



ANNUAL REPORT 2023-2024 BRETHREN VOLUNTEER SERVICE

THREE-QUARTERS OF A CENTURY AND COUNTING

Marking a milestone: Events commemorate BVS' 75th anniversary

The past year was a year of celebration, as communities around the country held events to mark a milestone: The 75th anniversary of Brethren Volunteer Service.

Gatherings took place in California, Kansas, Maryland, Pennsylvania, and elsewhere during the year, bringing BVS alumni and friends together to share stories, enjoy fellowship, and lift up the ministry of BVS.

In addition, the 2023 Annual Conference included a special recognition of BVS' diamond jubilee during business, and a sellout BVS luncheon during the Conference added to the



festivities. A new book from author Jim Lehman and Brethren Press, *A Year of Living Differently*, also helped mark the occasion.

BVS director Chelsea Goss

Skillen said it was a chance to "honor the legacy of those who have dedicated their time, skills, and hearts to be the hands and feet of Jesus."

BVS BY THE NUMBERS

Volunteers currently serving:

26

*(19 in the US, 2 in Europe,
4 in Asia, 1 in Africa)*

Active BVS project sites:

About 55

Number of US states home to BVS project sites:

16 (plus Washington D.C.)

Current BVS monthly stipend:

\$250

BVS goes remote

It was announced this spring that Brethren Volunteer Service would be going remote for the first time in its history, as director Chelsea Goss Skillen relocated to her home in Richmond, Va.

All other full-time staff in the department were already working remotely. BVS will continue to maintain a small office presence in Elgin, Ill., with some part-time work and occasional volunteers located there.

STAFF UPDATES

Virginia Rendler began in July 2023 as interim volun-



teer coordinator for BVS. Working remotely from N. Manchester, Ind., she connects

regularly with volunteers through the year and plays a key role in making orientation plans.

Marissa Witkovsky-Eldred had the "interim" removed from her title last fall as she continues to serve as coordinator for FaithX.

Units 333 and 334 join the chorus with orientations in 2023

Twenty-two volunteers completed orientation this past year, with Unit 333 taking place at Inspiration Hills in northern Ohio in late July and early August, and Unit 334 meeting at Camp Koinonia in Cle Elum, Wash., in the fall.

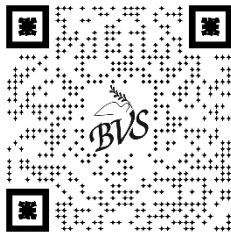
Members of those groups who were serving in the US gathered for a mid-year retreat at Camp Ithiel near Orlando, Fla., in March, and all volunteers do regular check-ins with BVS staff members.

The orientations typically include a variety of training sessions, sharing and conversations, games, a service project, worship, and cooking meals together.



ON THE SCHEDULE: UNITS 335 & 336

This year's **summer unit (Unit 335)** will hold orientation July 28-Aug. 5 at Camp Colorado, located near Sedalia, Colo., southwest of Denver. The **fall unit (Unit 336)** will gather Sept. 17-25 at Camp Brethren Heights in Rodney, Mich., north of Grand Rapids. Online pre-orientation meetings also take place before each group gathers.



FaithX: A 'beloved' message of service

A new older adult service trip highlighted the FaithX short-term service opportunities in 2024, with 15 people taking part in a February event at Camp Ithiel in Florida.



Another dozen trips were offered over the summer including experiences for youth and young adults, an adult trip to Ecuador, and the We Are Able trip for those with developmental disabilities. Domestic trips spanned nine states, from North Carolina to Indiana to Washington. More than 190 people registered.

The 2024 FaithX theme is "Beloved," drawn from 1 John 4:7. That also served as the theme for the denomination's Service Sunday in February.

DID YOU KNOW?

- BVS welcomed several new projects in the past year, including Lydia's House in Cincinnati, Christ House in Washington D.C., the San Diego Peace Campus, and the China Potato Project. Others are in the pipeline.
- BVS has recently done enhancements to its website, created a new purple promotional brochure, and developed an online project resource guide for volunteers. It also puts out a monthly e-newsletter with updates.
- The message of BVS hit the road frequently in recent months, with staff sharing at regional youth conferences, Young Adult Conference, college visits, and Annual Conference.