

VOLUNTEER CHAMPION

Mary Snediker

C24/7 Academic Ambassador

Mary Snediker promotes education and serves elementary and middle school children enrolled in C24/7 After School Programs. She volunteers her time on an ongoing basis, and influence students' lives in very positive ways. Mary is mother, sister, and friend to C24/7 staff, student family members and she serves to help impact and help change their lives. Mary defines the meaning of the word "volunteer", and she is a very passionate volunteer. When given a mission she is committed no matter what obstacles get in her way.

Now retired, she found C24/7 when the Founders, Brother James and Natalie Crockett visited Glencoe Union Church. They spoke and introduced C24/7's mission to the Glencoe congregation. Mary subsequently went for a site visit and was immediately enamored by their passion for their ministry and signed up as a volunteer immediately.

She knew once she retired, she wanted to give back and joined C24/7 three years ago. She initially began volunteering with the elementary students; and because of her dedication, she was asked to work with the Middle School students because of the need and have since learned how amazing it is to work with middle school students and have absolutely fell in love with the program.

"Volunteering has given much more to me than I feel I have given to them", touts Mary. And for years I've been reading from different sources, including Father Greg Boyle, Father Richard Rohr, and Civil Rights Attorney, Bryan Stevenson – author of Just Mercy; and lastly,



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Father Gustavo Gutierrez. The theme among each of these authors is to be in proximity – don't stand at the perimeter, get in. And "that's what I wanted" when she choose C24/7 – to be in proximity to this community and noted that Rogers Park was the perfect fit.

"I want to earn the children's trust. To be another adult in their lives that they know will show up. I want to help them believe they are the beloved children of a God that loves us unconditionally. " And as Father Greg Boyle says, "here is what we seek. The compassion to stand in awe of what the poor have to carry rather than in judgment of how they carry it".

In closing, Mary feels the staff has been wonderful, the Program Director, Fatimah Mithcell is an absolute joy to work with. This is her second year, and she has really grown into the role. Moreover, I love the Crockett's, - I truly love them – they are so committed to their mission. They are unabashedly Christin in their every interaction. When you're in their company the Light of Christ is with you. It lights up the room!

Finally, last year I received approval to launch a Book Club, and with the help of my Librarian, we selected six different books specifically for middle schoolers, and we are on our second book. Book Club is important to me because it gives the youth the opportunity to discuss how they feel about some of the difficult things the book characters live through, and C24/7 provides them with a safe place to discuss these things. In addition, it provides an opportunity to assess and promote literacy. In roundtable discussions, we sit and read aloud and discuss what we've read and learned.

Overall, it's been exceptionally fun and rewarding!