

Volunteering & Service | Br Chris Wills

Marists Collaborate with Jesuit Refugee Service at Westmead

Creating New Volunteering Opportunities for Marists in Sydney

The Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) is an international Catholic organisation with a mission to accompany, serve and advocate on behalf of refugees and other forcibly displaced persons, that they may heal, learn, and determine their own future. They were founded in 1980 and are present in 52 countries. Their organisational structure has the possibility of informing Marists about new ways of association. Marists have often collaborated with them in works of solidarity, most notably in the La Valla School in Cambodia and the Fratelli Project in Lebanon.

owned by St Vincent's Boys Home. JRS have taken over a little more than 80% of the building where they have based the Arrupe Centre, which provides counselling, legal, pastoral and economic services to asylum seekers from many different countries.

The Brothers' community, Graham and Chris, retains the bottom floor and half the top floor on the school side and we are gradually creating comfortable living spaces for ourselves.

Well-developed Volunteer Program

Lay and Brother Marists may be interested in volunteering with JRS as part of our Marist contribution to the crisis of worldwide mass human displacement. JRS has a well-developed volunteer program coordinated by Sister Margaret Guy and they are looking for people who could assist with services ranging from reception, driving and food bank through to English teaching, legal services and men's group. These are only a few examples. You could be a cook, a receptionist, child carer, counsellor, mentor, loans administrator, hospitality person and administrator. In their new facility there is scope for great creativity.

Longer Term Collaborative Plans

Longer term plans for the Marist-JRS collaboration include some partnerships in planning and implementing modules for refugee awareness in the Schools Program



Welcoming to Arrupe Place, the new Jesuit Refugee Service centre located at La Valla Monastery, Westmead. The event was run by the JRS professional staff and their volunteers. Fr Brian, provincial of the Jesuits, also attended.

Recently JRS had the official opening of their new facility in the La Valla Monastery at Westmead. This house has been home to many Marist Brothers since the 1960s, when they moved the High School from Parramatta to a site on land originally

and expanding the Community Development Program which includes creating a food garden in the grounds of the monastery. There are also some possibilities of joint works in the area of Advocacy and the potential to connect our Marist network to the Employment Program.

Partnerships With Existing Networks

The UNHCR estimates that there are about 60 million displaced people in the world and, inevitably, Marists are being directly connected with them. Two international examples are the Fratelli Project in Lebanon which ministers to Syrian and Iraqi children and young people, and the Lavalla200> Community in Sicily, ministering to unaccompanied minors from West Africa. Increasingly good work in the area of refugee support and care of people seeking asylum is done in partnerships and other forms of collaboration. Our natural link with JRS gives Marists the opportunity to learn, become part of the network and be engaged in frontline services.

The Fratelli Project

International Marist Short Term Volunteering Opportunity for Australians

The Fratelli project was created in 2016 in Lebanon by the congregations of the Brothers of the Christian Schools and the Marist Brothers to try to respond to the urgent, emerging needs of the most vulnerable children and young people. It assists mainly Syrian and Iraqi children displaced by the wars in the Middle East.

The project works in two educational centres:

1. Fratelli Rmeileh, located in the old Collège de Notre Dame de Fátima in Rmeileh - Saïda, 30 kilometres south of the Lebanese capital, Beirut. Activities began in March 2016 and, since then, the project has been assisting Syrians with different children's programs (Preschools, educational support, Basic Learning Programs and youth groups). It also develops activities for young people and adults (sewing, cooking, English and computer-skills).

2. Fratelli Bourj Hammoud, located in the "Société de Saint Vincent de Paul" building in the city of Bourj Hammoud, in the metropolitan region of Beirut. Since December 2016 it has developed activities with young Iraqi refugees and Lebanese children.

The community is inter-congregational and intercultural. It is located in Rmeileh, composed of 4 brothers (two Marists and two Lasallians) and volunteers (long-term) from several countries.

The Summer Program takes place in the months of July and August. In this period we are open to short term Volunteers. For the year 2019, the following guideline should be followed for the indication of volunteers:

- We will have 6 places available in July and 6 in August.
- The candidate must be available for the whole month of July or August.
- Preferably, the candidates must come from different countries or continents. We want to underline the international and intercultural dimension of the Fratelli Project.



- The candidate must be at a minimum age of 18 years.
- Possibly, people who have not already been volunteers in the Fratelli Project must be indicated.
- Make sure the candidate is available and has a spirit of service and proactivity.
- Special Cases will be analyzed by the Fratelli Council.

At the end of the process, the Fratelli Project Council will make the selection and confirmation of the names seeking to balance the number of Marist and Lasallian volunteers.



For more information you can find the Fratelli Project page on Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/FratelliProject/>

To indicate your interest as a candidate, please fill in the table in [this document](#).

If you are interested in any of these opportunities, please contact Br Chris Wills:

chris.wills@marists.org.au

Br Chris WillsFMS