

Insights from AMA Parents

Elliot's Parents: Alison and Johan Simmons-Uvin

What was it like to talk with Elliot as he decided to volunteer with AMA? There were three phases that our conversations seemed to have gone through. One was listening to the various factors Elliot was taking into consideration and asking clarifying questions. He wanted a smaller and more focused service year where he could grow and learn. Then, it was more a conversation that focused on confirming his decision. In the end, it was about communicating our respect for and pride in his decision.

What were your first impressions of the Assumption Sisters? Our first reaction was that the sisters sounded like an "interesting and funny bunch." As we learned about their deep passion and commitment and their remarkable ability to create and spread joy, we knew Elliot's experience was going to be worthwhile and life altering.

In what ways have you noticed Elliot grow in his understanding of faith, service, solidarity, or community? We think Elliot has developed a much deeper sense of service and community commitment. He has become much clearer on his own values and has developed a deep respect for others. He has learned how to live in a different community and gained skills in working with people and listening and understanding how their stories relate to their community.

Any funny or touching stories to share? Of course we were thrilled that he was teaching ESOL since that is what we both have done and do now. His stories about teaching things like "aunt" and sharing his movements as he taught basic vocabulary was exciting and funny at the same time, he has a gift and interest in teaching and learned as much from his students as they learned from him.



Meaghan's Parents: Kevin and Karen Hickey

Just before Meaghan was to graduate from St. Anselm, we approached her with the typical questions: What are your plans? Have you applied to Grad School? Have you worked on your resume? Well, maybe we bombarded her with those questions. In any case, we did hear some hesitation, some nervousness, and a response we hoped would be different than the one she gave us.

When she told us about the AMA program she was considering, it was as if she became nervous and a little confused. Why would this energetic, intelligent young lady want to put her future on hold? As a student at St. Anselm, Meaghan volunteered and went on numerous mission trips. Honestly, we figured she did that then, and now she needs to begin her future. As Meaghan began to discuss this option with us, the hesitation and nervousness in her voice turned into pure joy and excitement.

It was at that moment we knew we couldn't discourage her from doing this. Meg was determined. She was going to volunteer again. Yes, we were proud of her, but we were nervous too.

After her interview in Worcester with AMA, Meg came home even more excited. "I know this is where God needs me to be, I really know it."

Move in day was a memorable experience. Our car was so over loaded we couldn't even see out the windows. Sr. Mary Ann, Michelle, and Elliot came out to help. The expression on their faces was priceless. I almost wished Michelle was with her always present camera to capture a picture of their faces. Elliot had shown up just moments before with just a duffel bag or backpack. And here was Meg with a carload. The best part was when we took out the 32" TV out of the trunk. Meaghan was supposed to be living simply, and anyone that knows Meaghan would laugh at the thought of that. For Heaven's sake, her makeup bag is the size of a small child.

When we met Michelle and Sister Mary Ann, we understood why Meg wanted to be part of this program. They welcomed her with open arms and we could feel the love they already had for her. As I drove away, I too felt like God was telling me she belongs here.

Meaghan has always been a sweet and giving young lady, but this experience has made her true self shine through. We witnessed her at her best, and when we saw her struggle with her emotions after realizing that some people had no choice but to live simply because that is all they had.

In time, we as her parents we grew too. We realized, that Meaghan never really put her goals and future on hold after all. It is because she was an AMA that her future is brighter and more blessed. We couldn't be more proud of her. Thank you to all the Sisters, Michelle, Elliot, and all involved in the AMA Program for giving her this opportunity and for being new and life-long members of her family and ours.



THANK YOU from Worcester, W. Philly, Lansdale, and Chapa!



Thank you for your friendship & financial support of young people serving in Assumption missions!

Pictures: Worcester community with the *Called to Life* group, West Philadelphia community, Lansdale with students from Assumption College, and the Sisters of Chaparral on retreat with the AMAs!