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The Vincentian

Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Conference

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Vincentian Fresh Perspectives

(by Adelheid Thieme)



Do you know parents who are trying hard to make ends meet on a low income, live in a home that could use a makeover, but cannot afford the expense? If your answer to this question is "yes," you might help us get this family in touch with a program called **Vincentian Fresh Perspectives**.

Vincentian Fresh Perspectives is a program whose aim is to help the less fortunate improve their living spaces by offering them home makeovers. Since its launch in February 2011, the program has been able to refurbish 65 homes in the Phoenix area.

Gabriela Bova serves as a coordinator between families that live in run-down spaces and volunteers who would like to offer practical help. Volunteers bring beds, tables, lamps, curtains and other creature comforts to make a house or apartment a home. They repair broken windows, hang doors, and bring color into the homes by painting or decorating with pieces of painted cardboard. **Vincentian Fresh Perspectives** likes to pay special attention to the children, providing desks, toy boxes, and colorful bed linens.

Funding is provided by the volunteers or their employers, sometimes even by landlords. To qualify, individuals or families need to have lived in their house or apartment for an extended time, earn an income, and be in a sustainable situation.

The volunteers and the people they serve love the program. Volunteers get a lot of satisfaction out of seeing the families' faces light up. Initially, the people who are being helped are often depressed and hopeless. After the project is finished, however, they are smiling and filled with joy, happy that they now live in a place that feels homey and comfortable.

Vincentian Fresh Perspectives is about restoring hope and showing that the community cares. If you are interested in volunteering or obtaining more information about **Vincentian Fresh Perspectives**, please contact us at 480-966-1974 or e-mail Gabriela Bova at gbova@svdphx-az.org.

Angels Among Us

(by Susana and Albert Marquez,
SVdP Co-presidents October 2009-12)



Throughout the ages, God has sent angels as messengers. An angel appeared to Mary to reveal that she was to be the mother of our Savior.

Joseph also received a visit to tell him the significance of Mary's pregnancy. There are many other examples in the old and new Testaments. **Angels are everywhere, even here in Tempe.**

As our tenure as presidents of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul comes to a close, **we look back and find many angels that have crossed our paths.** When we started our term, we envisioned that our responsibilities would be to run the meetings, attend some functions, assign some duties to other members, and make a home visit or two. We found out that the title of president attracts many requests, comments, a few complaints and often a need to pacify or placate someone who perceived some minor (or major) injustice.

The primary purpose of SVdP is to bring the love and peace of Christ to those who are in need. When our conference brings some help in the form of food or financial assistance, we try to bring also the message of Christ. We may visit a family ready to be evicted from their apartment or a single mother with small children having no food or an elderly couple with a high utility bill in this sweltering heat. Usually our help is somewhat limited, but we try to partner with other agencies to help the family through their crisis.

At times we struggle when our resources are scarce and the requests are numerous, but somehow **our donor angels** never let us down and provide us with the financial means to help. At one time our bank balance was so low that we decided to stop helping financially temporarily. At once, two angels from our own group came forth and shared not only of their time and talent, but of their resources. We were able to continue helping our needy. Other angels in the parish and Tempe provide us with the financial means to help struggling families.

The **members and volunteers that deliver food and make home visits** are angels who listen to our clients talking about their problems, concerns, anxieties and struggles. **The people we serve** are angels that give us a message of hope and appreciation.

Other volunteers also qualify as angels. Some are Vincentians, others are **parishioners or people from the community.** On Turkey Saturday, a Thanksgiving dinner is delivered to 300 or more families. We have the Adopt-A-Family Christmas program in which sponsor families and organizations provide Christmas gifts to over 100 needy families with small children. Some angels quietly work at the pantry stocking food, answering the phone or making arrangements to pick up food allotments from the warehouses. The angel who gives us great support is **Fr. John.**

We have learned during our term that there are many people who go about daily doing God's work without fanfare, without need for recognition. They are an inspiration. We pray daily for the people that we serve and for all those who help us serve. It has been a privilege to serve as presidents; we are truly blessed. It is a privilege to be a Vincentian and follow the Lord's words, "As often as you did it for one of my least of my brothers, you did it for me." (Matthew 5:40)

Last-Minute Help

(by Debbie Corte)



During the month of May on a 95-degree day, Adelheid and I set out to deliver food to five families. Our last delivery had us knocking on the door of a single mother with six children. Two of them were playing ball in the front of their home and came running to help carry the food boxes.

We entered upon an efficient, clean home. One of the children, who was around 11 years old, was stirring a pot for dinner. The mother asked us to take a seat at her large dining table right next to a china hutch along the wall. It did not display fine china or collectibles from far away travels, but framed photos of her children.

The mother proudly explained the adventures of her day. To witness her daughter's graduation from kindergarten, she had taken the city bus with her other children, not a small feat for a mother with six children. In the morning, she had found out that she would be without an income. She had a daycare business for three families, and two of the families would be moving out of state to find jobs. The third family called that the mother had lost her employment and would not need our client's services any more. Nevertheless, she would not let her problems interfere with her family's excitement

for their youngest sibling. She told us that she had no money and that there were only \$4.00 left on her M-Power box. The next morning, she would be out of electricity.

Adelheid noticed that the time was **4:59 pm**, and Salt River Project closes at 5:00 pm. Hoping that the line would still be picked up, she dialed the number of the Counseling Department at SRP. The room fell silent. The boy stopped stirring the dinner in the kitchen.

When Adelheid started speaking to a live person on the other end of the line, it seemed like the rest of us began to breathe again. The clock struck 5:00 o'clock as we put two weeks' worth of electricity on our fellow American's account. It truly was an adventurous day for the family.

I've often referred to the moon as the pupil of God's eye, watching over us while darkness falls. The sun is His everlasting burning love for us. We are all united through the Holy Spirit and encouraged by the love brought forth to live in abundance, even when it may seem challenging. The mother chose to live abundantly that day, as her faith in the Holy Spirit of our Lord carried her.

In Memory of Recently Deceased Volunteers

In the past few months, several of our dear members have passed into the peace of the Lord. We fondly remember **Marge Long, Emma Santa Cruz, David Snodgrass, and Lucile White**. Their commitment to the work of the St. Vincent de Paul Society has been an inspiration to us. We will keep them in our prayers.

New Group of SVdP Officers

On August 22, 2012, the following incoming officers were elected to serve from October 2012 until October 2015.



PRESIDENT Julian Natividad, a member of our conference for 12 years, has answered the phone and been responsible for the excellent relationship we have with the Mesa Food Bank that provides us with approximately 10% of our food.

(from left to right: Julian Natividad, Elizabeth Clements, Don Ong, Jennifer Green, and Bill Richwine)

VICE PRESIDENT Jennifer Green, a member of our conference for approximately one year, has become an integral member, picking up food from our downtown warehouse and stocking our pantry .

VICE PRESIDENT Bill Richwine will be serving his second tour as Vice President. Bill has established a smooth relationship with our Saint Vincent de Paul downtown food warehouse and excellent procedures to acquire and distribute food to our clients. He has also assumed the duties of Pantry Manager.

TREASURER Don Ong has served as Pantry Manager for 12 years and as office administrator for approximately 8 years. His excellent efforts have insured a smoothly running organization for 12 years.

SECRETARY Elizabeth Clements has been serving as intake coordinator for five years. She takes our clients' food box requests, informs them about financial assistance, and advises them of other agencies that can also help.

January to June 2012 Financial Report

Thank you, donors, for generously supporting our St. Vincent de Paul conference. **Our total income was \$ 24,286.05.** We provided assistance in the amount of \$ 36,913.15 (see chart below). **Our fund reserves will soon be depleted,** and we need donations soon if we want to continue helping the needy in our community.

