

THE VINCENTIAN

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of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul

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Member of Msgr. McCready District 12

Spotlight on ...

One of the most hard-working volunteers in our conference is **Don Ong**, who, together with Gerry Green and Alan Lafontain, spends countless hours managing the pantry. Hardly a day goes by when we do not see Don stocking the shelves and preparing food boxes for delivery teams. Don also rotates the stock on the shelves, checks for bad food items, and disposes of them. He also keeps track of the number of deliveries made and prepares a report at the end of the month. He has also recently started delivering food with Jack Traynor and Bob Erickson.

Don became involved with our conference during our food drive in June last year. Ben showed him the pantry and suggested he might donate a few hours a week and help stocking the shelves. Don's professional background soon proved to be very valuable for his work in the conference.

Two years ago, Don retired from Luke Air Force Base, where he was the manager of the Self-Help Store. Don grew up in his parents' neighborhood grocery store and worked there after school. He managed the store after his father passed away in 1966 and closed it in 1970. He then went to work at the Commissary Store and Warehouse at Williams Air Force Base. It is no wonder that the pantry feels like home to him. "I enjoy working at the pantry," Don says, "because I get to work with a very special group of people."

In his spare time, Don is refurbishing furniture, watching science fiction movies, and going to the casino for bingo. Judging by the hours he spends in the pantry, however, he does not seem to have much time left for his hobbies. We value Don's selfless contribution to the work of our

conference and appreciate his tremendous commitment.

Letter from the Holy Father to the St. Vincent de Paul Society

You represent an eminent form of charity that is carried out on all the continents, the service of the poor which, as Monsieur Vincent liked to recall, is a way of serving Christ.

Through its daily efforts, your association is

Letter from the Holy Father to the St. Vincent de Paul Society

Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich.

I therefore encourage you in your personal contact with the poor always to be witnesses to charity as well as to justice, contributing to the individual's overall development.

The time has come for a new creativity in charity, not only by ensuring that help is effective but also by getting close to those who suffer.

I ask the Blessed Virgin Mary to help you constantly to find new ways to love the poor, so that the whole Church will live this charity each day close at hand, and I affectionately give you my Apostolic Blessing, which I extend to all the members of the St. Vincent de Paul Society.

(Excerpt from a letter from the Vatican, 14 February, 2001)

Msgr. McCready Memorialized

A biblical garden was built at our central St. Vincent de Paul center in downtown Phoenix (401 W. Watkins). Around a fountain shaded by an awning are twelve settees, one for each district. One

of them is named for Msgr. McCready. The newly created District 12 was named in his honor.

“Walk for Hope”

by Debbie Corte

As I go through my daily existence, I am usually too busy to even think about the personal struggles of the people who surround me. Answering the phone on Thursday nights in the St. Vincent de Paul office, however, brings me into the lives of my neighboring Americans. One life in particular touched me.

An African-American woman who had an 11-month-old child was calling for assistance. She was unemployed and on the verge of eviction. As I was asking her the necessary questions to fill out her request, I was impressed by her determination to get herself out of her current situation. She recalled an experience she had had while trying to dig herself out of her hole.

To prevent eviction, she had decided to apply for admission into “U-Mom,” a temporary housing facility provided by the Maricopa County housing department. She had no transportation and needed to walk to the office. She woke up at 5:00am, got herself and her baby ready to leave their home at 6:00am, and walked to 32nd and Van Buren. The journey took all of four hours. When she arrived at 10:10, she was told that the cut-off time was 10 o’clock and that her application would no longer be accepted that day. The personnel at U-Mom was not sympathetic to her pleas. Her four-hour walk with her baby had been in vain.

As I listened, the urge to leave my cozy comfort zone became stronger. The following day, I drove her and her baby back to “U-Mom.” I have never seen a woman more excited to have the chance to live in such a disturbing place. Her enthusiasm compelled me. We went out for lunch together and then drove to the DES office, where she printed up her resume and sent it out to potential employers. I finally purchased some make-up and a new hair color for her. I could feel the surge of hope in her.

Hope is what she gave me. I admired her strength, her determination, and her exuberance. I enjoy my time as a volunteer at St. Vincent de Paul

because, every now and then, I can turn another American’s misfortune into a box of treasure.

2004 Arizona State Budget

*by Bart and Valerie Nigro, OLMC representatives
in the Voice of the Poor Committee*

As negotiations on the 2004 Arizona state budget will continue, it is extremely important for you **to call or email your legislators** and reinforce the St. Vincent de Paul Board position that cuts should NOT be made in the DES, DHS, AHCCCS budgets or the Housing Trust Fund.

Please take a moment to communicate on behalf of those we serve. Like so many other faith-based and non-profit service providers, we count on stretching our funds by using state dollars in many areas.

For District 17 (Tempe), the legislators are

- Senator Harry Mitchell
(602-542-4124, hmittell@azleg.state.az.us)
- Representative Meg Burton Cahill
(602-542-5896, mburton@azleg.state.az.us)
- Representative Mark Thompson
(602-542-4225, mthompson@azleg.state.az.us)

Best Wishes to ...

We are sorry that two of our valued conference members will be leaving us shortly.

Susannah Lee has been accepted by the order of the Carmelite Sisters. She has been a bright ray of sunshine in our office. With Susannah praying for us, we will get stronger.

Adam Vernon has been accepted into Cooley Law School in Lansing, Michigan. He has stated that when he finishes his studies, he will return and take a leadership role in the Society. We will miss Adam, a cheerful and reliable worker who enjoyed doing home visits and serving on the Adopt-A-Family Committee. We look forward to Adam’s return.

New President

We are very pleased to announce that **Steve Petruzzella** has been elected to be our next President. He will take over the reins from **Ben Picone** on October 1, 2003. Steve brings to the Society a very strong commitment to the work that we do. Most importantly, he has the spiritual attitude essential for our apostolic work.

From the President's Pen

by Ben Picone

My three-year term of office as President of Our Lady of Mount Carmel's Saint Vincent de Paul Conference will be ending on September 30. During these years, and specifically at the recent Western Regional Conference, I have come to a deeper understanding of our vocation as Vincentians. Before I leave, I would like to share with you, our conference members and benefactors, what being a Vincentian means to me.

People normally see us as the organization that delivers food and pays rent and utilities for the poor. This is the part of our work that is very practical. However, our service is much more than that.

When Christ told us "the poor will always be with you," it was not just a statement, but it was a challenge, an opportunity to come closer to Him by service to the poor. We find the face of Christ in those we serve. In our baptism, we were given the power and responsibility to spread the good news. We are called to bring the good news to the poor and show them that God still loves them. Vincentians know that the poor are His beloved sons and daughters, no matter what their situation may be.

We need to ask ourselves how Jesus Christ would go about helping the poor if He were here today. How would He handle the situation of a terminally ill parishioner who is undergoing her second series of chemotherapy? She needs not only transportation, but also monthly financial support in amounts that we currently cannot afford. More importantly, how do we provide the love and

comfort that she also needs? She has no family except for her 18-year-old son who is trying to pursue his studies at Arizona State University.

How about the young mother-to-be who is expecting a baby in October? She has lost her job, is about to lose her trailer home and has no place to go. We want to support her choice of carrying the baby to term instead of having an abortion.

For both clients, we need to provide assistance on a long-term basis by offering the help we can afford and by networking with other organizations. We as Catholics need to "walk the talk" when we tell the sick lady that God loves her and when we tell the young mother that she should choose life for her baby.

We need to grow into Jesus Christ, whose love we experience in the Eucharist. Jesus did not come to be locked up in the Church. Our vocation requires that we take God's love that we find inside the Church outside to the poor, telling them that God loves them. We need to ask what He wants us to do and be creative in our ways of assisting the poor. We need to remember that the poor have the same basic human needs that we have: love and dignity. Therefore, we do not judge them, but we try to build more personal relationships and friendships.

Jesus Christ said that He will come back. Whatever we do for the poor, we do for Him: "I was thirsty and you gave me drink; I was hungry and you gave me food; I was naked and you gave me clothes." The poor are a blessing for us. Our service to the poor allows us to practice our faith and grow in our relationship with Christ.

From the Treasurer

By Barbara Pawlak

Thanks to the generosity of our donors, we began the year 2003 with a healthy balance, which was depleted by mid-year. Income for the first six months totaled \$26,296.37, while expenditures topped off at \$38,358.49. Food boxes with a value of \$80 each went to 1,516 families. The approximate worth of the food we delivered was \$82,560. In addition, we helped 169 families with rent, ranging from \$100 to \$185, and 47 families with utilities.

God bless you (everyone)!

Our Lady of Mount Carmel
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Thank you Letter from a client

To: All the people who help at St. Vincent de Paul,

Recently, my family and I have been suffering hardship. Our business is going down hill quickly. We just filed for bankruptcy, and we just lost our father to cancer. Needless to say, life hasn't been that great.

Anyway, when I didn't know how I was going to pay for my M-Power, you guys (gals) came through and helped me with my electric bill. Also you brought us food that I was way too embarrassed to ask for. I will never forget your kindness. When we get back on our feet, we will return your kindness.

The Vincentian Vocation

“God has created me to do Him some definite service; He has committed some work to me which He has not committed to another. I have my mission – I may never know it in this life, but I shall be told it in the next... I have a part in a great work; I am a link in a chain, a bond of connection between persons. He has not created me for naught. I shall do good, I shall do His work; I shall be an angel of peace, a preacher of truth in my own place, while not intending it, if I do but keep His commandments

and serve Him in my calling.”

(Venerable John Henry Cardinal Newman)