Greetings from the Director

Dear Friends of AMA,

Happy Summer! I hope you enjoy reading our latest “Friends of AMA” Newsletter. In addition to the longer reflection by Elliot, and the Milestones of previous AMAs, we have some special “extras” this year—Insights from AMA Parents and an AMA alum reflection (written by an AMA who reached out to us on Facebook thirty-one years after her year as an AMA ended)! Thank you to all who contributed photos and reflections for this newsletter and appeal. The voices and pictures of many are what make these publications so special.

Thank you for your continued friendship with the Assumption. Your donations help cover the stipends of our young people on mission, they help build the Kingdom of God here on earth by empowering young people to discover how they can be instruments of peace, joy, and justice. As Sr. Diana wrote in a newsletter at the beginning of my time as director, “When you support an AMA, you support a young person’s dream. A dream to grow in faith, to serve, to live for a while a simple committed community life. A dream to live the experience: “It’s not about me, but the other and Jesus.’” Thank you for making this important ministry to young people and those they serve possible. If you are unable to give financially at this time, you can still help!

Please help us spread the word of AMA to college students and encourage them to think about a year of service.

You will read below that my time with the Assumption as the Director of the Volunteer and Vocation Ministry is coming to a close. There are so many words of gratitude that I wish I could express in this tiny space, but try as I might, no combination of words can adequately convey the deep appreciation and love I hold for the Sisters and many hearts that have welcomed and supported me for the past (almost!) four years. Thank you to all of the Assumption Sisters, AMAs, and Friends of the Assumption for welcoming me into your community, homes, hearts, and lives. I will forever be grateful.

Peace,

Michelle

Pictur‌es: At top, AMAs and AMA alums Meaghan, Liz, Megan, and Elliot pause for a photo at the Celebration of Sr. Ake’s First Vows on April 30th. Right: current AMAs Idalia, Maria, Meaghan, and Elliot take a break from the reflecting and praying to take a picture with the welcome sign during their retreat in Chaparral! A good-looking and fun-loving group, wouldn’t you say?

A Message from the Provincial

Sr. Nuala Cotter, RA

Almost four years ago, on October 1, 2012, a slender young woman with a million dollar smile came to Worcester and took us all by storm: when Michelle Sherman got into the driver’s seat of our AMA Program (as well as our project for Vocation Promotion), things began to move! Since then, Michelle has become the dear friend of the Assumption Sisters and of the AMAs – those she recruited, to be sure, but also many of those who were already AMA “alums” when she came on board. And of course, many others have grown to know, appreciate, and love Michelle – her friends and neighbors in Worcester, the Campus Ministry Team at Assumption College (and the College alums who did the “Called to Life” retreat series for a whole year of once-a-month Sunday afternoons in 2015-16), the members of FIAT, the international vocation promotion team of the Religious of the Assumption, the people of St. Peter’s parish, the “knitting ladies” of Assumption Center and so many others.

All of which makes it very hard to say that Michelle is leaving her work with AMA and Vocation Ministry as of the end of July; it was not an easy decision, but family needs had to come first, and the six hour trek to Worcester as well as the other demands on her time just were a little too much for someone who gives everything. We’re happy to say that Michelle is moving on to a new position with the Villanova University Campus Ministry, where she’ll have special responsibility for retreats. Of course, we know very well that Michelle will never be really far away from us – we count on her friendship and hope she’ll count on ours! Thank you, Michelle, for everything you are and give to us Sisters and to all the others whose lives are touched and improved by yours. Go with God. Vaya con Dios!

~Sr. Nuala and the Sisters

Picture: BIG SMILES! During AMA Orientation, Michelle Sherman, Mike Land, Sr. Nuala, and Ally Longchamps take a moment for a selfie!
A Heartfelt “Thank You” to all of our Donors!
(June ’15–June ’16)

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New Experiences…
New Perspective

- Elliot Simmons-Uvin, Worcester AMA

The second half of my year as an AMA has been full of adventure, immersion, and good times. Over these past several months I have been fortunate enough to see Sr. Akeneta make her first profession of vows, attend a pilgrimage with the W. Philly community, visit Maria, Idalia and the RA’s in Chaparral New Mexico, and enjoy the rest of my time as a member of the Woo. Each of these experiences has contributed to my discernment for answering the big question, what’s next? I will explain to you all later what lies ahead for me next year, but as for now I would like to share a little bit about each of these experiences and what positive impact they had on me in understanding the value of being an AMA.

My second visit to Philadelphia was not to see Pope Francis, but to participate in the Jubilee Year Pilgrimage. In this pilgrimage, I visited the National Shrine of St. John Newman, St. Rita of Cascia, St. Katherine Drexel, and the Miraculous Medal Shrine. This was a new experience for me, as I have not participated in many pilgrimages and am not familiar with many saints. Learning about each of the saints allowed me to see the effect that these religious individuals had on both their communities then and now. I felt a connection to St. Katherine Drexel because she served African Americans and Native Americans. I was unaware that my family had been close with Katherine Drexel and the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament throughout their lives. Out of all the shrines we had visited, I enjoyed seeing the National Shrine of Katherine Drexel and learning a little more about a sister that worked closely with my relatives. I enjoyed learning more about these four Saints and the service they provided for the world. It was also great to spend some time with the sisters in W. Philly sharing meals, conversing about AMA and their ministries, and participating in prayer. On our last day in Philly we met up with Michelle and Kevin (AMA Alum NM) for dinner, the fairy garden, to the fiesta decorations and participating in prayer. On our last day in Philly we met up with Michelle and Kevin (AMA Alum NM) for Philly cheese steaks and decided to take a walking tour of Philly from the liberty bell all the way to the convent.

A few weeks after the pilgrimage, Sr. Akeneta made her first profession of vows. I was told it’s pretty rare to witness a sister make her first vows. So to witness Sr. Ake make her first vows was another memorable experience apart of my AMA year. From the mass to the dinner, the fairy garden, to the fiesta decorations and everything else in between, it expressed the love and spirit of the assumption family. I am so grateful that I was able to be apart of the celebration for Sr. Ake.

Another adventure in and of itself was our end of the year retreat in Chaparral, NM. I have grown up in Boston for most of my life, traveled across Europe, and also to a large number of states in the US, but I’ve never been to a place like Chaparral, NM. To be completely honest, I was shocked that this was even part of the United States. Despite the differences in what I was used too, and the socioeconomic differences between Boston and Chaparral, I could see a strong faith community enjoying the simple beauty of Chaparral. From spending time with a veteran of Vietnam and Korea, the youth group, listening to the women whom participate in prison ministry, visiting Annunciation House, and spending time at Casa Maria Eugenia with the RA’s, the trip was an immersion into the life of Chaparral. It was also nice to spend time with Maria and Idalia. Even though we are all AMAs, we usually only talk to each other during retreats or group conversations with Michelle, so this week gave us the opportunity to spend some quality time together to catch up on our experiences as AMA’s.

Out of all the shrines we had visited, I enjoyed seeing the National Shrine of Katherine Drexel and learning a little more about a sister that worked closely with my relatives.
AMA Alum Profile: Katie Colón

Thirty-one years ago, as I approached my college graduation, I felt a strong calling to spend some time doing volunteer work as the next step along my life’s path. My search led me to Sr. Francis Joseph, RA, in Pennsylvania who told me she was leading the effort to rebuild the AMA program in the U.S. after some period of hiatus. That August (1985), I became the first AMA from the U.S. in the newly reinstated program – destination Mission San Ildefonso, in the state of Queretaro, Mexico. It was the start of what was truly an amazing year in my life. I lived, worked and prayed with the sisters in that very rural part of the state for the next 13 months. There, I met Sr. Chabela (now in Chaparral) and several other wonderful “madres” who, along with the people of the community, would have a profound effect on my life.

The people we served were Otomi Indians. The contrast between their simple faith-filled way of life and the relative abundance and harried nature of life in U.S. had a significant impact on me. As a young woman of 22 (with limited life experience), I remember being struck by the fact that people who had seemingly so little in the way of material goods and comforts could nonetheless truly find joy in their lives, even in the face of deep hardships. I helped both to teach catechism to young people and to teach adults who had not had the chance to attend school to read and write in Spanish. And I grew to care deeply for the people, their beautiful cultural traditions and their resilient spirits.

Just as powerful was my exposure through the work of the sisters to community workers, both inside and outside San Ildefonso, who were focused on issues of social and economic justice, and the economic impact of the policies of countries like the United States in other parts of the world. Although I love my country, my year as an AMA broadened my world view and strengthened my values around social justice, civil rights and equality – values that I’ve carried with me into the rest of my life.

Today, I am a wife and the mother of three adult children. I live in Minnesota and work as a marketing director for a health services organization. But despite my busy life, I will always look back on my year as an AMA as one that helped form the person I have become – in every sense of the word. I am deeply grateful for my time as an AMA and am so glad that the program continues to thrive today!
Emily Cerial (Chaparral, 2009-10) married Devin King on July 19, 2015 in PA.

Theodore John Richard Carey was born July 22nd to Sara and Brendan (Mexico, 2009-10) Carey.

Liz Clayton (Worcester, 2006-07) and her husband Russ Wilson welcomed their second baby girl into the world on May 17, 2016. Big Sister Abby's pretty happy too. God bless you, little Eleanor Grace (Ellie)!

Beth Coogan (Summer Cana Community, 2015) is currently serving with AmeriCorps Access Workforce Development in Raleigh, NC helping people with barriers to employment find jobs.

Maggie McCormick McCabe (Chaparral, 2005-06), husband Dan McCabe and Big Brothers Sam and Murphy welcomed Baby Evie into the world on May 9, 2016. Your AMA family welcomes you, too!

Kevin Molyneux (Chaparral 2014-2015) has completed his first year of medical school at Jefferson in Philadelphia, and will be returning to Chapa to visit and work on a public health project this summer.

In April 2016, Rebecca Ickes (Newcastle, 2009-10) went to Fiji with the “Give Clean Water” project and helped install clean water systems in the islands. Rebecca, now a professional photographer, continues to live the AMA spirit of service!

Congratulations to Sr. Akeneta who professed her first vows as a Religious of the Assumption on April 30th. God bless you, Sr. Ake!

Monica Glick (Worcester) and her family will move to Lancaster, PA in June.

Becca Petty (Chaparral, 2010-11) welcomed baby Claire to the family in January. Big Sister Kesara was pretty excited too!

Katy O’Brien (Chaparral, 2007-08) is making the camino to Santiago de Compostela in June 2016! Praying with you, Katy!

Kristin Prinn (Chaparral, 2004-05) was featured in the Spring 2016 issue of Jesuits magazine. Her work with the LUCY project (Lifting Up Camden’s Youth) is truly inspiring. Bravo, Kristin!

Kathleen Gardner (2011-2012, Newcastle, England) recently directed her first short film for the Washington DC 48 Hour Film Festival. She headed up a team of 18 people that wrote, shot and edited the film all in one weekend. It went on to screen at a theater and was chosen by a panel of judges to be included in the Best of Washington DC screening and won an award. The experience reminded her of the days she spent creating films with the kids at Kids Kabin during her AMA year.

Maria Garcia Madrigal (2014, three month AMA from Mexico) is currently in the fourth semester of her academic studies (administration and human resources). She writes, “I’m very happy in the university. My sister graduated for the university last Saturday. I miss: Guadalupe’s family, all the sisters, Michelle’s at the knitting Friday, dreams with girls, (the place that was like a selling garage), and all the things, people, places and experiences that I had lived there.”

Lauren Brinkman (Newcastle, 2013-2014): Here is a picture of Thomas Simmons and Marjorie Benito and myself at a Cincinnati Reds baseball game. Marj and Thomas are both visiting! Marj was one of my house mates during the program and Thomas a very dear friend from the United Kingdom I met during my year there.

Rachel Recolcolin (Chaparral ‘13-‘14, Philippines ‘14-‘15) writes, “After serving AMA in New Mexico and the Philippines from 2013-2015 and just recently a half a year with Cabrini Mission Corps, I was recently hired as the new Administrative Assistant by the Drew Company and WebPort Global (subsidiary) in Boston at the Seaport District. The company specializes in real estate and trade management, event management and international trade services, real estate development, and hospitality consulting. I am at my second week here and I am liking it so far. I am learning a lot especially with the business aspect of it which is a new field for me since I’m very use to the international and humanitarian sector but I like to challenge myself and discover what God has in store for me. I hope and pray for a good year.”

Elizabeth Koroleski (Worcester in 2013-14) sent us an update: “I moved down to Lynchburg, Virginia from my home in Michigan last July to work at the Point of Honor house museum giving tours and now I’m also doing some research work! Here’s a picture from my trip back up to Worcester when I got to meet this year’s AMAs and celebrate Duck Day at Assumption College!”

In April 2016, Kristin Prinn (Chaparral, 2011-12) went to Fiji with the “Give Clean Water” project and helped install clean water systems in the islands. Rebecca, now a professional photographer, continues to live the AMA spirit of service!

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Liz Burnam-Supple (Worcester from 2011-2012) writes, “I will be moving in August from my life-long home of Philadelphia, PA to Los Angeles where my husband, Dan, will begin graduate school for an MFA in screenwriting. Fortunately, I will be able to stay with my firm, Morgan Lewis & Bockius, and simply transfer to our LA office. I am very excited and nervous for this grand adventure. Please keep Dan and me in your prayers as we embark on this wonderful new step, as we keep the Assumption Family in ours.”

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