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The Vincentian

Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Conference

March 2009

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2008 Thanksgiving Food Drive Huge Success

The support from the parish and the community during our 2008 Thanksgiving Food Drive was overwhelming. Many parishioners assisted us in preparing and delivering the boxes. For the first time, **Cox Communications** participated, sending 14 trucks to assist in the delivery of food boxes to more than 100 families. This year, under the leadership of **Chris Baldi**, we are planning on expanding the drive and helping up to 300 families who are in need of assistance. Keep up the good work! We could not do it without you.



First-time volunteers (from left to right) Kathryn Martinez, Bill Sears, Jean Hornung-Sterr, Ashley Moreland, Holly Crosthwait, Michelle Soper, and Marie Soto are preparing boxes for the food drive.



Jack Traynor, a long-time Vincentian, is helping with the bagging of potatoes, one of the staples of our Thanksgiving food boxes.

Wiping Away Tears

(by Adelheid Thieme)

When I open the newspaper these days, I am bombarded by headlines that reflect the current economic crisis. I read about increasing layoffs and higher unemployment rates. These are numbers and statistics, which I find worrisome, but it takes a visit

with one of the victims of this crisis to open my eyes to the human side of these figures.

Lisa, a single mother of a 10-year-old boy, has lost her job at the Home Depot in November. She has sent out countless applications, yet has not received any response so far. Her applications for food stamps and unemployment benefits are

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Wiping Away Tears *(continued from p. 1)*

pending, and she has trouble paying the rent. Her mother has already helped her more than she can afford, and Lisa has exhausted the government-funded rental assistance for the remainder of the year.

A strong and independent woman, she is used to fending for herself. Since the birth of her son, she has been self-sufficient. Now she has no food on the table and is in danger of losing her home. She feels embarrassed.

After helping us carry in the food boxes, Lisa accompanies us to the manager's office to discuss the rental situation. Walking beside us, she furtively brushes away a tear, a tear that says it all: "Will the manager let me stay in the apartment if

I can only pay a portion of the rent? How about next month? Will I find a job? Will I soon be homeless? How can I keep my son safe and warm? I am hungry, alone, and absolutely desperate."

Fortunately, the manager accepts the check and promises Lisa "to work with her." She is saved from eviction for one more month.

Outside the door, we speak a few encouraging words to Lisa, expressing our hope that she will soon find a job and be back on her feet. But our words sound hollow to her – and to us. She is glad to accept a hug from us, though, and we promise to pray for her and her little son.

Praying with Children

(by Mary Vrizuella)



After delivering food, we ask our clients if they would like to pray for God's blessings. Many times, there are children present. Memorable things happen when we form a prayer circle:

A **baby** held on her mother's arm grabbed my little finger as I reached for her hand. She held on tightly until we had finished praying. How did this little angel know what to do? Her warm, gentle touch stayed with me for a long time.

A **4-year-old girl**, a bundle of energy, was excited about our visit. She was all over the place, jumping around, sitting on our laps, looking at our papers, grabbing pencils, and asking questions. She joined us when we formed the prayer circle.

All of a sudden, an awesome calm overcame her, and she listened quietly while the prayer was being said. As soon as we unclasped our hands, she was "bouncing off the walls" again.

A **7-year-old boy** could not stop giggling as we were praying with his mother. After we had finished, he said seriously, "Can we pray again?"

Another **4-year-old** yelled "wait, wait" and ran to her room to get her teddy bear so that he could join us in the prayer circle.

These wonderful memories are one of the reasons why I cherish our job of delivering food boxes.

Gerry Green Lifetime Achievement Award Recipient: Adelheid Thieme

(by Ben Picone)



our conference.

Adelheid Thieme was presented the Gerry Green Lifetime Achievement Award at our conference meeting on February 11, 2009. The award is conferred on an outstanding member who has contributed greatly to the success of

The award is in memory of one of our longest-serving members who passed away in 2005. **Gerry Green** was an exemplary Vincentian who devoted years of his life to helping the needy in our parish. He was so dedicated that, even when he was critically ill, he delivered (and unloaded) a truck load of food to our pantry once a week. His last delivery took place two weeks before he passed away.

The award is not an annual award, but is presented to individuals who have distinguished themselves over an extended period of time.

Adelheid Thieme has been **delivering food and checks** to poor families on Wednesday afternoons for over 13 years. She still holds the record of delivering food boxes to 16 families within one day.

Together with her daughter, Clara, and her friend, Allen Williams, **she designed, developed, and debugged a computerized system** that we now use to keep track of our clients. The system has streamlined our procedures and allowed us to more fully serve our clients. Adelheid **trained our phone persons** until they felt comfortable using the database. Currently, she still **maintains the database**, making sure it is backed up regularly.

She has also served as **recording secretary in our conference for 4 years**. As **financial secretary for the past 8 years**, she has recorded all donations and sent out thank-you notes to our donors along with about 250 annual tax statements.

Her greatest contribution has been the **publication of this quarterly newsletter**, which informs donors and members about the work of the conference. It has become our most important fund raiser and has **generated over \$160,000 over the last six years**.

Adelheid manages all of the above while having a full-time job teaching English at Arizona State University.

Corporal Works of Mercy



homeless.

Fr. John Bonavitacola honored us with his presence at our October 2008 meeting. He emphasized the Christian calling to practice the Corporal Works of Mercy, specifically feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, clothing the naked, and sheltering the

We were also grateful for being able to welcome 7 new members: **Pat Martinez, Bill and Janet Richwine, Helen Franco, Catherine Godoy, Jerry and Maria Peña, and Katherine Scherrer**.

From the President's Pen



Recently, we visited a small Hispanic family. The father had been deported to Mexico, leaving behind the mother with three school-age children and no means of support. When we carried in the food boxes we had brought, we immediately noticed the neat living-room/kitchen and the simple Christmas decorations. The mother was delighted that my partner, Alice, spoke Spanish.

We reassured the mother that we would help her with her rent payment and referred her to other free or inexpensive food sources. Before we left, we prayed together, with Alice translating, that God would ease her burden, help her take care of her children, and grant her good health.

Suddenly, a smile filled the mother's face and she spoke rapidly to Alice while making fluttering movements with her hands and darting her fingers here and there.

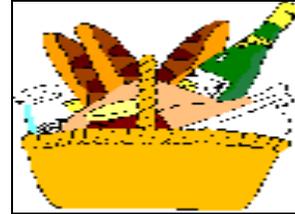
Alice explained to me that the mother had spent the night worrying about how she was going to pay the rent and provide for her children. In the midst of her depression, she had suddenly seen angels and bright lights appearing around the room. A deep calm had enveloped her, and she had great faith that her problems would be solved.... This was what we had been praying for moments before. The coincidence was dramatic.

Alice and I were touched by our experience and were reminded again that, in this ministry, we gain more than we give.

God's blessings on you and yours.

Barbara Pawlak

January – December 2008 Financial Report



Food purchased:	\$13,888.41
Rental Assistance:	\$44,848.86
Utility Assistance:	\$21,407.91
Clothes/Transportation/Furniture	\$ 5,741.04
Total:	\$85,878.22

A Can of Corn

(by Trisha Brandt-Fox)

While sitting in church recently, I noticed a man standing in the back next to the food collection bin. He seemed to be lost in thought, so I decided to go over to him and thank him for giving some food to St. Vincent de Paul. A conversation ensued.

He said, "Every time I come to church, I try to bring a can of something in memory of my Mom and the meals we shared. Today I brought corn, her favorite."

What a beautiful and simple act of love. By bringing a can of corn, he remembered his special Mom and hoped to help feed someone else that he would never know.