

Frances Kantner '05



“It seems funny to me to get attention for this sort of thing. It’s just what I think people should do.”

Volunteering for service has always been a part of Frances Kantner’s life, and coming to the University of Indianapolis only strengthened her ambition. A social work major from Mentone, Indiana, Frances already knew in seventh grade that she wanted to make a career out of helping people. “I decided then that I wanted to do some kind of human service,” she said. “We had visited a group home with my church and I thought ‘I want to help these people.’”

When she came to the University, Frances immediately signed up for a service-learning class. “I thought, ‘Oh, volunteering—that is something I like to do.’ I was able to get credit for it and work with different populations of people.” She also quickly found a home within the Social Work Department. “I met the social work professors and they were so nice and helpful. I felt like they wanted me here and would do anything to help me.”

As she began to volunteer in Indianapolis, she found herself being challenged and stretched in new and sometimes uncomfortable ways. One of her first volunteer experiences was at the Damien Center, a home for people with HIV and AIDS.

“I was 18 and ‘fresh from the farm,’” she said, “and I was really scared. I wasn’t even doing much—just helping people to get groceries—but it was so new to me. It turned out that it was a really good experience, though.”

After spending a semester working at the Damien Center, she spent another semester at the Concord Center working with young kids and senior citizens. Another semester found Frances at Girls Incorporated of Indianapolis, where she tutored kids after school. Fletcher Place, a homeless shelter downtown, benefited from having Frances there to pack lunches on Fridays.

“Though it was scary at first,” she said, “you start to see through it. After you get past what’s different, it’s not scary anymore.” From there she moved on to the Julian Center, a place for women and children who are victims of domestic violence, where she assisted with the school for the children.

During her junior year, Frances split her time, working with the Wheeler Arts Alternative Academy helping to write grants, and doing her internship practicum with the Indiana Girls School, working with a social worker. “I think that the service learning opportunities at UIndy are great,” said Frances. “It’s definitely been the best thing that I’ve done here at school.”

Even after Frances was graduated from the University, her service learning experiences continued and will likely have a lasting impression on her career.

“I want to go to grad school and earn my master’s in social work and law,” she said. “Then I want to be an advocate for kids in court or just represent kids in court cases. Helping in that way really calls to me.” And it’s likely that she won’t think that she doing anything extraordinary or special—it’s just what people should do. —*Jennifer Huber*

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(p. 81) Frances Kantner with children. Photograph provided by Frances Kantner used with her permission.