

It's a Family Thing....

Two years ago Natasha Lovely was beginning her social work internship at St. Leo's. Her mother, Maria Gavira is starting her lay pastoral ministry practicum here this fall.

"My daughter, Natasha, was an intern at St Leo's" Maria said. So when it came time to look for a field placement Natasha told me 'Mom, you should look no further than St Leo, Father Jim is so nice and all the staff & parishioners are the best ever.'" With this high recommendation and learning more about the mission of the parish, Maria found St. Leo "an instant attraction."

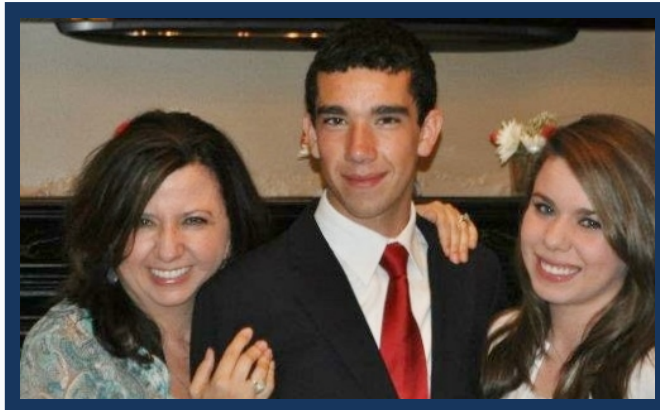
Maria works full time in human resources at Procter and Gamble and hadn't planned to study lay pastoral ministry but it seems God had other ideas. "It was an unexpected calling in front of the blessed sacrament at World Youth Day 2011 in Madrid," she said .. God has a way of humoring me and although at that moment I said 'no way,' less than a year later, I applied for the Master program at the Athenaeum of Ohio and absolutely, love discovering and learning more about the richness of our Catholic Faith. She brings a lot of gifts to her practicum. A native of Columbia, she is a native Spanish speaker, "As an immigrant myself, I have been extremely blessed with many opportunities

in this country with a wide range of benefits that include education, work, health insurance, and most importantly, the gift of a Catholic community." Maria said." As this opportunity came about, I realized that I have never worked with immigrants and refugees. The learnings will be two-fold, I will immensely learn from this community and I hope to possibly inspire and enable others with my own immigrant story."

While she is here Maria will also be working with Cincinnati's *First Ladies'* Health Fair Sunday, Oct. 9. St. Leo's will be one of the sites throughout the

city that will provide health education and testing that day. Maria is also skilled in using social media and will be working with Casey to develop special Facebook and Instagram pages to help the parish stay in touch with students who are now in college. She has also worked with youth ministry and will be helping develop a "servers' club" that will meet monthly and provide opportunities for fun and faith building.

As to future ministry goals, Maria says she knows God has a plan for her after she retires. "I trust His judgment and can't wait until He reveals His will for me."



Maria pictured with son Philip and daughter Natasha.

-Angela Anno