**WE COMMIT OURSELVES TO INTENSIFY OUR EFFORTS TO SHARE OUR SPIRITUALITY AND MISSION WITH YOUNG ADULTS.**

Thank you for supporting the St. Joseph Worker Program!

The annual California Dreamin' Program highlighted accomplishments of the St. Joseph Workers culminating in a 6-minute video and Kristen Daniels’ reflections in which she said: “To have the courage to stand in front of you and announce that I am a writer, only comes from being an alumna of the program we are celebrating tonight.” See below for complete text.

It is a privilege to work with these young Dreamers, who are changed for life because of their connection with our Charism.

Video: [https://www.dropbox.com/s/edjaaatwzh5wmf3/SJWP%20Master\_rev.mov?dl=0](https://www.dropbox.com/s/edjaaatwzh5wmf3/SJWP%20Master_rev.mov?dl=0#_blank)

 Submitted by Judy Molosky, CSJ

Now Sr. Judy gave me an excellent introduction but for those of you who I haven’t met yet, I’d like to formally introduce myself. I am Kristen Daniels, born in Connecticut but with Angelino blood coursing through my veins from the very beginning. I am obsessed with comic book superheroes, fluent in sarcasm and love forcing people to listen to my new favorite song. I am a voracious reader and am hoping to read a book a week this year.

 And… I am a writer.

 I’m going to be honest with y’all tonight- I have never said that out loud. I dance around the title, making excuses, refusing to own the fact that being a writer is as much as part of me as any limb attached to this body. *To have the courage to stand in front of you and announce that I am a writer, that only comes from being an alumna of the program we are celebrating tonight.*

 This is not the first time I’ve been presented with the opportunity to write. I met this fork in

the road once before when going to college. At the very last moment I shied away from journalism and writing, not possessing the confidence to allow my words to reach others.

 Applying for this internship brought out all my insecurities, both old and new. *(Kristen has been hired as full-time Intern writer at NCR-National Catholic Reporter, with first assignment covering World Youth Day in Poland)* It was too far from California, I wouldn’t know anyone and big surprise, it would necessitate having someone judge my writing. Thankfully, I am fortunate enough to realize, most times, when I’m being stubborn and obstinate. The St. Joseph Worker Program, my family, my friends and co-workers all saw the bigger picture for me- they pushed me to pursue a dream that I thought had long expired. They are my cheerleaders. They were the whispers reminding me that I am good enough. They were my strength when I was discouraged. They are the unshakeable spirit that brought me comfort during my six-hour interview. When my confidence wasn’t enough, they always graciously offered me theirs.

 And that is what the St. Joseph Worker Program is all about. Not only are we here creating women who are passionate about social justice, leadership, faith and community. We are here creating women who have the determination and the means to pursue their dreams.

 I can go on forever about the positive impact of this program, but it is equally as important to understand the difficulties each young women faces when they choose to volunteer for a year. I left college with a suitcase full of dreams and buckets upon buckets full of loans. Unfortunately money, loans and bills are all huge burdens every women faces. It isn’t unusual to face pressure from one’s support systems to pursue a more “normal” looking career path post-college. One thing that made it easier for my Mom to adjust when I moved here was that I’d receive the Americorps stipend to pay for accrued interest and assist with my future loan payments.

 Starting this year, Americorps has decided to no longer offer this help to programs like the program you are here celebrating. In response, the St. Joseph Worker Program Advisory Council hopes to initiate a fund for loan repayment. The Council firmly believes all young women should have access to volunteering, regardless of socioeconomic background. This fund is still developing, so please stay tuned in the next couple of months for information.

In the meantime, I’d like to thank each of you for your spiritual, emotional and financial support. Your support makes all the difference. To anyone who is wondering where your support goes, it helps fund positions like homeless caseworkers, who work tirelessly to be a beacon of hope for individuals who are at the end of their rope. Your money supports mentors that build and inspire strong female leaders, showing that they’re capable of leading everything from a classroom to Capitol Hill. And your money helps instill confidence and growth in women who now have the courage to push beyond the boundaries of their hopes and pursue the unspeakable dreams that emanate from the bottom of their heart. So from the bottom of my own heart, thank you for your continued support!