his age, and walked with a limp. Intellectually he was not on the same level as his peers. He was constantly made fun of and pushed around by other kids. I decided then that my mission was to make a difference in his life if only for the time he was there. I worked with him to make sure his homework was done, and watched out for him during group activities. I also ate dinner with him, and sat with him during character building. Things that he said no one did with him at home. Over the year I watched his confidence grow and change, he was like a whole new kid.

It wasn't until later that year that I realized that I impacted his life just as much as he had mine. The last day of school the principal and the school representative asked to have a meeting with me. They started out by saying that he was taken away from his mother, and placed in foster care. They also showed me some essays and pictures that he left at school. They told me he only had his homework done on days after the program. The essay that made me cry was about how I was the only friend he had, and that I was the only one to eat dinner with him. Next they gave me a picture that he drew of him and I on the playground, I still have that picture.

Volunteering not only impacts the people being assisted, but you as well. I learned that little things, that may seem pointless, often mean the most to others. Those were some of the best times of my life. I realized that by volunteering I was shaping my life and outlook on the future.

For more examples look at the web site: www.thisibelieve.org.

9 Things You Can Do to Fight Homelessness

1. Defend homeless people's civil rights

Sign on to the **National Homeless Civil Rights Organizing Project**, a grassroots-level effort to combat growing trends affecting the homeless, such as increased criminalization and the **recent increase** in hate crimes and violent acts against the homeless. Here's how they define their mission: "By definition, people who are homeless live in public. A lack of housing forces them to do in public what everyone prefers to do in private. This indignity is one of many reasons we seek to end homelessness. Unfortunately, it has also become the battleground for the most fundamental defense of people who happen to be homeless: the right to exist." Get involved in one of their nine field offices across the country: Los Angeles, CA, San Francisco, CA, Portland, OR, Chicago, IL, Jeffersonville, IN, Cincinnati, OH, Atlanta, GA, Austin, TX, and Washington, DC.

2. Respond to legislative alerts

Sign up for email updates from the **National Alliance to End Homelessness**. Not only will you remain up-to-date on what's happening in Congress affecting homelessness and poverty nationally, you'll learn how to get involved when it's most critical. This powerful resource will provide you with all of the tools and information you'll need to contact your legislator about timely legislation.

3. Learn how to appropriately react to panhandlers

You're walking down the street. Someone asks you for money - and you're stuck. You feel for the person, you want to help, but you're unsure of how your charity will be spent. You don't want to encourage destructive behavior. How should you react?

Regardless of your response, you must assess each situation. Always look out for your own safety and avoid confrontation. That being said, here are some alternative responses to requests for money or change:

- Provide information about local organizations serving homeless people. Educate yourself about services offered by your community. Many organizations provide brochures for people to distribute in response to requests for money.
- Carry coupons for food (such as a sandwich or cup of coffee) or pre-packaged food (granola bar or tuna).
- Even if you're not planning on giving money, food, or information, it's best to politely smile and **acknowledge the individual**. Nobody likes to be ignored.

4. Stock up someone's new home

Across the country, homeless individuals and families are moving out of shelters and into permanent, supported housing. You can help make a formerly homeless person's new home more welcoming by providing supplies to furnish and equip their home for habitation. Consider

providing towels, pots, pans, bedsheets, utensils, lamps, shower liners, trash cans, etc. Contact your **local service organization** to learn more about turning "permanent housing" into a home.

5. Take advantage of teachable moments

When you see others behaving in insulting ways toward someone who is homeless, take advantage of the opportunity to share your compassionate and informed view on the difficult circumstances and obstacles facing people experiencing homelessness. You may be able to take the damaging arrow aimed at a person who is homeless and turn it into something constructive.

6. Find creative ways to collect supplies for a local organization

Shelters are in constant demand of supplies to distribute to homeless individuals. Large scale donation drives are great, but you can easily gather supplies more frequently by incorporating charity into your everyday life. For example, next time you have a party, ask everyone to bring a bar of soap or a tube of toothpaste. Buy an extra can of soup and jar of peanut butter every time you go grocery shopping, you'll be surprised how much you accumulate after just a few months. Be creative. Know that donations of goods in all quantities are useful and appreciated.

7. Help homeless kids be kids

Many children living in shelters don't have as much exposure to the simple pleasures in life that most kids experience. Work with your local shelters to sponsor a trip to a museum, baseball game, or park. Donate tickets to an event or aquarium so a family can attend together. Volunteer to organize host a game of whiffle-ball or barbecue at your **local family shelter**. Your time and energy will provide a welcome break from the stresses and challenges faced by homeless children.

8. Volunteer

You: talented, skilled, and compassionate. Why not lend your expertise and enthusiasm to improving your community? Shelters are always looking for dedicated volunteers to further their mission. Opportunities range from being a member of a board of directors to tutoring a homeless child. Planning a fundraising event to working as an overnight staff person at a shelter. The possibilities are endless. Contact your **local service-provider**, find out what they need, and determine how you can help.

9. Think outside the box

There are no limits to the ways you can become involved in the fight to end homelessness in America. Whether it's connecting with an individual or family experiencing homelessness, becoming an informed and active advocate, volunteering regularly at an organization in your community, or raising awareness and funding, you can use your talents and concern to make a difference.

About GlobeMed (see change.org)

Mission

GlobeMed's mission is to connect the assets of a student- led network to grassroots health organizations working in communities around the world. By inspiring and training university students to mobilize resources for global health, we seek to build a movement fighting for a more sustainable and secure world

Programs

GlobeMed organizes a powerful combination of programs that provide undergraduate students with the knowledge, skills, and passion needed to improve global health. Our [Health Partnerships](#) enable students to improve global health by mobilizing the resources of their university campuses to support partner grassroots health organizations throughout the world. As part of [globalhealthU](#), students organize discussions and public events on their campuses to build a critical understanding of global health issues. Each year, the [GlobeMed Global Health Summit](#) brings together GlobeMed members from across the country to learn from leaders in global health.

The GlobeMed Network

The GlobeMed Network currently includes 18 chapters at university campuses throughout the country and a small central office in Evanston, IL. Chapters are at the heart of GlobeMed's model of engaging students to make an impact in the health of communities around the world. Each Chapter partners with a grassroots organization in a developing country to collaborate on specific projects, organize educational programs organize a global health curriculum on campus, and lead trips to work with partners in communities abroad..

GlobeMed Chapters are at the following 16 schools:

Bucknell University	University of Southern California	Florida State University
Loyola University	University of Missouri-Kansas City	Northeastern University
Northwestern University	Penn State University	Truman State University
The George Washington University	University of California - Los Angeles	
University of Michigan - Ann Arbor	University of North Carolina - Chapel Hill	
University of Oklahoma	DePaul University	Washington University in St. Louis

- **To donate to GlobeMed through Andrew Gaillardetz at Loyola University, go to <http://www.change.org/myfundraising/everydollarcounts>**

Our current projects are to raise \$1000/year to subsidize half the year's salary of the health care workers and raise \$1000/year to fund training for the health care workers. Key fact: The health care workers of the La Primavera health clinic currently work with no pay and no opportunity for further training.

Speak Up 4 Service

What are you doing to make a difference in our community?

Provide service to: _____

Organization's Main Mission/Focus: _____

Contact Name: _____

Contact Phone #: _____ E-mail: _____

Your Name: _____

Your Phone #: _____ E-mail: _____

Describe what you do to benefit this organization and describe other volunteer opportunities with this service organization: