

Vincentian Charities



Newsletter and Chronicle of Activities
BATON ROUGE DIOCESAN COUNCIL
SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT de PAUL
Special Thanksgiving Edition Vol. XX, No. IV
Serving God's Poor in this Community Since 1865



Showing Thanks

The holiday feeling that begins around Thanksgiving of each year is already present at St. Vincent de Paul as volunteers and community leaders come together to share their blessings. You can see Thanksgiving generosity and gratitude in action at all our charitable works, but especially at our Dining Room. This year, we are expecting another large crowd to come to us on Thanksgiving Day and on the days to follow.

This past year has been a struggle for us. While the economy has created a tremendous need for our services, many of our supporters have also been stressed economically and haven't been able to give as much as they have in previous years. This combination of increased demand and lower donation amounts has been a real challenge in our efforts to address the issue of hunger in our community. In 2001, we served approximately 100,000 meals. Now, just a decade later, we are serving well over 200,000 meals every year. That's just one indication of the increase in poverty.

Many times, our St. Vincent de Paul Dining Room is the first place someone comes to seek assistance with basic necessities. We fill this most basic need of a hot meal, but we also answer questions like, "Where can I find shelter? Can you help me get a job?"

Our Dining Room is an open invitation to people who are hungry and need a helping hand. Every meal is served with love and compassion. Our philosophy is to give a hand-up – not a hand-out – but we also understand that it's hard to focus on finding a job when you're hungry and wondering where your next meal is coming from.

We are seeing so many new faces – people who have never had to ask for help before. Low-income workers are finding
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From left to right: Michael Acaldo, Ricky Blanton, Mike Grimmer, Rick Bayhi, Brent LeBlanc and Jack Persac, pose for a quick photo at this year's tournament.

Price LeBlanc Toyota-Lexus Golf Tournament a Great Success

We want to thank the Price LeBlanc family for their title support of this year's St. Vincent de Paul charity golf tournament. It was a great success because of their support and involvement, along with the involvement of our key sponsors, Amedisys, Kean's Fine Dry Cleaning, and Hancock Bank. We also want to take this opportunity to thank all the golfers, golf teams and hole sponsors that came out to make the tournament a special event for the 120 golfers that paid to come out and play. We especially wish to thank our honorary Golf Committee parish government chairs: Mayor Kip Holden; Mike Grimmer; Tommy Martinez; J. Mitchell Ourso, Jr.; and Pee Wee Berthelot. This year's tournament raised over \$26,000 which will go directly toward services for the most vulnerable people in our community.

A golf tournament is a lot of fun, but knowing that you're helping to provide food, clothing and shelter, makes it even more special. We certainly wish we had more \$26,000 days at St. Vincent de Paul where \$26,000 in resources came in to be utilized for the betterment of our community.

In today's economy, every dollar counts, and we want to express our gratitude to our Golf Committee, led by Rick Bayhi, and all the leaders that worked so hard to make this a success. We thank all those who participated and came out to swing for a great cause.



Lou Bizot, Bill Millard, Mayor-President Kip Holden and Michael Acaldo at a press conference announcing this exciting gift.

Paint Makeover

St. Vincent de Paul is so very blessed to have the support of Benjamin Moore Paints, the U.S. Conference of Mayors, and most importantly, Mayor-President Kip Holden. Under
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*In this issue – \$50,000 Challenge Grant
Annual Celebration a Great Success*

\$50,000 Challenge Grant We Still Need Your Help!

We wish to once again thank the Huey & Angelina Wilson Foundation for their generous challenge grant of \$50,000 for our new Essential Needs Distribution Center. We still need your help in reaching this challenge. For every dollar given to this effort, the Wilson Foundation will match it dollar-for-dollar up to the \$50,000 challenge grant total. In order for us to receive this contribution, we have to raise the matching \$50,000. Please consider helping us with this important effort. For more information, call Michael Acaldo at (225) 383-7837, extension O.

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a program established by Benjamin Moore Paints and the U.S. Conference of Mayors, one emergency shelter in each of the 50 states and the District of Columbia were given free paint jobs. Thanks to the leadership of Mayor-President Kip Holden, who nominated St. Vincent de Paul to receive this honor in Louisiana, our Bishop Ott Shelter Program received a free paint job. Over 75 gallons of Benjamin Moore paint was donated, as well as materials and labor to complete the job. We thank Harrison Paint Company and Benjamin Moore for brightening our entire women and children's shelter facility.

At St. Vincent de Paul, we are proud of our well maintained facilities. Of course, our homeless guests help to keep our facilities clean and organized, but painting a 10,000 sq. ft. area would have to be contracted out and would be very costly. Thanks to this wonderful program by Benjamin Moore Paints, our women and children's shelter was freshly painted just in time for the holidays. What an awesome opportunity to brighten up the lives of the homeless in a unique and remarkable way.

The Mayor himself kicked off the event and was more than willing to get his hands dirty. He didn't hesitate to pick up a paint roller and get things started. Our Board Chair, Cary Kearny, said, "This is a fantastic project. We feel so blessed to have been selected as Louisiana's recipient of this wonderful gift."

Painting this facility – between the labor, materials, and paint – could run anywhere from \$10,000 to \$12,000, so this is a tremendous gift to our local Society. We thank Benjamin Moore Paints, Harrison Paint Company, the U.S. Conference of Mayors, and Mayor-President Kip Holden for making a real difference in our community.

WBRZ's Coats for Kids Once again, WBRZ-Channel 2 and Pat Shingleton have asked St. Vincent de Paul to assist in the distribution of coats to needy children. We encourage you to support this important drive. For more information, call us at 383-7837, extension O.

Bishop Ott Collection Drive

For 20 years, our collection drive has been going strong, making a difference for the homeless in our community. We thank WVLA NBC 33, WGMB FOX 44, WBRL CW 21 and KZUP RTV19 for their continued support of this effort. Watch for future promotions and opportunities to give. Read our next newsletter for more info. Many items are needed, such as soap, shampoo, baby diapers, etc. For information on items needed most, contact us at 383-7837, extension O. Please consider purchasing an item and dropping it by our main shelter facility located at 1623 Convention Street.

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it harder than ever to make ends meet. When you are struggling to buy food and pay the rent, there is nothing left over, so people that were barely making it from one paycheck to the next have nothing to fall back on when they lose their jobs. With the loss of a job, health insurance is also lost, and an illness can be catastrophic. Most of the time, we don't know the circumstances that led to this low point in their lives, but we do know that the people who come to us need our help to survive. People like five-year-old Jordan, in this photo, are counting on us. Our focus is on hunger, but our priority is helping families and individuals to achieve self-sufficiency so they don't have to come to us on Thanksgiving Day or any day for this necessity.



During this holiday season, we ask that you keep the Society and our efforts in your thoughts and prayers. We will be here for the needy on Thanksgiving Day, as well as Thanksgiving Friday, Saturday and Sunday, which is typically one of the busiest weekends of the year. There are other places that serve a meal on Thanksgiving Day, but with your help, we will be here every day of the year, making sure that no one in our community has to go hungry.

Annual Celebration a Great Success

On September 29th, St. Vincent de Paul members and supporters throughout our Diocese came together at St. Aloysius Parish for our Annual St. Vincent de Paul Mass.

Cary Kearny, Board Chair of our Special Works, thanked everyone in attendance for the important role they play in our Society. Then, Bishop Robert Muench and Jeff Say, our Council President, presented awards in recognition of some very special St. Vincent de Paul volunteers.



The first award of the evening was the *St. Vincent de Paul Community Award*, which was given to River Road Coffees. This special family has generously donated their services and products to St. Vincent de Paul and our mission of charity for many years. Their contributions have touched the lives of many of our guests, especially at our homeless shelters. **Mr. John Melancon** and his son, **Ian Melancon**, accepted

an award from the Bishop and St. Vincent de Paul for all that their family has done to help those in need.



The next award was our **Be a Light Award**. Bishop Ott once said, "If I have been a light in some small way, then all of us can be a light." A group of very special volunteers has distinguished themselves by spending a tremendous amount of time and energy in helping us in our mission. For many years, they have prepared and served a monthly meal at the Bishop Ott Shelter for the Homeless. The ladies in this special group, who are members of the St. Peter Clavier Ladies Auxiliary, are **Rolia Terrance, Magdalene Franklin, Veronica Martin and Jeanette Aguillard**.

The third award was our **Saints Cosmas and Damian Award**. They are the patron saints of pharmacists. This year, our pharmacy will fill prescriptions worth over \$2 million for those who have nowhere else to turn for their prescription medicines. This year's award recipient, **Mr. Herman Stroderd**, has dedicated many years of volunteer service as a pharmacist and has filled prescriptions that have literally saved lives.



Our **St. Vincent de Paul Store Program Community Award** was presented to a volunteer at our Hammond Thrift Store. This year, our stores family wanted to recognize a very special individual, **Mrs. Ruscilla Salomone**. She was given the award for her dedicated service and selfless sacrifice of time that have touched the lives of thousands of people in the Hammond community.

Our **Heaven's Helpers Award** went to two very special individuals who were recognized for their donations of food that have fed thousands of people in need. **Mr. Darrel Rivere** of *À La Carte Foods* is the owner of this phenomenal company that has donated so much food to help so many people. **Mr. Harvard Bardwell**, who also supports St. Vincent de Paul and works in conjunction with *À La Carte Foods*, was recognized for his involvement and support in the Dining Room. Mr. Rivere and Mr. Bardwell are great examples for other business leaders in our community to follow.



The final award of the night was our **Top Hat Award**. The name of this award comes from Frederic Ozanam who founded the Society in 1833 as he visited the poor in his top hat. This year's recipient, **Mr. Felix Sagona**, is a very young 88-year-old whose zeal for life and commitment to living the Gospel made him the perfect candidate for this



honor. Felix is a long-time member of Our Lady of Mercy Conference and has served in a variety of leadership capacities. After 26 years of service with St. Vincent de Paul, he still loves making home visits to the poor.

The event included a brief annual report given by Michael Acaldo. The event also gave St. Vincent de Paul an opportunity to thank all our phenomenal supporters, including Bishop Robert Muench, St. Aloysius Parish, Father Than Vu, and Father Jamin David for helping us to put on such a wonderful celebration this year.

One-Stop Opens

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul is pleased to announce the opening of the Capital Area Alliance for the Homeless One-Stop Center. This center is a community collaboration of agencies that have come together to respond to the growing number of homeless men, women and children in our community. The purpose of this Center is to provide one location for the homeless, where they can have their needs met and take the next step toward self-sufficiency. The center will provide a variety of services, including mental health counseling, direction to substance abuse centers, and a number of other services, including an interface with other St. Vincent de Paul programs. In addition, the complex will house 36 single-occupancy apartments for those who are chronically homeless.

St. Vincent de Paul is proud to be a part of this collaboration of agencies such as Volunteers of America, Catholic Charities and the Capital Area Alliance for the Homeless – just to name a few.

Christmas is Just Around the Corner

The Christmas holidays are a very special time at St. Vincent de Paul, and it's hard to believe it's just over a month away. We want to make this a wonderful Christmas for all the needy and homeless children we serve, but we need your help. Anyone who would like to donate a gift for children (from infants to 12 years old), is encouraged to do so by collecting gifts and dropping them off at our office located on the St. Vincent de Paul main charitable campus.



Every year, Bishop Robert Muench comes out and puts on a St. Nicholas cap to give hundreds of needy children a Christmas gift. Some of these children are homeless and live at our shelter. Some of them eat at our St. Vincent de Paul Dining Room every day. We work hard throughout the year to serve these children of God and we would love to have your help this Christmas.

If you have any questions about this year's toy effort, give us a call at 383-7837, extension O, and ask for Pam Nelson. This event brings a smile to the faces of hundreds of needy children in our community. Thank you for your support of this effort and for your prayers.

Thanksgiving is Easy

I truly believe that every day is a gift from God, and when I wake up each morning, I am so thankful that He has given me another opportunity to enjoy His blessings. Obviously, I am thankful for my parents, my wife, and my children, but I am also grateful to be a part of the St. Vincent de Paul family.

Every day when I walk through the halls of St. Vincent de Paul, I see people coming in to volunteer their time and resources to our efforts. They share their skills unselfishly and aren't afraid of hard work. I see individuals who donate food items – everything from a bag of rice to a whole pallet of food. Some people come by to drop off a financial gift, while others are here to drop off a car title. How fortunate I am to witness their good deeds and to see such generosity every day.

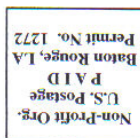
At St. Vincent de Paul, there are so many things to be thankful for. Yes, the need for our services continues to grow, but every request is an opportunity to make a difference. What a blessing that is! I am thankful for our supporters who are giving in every way they can and as much as they can. You are the ones that make our visions a reality.

At St. Vincent de Paul, I see our volunteers and staff members responding to local needs in an accountable way, giving a hand-up to individuals and families who have nowhere else to turn. "For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink. I was a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me. I was ill and you comforted me..." These are the words that motivate us and the message that touches our hearts.

We are all called to be Christ's disciples, and I am thankful for the opportunity to see so many people who have responded to His call with kindness and generosity. I want to express my gratitude to all of you. Please be assured that everything you do is greatly appreciated. -- **Michael J. Acaldo, President & CEO, St. Vincent de Paul Charities**



*Get Your Christmas Shopping Done Early! – Taste & See – the Perfect Gift
The Taste & See Cookbook can be ordered through our website at svdpbr.org*



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