The long summer days have faded and the crispness of fall has arrived. Each new season has us reflecting on the one we left behind, and at TACSC, we are always nostalgic about summer because it is our favorite time of year.

This past summer was filled with close to 300 enthusiastic delegates in their red shirts and binders who had unforgettable experiences at Summer Conference. While the world around us changes so quickly, the traditions at TACSC do not. Students still loved every minute of the bia-athalons, talent shows, relays and races and, of course, night prayers and reflections time. We were blessed to have Archbishop Jose Gomez celebrate mass with us once again this year. It was a beautiful celebration of our staff, students, families and TACSC community coming together.

Summer Conference wasn't just for middle school students this year. We were thrilled to expand our programs with the addition of our new High School Leadership Program. Eighty high school students joined us at Claremont McKenna College for three days and two nights, taking a deeper dive into leadership, led by our amazing senior staff. The three-day program ended with college admissions author and expert Dr. Cynthia Colon sharing ways for our high school students to use these skills for their next chapter—college.

So as we look back knowing that Summer ‘19 was another amazing year for TACSC, we are equally excited to look ahead to another great year of growing future Catholic leaders. Thank you for being a part of our past, present and future TACSC family, there is no one else we would rather share the seasons with than you! Happy Fall!

With gratitude,

Heidi Johnson,
Executive Director
After serving as a volunteer staff member at the Loyola Marymount University Summer Conference, I started working as a caretaker at Bethlehem Farm in West Virginia. Bethlehem Farm is a Catholic Community in Appalachia that transforms lives through service with the local community and the teaching of sustainable practices. We invite volunteers to join us in living the Gospel cornerstones of service, prayer, simplicity and community.

A single day at the Farm could include any number of things. We wake up and pray together as a group, led by someone in the community. We have the chance to share where we are on our own faith journey and learn from others. We transition to chores, which could include things like making breakfast, taking care of the donkeys and chickens, harvesting and watering, getting ready for a work site or writing a grant to find funding for the Farm. We then eat farm-fresh eggs, berries just picked off the bush and an assortment of organic and locally-produced foods for breakfast. After chores we go into a larger task for the day. Often, you can find me working in the garden, greenhouse, orchard or hoop house pulling weeds, spreading seeds and making sure I am on top of what needs to be done to keep the already-planted plants healthy and prepare for new ones.

Other days I'll head off to a worksite in the community. We perform home repair to low-income homeowners in the local area. As part of this program, we provide free labor, and the homeowner pays for the materials needed with a no-interest loan, provided by the Farm. We work with the homeowner to define their immediate needs and what we can do.

Still other days, I will work in the kitchen to can things from the garden. Sometimes it's cleaning the farmhouse to prepare for volunteers during our 18 group weeks.
throughout the year. Occasionally we will help a neighbor complete a task on their farm. I have been able to help monitor our bee hives and make sure they are healthy. Daily tasks are an ever-evolving list. We work together to get things done and then gather for dinner at the end of the day.

In the big picture, we continuously strive to be sustainable in our actions. We share a lot of things. We buy second hand. Over the summer we installed a solar hot water system to essentially eradicate our propane usage. Very soon, all of the electricity we use will be from solar panels on our farmhouse.

We have outdoor bucket showers which remind us to be mindful of how much water we consume. For that purpose we also go by the motto, “if it's yellow let it mellow; if it's brown flush it down.” Our compost toilets allow us to close the loop on waste production and put great, clean, chemical-free soil straight back into the ground. It's incredible to know where my food comes from and where it returns, without all the unnecessary resource-waste in between.

Every week we participate in an energy fast. In the Catholic tradition, we fast for many reasons, and it makes us more keenly aware of what we have when we go without. One night of the week we bring out our solar-powered lights and oil lamps and take a break from the majority of our electricity usage. We pre-pour water for drinking and brushing teeth, as even that is powered by an electric pump. We do not use our modern devices but instead play games, look at the stars, and read books.

One of my favorite things about the Farm is that I am able to continuously learn from those around me while I also practice servant leadership with volunteers during group weeks. I have never had a boring day. I am able to engage in conversations that challenge me, and the work I do around the Farm is also physically challenging. Living a counter-cultural lifestyle challenges me to remember the greater web of life in how I spend my time and my money. Leading volunteers at worksites challenges me to think ahead and be prepared. I have to make SMART goals about what I need to get done in a single day, a month and a
year. I'm always interacting with others. I have to use my communication skills to maximize time in meetings and to clearly tell a volunteer what I want them to do. If my directions are not specific, we could end up ruining a house instead of fixing it!

I do not think I would be doing post-graduate service if I had not learned the value of being a servant leader so clearly while at TACSC. Being on staff for the last few years has provided me with mentors who have encouraged me to pursue justice and to not get bogged down by what society says I should be doing. Pursuing environmental justice is my Magis, and I try to do that through an intentional lifestyle living with others and in this greater web of life.

I encourage you to continuously push yourself to be uncomfortable—through conversations and through the lifestyle you live. Try to go without things; you'll often find you don't really need them. Time your showers. Hang your clothes to dry. Try an energy fast. Plant a garden. Care for Earth as a friend. Think about how your actions affect others.

Find us on Facebook and Instagram! And if you would be interested in joining in our service, we have group weeks for high school and college students, adults and even families! If you would like to help from a far, you can donate at bit.ly/TACSCTori.

I appreciate your support and prayers, and I can’t wait to see how we TACSCers will continue to change the world!

Tori is a 2015 Notre Dame Academy graduate and a 2019 graduate of the University of Notre Dame.
We served a record-breaking number of students this summer between our Junior High Summer Conferences and NEW overnight High School Seminar.

This summer's theme was “Medieval Times.” Our seasoned volunteer staff members used unique teaching methods to create presentations relating to the theme. Our two main presentations, Making Meetings Matter and Communications, are two-hour productions that our staff put together. Our delegates always enjoy these presentations and get a good laugh while learning new life skills.

Last year, we launched our inaugural High School Seminar. This year, we had our first overnight High School Seminar, where students from over a dozen different high schools, many of whom had not heard of TACSC before, joined us for three days and two nights of life leadership training.
One of the main lessons we teach our students is that you cannot lead unless you serve. The TACSC family is a community of like-minded leaders that come together to lift one another up and learn how to change our world for the better. Now, the thousands of students we served last year are walking into a new school year, ready to put into action everything they learned.

Our students continue to participate with TACSC in high school, college and beyond to pass on the TACSC magic they once felt. Entering my 12th year of involvement with TACSC, that magic is very much still alive. There is a growing demand for leadership, and we need your help to train tomorrow's leaders. If you are not yet a part of our alumni program, we would love for you to join us and get involved!

Here is to another amazing year ahead,

Anthony Boulahoud
Associate Program Director
Summer Conference Director

We love to hear from you! Share your stories with us and stay connected with TACSC via social media or at tacsc@tacsc.org. You could be the next alum spotlight!

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Congratulations to TACSC Staff Member Molly Renze who won Comedy Sportz's Dual Duel 2019! Dual Duel is a competition where more than 40 improvisational comedy duo teams enter to win $500, a month run at the theatre and a trophy—but they only get 15-20 minutes to show their talent. Molly, a recent graduate of Rosary Academy, and her partner, another young college improviser with a crazy and fun concept, won the entire six-week competition. Molly is very grateful for the experience and how much it has made her grow as an improviser and a human!

Molly said, "I couldn’t have done this without TACSC. TACSC pushed me to the front of the classroom and allowed me to make it my stage. When communicating with my partner, I had to plan meetings, practice, work through disagreements and work with the theatre to make our show work. Even being the youngest team in the competition, I knew I could use my leadership skills to show my confidence and ability to beat all the other older, more experienced teams. I used my faith and skills to push through the end to be number one."

Congratulations, Molly! We are proud of you!

*Molly and her improv partner will have a monthly run of their show “JOLLY PLAYTIME” at the El Portal Theatre in North Hollywood.*