I t was an evening that Christopher McCartin ’91 CE says he will never forget. November first, 1991. “I got off the plane at the airport just above Panama City,” McCartin recalls, “and all at once I realized that I was completely on my own. I was fairly naïve and I knew exactly 20 words of Spanish!”

Scanning the airport terminal on that long-ago afternoon in Panama, the youthful engineer saw no sign of a welcoming committee. With growing alarm, he asked himself: Was he really doing this? Was he going to spend the next year and a half as a volunteer engineer at a remote outpost in rural Central America where he’d agreed to help build a water-supply system for a Catholic missionary priest he’d never even met?

Yes, he was. He’d taken the plunge. After conferring at length with his College of Engineering mentor, Associate Engineering Professor Frank Falcone ’70 CE, ’73 MSCE and telling him “I want to help people,” McCartin had taken Falcone’s suggestion and dropped by Campus Ministry where a thoughtful staffer told him about “a really interesting opportunity to volunteer in Panama.”

Less than six months after graduating, the gung-ho McCartin packed half a dozen of his engineering textbooks, along with a brand-new spirit level and a surveyor’s rod (both donated by the College). Then he hopped aboard a jetliner for the 4,425-mile flight from New York to Panama City where he soon found himself shaking hands with the cheerful and endlessly energetic Capuchin missionary priest from Wisconsin—Father Wally—who’d already been working on the water-system startup for three years. Within a few hours, the two of them were rattling down a bumpy road in the priest’s battered pickup toward Chris McCartin’s Amazing Adventure in Panama.

During the next 18 months, the tireless young engineer from East Rockaway, New York, would spend hundreds of hours “applying engineering principles” to Father Wally’s numerous water-related infrastructural projects in the Bayano region of central Panama. On one particularly memorable occasion, he rode on horseback high into a range of nearby mountains, and then, with the help of a few local volunteers, surveyed a gravity-based path of descent that would allow water to flow smoothly through downhill pipes all the way to the village of Wacuco and environs.

“That was a terrific way to start an engineering career,” says McCartin, now 46, who these days serves as a managing director at the New York City-based real estate firm, Tishman Speyer. “That experience taught me how to rely on myself as an engineer—and it also taught me a lot about how the rest of the world lives. For a young engineer just starting out, both of those lessons were invaluable.”

Like Chris McCartin and Frank Falcone, more than 100 Villanova Engineering students, alums and professors have journeyed to far-off Panama to help Father Wally bring water to parts of the Bayano region during the past 24 years. “I’ve been there seven times so far,” says Daniel Lutz ’71 CE, now the director of public works for Upper Darby, Pa., “along with some great teachers like [Assistant Professor James C.] Jim O’Brien and [Professor and Senior Associate Dean for Graduate Studies and Research Gerald F.] Jerry Jones. We’ve taken many students along, and most of them learn a great deal about using their [engineering] skills to help other people.” Adds Engineering Associate Professor Bridget Wisshak, PhD, ’00 CE, who’s visited the region on three separate occasions: “I think one of the best things about these
“These trips provide Villanova students with the opportunity to experience a culture distinctly different from their own, put their education into practice and feel the satisfaction of helping those less fortunate than themselves. Service to others is a foundational value at Villanova that is evident everywhere one looks.”

—William Dooley, parent

Nearly a quarter of a century after Chris McCartin got it all started, Villanova’s service-learning connection to the Central American country and Father Wally is even truer than ever. “I went down there six times during my years at Villanova,” recalls recent graduate William Angiolillo ’12 CE, ’13 MSCE, who is now a staff engineer at Redline & Moul Inc., in Stamford, Ct., “and that experience expanded my horizons. It provided invaluable insight into the process of civil engineering, and also some spiritual insights that I still value today. Father Wally is an incredible man, and his faith is infectious.”

service-learning projects is that they allow students to actually see how what they’re learning in the classroom gets applied in real life. It’s fine to learn about laying pipes in school, but if you actually have to do it in a place like Panama, you face very real engineering challenges unique to that project. In more recent years, Villanova engineering teams have helped Father Wally expand and refine his once-primitive water-delivery system into a modern network that relies on an enhanced dam, a huge storage facility and miles of carefully engineered pipes to supply central Panama’s once-thirsty residents with clean and potable water, 24/7. This program changes lives. It reaches the people who are living without running water or electricity. It educates the local engineers about sustainable development of the Caramanico facility and miles of carefully engineered pipes to supply central Panama’s once-thirsty residents with clean and potable water, 24/7.

“Supporting Engineering Service Learning”

Villanova Engineering Service Learning would not be possible without generous support from donors. The following alumni and families have made significant contributions to advance Villanova’s commitment to developing innovative and humanitarian engineers:

Engineering students travel to Cambodia to support structural development efforts at the Caramanico School, built by Anne and Thomas CE ’71, MSCE ’83 at the site of the former King’s School in Cambodia.

“Supporting Engineering Service Learning”

Villanova Engineering Service Learning would not be possible without generous support from donors. The following alumni and families have made significant contributions to advance Villanova’s commitment to developing innovative and humanitarian engineers:

“Supporting Engineering Service Learning”

Villanova Engineering Service Learning would not be possible without generous support from donors. The following alumni and families have made significant contributions to advance Villanova’s commitment to developing innovative and humanitarian engineers:

“Supporting Engineering Service Learning”

Villanova Engineering Service Learning would not be possible without generous support from donors. The following alumni and families have made significant contributions to advance Villanova’s commitment to developing innovative and humanitarian engineers:

“Supporting Engineering Service Learning”

Villanova Engineering Service Learning would not be possible without generous support from donors. The following alumni and families have made significant contributions to advance Villanova’s commitment to developing innovative and humanitarian engineers:

“Supporting Engineering Service Learning”

Villanova Engineering Service Learning would not be possible without generous support from donors. The following alumni and families have made significant contributions to advance Villanova’s commitment to developing innovative and humanitarian engineers:

“Supporting Engineering Service Learning”

Villanova Engineering Service Learning would not be possible without generous support from donors. The following alumni and families have made significant contributions to advance Villanova’s commitment to developing innovative and humanitarian engineers:

“Supporting Engineering Service Learning”

Villanova Engineering Service Learning would not be possible without generous support from donors. The following alumni and families have made significant contributions to advance Villanova’s commitment to developing innovative and humanitarian engineers:

“Supporting Engineering Service Learning”

Villanova Engineering Service Learning would not be possible without generous support from donors. The following alumni and families have made significant contributions to advance Villanova’s commitment to developing innovative and humanitarian engineers:

“Supporting Engineering Service Learning”

Villanova Engineering Service Learning would not be possible without generous support from donors. The following alumni and families have made significant contributions to advance Villanova’s commitment to developing innovative and humanitarian engineers:

“Supporting Engineering Service Learning”

Villanova Engineering Service Learning would not be possible without generous support from donors. The following alumni and families have made significant contributions to advance Villanova’s commitment to developing innovative and humanitarian engineers:

“Supporting Engineering Service Learning”

Villanova Engineering Service Learning would not be possible without generous support from donors. The following alumni and families have made significant contributions to advance Villanova’s commitment to developing innovative and humanitarian engineers:

“Supporting Engineering Service Learning”

In order to help the College of Engineering also offers students the opportunity to participate in international service internships over the summer. Villanova engineering students have completed or are pursuing international service work.

Nearly a quarter of a century after Chris McCartin got it all started, Villanova’s service-learning connection to the Central American country and Father Wally is even truer than ever. “I went down there six times during my years at Villanova,” recalls recent graduate William Angiolillo ’12 CE, ’13 MSCE, who is now a staff engineer at Redline & Moul Inc., in Stamford, Ct., “and that experience expanded my horizons. It provided invaluable insight into the process of civil engineering, and also some spiritual insights that I still value today. Father Wally is an incredible man, and his faith is infectious.”

service-learning projects is that they allow students to actually see how what they’re learning in the classroom gets applied in real life. It’s fine to learn about laying pipes in school, but if you actually have to do it in a place like Panama, you face very real engineering challenges unique to that project. In more recent years, Villanova engineering teams have helped Father Wally expand and refine his once-primitive water-delivery system into a modern network that relies on an enhanced dam, a huge storage facility and miles of carefully engineered pipes to supply central Panama’s once-thirsty residents with clean and potable water, 24/7.

service-learning projects is that they allow students to actually see how what they’re learning in the classroom gets applied in real life. It’s fine to learn about laying pipes in school, but if you actually have to do it in a place like Panama, you face very real engineering challenges unique to that project. In more recent years, Villanova engineering teams have helped Father Wally expand and refine his once-primitive water-delivery system into a modern network that relies on an enhanced dam, a huge storage facility and miles of carefully engineered pipes to supply central Panama’s once-thirsty residents with clean and potable water, 24/7.

service-learning projects is that they allow students to actually see how what they’re learning in the classroom gets applied in real life. It’s fine to learn about laying pipes in school, but if you actually have to do it in a place like Panama, you face very real engineering challenges unique to that project. In more recent years, Villanova engineering teams have helped Father Wally expand and refine his once-primitive water-delivery system into a modern network that relies on an enhanced dam, a huge storage facility and miles of carefully engineered pipes to supply central Panama’s once-thirsty residents with clean and potable water, 24/7.

service-learning projects is that they allow students to actually see how what they’re learning in the classroom gets applied in real life. It’s fine to learn about laying pipes in school, but if you actually have to do it in a place like Panama, you face very real engineering challenges unique to that project. In more recent years, Villanova engineering teams have helped Father Wally expand and refine his once-primitive water-delivery system into a modern network that relies on an enhanced dam, a huge storage facility and miles of carefully engineered pipes to supply central Panama’s once-thirsty residents with clean and potable water, 24/7.