

Vincentian Charities



Newsletter and Chronicle of Activities
BATON ROUGE DIOCESAN COUNCIL
SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT de PAUL
Special Summer Edition Vol. XX, No. II

Serving God's Poor in this Community Since 1865

Uniforms for Kids

Many of the young children in our community are looking forward to the summer break being over and for school to begin – not because they're missing their friends, but for reasons that most kids wouldn't understand. For literally thousands of needy children in our community, the comfortable classrooms are a welcome relief from homes without air conditioning. It's also a place where they can depend on a nourishing breakfast and lunch.



Education is the only chance these children have to break the cycle of poverty, and that's what our 14th annual Uniforms for Kids effort is all about – reaching out to needy children and helping them get the education they so desperately need.

Once again, WAFB-Channel 9, Kean's the Cleaner, Moniotte Investments and Chase have partnered with St. Vincent de Paul to ensure that needy children have the proper uniforms for school. There is a lot at stake with this year's campaign. The economy is still struggling, the demand for our services is high, and we know that donations are going to be a challenge.

What energizes everyone involved in this effort are the children. Through Uniforms for Kids, we have an opportunity to save the self-esteem of thousands of young boys and girls. Because of this effort, they will be saved from the embarrassment and ridicule of going to school without the proper attire.

Through the years, these children have shared with us countless thank-you's, but some of their stories are truly heart-wrenching. They have told us how it feels to sit in the principal's office because they didn't have a uniform to wear to school; how it feels to get on the bus and know that everyone is staring at you; and how happy they are that they

Continued on page 2; see "Uniforms for Kids"

Vision 150 Picking up Steam

We are so excited about our *Vision 150* strategic planning process. *Vision 150* outlines our strategic plans for the next several years and will put us in a position to ensure that our work will continue in an exciting and dynamic way.

Yes, there is an economic downturn, times are tough, and we are struggling to keep our doors open, but our work must continue. We are able to keep going because of the Good Lord and the support of people like you who willingly give of their time and resources to benefit God's poor.

It would be easy for us to focus only on maintaining existing programs, but we see the growing need for services in our community. We know that pressing economic issues and mounting government debt means that assistance from federal government programs will ultimately be cut back or eliminated. Unfortunately, there is a large population that is desperately trying to keep their heads above water. We want to be there for them, to be able to help those who need a hand-up. That's why we are developing a vision for the future – so that we can serve as a family for those who have nowhere else to turn.

We have developed a *Vision 150* questionnaire with questions about St. Vincent de Paul and our services in the community. We hope you will give us your answers to these questions, which will help us as we continue this planning process for the future.

We ask you to go online at www.svdpbr.org and complete the questionnaire, or call us at 383-7837, extension O, if you would like to have one mailed to you. You can help us examine the visions, possibilities and processes that are so critical to the future of St. Vincent de Paul.



From left to right, Chad Ortte, Bobby DeAngelo, Michael Acaldo and Steven Landry of the W Group. See the story below about these special people who helped St. Vincent de Paul form a new vision for the future.

Vision – Essential Needs Distribution Center

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul is a leader in providing food, clothing, furniture, household items and toiletries to thousands of poor and homeless individuals in our community. Our specialty is giving a hand-up to people in need of the basic essentials of life. In the past, this was done through our Warehouse/Distribution Center located at 1010 Nicholson Drive. However, this leased facility was recently sold by the owner, Mickey Montalbano, to a group

Continued on page 2; see "Essential Needs"

In this issue - Vision – Campus Growth
Mr. Charles's Office



From left to right, Cary Kearny (SVDP Board Chair); Michael Olinde (Event Chair); Ashley Ponsabe, Jay Jolly (Republic Finance Event Sponsor), Eiad Asbahi and Bob Matthews. These Sunrise Rotary Club members helped to raise funds for our Uniforms for Kids effort through a Bands & Barbecue event.

Uniforms for Kids Continued from page 1

won't have to go through that again this year. For children, poverty is painful in so many ways. They long to fit in, to be like all the other kids at school. The last thing a child wants is to stand out for all the wrong reasons. The children in these photos live at our Sweet Dreams Shelter. Sierra (on page 1), Jakobie and Austin know what it feels like to lose everything. They will be starting school in the fall, and we want to make sure they look forward to the new school year. This shouldn't be something they dread.



Through our Uniforms for Kids effort, we are keeping needy children like Sierra, Jakobie and Austin in the classroom and giving them hope for a brighter future.

We hope that the economic downturn has not been difficult for you and your family and that you will consider adopting a needy child this year by providing the uniforms they need to start school.

It is only through the generosity of people in our community that we will be able to meet this challenge. Please support this year's effort by making a contribution to Uniforms for Kids, P.O. Box 127, Baton Rouge, LA 70821, or online at www.svdpbr.org.

Essential Needs Continued from page 1

of buyers. Since then, two of those buyers, Bobby DeAngelo and Chad Ortte, have worked with St. Vincent de Paul in a remarkable way.

In today's business world, ethics sometimes wind up at the very bottom of To Do lists. But with Bobby and Chad, ethics was Number 1. When they purchased the warehouse, they understood the importance of St. Vincent de Paul's work in our community. Instead of giving us notice and telling us to find another warehouse, they assisted in the process. Although they had plans for the Nicholson Drive warehouse, they willingly helped us to find a new facility. They were a big part of the solution.

Bobby and Chad located a vacant 15,000 sq. ft. warehouse at 1466 North St., which was built in 1956 by A. Hays Town. They worked hard to enable us to purchase this

building at a very low price. We are so grateful to them for the effort they put into making this property acquisition possible. We are also grateful to Steven Landry of The W Group. Steven donates his time and talent to helping the Society with real estate transactions. He has been a blessing to us for many years.

Considering the age of the building, it's in remarkably good shape, although it does need a total roof replacement and other renovations. After all is said and done, getting a newly renovated 15,000 sq. ft. warehouse and office space in the downtown area for \$30 per sq. ft. is going to be a godsend for us. Obviously, we will need help to raise the funds to pay for the building and renovations. The total project cost (building purchase price and renovations) is \$460,000.

St. Vincent de Paul has a history of being project debt-free. This means that dollars can go directly toward services to the needy, with nothing going toward interest on mortgage payments. We couldn't pass up this opportunity, so we went ahead and purchased the warehouse. We were able to get short-term financing for the project until we could raise the dollars we needed. We made an official grant request to the Huey & Angelina Wilson Foundation, and they were kind enough to issue a \$50,000 challenge grant – the first financial commitment to this project. This challenge grant states that the Wilson Foundation will write a check for \$50,000 once we raise a matching \$50,000. The foundation's purpose in granting this generous gift to the Society was to encourage and motivate others to give.

Anyone interested in helping with this project or seeing the North St. warehouse is welcome to call Michael Acaldo at 383-7837, extension O, or send an email to macaldo@svdpbr.com.

This new facility will be much more than a warehouse. The name says it all – this will be an Essential Needs Distribution Center. This operation will ensure that the storage/distribution functions of our dining room, shelters, pharmacy and thrift stores will continue without risk of interruption. In addition, this new facility will put us in a much better position to deal with possible disasters in the future. Our distribution center played such an important role after Hurricanes Katrina and Gustav.

The Essential Needs Distribution Center will be used to store donations of food that our dining room just doesn't have room for. Sometimes food is donated in large bulk quantities, and we never want to turn away food donations. We can also store items such as bottled water in case of disasters, so that we are ready to respond quickly.

Just imagine having a household of more than 100 people, and you can imagine how much storage space we need to make sure that we have shoes, underwear, pajamas, clothing and toiletry items on hand when homeless individuals and families check into our shelter. When someone finds a job and is ready to leave our shelter, we also help them with the furnishings they need for their apartment.

Obviously, the thrift store function of our distribution center is important. In today's economy, there has been a huge

demand for household items, furniture, and clothing, and every item that we give away comes through our Essential Needs Distribution Center. The Distribution Center also houses the clothing, furniture and other items that we sell through our thrift stores to help us earn income that can be used to pay the utility bills and other expenses at our shelters, dining room and pharmacy.

Our distribution center also produces critically needed recycling revenues for our Society's income stream. When someone donates a shirt with a tear in it or a pair of pants with a broken zipper, we recycle those, and the dollars generated through our recycling efforts help us greatly in our operations and service to those in need.

The Essential Needs Distribution Center is the central hub of our operations. There is a constant stream of goods, food, furniture and household items flowing through this facility. It's surprising to see how many in-kind donations pass through this important St. Vincent de Paul operation every day. A critical part of our vision for the future is to make sure that this function continues without interruption.



Mark Your Calendars for the St. Vincent de Paul Open Charity Golf Classic

We are pleased to announce that the 15th Annual Golf Tournament benefiting the charities of St. Vincent de Paul will be held on October 31, 2011 at the Greystone Golf Course in Denham Springs.

Another Successful Easter Basket Drive

This year's Build a Basket effort was an outstanding success thanks to the support of hundreds of people in the community and Catholic Radio, WPYR-1380. Catholic Radio's support inspired individuals and groups to donate over 1,100 Easter baskets and hundreds of pounds of candy. Children in our homeless shelter woke up Easter morning and had an Easter basket waiting for them. Children who ate in our dining room also received Easter baskets. This wonderful outreach effort is helping us to bring Christ into the lives of the most vulnerable children in our community. We want to thank everyone that participated in this effort and made it such an outstanding success.

Fountain of Youth... If you want to discover the fountain of youth, ask Mr. Rosie Martina for his secret. He started volunteering with St. Vincent de Paul when he was only 60 years old, and he hasn't aged since. At 88 years old, he regularly picks up donated food items from local restaurants and grocery stores for our dining room.

Mr. Rosie can't make the pick-ups for all of Baton Rouge by himself and is looking for volunteers. If you can help, give us a call at 383-7837, ext. O.

Ensure that your values and beliefs live forever by remembering the Society of St. Vincent de Paul in your will.



Leaders from Hancock Bank pose for a quick photo while serving at the St. Vincent de Paul Dining Room. We want to thank Hancock Bank for donating 2,000 pounds of crawfish to our Dining Room. Not only did our guests enjoy delicious boiled crawfish, but after all was said and done, we were able to freeze the remaining crawfish tails for etouffees and other delicious dishes to be served in the future. Hancock Bank is a great supporter of St. Vincent de Paul and serves as an example for other businesses and groups in the community. If you are having an event that is catered by a licensed caterer and you have a lot of food left over, please let us know. Don't waste it! We can put it to good use.

MR. CHARLES'S OFFICE

Some years ago, a recently retired gentleman showed up at the St. Vincent de Paul thrift store on Plank Road with a desire to volunteer. He was a great person who wanted to live his faith. He looked around the Plank Road store and saw that some of the donated furniture needed repairs.

This new volunteer began his work in a small corner workroom at the Plank Road store. He brought in his own tools and started repairing furniture. As everyone knows, space at St. Vincent de Paul is always tight, and one day, we received a large shipment of donated items. There was nowhere else to store them except for the area where Mr. Charles made his repairs. Needless to say, the next time he came in to volunteer, he was shocked at the sight of his little work space. But he just smiled and made the best of it.

The next week when Mr. Charles showed up, the thrift store staff had cleaned out his area and placed a sign on his door: *Mr. Charles's Office – For His Use Only.*

For more than 23 years, Mr. Charles Bossier spent every Wednesday, and sometimes other days of the week, at the St. Vincent de Paul thrift store, repairing furniture. He would use anything he had on hand to make a repair. One of his favorite stories was about the time he used a baseball bat to fashion a leg for a table.

In 1990 Charles was recognized by St. Vincent de Paul as a *Top Hat* recipient. He recently went to his rest, not long after Easter of this year. He was a remarkable man and a phenomenal giver who dedicated his life to others.

Charles was an anonymous member of our League of Angels for many years. We were recently notified that, after all these years of giving, he had wanted to do even more. He left a very nice estate gift to the Society because of his love for the poor and his desire to continue St. Vincent de Paul's ministry. Even now, he continues to give, and his spirit is very much alive at St. Vincent de Paul.

Vision – Campus Growth

I remember my first day at St. Vincent de Paul over 21 years ago. We were much smaller back then with one thrift store and a dining room. What amazed me then, and still does today, is the commitment of the volunteers and supporters of St. Vincent de Paul. Whether someone is serving up a hot meal in our dining room, serving on one of our boards or committees, or providing financial support, their commitment is a constant source of inspiration for me. Many members of the St. Vincent de Paul family also remember us in their estate planning.

Quite often, I have an opportunity to appear on television or be interviewed for the newspaper. I get a lot of credit for what other people do, but I know who is really responsible for the growth of our local Society: our supporters – people who are truly living their faith.

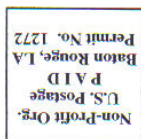
The vision of growing our main charitable campus has always been important to St. Vincent de Paul and to me. That first day on the job, I was shocked to learn that the only property we owned was the lot that the dining room sat on. We've certainly come a long way since then.

A recent property acquisition for St. Vincent de Paul was the corner lot at Florida Blvd. and N. 17th St., which comprises about 25% of our block. This had been a payday loan business that closed down last fall. In October, an electrical fire caused substantial damage to the empty building. A good volunteer of the Society, Robert Say, quickly began the process of finding out who owned the building. When we found out the owner's name, one of our board members, Charles Moniotte, realized that he knew that individual. Charles contacted the owner and told him that St. Vincent de Paul had been interested in this property for quite some time.

The owner recognizes the importance of the work we do, and offered the property to us for \$110,000, which is a good price for this property fronting on Florida Blvd. We took a leap of faith and purchased the property in the spring. We now own 95% of the block that our main charitable campus sits on. It's exciting for us to own this property because we recognize the value of continuing our mission and our ministry to those in need.

We ask you to keep this project, and all our visions, in your thoughts and prayers.

-- *Michael J. Acaldo, President & CEO, St. Vincent de Paul Charities*



Address Service Requested

*Society of St. Vincent de Paul
P. O. Box 127
Baton Rouge, LA 70821-0127*