

Little Sisters of the Poor • *Spring into Service* Frequently Asked Questions

How do I know if *Spring into Service* is right for me?

Spring into Service, our live-in service program, was designed as an extended “Come and See” experience for young Catholic women interested in exploring consecrated life in an active apostolic community.

Maybe you know a little about the Little Sisters of the Poor and would like to get to know us better, or you have a sense that God may be calling you to religious life, but you don’t know where. Perhaps you’ve never really thought about consecrated life, but Christ has put in your heart a strong desire to serve the least of his brothers and sisters — the poor, the sick and the elderly — or to take a stand in favor of the sacredness of human life. If any of these scenarios describes you, then *Spring into Service* could be right for you!

Although we are able to offer modest financial compensation to young women who commit to at least six weeks of service in one of our homes, usually during the summer months, *Spring into Service* is not a simple job. Nor is it a professional internship. It’s much more!

Who is eligible to apply?

Single, Catholic, college-age young women (18 years and older) and recent college graduates are eligible for the program.

Where would I be living?

Participants in our *Spring into Service* program live in a guest room in one of our homes. Depending on the available accommodations and the number of young women serving with you, you could be asked to share a room with another participant.

Are the dates of service set?

No, each young woman determines her arrival and departure dates with the Sisters at the home to which she is assigned.

What if I have a family event or other reason to leave for a few days in the middle of my stay?

Not to worry! Many participants have had weddings, family reunions or other special occasions for which they have needed a few days off mid-summer. If this is your situation please mention this on your application and then let the Sisters know as soon as possible when you receive your assignment.

What kind of work would I be doing?

Generally you would be directly involved in the daily lives of our elderly Residents, including helping to serve meals, transporting them to and from activities, helping to prepare and animate recreational and social activities and providing companionship.

If you are a certified nursing assistant (CNA) with eligibility to work in the state where you are assigned, you will be able to perform more direct care tasks, including bathing, dressing and feeding our infirm Residents.

You could be asked to assist with other “odd jobs” around the home according to need. We also invite you to make known your gifts, talents and interests; we’ll be happy to work with you to see how we can put them to use.

I don’t have any experience with the elderly, should I still apply?

No problem! An open, willing heart, flexibility and a good sense of humor are more important than any specific experience. You will receive appropriate training for any tasks you are asked to do.

What else would be expected of me?

Participants in *Spring into Service* are encouraged to enter fully into the spirit of the program. This includes participating in times of community prayer (evening prayer with the Sisters, daily Mass and special celebrations; morning prayer each day is optional), and contributing to a positive community spirit among the Little Sisters, Residents, staff, volunteers and other participants in the program. You will be invited to share a meal and a bit of community time with the Sisters on a regular basis.

In harmony with our charism, participants are also encouraged to practice a simple lifestyle and purity of heart in all their activities, both while “on the job” and in their free time.

Is it possible to take classes or hold down another job while participating in *Spring into Service*?

Because *Spring into Service* is an immersion experience with work, community and spiritual components, it is not possible to hold down another job while participating in the program.

Depending on the workload and time commitment required, it might be possible to take a summer class, especially if it is really necessary for your studies and it is online. Nevertheless, you should discuss this with the program organizer and/or the Sisters in your assigned location to discern if taking a course is advisable.

Is there a dress code?

We ask that all those who work in our homes, whether as volunteers or paid staff, wear modest, comfortable, practical clothing while working with the elderly. This means slacks rather than shorts; skirts and dresses that go more or less to your knees so that you

can bend over without being embarrassed; short or long sleeve blouses or shirts; nothing too low cut, too tight, see-through or otherwise too revealing.

If you are working as a CNA you will probably be asked to wear a uniform.

Our homes are air conditioned and some people find them a bit chilly, even in the middle of summer, so you might want to take that into account when planning what clothing to bring.

When working around wheelchairs, walkers, etc. we recommend wearing close-toed shoes or supportive sandals, not flip flops. Athletic footwear is fine.

Laundry facilities will be provided.

You will want to bring a couple of skirts and/or dresses for Sundays and special occasions. Feel free to wear more casual clothing in your time off (i.e. shorts that are not too short, like bermudas or skorts).

Speaking of time off, will we have any?

Yes, you will have regularly scheduled time off and we encourage you to use this time for rest and relaxation in harmony with the spirit of the program. We also encourage you to use this time to explore the local attractions where you will be assigned, while respecting the values and rhythm of life of the home (i.e. using media appropriately, not staying out too late, etc.).

My friend and I are both applying to the program, can we serve together?

This is a tricky question! You should pray about this. If you and your friend are together, will you each be free to discern and follow the Spirit's lead? Will you have a tendency to want to be together all the time, or will you be willing to work independently, at separate tasks? If you are together will you still be open to new relationships with the new people you will meet?

We usually send young women out to the homes in pairs or trios, so in most cases you would not be alone. We encourage you to look at the *Spring into Service* experience as an opportunity to meet new people, build community and grow humanly and spiritually.

What if I have dietary or other health concerns?

We ask that you make these issues known during the application process and together we will discern whether the program is right for you. Common dietary restrictions are generally not a problem, but if you need specific items it might be best for you to plan on obtaining them yourself. We can figure this out together.

Even if you do not have special needs we count on you to be open about any difficulties you might encounter during your stay with us and we will work with you to address these and to assure that you have the best experience possible (i.e. fatigue or stress in a new climate or unfamiliar environment, strong emotional reactions in working with a vulnerable population and confronting sickness and death, etc.).

Our foundress, Saint Jeanne Jugan, often said, "Making the elderly happy, that is what counts!" Our desire is that your time with us will be happy, healthy and spiritually enriching as well!