

Keeping Pace

The latest news from The Pace Center, VCU's Methodist Campus Ministry



Vicky with other members of Katie's Art Project

Meet a Pace Fellow: Vicky

Vicky started volunteering at Pace during her Freshman year when Community Cafe, Pace's multicultural student-made lunch, was just getting started. "I saw that they were looking for volunteers. I love to cook, but at the time, was living in the dorms with no real kitchen." Vicky, now a VCU senior majoring in biology on a pre-dental track, is also one of Pace's first Fellows. Fellowship is a six-hour per week program that helps students develop leadership skills as they pursue personal and professional growth. As a Fellow, Vicky is the kitchen lead on the Food Team and is also a member of the Arts and Music Team.

Not only is Vicky an active member of the Pace Center, she is involved in several other organizations on VCU's campus and was recently voted Treasurer of Katie's Art Project at VCU (KAP). KAP is a nonprofit that connects children with life-threatening illnesses to artists in order to create a lasting legacy through art. "We decided to host an art gallery opening to raise money. We collected works donated by VCU students, high school students, and local artists, and also partnered with other student orgs, like Heart to Soul in Action at VCU, Race 4 Unity, and Pace."

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Pace in a Week

Walk a Dog - Wednesdays and Fridays
Students are able to get some fresh air, exercise, and conversation when they walk dogs with Pace.

Stories and Lunch - Wednesdays
Personal stories help build community and bridge political, social, and cultural divides. During this series, VCU students share personal stories on topics such as ancestors, recovery, grief, and more, while enjoying a meal together.

Community Cafe - Thursdays
Students created Community Cafe in order to celebrate VCU's diverse student body through food. At each meal, you can try new cuisines cooked by students, explore new cultures, and meet new people.

Pause and Reflect - Daily
Students meditate for 15 minutes on a prompt and discuss with the group to work through the stress and emotions they're feeling.

Worship - Thursdays
Join us in person at Pace, for a special student service where we celebrate and reflect on the scripture.

Service Projects - Thursdays & Fridays
Students participate in Richmond community service projects as a group.



Vicky speaking with her mentor, Claire, at the Katie's Art Project Showcase

When asked what the best part of the showcase was, Vicky said she was most inspired by the variance in the artworks that were donated to be auctioned. An artist herself, specializing in fiber crafts, Vicky loved seeing what inspired others and what they were making. "When you just ask for money all you see is a number on a screen, but with art, you get to see the product, what people are passionate about making."

Everyone involved considered the event a huge success. Katie's Art Project is a new VCU student organization. "This was the first year that the org existed outside of covid. So this event set the precedent of what KAP is capable of. We reached over \$1,000 in donations."

By working with others to plan the event, Vicky honed leadership skills such as collaboration and conflict management.

"The other students I worked with came from different backgrounds and possessed different skill sets. I used to volunteer at free dental clinics while I was in high school.

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Through those experiences, I learned logistical skills, and how to direct moving pieces. But not everyone has the ability to do that." said Vicky. "Some people are more free-flowing and think about big ideas - what *could* happen, not what *needs* to happen. Those are their gifts. I'm very logical and precise. My gifts are planning out steps and getting stuff done. I helped lead the group by letting people go at their own pace, but set goals and provided guidance for the idea-generators. We each brought our gifts to the table and, in the end, it all worked out."

Through her work as a Pace Fellow, Vicky has discovered that she possesses other gifts as well. "I realized that I'm proactive and passionate. I'm not a bystander and I don't do these things because I have to. I'm passionate! The Pace Center gives me the avenue to make things happen. I think a lot of other Pace Fellows feel the same way. Pace is a nurturing nest - like the place you put lizard eggs in and watch them hatch."

"The Pace Center gives me an avenue to make things happen... Pace is a nurturing nest - like the place you put lizard eggs in and watch them hatch"

- Vicky, Pace Fellow and VCU senior majoring in Biology



Vicky with her father and Katie's Art Project member, Georgia



From left: Student participants fold origami; student volunteers prepare food; students at the Philippines table.

Multicultural Night Market Event

With only a day to go until the event, Pace's student volunteers are nervous and excited. "We're decorating ... and we're planning backup options." said Selma, a VCU freshman and Pace Fellow. Pace students have been working for over a month to present "JAO (Joint Asian Organizations) House Night Market" a multicultural community event in collaboration with five of VCU's East Asian student organizations. "The idea is that there will be cultural exchange through activities where students can learn new languages or cultural crafts. And then, afterward, everyone gets to celebrate with a taste of each organizations' food."

"We're going to run out of food." said Eda, a Pace Fellow who is pursuing an accounting certificate. "Or, alternatively," Selma interjected, "We're experiencing a lot of engagement from the student community." To laughter, Eda continued, "We had a lot of Pace members express interest in making a dish of our own, so we last minute decided to make beef and vegetarian kababs."

"I'm excited to bring the community together. Even if it's your first time at Pace or you are a transfer student, this event might help you to get to know some people on campus. Maybe to make one extra friend." David, a transfer student himself started coming to the Pace Center through Pace's "Walk a Dog" event. This event is a way for students to connect with each other and chaplains while getting some fresh air and exercise. David became a regular at the event and has since become part of Pace's fabric, attending and volunteering at several Pace events each week.

In the end, student attendance was monumental with over 30 student volunteers to help prepare for JAO night and over 350 student attendees. Though the attendance was staggering, at Pace, students are encouraged to think of success beyond just numbers. When asked why they thought the event was successful, students agreed that the diversity of the attendees and depth of the experience was what made the event count. Students noted that the teamwork and collaboration during the event, the cultural sharing, and personal interactions made the event great. "Volunteers enjoyed the atmosphere of Pace and wanted to be a part of the Pace community." Pace Fellow, Cherie, said. "They wanted to come back."



Over 350 students attended the Joint Asian Organizations Night Market event.



Pace Fellow Maikah, processing clothing donations for Afghan refugee families

Pace by the Numbers Fall 2021	
Total semester attendance	1500
Unique student attendees	800
Total student volunteers	250
Pace social work interns	4
Pace Fellows	14
Pace Leaders	27
Student Meals hosted by Pace	23
Pounds of clothes collected	45
Cards of Hope created	18
Mentor matches made	10
Pints of Blood Donated at Pace	114
Student Volunteers @ Belmont Food Pantry	97

Pace Serves the RVA Community

If you were to wake up around 6:30 a.m. on Thursday mornings this fall and listen very carefully, you might be able to hear the sound of alarm clocks ringing throughout VCU's campus. A group of Pace students is dedicated to making the 7:30 a.m. shift at Belmont Community Resource Services, a food and clothing pantry founded by Belmont United Methodist Church in Richmond's south side.

"There were about nine student volunteers today," said Master of Social Work student, Maggie. "Some of us were at the produce table, some were unpacking bread, dry goods, and meat. The donations get organized on Thursday, and then on Friday, we do distribution."

Belmont volunteers were happy to have the extra help: over 300 families are served by the pantry each week, a number that has only increased due to the pandemic. Belmont requires at least 50 volunteers a week just to keep the pantry going.

"The other volunteers are super friendly and welcoming," said Matt, a VCU student veteran and Pace Fellow. "It's nice interacting with them, learning other people's connection to the area, and networking." Matt is a member of the Pace Center's Serve team, a group of students who are interested in service opportunities in the Richmond area and want to volunteer together. Matt is also responsible for helping to organize a clothing drive for Afghan

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Student volunteer, Maggie, sorts food at Belmont Food Pantry.



Pace student volunteers, Ethan and Matt, unpacking food donations at Belmont Food Pantry.

refugees who have relocated to the Richmond area. "Team Rubicon, a veteran's disaster relief organization, was collecting specific items for the 10,000 refugees at Fort Pickett and I thought I could use the people and resources at Pace, VCU, and the Student Veteran's Association to help." Besides helping to host this drive, students at the Pace Center also created "Cards of Hope": hand-made cards with inspirational messages to welcome refugee families.

The Pace Center is working to instill a sense of community responsibility in students. "Each year, students are interested in volunteering in the community, but they don't know where to begin," says Reverend Katie Gooch, Director of the Pace Center. "At Pace, we are able to connect those students with each other and help them find opportunities where they can make a difference. They give each other rides and hold each other accountable for 6:30 a.m. wake-ups. It makes me proud to send these students to United Methodist Churches and other organizations whose volunteers give out of their faith and love for humankind. By equipping and empowering students to be in

service with their community, Pace is nurturing their desires to give back to the community into a life-long passion and vision of service."

Not all Pace students have the drive to volunteer in greater Richmond's communities, but the ones who do gain a lot from the experience. "Personally, I volunteer because it makes me happier knowing I make a difference in someone's life. I think that's why I'm at the Pace Center in general - because I'm making a difference - I'm not just sitting on my butt at home," reflected Ethan, a freshman studying psychology. "There's obviously no monetary gain from the experience, but I get a lot of emotional happiness from being at Belmont."

The Serve team is considering ways to build deeper relationships with the recipients of Belmont's Food Pantry, to learn more about the gifts of the people they are serving. "We want to spend more time there and learn more about what goes on," said Ethan.



Pace student volunteers, Kailey and Niara, bag food at Belmont.

"I volunteer because it makes me happier knowing I make a difference in someone's life."

- Ethan, VCU freshman and Sociology Major

Remembering Reverend Doug Hill



Students Q and Kayani frame Doug's memorial mural.

Reverend Doug Hill was a member of the Pace Center's board for almost 10 years. When Rev. Hill passed away unexpectedly this fall we wanted our students to understand why he mattered to the Pace Center. To Pace, Doug exemplified what it meant to lead a life of service and devotion. "In his nearly 10 years of service on the Pace Board, Doug Hill was the model of what it means to 'serve'" says D'Arcy Mays, Pace's Board Chair. "He was faithful to the ministry, a friend and mentor to Pace Directors and board members, and would say 'yes' to any request. He had a positive story to share for any situation. A true man of God, he will be missed greatly."

Our students decided to memorialize Rev. Hill through a mural that they worked together to paint - a tree in all seasons. The tree symbolizes the growth of Pace, which Doug helped to cultivate, and also, the seasons of life. Our students are in their spring now, but we hope that as they grow, they will continue devoting energy to causes that will have a positive impact on the world, as Doug did. Rev. Hill's mural will hang at the Pace Center.

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