

St. Vincent de Paul
Society at
Our Lady of Mt.
Carmel

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The Vincentian

Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Conference

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Requests for Food Boxes Increasing

Over the summer months, our St. Vincent de Paul office has been inundated with requests for food boxes. In the second quarter of 2010, we delivered food to **463 families** and filled **926 boxes of food**. In addition to our monthly allotment from the SVdP Warehouse in Phoenix and 203 cases from the United Food Bank, we rely on the generosity of our parishioners. We are grateful for your participation in our food drives and the donations you place in the collection bins at the church entrances.



Jim Garvey (left) and Dan Garvey helping with a food drive in McCready Hall.



Alice Allen (left), Robin Lee, and Bob McKay sorting donated food.

We also appreciate the support of the community. **AJ's Fine Foods** regularly donates delicious bagels and pastries. Channel 12 held a citywide peanut butter and jelly drive at **Basha's and Food City** stores throughout July. We collected 12 banana boxes of these food staples. **Food City** offers us meats at bargain prices, and **Alpine Valley Bread Company** in Mesa allows us to purchase 100 loaves of bread a week for a nominal price. Without the support from these stores, many people in Tempe would go hungry.

"I've learned that you shouldn't go through life with a catcher's mitt on both hands. You need to be able to throw something back." -- Maya Angelou

Adopt-A-Family 2010

(by Mike Murphy)



The Christmas Adopt- A- Family Program is still a few months away, but our planning for this event is just beginning to heat up. We can always use new Sponsors to help with the 100+ needy families we assist in Tempe in and around the Mt. Carmel parish area each year. The Sponsor takes on a commitment (time, resources) to buy the gifts and Christmas dinner grocery items to help brighten their Christmas day.

Past sponsors fall into a few distinct categories: a) individual families acting as sponsors, b) groups of families in the neighborhood or friends joining together to sponsor a family, c) office groups where co-workers get together and sponsor a family, d) civic or church groups, and e) schools or classrooms within a school where the children sponsor multiple families.

We are often asked questions about the program, so to help you understand the program a little better, see the Q and A below:

Q. What exactly is the program all about?

A. Each year, we locate families in need and match them to sponsors who are willing to adopt a family for Christmas. Essentially, the program is geared towards families with young children (ages 2-14) who cannot afford to purchase presents on their own. Then, our sponsors step in and shop for gifts as well as visit with the families the weekend before Christmas, bringing them both presents and food to enrich their Christmas celebration.

Q. How are the families selected?

A. On an ongoing basis during the year, we have volunteers who deliver food to those in need. During the fall season, these volunteers also ask those families if they might be interested in the Adopt-A-Family program. The volunteers realize that some of the poor are too proud to ask, so they are sensitive in approaching the families who might benefit from this program.

Q. Where do our sponsors come from?

A. We have sponsors who continue to come back each year, and several of these sponsors have been with us for over 5 years. Other sponsors come from referrals from our downtown St. Vincent de Paul main office. A number of our sponsors are also parishioners of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel parish. Still others come from word-of-mouth from sponsors who shared their positive experience and got others “hooked” on being a sponsor.

Q. How do you become a sponsor?

A. Just send a letter to OLMC St. Vincent de Paul (2121 S. Rural Rd., Tempe AZ 85282, Attn: “Adopt-A-Family”) or call the SVdP office at (480) 966-1974. We will get in touch with you and guide you through the process.

Q. What do sponsors commit to?

A. The time commitment is probably about 4-6 hours, including shopping time and communication with the family. The estimated cost is usually around \$40 per person in the family, which is a general guideline to cover gifts, clothing and food.

Meet our Volunteers



Since 2003, when Josie Vega introduced her to our conference, **Erlinda Varela Schweller** has come into our office once a week to take our clients' voice mail messages and have them ready for the phone volunteers. Erlinda also reorganizes pastries and bread donated by AJ's Fine Foods so that they may be added to our clients' food boxes. She also makes up snack packs.

Born and raised in Phoenix, Arizona, Erlinda graduated from St. Joseph's Hospital School of Nursing. She was recruited into the Air Force Reserve at Luke Air Force Base, Glendale. She attended and graduated from Flight Nurse Training at Brooks Air Force Base, Texas.

To use her training as a Flight Nurse, Erlinda transferred to the Arizona Air National Guard at Sky Harbor, where she enjoyed eight years of medical evacuation experience and travel. Next Erlinda transferred to the Army National Guard in Phoenix, later relocating to an Army unit in Boston, Massachusetts, where she spent 13 years. In 1993, she completed 28 years of military service and decided to retire from nursing and from the Army as a Lieutenant Colonel. She returned home to Arizona.

Together with her now deceased husband, who worked for Pan American Airlines, Erlinda enjoyed many travels. She has traveled extensively in the contiguous United States as well as in Western Europe and Middle America. In addition to volunteering with St. Vincent de Paul and Hospice of the Valley, she enjoys dancing, cooking, organizational projects, and helping in any way she can.

We are fortunate to have Erlinda as part of our team. She is a hard worker who will faithfully continue to use her organizational and communication skills for the benefit of our clients.

Save the Family

(by Susana and Albert Marquez)



On April 26, 2010, Melissa Garcia, a Sr. Case Manager with *Save The Family*, made a presentation to OLMC St. Vincent de Paul Conference. *Save The Family* is an agency in Mesa, AZ that serves homeless families with children. We often refer our clients to them.

Besides housing, the agency offers education for adults and children. Adult classes stress parenting, personal growth and development. Services for adults include career development, financial planning, education and support for domestic violence, GED tutoring, after-school classes and tuition help for summer camps and other activities.

For young children that are coping with domestic violence, homelessness and poverty, *Save The Family* has a program called Kids Works. This program is designed to help children heal and develop healthy social skills using art, play, and educational programs to help them learn to express themselves.

Like many agencies, *Save The Family* has a broad volunteer base that provides many services such as legal, medical and dental support, upkeep and rehabilitation of housing units, support as tutors, mentors and also help at their thrift store. The growth of their facilities and the expansion of their services make it possible for many families to overcome homelessness and achieve life-long independence.

Beating the Heat

(by Adelheid Thieme)



On a hot and humid August afternoon, my partner and I visit Tracy, who lives in a mobile home park in Tempe. She has called our office for a food box and help with her electric bill. As we enter her trailer, our eyes need some time to adjust to the darkness in the living room, where the air feels hot and sticky.

Tracy apologizes for the uncomfortable atmosphere and explains that, to conserve energy, she keeps the curtains closed during the day and turns on the air conditioner only at night so that she and her son will be able to sleep. From an adjacent room, we hear the excited yapping of a dog. The hum of a fan and the noise created by the dog, a miniature mutt, almost drown out our voices. With our permission, Tracy releases the dog. He greets us with great excitement, assesses the situation, and decides to curl up in my lap. He is panting heavily to beat the heat, but in contrast to his owner, he has no worry in the world.

Tracy is currently in dire financial straits. Her disability check covers her rent, but the high utility bills in the summer make it almost impossible for her to buy food for herself and her 18-year-old son, who has just graduated from high school. She receives \$126 in food stamps per month, which cover a small portion of her food expenses. However, since she is still paying back a loan that she needed for her husband's burial, money is extremely tight.

Tracy is more than happy to accept two banana boxes full of food. Her son appreciates the bagels and pastries donated by AJ's Fine Foods. Tracy is grateful for our utility assistance, which will buy her one week's worth of electricity. We

express our regret that we cannot provide more help because our funds are at an all-time low, and we refer her to other agencies and stores that provide free or low-cost food.

Before leaving, we join hands with Tracy and her son. Even the dog realizes that something special is happening and squats in the middle of the circle. We ask God's blessings on Tracy and her family. Even though the material assistance we can offer at this time is minimal, we know that the Lord is touching her through us with his compassion and love.

Financial Report 2nd Quarter 2010

From April to June 2010, we received **donations** in the amount of **\$13,479.20**, but provided **assistance** in the amount of **\$21,573.67**. Our funds are almost depleted. The chart below presents a more detailed overview of assistance given:

