**Mennonite Voluntary Service Contributions**

**Soliciting funds**

Thank you for your interest in partnering with Mennonite Voluntary Service (MVS). Whether you have applied to become an MVS participant in one of our units, or an advocate providing support to a participant, you have made an important step toward an experience of personal development and cross-cultural ministry that we hope will have a lasting impact on your life.

We know that raising support can feel like a daunting task. Yet for many participants this has been a wonderful experience in feeling support from friends, family, and your congregation and community. We encourage you to consider that there are those that truly do care for and want to support you.

It is important to ask your community/congregation to join you in this experience, for you are not embarking on an individualistic endeavor, but one that is grounded in the community of faith. Part of the role of the advocate will be to help raise contributions for the expenses of the unit where the participant will be serving. The following guidelines and reflections will help as you begin contacting people to raise these contributions. Though this may be uncomfortable for some, we have found that people will often be excited to partner with you in this way and generously desire to walk with you during your experience.

**How to approach potential supporters**

Make a list of relatives, church friends, and neighbors who you plan to contact. Ask the people you identified if they are interested in supporting you in this experience. Each person must decide if they are able to give and some may choose to be supportive in ways beyond finances. In your visit, phone call, or letter, take time to explain what you will be doing and what you are asking of them. Be pleasant, and give them time to think and pray about it. Pastors or youth leaders may be helpful in giving guidance on presenting the opportunity to the church. Share with others where you will be living, the type of placement you will be serving at, why you decided to do MVS, what you are hoping to get out of the year, and whatever else makes you excited. This is your opportunity to share what MVS is all about!

**Fundraising**

It is your responsibility along with your advocate to solicit funds for MVS and develop a support network. This includes personally contacting your family, friends, and congregation.

MVS is asking each participant, with the help of their advocate, to raise at least $4,000 USD to help cover unit and location expenses. The yearly cost of lodging, food, healthcare, and other benefits for each MVS participant is on average $16,000. These expenses are largely covered by the partner agencies where the MVS participants will be serving. By collecting funds from other sources, we can better assist these agencies by lowering their financial burden.

Your motivation for soliciting funds for MVS is highest before you leave home as you anticipate entering service. Many people will be excited for you as you plan your entry into the program. While there is no official deadline for collecting these funds, it is much more difficult to raise money after you have left for the unit location. Participants are encouraged to send a thank you note to each donor to express their gratitude for the generous giving of each person.

You or your family as well may have resources that can be used to help cover your participant contribution. We encourage a minimum of 10 percent of the total contributions you are asked to help raise be covered from your personal funds. We have learned that participants gain a greater appreciation for their MVS experience when they also invest financially.

***If you have any questions, please e-mail Marisa Smucker, MVS director, at*** [***MarisaS@MennoniteMission.net***](mailto:MarisaS@MennoniteMission.net)***.***

**Collecting Contributions**

There are several ways donors can give funds on behalf of the MVS participant. MVS recommends using the MobileCause site, but the other options can be used for a donor who is more comfortable giving in another way. Donors outside of the United States should give through one of the online methods below or contact MVS Staff to work out other possibilities.

**MobileCause**

MMN has a subscription with MobileCause, a crowdfunding website. A page will be set up specifically for each MVS participant to use in their fundraising efforts. The benefits of using this site are that you will be able to see an up-to-date progress bar of the funds that have come in, as well as to see who has donated money on your behalf.

Participants can share the link to their MobileCause page through letters, email, social media, etc., as well as a texting option to direct people to the participant’s fundraising page as well.

*Any international contributions made through MobileCause would not receive a tax-deductible receipt.*

**MMN Website**

Churches and individuals are welcome to give through the Mennonite Mission Network website. Participants can direct individuals and churches to the following link:

<https://mmngiving.formstack.com/forms/VoluntaryService> . The donor should select YES they are giving to a specific unit or participant. The participant’s name should then be noted on the electronic form so that donations get credited to the proper MVS participant and unit.

Participants can choose to share this link with friends and family through letters, email, social media, etc.

**Checks**

Checks can either be made payable to the participant’s local congregation or be sent directly to Mennonite Mission Network. If checks are made to the local congregation, the church treasurer can then send in one cumulative check to Mennonite Mission Network with MVS and the participant’s name in the memo line.

Individual checks mailed directly to MMN should be made out to Mennonite Mission Network with MVS and the participant’s name in the memo line. Including a note with all checks will also ensure the donation is credited to the correct participant and unit. Donations not labeled clearly will go to the MVS general fund.

Checks can be mailed to or dropped off at either MMN office:

Mennonite Voluntary Service Mennonite Voluntary Service

Mennonite Mission Network Mennonite Mission Network

PO Box 370 718 N Main Street

Elkhart IN 46515-0370 Newton, KS 67114

**Tax Deductions**

U.S. donors will receive a MMN donation receipt on behalf of MVS. Checks made out directly to the participant are not tax-deductible.

*Due to IRS rules pertaining to tax-deductible giving, contributions designated for MVS cannot be returned. All contributions received will be used for meeting the needs of the MVS program.*

**Soliciting funds (sample letter)**

Dear [Name], family, friends and church members,

It is with a sense of real excitement and anticipation that I write this letter to you. Beginning in [Month], I am planning to enter the Mennonite Voluntary Service program. MVS provides experiences that create space for intentional formation. MVS is an experience designed for adults to grow in their faith, participate in the work of the church in a new location, learn to see what God is doing in the world, and to imagine and explore ways to continue to serve in the years to come.

I will be leaving [Date] to spend the next year in [Unit Location], a service location where I will have the chance to live with and get to know a community different than my own. I am looking forward to serving and building relationships that are transforming in my life.

I would really like you to go on this journey with me, in prayer and financial support. Participating in MVS requires me to raise part of my financial support so that the communities where we are serving do not have to fully support us with their own finances.

I will be keeping you informed about my experiences through regular communication. I want my year in MVS to be a time where we share our experiences and stories of faith with one another. My hope is that we all grow in faith as a result.

I invite you to prayerfully consider contributing whatever feels appropriate for you. There are several ways that you can give a gift on behalf of my service term. You can find my fundraising page here [MobileCause Link]. You will receive a tax-deductible receipt from Mennonite Mission Network (except for international contributions).

If you would prefer to mail a check to MMN or to give through their website, please include MVS and my name in the memo line or where it asks if you are giving specifically for a participant.

I am really looking forward to this experience as a time of growth and discovery. I would like to thank you in advance for helping to make this possible and joining me in this journey.

Thank You!

[Name]