

St. Vincent de Paul  
Society at  
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# The Vincentian

Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Conference

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## From the President's Pen



In the St. Vincent de Paul Conference at OLMC, our phone volunteers work hard to answer every call

for assistance. Our phone line is open Monday through Saturday from 9:00 am to 11:00 am. Our clients are also welcomed to leave messages on our answering machine, and we make efforts to retrieve their messages and contact them as quickly as possible.

Although our recorded message states that we will return their calls, some clients seem surprised and comment, "**You are the only ones who call us back.**" Many of our clients are embarrassed that they have to request a food box or monetary assistance. Therefore, we try to answer every call with respect, courtesy, and good cheer. In the spirit of St. Vincent de Paul, our volunteers try to be responsive to the needs of others and bring the love of Christ to all we serve.

*Albert and Susana Marquez*  
Co-Presidents

## Meet our Volunteers



Since the fall of 2004, **Karen Kawam** has been volunteering for our St. Vincent de Paul conference. On Thursday mornings, she answers phone messages and

makes phone calls to clients as needed. Additionally, she helps with stocking the shelves. On Sunday nights, she picks up the pastries and breads donated by AJ's store in Ahwatukee and packs them into ziplock bags so that we add them to food boxes.

Karen and her husband, Eli, an electrical engineer who makes sure that the big freezer in our pantry is always operating efficiently, raised their four daughters in a spirit of giving. The whole family serves meals at the SVdP dining room in Mesa on Sunday mornings. They also volunteer their time tutoring a young man in the neighborhood twice a week who needs help with school. It has been a real blessing for the Kawam family to see him change from a frustrated 10-year-old into a confident 14-year-old who is proud of the good

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## Meet our Volunteers (cont. from p.1)

grades he earns in school. Karen is also an advocate for the disabled.

As a phone person, Karen is a blessing for those who call our office for help. Not only does she have a broad background that allows her to connect with people from all walks of life -- she worked in various fields including medical/dental and aerospace and served as a Certified Childbirth Instructor -- but she also possesses well-honed communication skills important for assessing and responding to our clients' needs.

In her spare time, Karen enjoys reading. She is also a huge animal lover and enjoys the family's dogs, cats, and even a horse! Since she was raised on the East Coast, growing up in both New Jersey and New York, she loves the beach.

For Karen, volunteering for SVdP is all about making a difference. She recalls one especially memorable experience. Several years ago, she had taken a call from a young mother who had no food, no diapers, and no formula. Karen and her oldest daughter, who happened to be in the office, decided to make up a food box and deliver it that same night. Upon arriving at the young mother's apartment, they were met by a woman carrying a newborn who had been crying for hours because he was hungry. The woman was so grateful that she started to cry. Both Karen and her daughter said a prayer for this family upon returning to their car. As they drove home, they saw a rainbow overhead, which they took as a sign that their prayers for this family had been heard.

We are fortunate to count Karen among our volunteers. She is a pleasure to work with, and our clients certainly benefit from her effective and efficient service.

## On the Brink of Homelessness

(by Adelheid Thieme)

A few days ago, my partner and I were visiting a family that had called us for an emergency food box and rental assistance. The trailer looked empty, and one of the windows had a bright pink sign stating that the home was being repossessed.



We knocked on the sliding door. Julie, a woman in her mid-fifties, who had fear written all over her face, peeked through the curtains. When she saw that it was not the Constable, but just two women standing in front of the door, her terror gave way to relief.

As it turned out, her husband had lost his job a few months ago and was trying to make ends meet on the \$40 that he earned per day, if he was hired. His wife explained that they had helped their son, who was trying hard to pay his own way though college and had never asked for money before, with his spring tuition bill. "I want him to have a better life than we have," she said, "and he needs to pursue his education." As a result of their generosity, however, there was not enough money for food and rent for the parents.

When we asked her about her employment status, she showed us her hands. I had never seen anything like that before. On both hands, her fingers were just swollen purple stumps. "I have gangrene on my hands," she said, "and my toes look as bad. I will need another amputation on my toes soon." Her disability check would cover most of next month's rent, but they needed help to avoid eviction now.

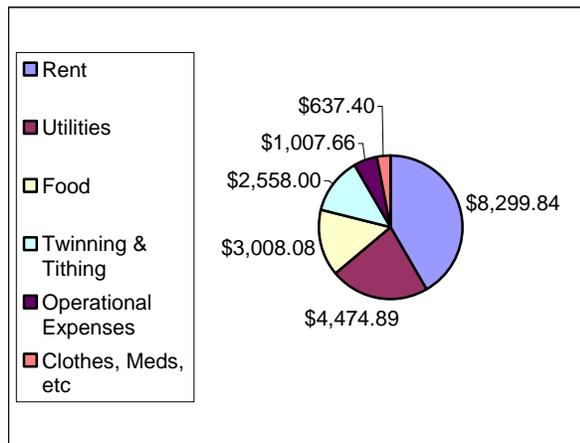
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Her husband offered to help us bring in the food boxes. When he saw the cereals, bread, pasta, rice, and canned vegetables, he started crying. He told us that they had just sold their television to buy food. "This is enough for two weeks," he said, "and we will eat for free."

We also referred them to other food sources that would ease their budget woes. Thanks to the generosity of our donors, we have (limited) means to prevent that Julie and her husband will become homeless, and we hope that the manager will be satisfied even if the couple cannot pay the entire debt at this time.

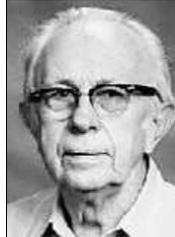
Before we left, we joined hands with Julie and her husband. We prayed that the Lord would grant this couple sustenance and strength as they are facing the fallout of the financial crisis in addition to their health problems.

## Financial Report First Quarter 2010



**Total: \$19,985.61**

## In Memoriam: Edward Kittock



At the age of 95, **Edward Kittock**, one of the founding members of our conference, entered into the Lord's peace on January 17, 2010. Until the age of 90, he delivered food every Tuesday morning together with one of our long-time members, John Reigelsberger, who preceded him in death.

After retiring from his 42-year long career in the postal service, Ed became active in serving the poor. In the late seventies, needy families would come to the rectory asking for assistance. Father McCready, who was pastor at that time, felt the need for a pantry. Under his direction, Ed and some other parishioners cleaned out a room in the southwest end of the parish hall. Ed and his friends installed shelves, collected food, and delivered it to the families who requested assistance.

Ed was a true source of inspiration. His gentle demeanor and his genuine kindness certainly made a difference in the lives of all the people he served.

## Thanksgiving 2010

(by Albert Marquez)

In previous years, for Thanksgiving, our conference used to distribute a turkey and all the trimmings to approximately 100 needy families within our parish. This past year, **Chris Baldi**, one of our members, suggested and led the effort to deliver turkeys and food boxes to 300 families.

On "Turkey Saturday", the last Saturday before Thanksgiving, with the help of our parishioners, it took us less than two hours to deliver these 300 boxes.

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## Thanksgiving 2010 (continued from p.3)

Many of our parishioners who delivered turkeys to our clients were first-time volunteers who not only enjoyed their task, but also gained a lot of satisfaction from filling a need.

On "Turkey Tuesday", the Tuesday before Thanksgiving, we collected turkeys to be delivered Thanksgiving 2010. Here are a few comments from donors that touched our hearts:

*An elderly gentleman:* "I have two children out of work. I know what they are feeling, and I just wanted to help others who are feeling the same way."

*A woman in her 40's* who donated \$10 and confided that her business would be closing in a week and she would be unemployed: "I wanted to help someone in need this Thanksgiving."

*A frail woman in her 80's* who donated 5 turkeys: "This is the only project I have planned for the day."

We are planning on serving the same number of families this year. You might join us in this ministry.

### **Attention, Readers!**

Would you like to receive the St. Vincent de Paul Newsletter in electronic format?

Would you like a friend to receive a copy of our newsletter?

Send an e-mail to  
[adelthieme@aol.com](mailto:adelthieme@aol.com)  
and write "Newsletter" in the subject line.

## Baby Jesus and the Holy Spirit Assist AAF

(by Mary Helen Kelley)

The Mt. Carmel conference of St. Vincent de Paul has a tradition of organizing the Adopt-A-Family Christmas program. This year, we needed a sponsor who would be willing to adopt a family with 9 children. Taking on such a large family is a huge expenditure because sponsors typically provide not only a complete Christmas dinner, but also two gifts for all the children under 18 and one present for the parents. In addition, one of the children, a 14-year-old girl, needed a twin bed.

The committee agreed to provide food from our conference pantry to limit the cost to the family. We were delighted to hear from the sponsors that they had a brand new twin bed stored in their garage and really wanted to give it away. They felt that this family was meant for them. The sponsors also said they had several pieces of slightly used clothing sized for infants or toddlers, which would be perfect for the young children in the family that they were helping. They were very excited with the match and said it was a blessing to know *whom* they were giving these items to. This was the perfect solution!

We all agreed that this was another example of Jesus and the Holy Spirit guiding us in our task to complete every detail of our job as Adopt-A-Family "match-makers." We rejoiced in witnessing this "mini-miracle" of God's love being revealed and the assistance given to us by the Holy Spirit.

Yes, the Holy Spirit works in wondrous and sometimes mysterious ways!