



Mercy volunteer Amanda Branum works with a client in the adult day care program.

Mercy Volunteer Gives an Added Dimension to People in Need at Mercy Neighborhood Ministries

by Elena Perri, Communications Specialist, Mid-Atlantic Community

Amanda Branum hadn't heard of Mercy Volunteer Corps, but during her search for a year-long volunteer opportunity, she soon realized the program would be a good fit.

"I read the description, and I really liked the values and the community and faith aspect that weren't really in the Peace Corps and AmeriCorps," said Amanda, a 2007 graduate of Messiah College, which is located near Harrisburg, PA. "I applied right away, and I found a site that I liked, so I decided to go with it." Amanda said she was drawn to Mercy Volunteer Corps' focus on living simply and in community with other volunteers.

"Their strong emphasis on living in community was important to me," she said. "I wanted to live with other people who were having the same experience rather than just living on my own. Mercy Volunteer Corps also has an emphasis on living simply and focusing on the people in your life rather than on material stuff."

Mercy Volunteer Corps offers placements in the continental United States and Guyana, South America, for a one or two-year commitment for full-time lay volunteers. Mercy

volunteers serve in education, health care and social services. Volunteers commit equally to service, a simple lifestyle in community, and personal and communal spiritual growth.

“The clients are very cheerful and very excited to be here,” she said. “I think it’s very inspiring that they have such difficult situations, and they manage to be so happy and enthusiastic every day.”

Amanda has enjoyed her work at Mercy Neighborhood Ministries so much that she has decided to extend her volunteer commitment for another year.

“It’s been a stretch for me, but it’s been really good for me,” she said. “I’m curious to see how the program grows and changes. I’m excited to be a part of that.”

The adult program currently has nine clients, but is licensed for 16. In January, Mercy Neighborhood Ministries began moving from Our Lady of Hope Church in the Tioga section of North Philadelphia to a new environmentally-friendly building a few blocks away.

At Mercy Neighborhood Ministries, Amanda works with executive director Sister Anne Provost, RSM, facilities manager, Sister Margery Lowry, RSM, and Mercy associates Denise Hay, director of development and public relations, and Marie McGuigan, director of adult programs.

“We’re thrilled Amanda has signed on another year especially since we’ve made the transition into this new facility,” Marie said. “She will lend continuity and consistency. She has a beautiful ability to minister in such a way that promotes the independence of the participants in the program and having them become fully who God calls them to be.”

Marie noted that although Amanda is a quiet person, “Her presence provides a security for them. They feel safe. Her approach is so gentle, quiet and non-threatening. “If we didn’t have her, we’d have to hire somebody, which would be a financial constraint,” Marie added. “It’s been nothing but a blessing to have her here with us.”