

the **DWC** *World*

Educating Tomorrow's Missionaries



WHAT'S INSIDE



COMING TO AMERICA

Students are goal-oriented

Sometimes a little friendly competition is just what students need after a long day of classes! Divine Word College formation groups squared off in a heated soccer tournament earlier this school year that resulted in weeks of intense play and lots of laughs. While teams exchanged verbal jabs with rivals during matches, they also helped one another off the ground after wipeouts. Sports are an important aspect of Human Formation, which is one of the five facets of the formation program at Divine Word College. Students are encouraged to take care of their physical health, as well as their emotional and psychological well-being.

A group of spectators made up mostly of students and staff gathered each evening to cheer on their favorite teams and players. In the end, there was only one winning team but everyone involved succeeded in making lasting memories.

Small-town education has **GLOBAL IMPACT**

Sometimes what we do in our own backyards has profound effects on the other side of the world! That is certainly the case for Divine Word College. Epworth, Iowa, the site of the College, is a small town of approximately 2,000 inhabitants. There are several other small towns nearby, and the larger city of Dubuque is about 15 miles away. Most of the teachers and staff of Divine Word College live close by, and they call this part of the world “home.”

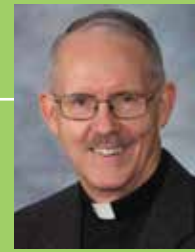
The College may be a small school, but our global impact is at least as large as a school a hundred times our size. Since 1931 when Divine Word Missionaries first arrived in Epworth, and since 1964 when Divine Word College opened, approximately 2,000 students have studied here. Now our former students are at work in dozens of countries around the world. Some are working in densely packed barrios of Latin America; others are teachers in Southeast Asia. Some are counselors and specialists in treatment of trauma in refugee centers around the world. Some are working in the rougher parts of Chicago and Los Angeles, in the mountains of West Virginia, and in the islands of the Caribbean. Quite a number are training other sisters, brothers, priests and lay ministers to spread the Good News. Here too, at DWC, we benefit from the training and enthusiasm of our alumni. Three-fourths of the SVD staff at DWC studied at the College; four lay staff members and a religious sister employed at the College are also graduates.

A doubter's question was once made about Jesus of Nazareth: “Can anything good come from Nazareth?” That inspires my question; can anything good come from Epworth? The answer is, YES! Very good people, working all over the world, come from Epworth.

Fr. Tom

By making a gift in your will and becoming a member of the Divine Word College Legacy Society, you will help prepare today's Catholic missionaries – just as Florian and Karen Steffen from Deerfield Beach, Florida (formerly from Maquoketa, Iowa) have. “We first learned about Divine Word College when we brought confirmation students from our parish to visit Divine Word. We also went to the March for Life in Washington D.C. with some Divine Word students. We became friends and later attended their graduation,” the Steffens said. “We greatly appreciate all that Divine Word Missionaries have done and are doing to spread our faith and love of Jesus Christ!! And how they have helped people all over the world. When we see the students at the March for Life rallies and events at the College, we know they are faith-filled and we want to help with their education.”

For information about leaving a gift to Divine Word College in your will, please contact Mark Singsank at 563-876-0097.



Fr. Tom Ascherman, SVD

You can help students for years to come

Each school year, Divine Word College students receive more than \$1.5 million in scholarship assistance. This assistance comes from the interest in our endowment fund. Money in our endowment fund is there because of generous benefactors who remembered the College with a gift in their will or estate.

Without these gifts, many of our students would have to look elsewhere for their education, because Divine Word College could not help them. You too, can help today's and tomorrow's Divine Word College students by remembering the College in your will.



Karen and Florian Steffen



For more information about Divine Word College, call 563-876-3353, email info@dwci.edu, or visit: www.dwci.edu



We are family

Religious congregations share founder, resources, mission



The Vocation Teams for Divine Word Missionaries and Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters sponsored a discernment retreat in December for people who are interested in religious life. DWC Counselor Sr. Aprilia Untarto, SSpS is seen here in the bottom left.

The term “family” has a lot of meanings. Some families are related by blood, some are connected solely by love and still others – like the Arnoldus Family – are bonded by a common religious charism.

In 1875, a German priest named Arnold Janssen inaugurated a Mission House in Steyl, Holland, and established a missionary order of priests and brothers called the Society of the Divine Word (SVD). Then in 1889, Father Janssen founded a missionary order for religious women named the Missionary Sisters Servants of the Holy Spirit (SSpS). Finally, in 1896 he founded a cloistered branch called the Holy Spirit Adoration Sisters (SSpSAP or “Pink Sisters”) who devoted themselves to prayer and perpetual adoration for the missions. Today, the three congregations continue to serve God’s people and share their resources to strengthen and uplift one another in the pursuit of their common mission. This year, Sr. Aprilia Untarto,

SSpS, is sharing her professional skills as the counselor at Divine Word College. Several SSps sisters have studied ESL at Divine Word College through the years and this January, the College welcomed the first SSps candidate to enroll in the undergraduate program.



Sr. Aprilia and the other SSps sisters at the College join the SVDs for weekly bible sharing, socials, recollections and conferences. “It feels like I work with my own siblings, my brothers and sisters,” Sr. Aprilia said. The three congregations founded by St. Arnold naturally gravitate toward each other in

ministry. The SSps and Divine Word Missionaries often establish mission houses that are close in proximity to combine their efforts at mission sites. Since the Pink Sisters are a contemplative order, their physical interactions with the other members of the Arnoldus Family are limited, but they exchange mutual prayers. The three congregations established a Joint Immigration Venture in the United States to promote justice for immigrants and refugees. The SSps Sisters and Divine Word Missionaries serve as active workers for the initiative and the Pink Sisters support them through prayer. “Fr. Arnold Janssen intentionally established our congregations as brothers and sisters and co-workers,” said Fr. Thang Hoang, Rector at Divine Word College. “We not only share the same founder but also the same charism and mission focus. The interculturality of these congregations is the main factor that keeps us connected.”

2021 support was amazing!



Mark Singsank,
Development
Office

Every day we receive donations from across the country to help our students with their education. Most Divine Word College students require 100% scholarship assistance to attend because their families, religious orders or dioceses have limited finances.

It’s because of you, our students are able to receive an education at Divine Word. Thank you very much! This past calendar year, you gave more than \$2.8 million to help our students. Your gifts came in all amounts, for a variety of reasons and through various methods. In recent years, more and more of you have sent gifts from your

traditional IRAs, gifts of appreciated stock and donor advised funds. These are all great ways for you to help Divine Word students and to help you when it comes to tax time. If you haven’t used any of those avenues to make your gifts to Divine Word, please contact your financial advisor or you can call me and I can help get you started.

I’m humbled every day at the generosity and kindness you show to Divine Word students and missionaries. I’m honored and privileged to know you and to be able to help you with your giving.

You are truly amazing!

COMING TO AMERICA

One of the most unique aspects of Divine Word College is the culturally diverse student body. This semester, 79 of the 97 full-time students enrolled at the College are international students. Each of them had to complete a long list of requirements in order to study in the United States but their patience and persistence is paying off.



Len Uhal,
Vice President for
Admissions

Obtaining Admission

The first step to enroll at any college is to fill out an application – the same is true for students at Divine Word College.

Men who are interested in entering the SVD formation program start by communicating with a vocation director to determine whether the religious order will be a good fit. Potential candidates who live outside the United States typically spend one to two years in this period of discernment. They email, text and speak via telephone or video chat with a vocation director.

Then, if the candidate is living in Canada or the Caribbean, a member of the vocation team travels to their home country to meet them for an in-person interview. Once they both agree that moving forward is the best option, the young man fills out an application and submits a variety of other required documents to the Admissions Committee.

Non-SVD candidates are typically men or women who are in vowed religious life and are referred to the College by their religious superior or bishop. They submit an application to DWC along with a health report, transcripts, a letter from their superior, a copy of their passport and a letter of suitability.

Divine Word College's Admissions Committee reviews all applications and decides whether to admit each applicant. International applicants who are approved are issued something called a Form I-20, which is a Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant Student Status. The staff in

DWC's Admissions Department enters the new student's name in a web-based system used by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security called SEVIS (Student and Exchange Visitor Information System). This database helps the government keep track of students while they're studying in the USA.

Applying for a Visa

Once an individual is offered admission to Divine Word College, it's time for them to

fill out the F-1 student visa application. They pay a SEVIS fee of \$350, which funds the United States' Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP). After that, prospective students pay a \$160 interview fee and set up a visa interview at a U.S. Consulate. The amount of time a student has to wait for this interview varies from one country to another and from day to day.



Long Hai Ngoc
Nguyen

Recently, some consulates closed for a period of time because of the Covid-19 pandemic and others, like the consulate in Haiti, closed due to violence in the area. Unexpected changes like these can make the enrollment process challenging and

unpredictable for students and the admissions team at DWC. Even after a student jumps through all of the required hoops and presents all of the requested documentation, the visa is not a sure thing. DWC student and SVD candidate Long Hai Ngoc Nguyen was denied a student visa the first three times he was interviewed at the U.S. Consulate in Vietnam. Students must pay the \$160 fee for each interview. By then, Long was nervous about whether he'd ever be approved, but he scheduled a fourth interview that fortunately resulted in a

Did you know?

U.S. schools need to be certified by the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) in order to enroll nonimmigrant students on an F-1 or M-1 visa. This program is part of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. Every two years, Divine Word College and other SEVP-certified schools have to apply for recertification to ensure that school officials are following regulations and requirements to maintain their certification.

positive outcome. He said he thinks he was denied the first three times because the interviewer was unconvinced that he had a genuine religious vocation and perhaps wondered if he would return to Vietnam after completing his studies.

“They just want to know the facts, the truth,” Long said. “What we want to do and why we want to do it.”



Carolyn Waechter

Maintaining documentation

After a student is approved for an F-1 Visa, it's time to pack their bags and move to the United States. In order to make it to Epworth before the start of a new ESL term, Long had just one week to prepare for his trip to Epworth in January 2020.

“I am really happy to be here,” he said. Long has already completed his ESL program and is now pursuing a bachelor's degree in philosophy. “I really love this environment and the way the people here work together. I think it's really good for me.”

For the past 20 years, Carolyn Waechter has served as DWC's International Student Advisor. She works closely with students to ensure that their visa paperwork is all in order and safely filed. She also makes changes in SEVIS as students progress in their education and change programs.

“Sometimes it's challenging because students don't always keep track of their documents,” she said.

Each semester – or term in the case of ESL students – Carolyn registers each international student in the SEVIS system. She records information like the student's address, verification that they are studying full time and other data that helps the government verify that the student is meeting the criteria necessary to maintain their student visa.

Keeping the faith

The unpredictable state of U.S. Consulates during the Covid-19 pandemic has led to a decrease in enrollment at Divine Word College, but not for a lack of effort from the College's Admissions team. In August 2021, 37 students were offered admission, but only 13 enrolled. Of the 24 students who did not enter, 17 were international students who were unable to get visas. Despite these difficult moments, Vice President for Admissions Len Uhal said the benefits of educating international students remain worthwhile.

“It's an opportunity for them to get a solid education but it's also an opportunity for Divine Word College to have more students at the school, which then makes it viable for our SVD candidates,” he said. “It allows the Divine Word Missionaries to share their charism, ministry, values and missionary vision with a group of people who will return to other countries around the world having St. Arnold's vision, imprint and charism engrained in them and there's value to that.”



CAMPUS CONNECTIONS



ESL students go wild

Every place is a learning opportunity for people who are learning a new language, so why not have a little fun in the process? The ESL students from Divine Word College took a field trip to Niabi Zoo in Coal Valley, Illinois in the fall to observe new animals and learn new words. It was also an opportunity for students to read about the animals and practice conversations with native English-speakers who work there. Field trips are a wonderful opportunity for DWC students to explore a variety of attractions in the Midwest.



All are welcome

Earlier this school year, College administrators decided to remove sections of the fence around campus. College President Fr. Tom Ascheman, SVD said the barrier sent an unwanted message that students needed to stay inside and the community was unwelcome on the property. As future missionaries, he said students should be developing a welcoming attitude, not shutting themselves away. Local high school students volunteered to help take down the fence and the materials were donated to local farmers and other businesses.



An education connection

From time to time, Divine Word College instructors partner with other area colleges for the mutual benefit of all students. This school year, the Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) students from Emmaus Bible College in Dubuque observed ESL classes at Divine Word to meet their practicum requirement. In addition, a DWC reading class met with a cross-cultural psychology class from Loras College. These experiences allow students to interact with peers while enriching the education they're receiving here at DWC.



Bless this home

Dozens of people gathered in October for the rededication and blessing of DWC's Megan Hall. Thanks to many generous benefactors like you, the century-old residence hall was updated with new siding, gutters and insulation, among other improvements. The religious sisters who live in the building even offered tours to those in attendance. Thanks to all who helped freshen up this seasoned building so it can continue to serve as a safe and comfortable home for DWC students.

FINDING PEACE AMID CHAOS

The floor-to-ceiling piece of artwork on display in DWC's Weyland Art Gallery feels caught between two worlds. The center is dark with illuminated angelic wings and a hovering halo but the edges depict sharp, ominous teeth that loom all too close to the peaceful image within.

The artist is DWC Senior Nay Kaw Sho. For him, art has always been an outlet to express his feelings. This piece was created for a multimedia art class exploring textiles in the fall. It's a depiction of his experience growing up in a refugee camp in Thailand. Nay's family is originally from Myanmar. They fled their village due to ethnic cleansing by the Burmese military and settled in a Thai refugee camp called "Mae La Oon." Nay was born in the camp a year later. He's the second youngest of seven children. When he was just five, his mother died.

Nay says life in a refugee camp was isolating. His family did not have Thai citizenship, so they couldn't move freely throughout the country or hold jobs. They were confined to the camp,

which was made up of people from his own ethnic group called "Karen." He attended school, played sports and did everything else within the perimeters of the camp.



When he was 15, Nay was relieved to learn that his family would be moving to Texas thanks to a United Nations program that helps refugees legally relocate. He spent a year in a program called the International Newcomer Academy before advancing to a local high school. After graduation, he

attended a community college and later met a Divine Word College Vocation Director who told him about Divine Word Missionaries. As a devoted Catholic, Nay saw the religious order as a possible opportunity to reach out and help people in need, like his own community.

Now as he completes his studies and reflects on what life must have been like for his father and the other adults in the refugee camp who feared for the safety of their families, Nay says his desire to help people in need is even stronger. Standing in front of his artwork, it's clear that Nay left a space for himself – or anyone else who views his work.

He says the teeth represent the fence that surrounded the camp where he was raised and the danger that lurked outside of it. It was the unknown that could come down at any moment and inflict pain and suffering on the people within. Still, through the eyes of a child, Nay felt safe and happy inside the camp. It was the only home he knew then and he found peace with his family and his faith.



Divine Word Missionaries are serving in 79 countries around the world. Did you know that the United States is one of them?

A long history

While it may seem strange to think of American ministries as traditional missionary work, the truth is that the U.S. has been an important missionary destination since the first SVDs arrived in the country in the late 1800s. The goal of the congregation is to serve the poor, marginalized, underserved and vulnerable. Those groups exist in America just like they do in other countries. Since the early 1900s, the SVD sought to evangelize among the black community. In 1934, Divine Word Missionaries ordained the first four African American priests to complete their entire formation at a U.S. seminary. They served at Immaculate Heart of Mary Church in Lafayette, Louisiana, a church that continues to have a strong connection to the religious order today.

An enduring service

The Divine Word Missionaries who work in American parishes often serve in diverse communities. SVD priests and brothers have broad language skills, formal intercultural

education and worldly experiences that make them a good fit in parishes that can be challenging for other priests. Today, more than 10 languages are spoken in the parishes where SVDs are serving throughout the Chicago Province! It's not easy for anyone to serve the pastoral needs of such diverse faith communities, but Divine Word Missionaries are able to lend their unique skillsets to provide a global perspective. Fr. Simon Hoang, SVD, recently joined the Divine Word College staff as the spiritual life coordinator. Originally from Vietnam, he graduated from DWC in 1999 and was ordained in 2007. He's spent the majority of the past 15 years working in parish ministry here in the United States. Most recently, he served as pastor of Sacred Heart Church in Memphis, Tennessee, for just over 10 years. With a diverse parish



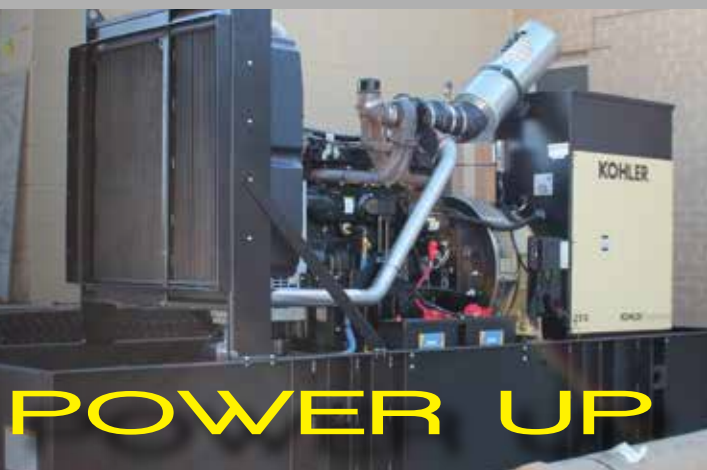
Fr. Simon Hoang, SVD with a parishioner at Sacred Heart Church in Memphis, Tennessee.

community, the church offers Masses in English, Vietnamese and Spanish. Fr. Simon is fluent in all three languages.

He says ministering effectively in a parish like Sacred Heart requires more than just basic communication skills. Parishioners need a pastor who helps them embrace and celebrate the unique aspects of their cultures. In some cases, it also requires an understanding of how to work with immigrants, people living in poverty and those who are outcast by society. "Most Divine Word Missionaries are able to do these ministries because we have our congregation behind us and the training we received during formation years," Fr. Simon said. "Sacred Heart is an inner-city church,

so we ministered not only to various cultural and immigrant groups, but also the homeless in the area." Some SVDs in the U.S. serve in roles outside of parishes. They are counselors, hospital chaplains, educators, and more. No matter what their role or where they serve, the common mission of service to God's people unites them all.

Divine Word College recently installed a 250 kW diesel generator designed to provide emergency power to the school's main building in the event of a major power loss. A smaller 20 kW generator was also installed at the nearby women's dormitory known as Megan Hall. Both generators were expected to be operational by mid-February. "We are relieved to know that we can continue operations no matter what Mother Nature throws at us," said Vice President of Operations Steve Winger. The total cost for the two generators, labor and the contractor's management fee was \$205,000. These purchases were made possible thanks to the generous donations of benefactors like you – *thank you for your continued support of Divine Word College!*



POWER UP