

The “Aha!” Moment

A handful of times in my life I have experienced the sort of “Aha!” sensation that comes with the discovery of something that, simply put, felt like a part of me that was missing prior. I felt it when I discovered my passion for accompaniment and service (thank you, Ignatians Service Organization), I felt it the first time I saw cut paper art (thank you, Maude White), and I knew it loud and clear when I visited the Working Boys’ Center – A Family of Families.

This “Aha!” sensation has led me to where I am now, a Year Long Volunteer at the WBC for the 2018–2019 year. Reflecting on how I have come to this place, I recall my first trip to Quito no more than 7 months ago. At the time, a trip to Quito sounded like a fairly inconvenient kink in my agenda. Although I had been looking forward to the trip for several months, I began to feel some remorse as the weight of academic stress was simultaneously encroaching. “I don’t know... I’m just swamped with my thesis...and what is the point of going on this trip anyway, if it’s just for a week?...Maybe I should try to back out.” These words make me cringe now, as I find it difficult to picture myself anywhere else than where I am now. I had plans to pursue a year of post-graduate service work in the United States, but I had completely discounted the possibility of serving abroad prior to my visit to the Center, largely due to my own doubt in my ability to serve in a country, language, and culture that is not my own. Surely, the cynical/stressed/strung out-on-4-cups-of-coffee-per-day senior year Ann had no idea how one Ignacio Companion spring break trip would quickly change her mind and influence the rest of her life.

These “Aha!” moments may be known as epiphanies, realizations, or insights, but I have come to know them as seedlings; desires planted in our hearts that are telling of our purpose and passions. In a favorite prayer/poem of mine (Seedlings) by Anthony De Mello SJ., it is proposed that in order to allow for the growth of seedlings, you must “sow them where the soil is rich, sow them in your heart, and give them time”. Of all of these, I feel certain that the most crucial is time. With how easily things fall out of style, become difficult, or inconvenient, we often convince ourselves that the things we desire are fleeting, temporal or just “not worth it”. I firmly believe that the things we desire the deepest, the “Aha!” moments, bring about an undeniable part of who we are, and are signs of the presence of divinity in our lives. I have several former YLVs, mentors, family, and friends to thank for influencing my perspective on this matter as it is something I have learned and felt deeply in recent years because of their guidance and support.

These first couple of months working with the families of the Center have shown me that my desires have yet to lead me astray. Every day spent with my students may bring it’s natural set of challenges, but more than anything, this time spent brings about courage, joy, and an immense amount of love within this family of families. As I unwind from yet another week here at the Center, I take a deep breath in, and exhale with trust and acceptance of where my “Aha!” moment has led me.



WBC NEWS

NEWS FROM THE WORKING BOYS’ CENTER • QUITO, ECUADOR • FALL 2018



Message from Padre Gustavo Calderón



Autumn gives color to our lives. The brown, yellow, orange and red tones merge to provide a beauty that reminds us how the grace of God works permanently in us. In Quito, at the beginning of September, we began a new adventure with the families of the Center. After summer vacation and renovations to the Center buildings, we were ready to receive 165 families and almost 400 children and adolescents to accompany the most vulnerable of this city. The families with us now are among the most marginalized— among them several Venezuelan families.

Five US volunteers arrived to complete our service team at the Center. Each one willing and able to contribute their skills and with a deep desire to live a different cultural experience and build hope for our students. Ann, Amanda, Cloe, Jelani, and Richelle instruct English classes, support extracurricular activities in the afternoon, and also offer classes for adult formation during the evening after the dinner program. Another important facet we’ve implemented is the technical and science high school degree. This is the first time that WBC has built a future by opening these courses and being able to offer its students complete secondary studies. We are all happy and excited

about this great step for our students; it feels like we are walking together with faith in the Lord.

From September 13th to 23rd, I was in Milwaukee to visit the apostolic communities of St. Marys Visitation and Lumen Christi. They were two weekends celebrating Eucharist and sharing with parishioners about what we do in Quito, how grateful we are for their help and also reiterate that we have their support to continue our mission accompanying poor families in Quito. In addition, I was able to meet with wonderful benefactors who were interested in knowing in greater detail about the transition process we are experiencing for the sustainability of the Center. They were interesting conversations to make our plans transparent and commitment to continue with the Center’s 54-year legacy. In this we are committed and we trust that Jesus and the Virgin will enlighten us to achieve it.

Gustavo Calderón Schmidt, S.J.

Provincial

Welcome to our First Graduating Class of 2021

At the WBC, we continue to listen to our families and their needs in an ever changing world about how we can best serve them in their journey from poverty to prosperity. In this spirit, we’ve started various new programs to help our families continue to innovate and flourish. One of the latest opportunities we are proud to present to our students is the Bachillerato Técnico, or Technical High School degree program.

Our Primer Curso students, or US sophomores, will be our first graduating high school class of 2021! Our new high school diploma has two options— sciences and technical. The science degree is a high school degree that will specialize wholly in academics, and our technical degree specializes in metal mechanics and the foundations behind it (think technical drawing and chemistry). Our total class size is 26 students, and we will continue to add grades as this class advances through high school. By the year 2020, we will provide education from 1 year to high school graduation, with adult formation included in that as well.

We’ve seen excellent benefits to the implementation of our degree already. Teojama Comercial, an Ecuadorian bus repair and sales company, will give special training modules to our Bachillerato Técnico students to provide them with

cutting edge skills in metal mechanics today. Our students work in laboratory science classes and computer classes to better prepare them for the work force and the potential to enter higher education.

For our 7th, 8th, and 9th graders, we continue to offer technical education training in sewing, cosmetology, carpentry, auto mechanics, and metal mechanics.

We can’t wait to see what the next few years of shaping tomorrow’s leaders bring the WBC and our community. Hard work, determination, and the right skills continue to help our families break the cycle of poverty forever and contribute to a brighter tomorrow.



Our technical education students touring Teojama Comercial Getting the “password” right for English class (responding to how are you?)

Please mail contributions to

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Discipleship in Action:

“This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.” John 15:12



Father Gustavo celebrating in Lumen Christi Parish

It mid-September, Fr. Gustavo Calderón traveled to Milwaukee, Wisconsin and celebrated mass with the congregations at both St. Mary's Visitation Parish (Elm Grove) and Lumen Christi Parish (Mequon). Each community has been connected with the Working Boys' Center – A Family of Families for decades and it was a beautiful experience to show our appreciation for their long-lasting support, share the good news about Center programming, and celebrate in Christ's love.

During the 24th and 25th Sunday in Ordinary Time, each Gospel spoke about discipleship and how we, as Christians, are called to follow Christ's example. We are invited to live like Him and be willing to give our lives for others; using our time, talent and treasure so that others have the opportunity to experience God's love. As disciples, we are to build a better world where justice and reconciliation bring us together – to be bridges of peace and bring justice to the world today, especially to the most vulnerable.

The WBC began with a desire to share God's love with the most vulnerable, and through the support of communities like St. Mary's Visitation and Lumen Christi, our mission continues. The population we continue to serve is the most vulnerable, the poorest of the poor. Some of our families live in one room apartments that are shared by five or six children and the parents. It can take a family over an hour by a crowded public bus to reach the Center for breakfast, with the family having to leave at 4:30 or five in the morning. Running water is a luxury; some families have to use a shared outhouse, as there is no water source in their house. As everything costs more than ever in Quito, providing nutritious meals in a sanitary environment for the entire family is extremely difficult. However, with the Center's support, our families receive the tools and resources to transition from poverty to prosperity.

As disciples, we are called to serve others, to put another before ourselves. To serve the vulnerable in the way the Lord did identifies us as Christians – we are asked to show others the love that God has given us. Both the St. Mary's Visitation and Lumen Christi communities have answered the call to be stewards of His love and our gratitude for the incredible generosity is everlasting. May we all continue to follow Jesus's example, living as instruments of His peace and serving those who are in need.

– Olivia Young, C4WF Development Director

Skills to Succeed:

Of all of the members in our family of families, our parents carry much of the difficulties and burdens that accompany them on their journey to break the cycle of poverty forever. With over half of our families making less than the minimum wage for an individual in Ecuador, many work in the informal job market– selling candy or food on the streets, working as daily construction workers, or recycling plastic bottles for the majority of their day.



Adult formation in action.

Despite the exhaustion they experience after a long day of work on top of many other responsibilities, our adults know that furthering their education is a priority to empower themselves to achieve the dreams they envision for themselves and their families. Three days a week after the dinner meal, we offer adult formation to improve career possibilities. From learning to read and write to money handling, mathematics, and computer skills, our goal is to prepare adults for the future they seek. Currently, around 50 adults attend our classes, and our volunteers make up the team of instructors.



Volunteer Jelani working on Math with Segundo and Narcissa.

Every Saturday is an entrepreneurial opportunity. In addition to Saturday sessions and catechism, we also offer workshops to help our adults improve their living situations. Since the beginning of the school year, we have offered sewing workshops and an opportunity from Fundación Telefónica to teach our adults entrepreneurial skills and how to build a successful business.

For Melba Cabezas, it has always been a dream to learn how to use the computer. Being a member of the Working Boys' Center for 7 years, she is seeking more skills to improve her professional prospects and ability to help her children with their computer-based homework. Melba has enjoyed the class so much, she has brought in 5 other members to learn as well!



Our adults in entrepreneurship workshop hosted by Fundación Telefónica

Forming a community with our Center parents is an additional benefit to our integral family programming. Group prayer, reflection, and birthday celebrations bring us together in Christ's love for the Lord and for each other. The kinship in the class is palpable and the volunteers look forward to accompanying the Center parents on their educational journey.