

Unsung hero of walking pilgrimage to Philadelphia and Pope Francis



Amanda Miller-Wehr and Father Jack Lombardi share a laugh (Paul McMullen/CR Staff)

Asked if she has any experience as a travel agent, Amanda Miller-Wehr answered, “No, other than planning family vacations.”

The administrative assistant at St. Peter in Hancock, however, has an undergraduate degree in hospitality management and has taught related subjects at the college level, background that is evident as she filled in all the logistical holes in the itinerary for our [108-mile walk](#) from Baltimore to Philadelphia.

Her boss, Father Jack Lombardi, is the spiritual leader of our Pilgrimage of Love and Mercy, a figurative and literal stretch that requires tracking donations of shelter, food, drink and gas money - let alone keeping up with the whereabouts of Father Jack, who, like the man in the song, has been everywhere.

Who coordinated lunch for Father Jack, myself, 18 other pilgrims and support van drivers Sept. 23 in Rising Sun? That would be Kellie Reynolds, the youth and young adult minister at St. Stephen in Bradshaw, who happens to live in Cecil County. Where are we bedding down Sept. 25? That would be in Aston, Pa., at Neumann University. I know that because of Amanda, who tracks and collates all the responses to the dozens of requests made by Father Jack for support.

Fortunately, when Amanda went to work in June 2014 for St. Peter Parish, it was with a degree in hospitality management from West Virginia Northern Community College, and with two semesters experience there as an adjunct instructor in the business and hospitality department. She's worked as a restaurant manager, and is the mother of five, including twins Jameson and Isabella, who turned 2 in June.

Amanda was born across the Mason-Dixon Line in Warfordsburg, Pa., but was baptized at St. Peter and received all her other sacraments there.

"When I started working here," Amanda said, "Father (Jack) and a group of 18 were just getting ready to go to France on a religious freedom pilgrimage. I wasn't involved in much of the planning for that, but helped with logistics here in the office during the final stages. This is the second pilgrimage that I have done with Father Jack. The first was the religious freedom [pilgrimage to Ireland](#) this past June with 20 pilgrims. It was a wonderful experience to be able to help organize the pilgrimage.

"I feel that it gets easier, as you know some of what lies ahead, and the basics in planning. But, you also never know what will happen. Things change constantly, and you have to always have faith that things will work out for the best, in the way that God intends them to."

We still need monetary donations to cover gas for our support vans. If you can help out there, give Amanda a call at or email her at officestpeter@verizon.net or call 301-678-6339.

Click [here](#) for ongoing coverage of Pope Francis' visit to America, including local, national and international stories, Catholic Review blogs and commentary.