

The Vincentian

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Spotlight on ...



Ela Jackiewicz has been a loyal member of our conference since 1996. Every Wednesday afternoon, for almost nine years, she has delivered food together with her partner, Adelheid Thieme. Every weekend, she also comes into the office to update our computer database. You will easily recognize her by her warm smile.

Ela grew up in Gdansk, Poland. After earning a Master's degree in Mathematics from the University of Gdansk, she moved to the United States, together with her husband, Zdzislaw. She earned another Master's degree in Statistics from the University of Arkansas before transferring to Tempe. Ela and Zdzislaw, a professor of Mathematics at Arizona State University, have two grown children: Tom, a networking expert in a major computer company in San Francisco, has just published his first book entitled "Deploying OpenLDAP." Their daughter, Hanna, is majoring in English Literature at ASU and is currently enrolled in a study-abroad program in Manchester, England.

Even though Ela is busy teaching Statistics, Algebra, and Calculus at ASU, she makes it a point to find time for home visits on Wednesday afternoons. "I like doing work in the church that is useful," she says. "Delivering food to the needy is for me a form of 'public prayer'. I also like to be a part of a non-discriminatory organization that admits and serves people of any faith and background. It feels good to be associated with a group of nice people who are not out for any monetary gain, but are happy to help their neighbors selflessly."

A Special Thanks to our Youngest Donors

We are proud of the children in our parish who saved their nickels and dimes and offered them up to help the needy in our community. Take a look at these impressive donations that we received from our youngest donors in 2004: The **students at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel School** collected \$1,237.83 in school mission monies. The **children in the Religious Education Program** donated \$65.50. Another substantial donation in the amount of \$500.00 came from **Cub Scout Pack #71**.

Just as important as the monetary contribution made by our students is the food that they collect for our pantry. Under the direction of **Lisa Townsend**, the students bring special items that are needed in our pantry. They collect an amazing amount of food: about 500 pounds per month.

May God bless these children for their compassionate hearts and their parents for raising such wonderful kids.

Adopt-A-Family 2004

(by Mike Muphy)

In late December, we concluded our Christmas 2004 "Adopt-A-Family" program. It was a huge success. Through the generosity of our community of sponsors, we were able to match 97 families this year. This is the third year in a row where we topped 95+ sponsors.

Several of the sponsors have reported back to me that it was an enriching experience for them personally. Thanks again to all of our sponsors, and we hope to have them and new sponsors back on board for next year's efforts.

Behind the Scenes

(by Ben Picone)

Many times we brag that we deliver about 180 food boxes per month (each box equals two banana boxes). Some of our volunteers are proud to say that they have delivered up to 13 boxes in one day. Meet some of our members who work behind the scenes to make all of this possible.



(Gerry Green arriving with a load of bread at the SVdP pantry.)

For many years, **Gerry Green** has supplied us with bread from various sources. If one source dries up, he finds another. He and **Alan LaFontain** pick up our food allocation from our main food sources, the St. Vincent de Paul warehouse in Phoenix, Paz de Cristo in Mesa, and the University Presbyterian Church in Tempe. They transport enormous amounts of food, the equivalent of six to nine truck loads.



(Alan LaFontain with a pallet of canned goods.)

Julian Natividad and his son drive to the Mesa United Food Bank to pick up our food allocation, which amounts to one large truck per month.



(Julian Natividad with a load of food from the Mesa United Food Bank.)

Gerry, Alan, and Julian not only load the food on their trucks, but also unload it at the pantry. There they help sort and place the food items in the refrigerators and on the shelves. Altogether, these three volunteers provide out pantry with approximately 10,800 pounds of food per month.

What is Voice of the Poor?

Two years ago the National Council of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul called for the formation of committees to advocate for the poor at the local, regional and national levels. **Bart and Valerie Nigro** coordinate the Voice of the Poor activities for our conference at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel in Tempe.

Voice of the Poor has two purposes: (1) education of membership on selected issues affecting those we serve and (2) advocacy for change in public policies detrimental to the poor. These areas have included the removal of Kidcap from Arizona's welfare laws, preservation of general assistance for the disabled, preservation of social services for the needy in the Arizona state budget, and raising unemployment insurance benefits for Arizonans. Voice of the Poor has also been involved in other areas.

For further information about Voice of the Poor or the date and time of the next meeting, please email Lucy Howell at Howishome@aol.com.

Home Visit Teams Jumping Hurdles

(by Adelheid Thieme)

When Ela and I do our home visits on Wednesday afternoons, we often face challenging situations. Some of them, however, have a funny side to them.

A few days before Christmas, we were planning on visiting Shirley, a mother of two boys, ages 14 and 17, who had called us for food and rental assistance. This was the last one of our four visits that day, and it was already dark. It had taken us a while to find the apartment in the huge complex, and we were glad that somebody was home. Unfortunately, the mother had just left for work, as Tim, her 17-year-old son, informed us. The family was going to be evicted the next day, so it was critical that we could discuss the rental situation that same night. Shirley had instructed her son to have us call her as soon as we arrived. If we thought that we could help her out, she would ask her employer for permission to go home for a few minutes.

As it turned out, the family did not have a working phone. We had forgotten to take our cell phone with us. Tim went to a neighbor's house to borrow a cell phone, but no one opened the door. The young man was quite resourceful. He asked us if it was all right with us to go with him to a public phone half a block down the street. To cut the way short, he led us across two small walls that divided the properties. When we had almost reached the public phone, he slowed down. He seemed to have second thoughts. "You know, ladies, the phone is in front of a porn shop. I hope you don't mind." "Don't worry about us," we said with a laugh, "we do whatever it takes."

At the phone booth, we encountered a more serious problem. We did not have the 35 cents required to make a phone call. Tim had no money at all, Ela only had a credit card, and I had 25 cents in my pocket. How would we get another 10 cents? Tim went up to a man who had just left the porn shop and was climbing into his big, beat-up Oldsmobile. "Can you lend the ladies 10 cents, man?" he said, pointing at the two of us. The man

dug in his pocket, could not find any cash, and returned into the store and made a purchase. A few minutes later, he came back, gave Tim 10 cents, and drove off.

This was not the last hurdle, though. Tim called his mother, told her that St. Vincent de Paul was here to discuss the rent, and then gave the receiver to me. The conversation between Shirley and me was soon interrupted because her cell phone battery died and she could hear nothing but static. She promised, though, to be home in two minutes.

Shirley was eligible for rental assistance. We dropped a check in a slot in the door of the office where the manager would find it the next morning. Shirley was very grateful that our odyssey had saved her from eviction, and she gave us a warm hug.

Financial Report (2004)

Food boxes delivered:	2,106
Food purchased:	\$7,183.27
Rents paid:	\$30,382.65
Utilities paid:	\$17,173.32
Transportation:	\$1,070.00
Clothing vouchers:	\$1,924.86

Poverty in the USA

- "We are the only nation in the world where all our poor people are fat." (Senator Phil Gramm, R-Texas)
- 12 million families, or 11.2 % of all U.S. households, were at some time during this past year uncertain of having, or unable to acquire, enough food for all their members because they had insufficient money or other resources.
- Of the 12 million families, 3.9 million had members who actually went hungry at some point last year.
- 88 % of low-income working families include a parent between 25 and 54 years old. Married couples head 53 percent of these families nationwide.

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I am a Christian

(Author: Maya Angelou)

When I say ... "I am a Christian"
I'm not shouting "I'm clean living."
I'm whispering "I was lost.
Now I'm found and forgiven."

When I say... "I am a Christian"
I don't speak of this with pride.
I'm confessing that I stumble
And need CHRIST to be my guide.

When I say ... "I am a Christian"
I'm not trying to be strong.
I'm professing that I'm weak
and need HIS strength to carry on.

When I say ... "I am a Christian"
I'm not bragging of success.
I'm admitting I have failed
and need God to clean my mess.

When I say ... "I am a Christian"
I'm not claiming to be perfect.
My flaws are far too visible,
but God believes I am worth it.

When I say ... "I am a Christian"
I still feel the sting of pain.
I have my share of heartaches,
so I call upon His name.

When I say ... "I am a Christian"
I'm not holier than thou.
I'm just a simple sinner
who received God's good grace, somehow.

