

THE VINCENTIAN

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of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul

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Spotlight on ...

Stephen Petruzzella joined our conference in the summer of 2002. Serving as a lector at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church, he met Barbara Pawlak, our Treasurer, and accepted her invitation to become a member of our home visit teams. "I felt called to help the needy," he says. "I have been greatly blessed in my life. I have a beautiful family, and I am in perfect health. I felt I needed to respond to God's calling and get involved." Stephen is so committed to the work of the St. Vincent de Paul Society that he has recently offered his time and talents to serve as President of our conference.

With his excellent communication and people skills, he seems to be predestined for this office. After earning a Bachelor of Science degree from Northeastern University in Boston, he worked in advertising and publishing for eight years. For the past three years, he has worked as a mortgage banker.

Stephen's busy schedule does not prevent him from being a dedicated father. He and his wife, Jennifer, have a son, Vincent, who is a first grader at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel School. Vincent is proud that his very own Dad is coaching his baseball and hockey team.

In his spare time, Stephen enjoys playing hockey. When talking about playing hockey, his eyes light up. With his job, his family, his sports activities, and his leadership role in our conference, Stephen will be an extremely busy man.

Norma Ostendorf

We are grateful for the monies that were donated to our Conference **in memory** of Norma Ostendorf. She will be remembered in our prayers.

Thanksgiving Food Boxes: We need your help!

We are in the planning stages for our annual Thanksgiving Food Delivery to needy families in our parish. This year, due to a decline in donations, our central facility in downtown Phoenix will not be able to provide turkeys.

To make sure that all the families we serve can have a festive meal, which would not be complete without a turkey, we are counting on you, our faithful contributors, to **donate turkeys**. Since we do not have the storing facilities, we can accept turkeys only **on Tuesday, November 25**. Please drop off your donated turkeys in the Annex (behind the Mt. Carmel Rectory) **after 9:00 am**.

We also need help with the **delivery of food boxes**. If you have some time from **9:00am until 5:00pm on Tuesday, November 25**, bring a partner and meet us in the Annex behind the Mt. Carmel Rectory. Let's all bring some holiday cheer and God's bountiful blessings to the needy.

Financial Report

(Fourth quarter 2003)

Home visits:	579
Food boxes:	1,158
Food expenses:	\$1,096
Rents paid (90 families):	\$11,583.45
Utilities paid (36 families)	\$3,538.01
Transportation/bus passes:	\$264
Clothing Vouchers:	\$1,140

Thank you, Ben

We gratefully recognize the huge contribution that **Ben Picone**, our past President, has made to our conference over the last three years. He has impressed us by the deep concern he has for the needy. Numerous individuals have gained from having Ben in their lives. We greatly appreciate his strong leadership and his hard work. We hope that he will continue to be closely involved with our conference.

WWJD?

(by Valerie and Bart Nigro)

During a session of spiritual reflection led by Deacon Tony Salamone at the beginning of our monthly meetings, we pondered the question, “What would Jesus do?” Each one of us, phone persons, home visitors, and all the people behind the scenes, shared how we could imitate Jesus and put our faith into action. This morning, as we set out to visit the three families assigned to us, we tried to achieve this goal and serve as Jesus’ hands and feet.

Our first visit took us to a second floor apartment, which was very clean and neat. It was the home of José, his wife, and their young daughter. José was unable to work due to an injury at work. Although his employer insisted that he had only pulled a muscle and should return to work as soon as possible, a physician ordered an MRI, which revealed a herniated disc in his spine. He was in a lot of pain and could barely walk. It would be at least two more weeks before the specialist could see him, he told us.

His wife gladly helped us carry the groceries upstairs. They were grateful for the food boxes, but insufficient funds to pay the rent were weighing heavily on their minds, as well. They had already been seeking help through governmental agencies but still needed rent money. We told them that we could go to the office and make a partial payment for them. They were very appreciative. They were also moved when we told them about the Adopt-a-Family Christmas Program and offered them an application. At the apartment office, the manager

told us that their policy was to work with their tenants and that José and his family were deserving of our assistance.

Our second client, a Mount Carmel parishioner, was a divorced dad with three children. We were seated in his nearly empty living room and learned of his situation. He began by asking if we could use several bags of baby clothing that was still in good condition. We told him that the St. Vincent de Paul Thrift Store would be glad to take them. He was also unable to work due to a job related injury, which resulted in a herniated disc in his neck. Groceries had been delivered to his family earlier in the week by another team, and we provided a partial payment toward housing. He thanked us and volunteered to help at our office if we had any “light” work for him to do.

An expectant mother with three daughters was our third client. She had recently been released from the hospital after surgery, was having a difficult pregnancy, and now faced eviction. Again, we were able to make a partial payment on the rent.

We invoked God’s blessings on each of these families and did our best to give them hope for a brighter future. As always, it was very humbling to visit people in need, and we hope that, within our power, we did what Jesus would have done.

A Note of Thanks



Dear Vincentians,

Thank you again for everything. God is awesome. Your prayers and support are more than we could have asked for. Please continue to pray for our family for guidance and strength. May God truly bless you all and your ministry.

(Letter from a family we served.)

A Blessing and a Hope

(by Adelheid Thieme)

“What gives them the strength to live with chaos?” This is the question I pondered after one of our recent home visits to a needy family. When we knocked on the door, a lady in her late sixties opened the door and kindly invited us in. She had a warm smile on her face. Her tiny living room was tidy, but cramped. On the floor, there were baby toys, a tricycle, children’s books, textbooks, newspapers and many other items. Her husband was sitting on the sofa rocking a baby to sleep. A teenage girl was doing her homework on the computer.

The lady and her husband were sharing their small apartment with their daughter, their son-in-law, and the couple’s 3-year-old son. In addition, they had allowed their 15-year-old granddaughter, who had given birth to a baby girl two weeks ago, to move in with them. Thus, a total of seven persons lived in a tiny two-bedroom apartment. The son-in-law, the major breadwinner in the family, had lost his job. The electricity company had sent a disconnect notice because of an overdue bill, and the family was facing eviction. Money for food and diapers was scarce.

We delivered the food boxes we had brought. This would feed the family for one week. We were also able to help with the rent. We informed the lady about a program that the utility company provides for families who have fallen behind on their payments. The lady was visibly relieved that her immediate problems had been solved. Our assistance would help her to keep up her spirit in such a stressful situation.

“When our granddaughter told us she was pregnant,” she said, “she thought we would abandon her, like everyone else had. But we did not. We are a family, and we take care of each other.” She glanced at the baby on her husband’s lap and smiled. She drew strength from the exquisite beauty of this new life. She continued, “The Good Lord will provide. He always has. Today, He has sent you.” Despite her sorrow and deprivation, she remained strong and resilient. In the midst of the “messiness” in her life, she discovered a blessing and a hope.

Cash Assistance for Needy Families

(by Valerie and Bart Nigro,
Voice of the Poor Committee Members)

If you know people with a low income who are not filing an income tax return, advise them that they could be eligible for an “earned income credit” **refund**, which is administered by the Internal Revenue Service.

This refund could range anywhere from approximately \$2,500 for one parent with one child to \$4,000 for a family with two children.

The IRS office in Tempe at Mill and Baseline can provide forms and answer questions. The City of Tempe is also providing help for this activity. For information, call 480-858-2323.

The Right Location

(by Ben Picone)

Last month, I was to deliver a food box and evaluate a client for rental assistance at an Apache Boulevard trailer/apartment complex. The address on the client information sheet specified delivery to space #4. I parked my truck and walked towards Trailer #4. A young woman answered the door. She was excited that I had food for her and inquired if we could also help with her rent. She was 19 years old and had two children ages 4 and 2. Her husband had found another woman and had left her to fend for herself.

When I asked her name to verify the information on our form, I discovered that I was in the wrong location. I should have been at Apartment #4, not Trailer #4. But the way things have happened to me many times when I am doing St. Vincent de Paul work, I was at the right location. I paid the delinquent portion of her rent and advised her of other agencies that could help her with rent and employment. Then I returned to the pantry, prepared another food box, and delivered to the occupants of Apartment #4. That day, I was in the right location twice.

Our Lady of Mount Carmel
Society of St. Vincent de Paul
2121 S. Rural Road

Adopt-A-Family 2003

(by Mike Murphy)

While your family is enjoying its Christmas holiday, do you ever stop and think that there are children who may not have a Merry Christmas? Many of them will not have a Christmas tree, a holiday dinner, and presents because their families are unable to afford it. The holiday season often magnifies the financial burdens of a low-income family.

These families would greatly appreciate being “adopted” by a sponsor. A sponsor may be an individual, a club, a business, or a group of friends.

A sponsor buys and wraps two new presents (one toy and one clothes item) for each child between the ages of 2 and 11, and one present for each child ages 12 to 14 and each parent and grand-

parent, if living in the same home. The sponsor also provides for a full Christmas dinner for the family. A general guideline is \$35 to \$40 per person in the family for both present and food items.

To obtain more information about our Adopt-A-Family Program, please pick up a brochure in Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church or call our St. Vincent de Paul office at 480-966-1974.

We invite you to share the holiday spirit with the less fortunate. May God bless you for your generosity.

*The poor stretch out
their hands to us,
but it is God
who receives
what we give to them.*

(St. Louise de Marillac)

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