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LOCAL NEWS

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Volunteer puts skills to good use

By Janet C. Wetzel
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After Peace Corps stint in Bolivia, Besl gives time here

Cheryl Besl has always loved being a part of projects and groups aimed at changing lives. After a two-year stint in Bolivia with the Peace Corps, she came home to Cincinnati in 2006 and jumped right back into volunteering here.

Besl, 34, who lives downtown, helps out at the Women's Connection, the American Cancer Society, Give Back Cincinnati, Healthy Moms and Babes and mentors for Cincinnati Youth Collaborative.

"Part of the reason I went to Bolivia, I wanted to learn more about another culture and really get involved in trying to make a difference. Now I want to continue doing that here," Besl said.

In Bolivia, she worked with a group of women who knit with alpaca wool, and a family that makes blankets and shawls on looms. She helped teach them business skills, basic marketing, accounting, styles, a little English and basic computer skills.

"It was very challenging, but re-

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warding as well. I have absolutely no regrets," said Besl, who previously lived in Washington, D.C., and volunteered for D.C. Cares and at a soup kitchen. A public relations account manager at Strata-G Communications, she helps with company pro-bono work for the American Cancer Society's Pan Ohio Hope Ride, with Cincy Cinco for four years and for Tender Mercies Celebritrees.

For several months she's mentored a teenage girl through Cincinnati Youth Collaborative. They enjoy regular outings and exchange calls, texts and e-mails. She's on the American Cancer Society's marketing/communications committee, has translated often for Healthy Moms and Babes and volunteered for Tall Stacks.

Because of her work in Bolivia,



The Enquirer/Cara Owsley

Downtown resident Cheryl Besl volunteers with a variety of local charities and organizations. She works in public relations.

Besl became heavily involved with the Women's Connection Hispanic women's program. She also helped redesign the logo and plan the celebration for the organization's logo for the recent 10th anniversary.

"Cheryl spends several hours a week helping us," said Jenny Brady, development director of The Women's Connection. "She helps with our Hispanic women's program ... She works directly with

the women one-on-one to assess their needs and then works with our program coordinator to see how we can build programs for their needs. She has public relations and marketing expertise, so she helps on our marketing committee. She helps with events and fundraisers too."

Besl said she's had a privileged life and she feels a responsibility to help others.

"I think it's important for people to get out of their comfort zone and learn more about people from different backgrounds - learn more about their circumstances and help where they can," she said. "I enjoy it. It's so rewarding. And I've discovered that the more you do, the better you feel. You can't lose."

Visit www.thewomensconnection.org, www.cancer.org/hoperide or www.healthymomsandbabes.org.

Do you know a Hometown Hero? E-mail Janet Wetzel at jjwetzel@fuse.net, or fax to 513-755-4150.