



**Name:** Emma Stahl-Wert

**MVS unit:** Tucson, Ariz.

**Hometown:** Pittsburgh

**School:** Eastern Mennonite University

**Area of study:** Environmental

Sustainability (i.e. Env.Sci. + Applied Soc.)

**Favorite item at Santa Cruz Farmers'**

**Market:** Handmade olive oil tortillas that a family makes together en masse

**Current placement:** Primavera Foundation

**Job description:** Garden Coordinator for Primavera, an organization that “provides pathways out of poverty through safe, affordable housing, workforce development, and neighborhood revitalization” (mission statement). My job is a new addition to the ways in which they address the root causes of poverty. I work with residents of Primavera’s many transitional housing programs to start, care for, and eventually harvest from their own gardens. The intended purpose is to increase food security by teaching garden skills, to provide some fresh healthy food for the houses, and to engage people in life-giving collaborative work.

**New life in Tucson**

Scott and I have thrown ourselves into the beautiful, vibrant, flawed, fun, heartbreaking city of Tucson from the first day, and though there’s still so much we don’t know or haven’t seen, we feel like we’ve gotten a pretty good big picture of our new home.

We both work with low-income and/or homeless people. Because of my work, I’ve even begun to recognize clients all around town that I may not have even noticed otherwise.

We attended a *No Mas Muertes* training, learning about the brutal journey that migrants attempt across the Sonoran Desert (and too frequently die during).

We’ve explored the cafés, bars, thrift stores, and food co-op along the hip 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue.

We’ve hiked the two biggest mountains: Mt. Wrightson and Mt. Lemmon.

We’ve gotten plugged into the larger volunteer community in Tucson and are already fast friends with the Jesuit volunteer house, former MVSers, and University of Arizona garden interns.



Emma Stahl-Wert

**Early impressions of our city**

Tucson is a town of contradictions. Close to the border, it lies on one of the oldest continuously human-occupied lands in the world. Despite the deep roots and rich history of people in the Sonoran Desert, the descendents of those who have lived here for the last 2,000 years are now treated like outsiders, particularly by Border Patrol utilizing racial profiling to catch undocumented immigrants.

Tucson feels like a small town to the point where even Scott and I run into people we know all around town even though it’s only been two months! Yet it’s a city that has been urban sprawling through the desert to its current girth of almost 20 miles. (I bike 8.5 miles to work each morning from our neighborhood on the East Side to downtown.)

There is a strong outdoor hiking, biking, gardening culture here, probably due in part to the beautiful mountains that ring the entire city. The Santa Rita