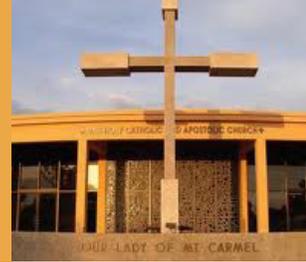




# THE Vincentian

Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Conference October 2014



## Meet our Volunteers: Janet and John Kovach (by Adelheid Thieme)



Janet and John Kovach feel truly blessed and are thankful for the many gifts the Lord has given them. This is the major reason why, for the past five years, they have taken out time every other Saturday to deliver food to needy families. "We feel good about helping other people," John says, "and we use it as a teaching tool for our children. We tell them that they may not have everything they want, but everything they need. We feel called to return what God has given us."

Both Janet and John lead extremely busy lives. John works as a Mechanical Estimator, assessing and pricing HVAC system installations and upgrades for commercial clients. Janet teaches English Language Arts and Pre-Algebra in 8th grade at Rhodes Junior High School in Mesa. She is also active in the Teachers' Union and enjoys attending various workshops and conferences to enhance her professional skills.

After their wedding in 2010, they combined their families and now spend ample time with

their 10 children (ages 13 through 35) and 25 grandchildren. Whenever time permits, Janet and John go camping with their children, spend a family weekend in San Diego, or go dancing. John also enjoys target-shooting.

Recently, Janet and John attended the SVdP Regional Conference in San Diego and the Systemic Change Conference in Los Angeles. While the first conference allowed them to network with and learn from other SVdP conferences, the latter conference gave them deeper insights into the many difficulties that the poor face and the need to help them find sustainable solutions to their problems. Janet and John are considering getting more training so that they can assist in developing a core group of advocates for the poor.

Janet and John will help organize our 2014 Thanksgiving Food Drive and enrich it with new ideas. We are thankful for their time, leadership, and vision for future change.

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## "Systemic Change" Offered to Our Friends

(by Jennifer Green)

"End Poverty Through Systemic Change... One Person, One Family, One Community at a time" is the motto of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul's focus on combating poverty.

Recently, our conference members were graced with the opportunity to attend one of the national meetings in Los Angeles. Four foundational blocks for the Society's effort are:

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## Systemic Change Conference

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- (1) **Empowerment** of the Society's members through education in the realities of poverty and its solutions, as well as empowerment of those we serve to provide opportunities to identify and claim their ability to make positive change for themselves and their communities.
- (2) **Mentoring** as a key to gaining and maintaining the motivation and support for change.
- (3) **Collaboration** with others who share our commitment to end poverty and transform lives. The Society alone, we know, cannot end poverty. Working together with others offers hope for transformative solutions.
- (4) **Advocacy** to change/adjust systems that are barriers to escaping from poverty for individuals and for communities, and create opportunities for meaningful lives for those who struggle now.

During the three-day conference, society members were trained on ways to implement the programs "Getting Ahead" and "Building Bridges."

We are excited to get started assessing our needs within the OLMC community and building a team to implement this change and assist our friends to get ahead. If you would like to become part of the team, please contact us at [secretary@svdp-olmc.phxcoxmail.com](mailto:secretary@svdp-olmc.phxcoxmail.com).

(For more information on the program, take time to explore all the training and support resources on the Society's Systemic Change Web portal: <http://www.svdpsusa.org/systemicchange>)

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## Western Regional Conference (by Elizabeth Clements)



*Janet and John Kovach, and Elizabeth Clements (right) attending Western Regional Conference*

The 2014 Saint Vincent de Paul (SVdP) annual **Western Regional Conference** was held late this May in San Diego. This gathering consisted of all western United States SVdP societies. One conference was from San Isidro, Mexico. A young Vincen-tian ("Young Vinnies") from Santa Clara University said she was originally from an Australian SVdP. Including myself, three members from Our Lady of Mount Carmel (OLMC) SVdP attended this regional gathering. (continued on page 3)

# 115 Degrees: Staying Alive

(by Adelheid Thieme)



Most of us welcome the cooler weather that usually sets in toward the end of September. We are glad that we made it through another summer with its scorching heat. When we see the high electricity costs, we sigh, pay, and go on with our lives – that is if we are still alive. Indeed, for some of our clients, these high utility bills are a matter of life or death.

It was a hot day in June – 115 degrees. As we pulled into the parking lot for a home visit, we noticed that the lady who had called us for a food box and utility assistance lived at the far end of the complex on the second floor. My partner and I were secretly hoping that there would be a strong man in that apartment who would help us carry the food boxes upstairs.

No such luck! The lady who opened the door was living by herself and obviously not able to assist us with the food boxes. She was using a walker, and the short walk from her kitchen to the entrance had exhausted her to the point that she had to catch her breath before she could talk to us. After we had brought in the food boxes, she told us that she had congestive heart failure as well as stage 4 kidney failure. Since she was unable to return to work after a hospital stay, she had applied for disability benefits, but had been denied.

She had scraped together the money to pay the month's rent, but she had no funds left for electricity. She was using the pay-as-you-go "M-Power" plan available through SRP. If she did not make a payment by the end of the day, her air conditioner and her oxygen concentra-

tor would stop working. Government-funded agencies had assisted her in the preceding months; however, they were bound by the rule that assistance could be offered only once per calendar year. Neighbors who certainly also had no money to spare had helped her with a dollar here and there. Our St. Vincent de Paul Society was her last hope because she knew that we assess need on a case-by-case basis and are free to operate in an unbureaucratic manner.

When we assured her that we would be able to put a substantial amount of money on her M-Power account, she started crying. "You have no idea how much this means to me," she said. "You are literally keeping me alive."

Thank you, donors. Your financial gifts to our conference enable clients like this lady to survive the summer months -- literally.

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## Western Regional Conference

(cont. from p. 2)

The three-day event is held annually in an effort to bring Vincentians together for workshops and trainings that help attendees understand, then share the National Strategic Plan for SVdP. The days started and ended in prayer. Each day we divided into groups. By doing this, we could hold intimate and meaningful discussions. We also brainstormed ways of how we could work together to meet common goals.

As a group we heard leaders describe all the upcoming exciting strategic plans for SVdP. We heard heartwarming success stories of people served by Vincentians. By the end of the three days, I felt as though I had just made over a hundred new Vincentian brothers and sisters that I can now call friends in Christ.

# Girl Scouts Encouraging Families

Girl Scout Troop 1114, 6th grade, had some encouraging words for the families that receive food boxes through our St. Vincent de Paul conference. Here are samples of their notes that we are happy to add to some of our food boxes:

Have a great meal and a  
good day

This is the day which  
the Lord has made;  
let us rejoice and  
be glad

Hi,  
I love you you will get  
through this. There will be better  
times. Love ya!  
Love,  
Natalie

## Why do they do it?

"I am thankful that our troop has the opportunity to make someone's day better, and it makes me sad that they do not have the same privileges as we do. I hope that our notes make the people feel cared for and loved as we are all God's children."

--Cienna Jaime

"Our Troop is writing notes to put a smile on faces of the families that are receiving the food boxes. We want to let them know that God is watching over them and He loves them. We also want to let them know that their rough times will pass and there are a lot of people praying for them (including me). It makes me happy to do this."

--Jacey Salisbury

## Thanksgiving 2014

Every year, the St. Vincent de Paul Society tries to brighten the holidays for needy families in our community by providing a food box with a turkey and all the trimmings for a festive Thanksgiving meal. Here are two ways you can help:

1. **Purchase** the following items and **deliver** them by **November 1** to our SVdP Pantry:

Turkey 10-12 pounds  
Box of stuffing  
Box of instant potatoes  
2 cans turkey broth

2 cans of cranberry sauce  
1 jar of turkey gravy  
2 cans of corn  
2 cans of green beans  
2 cans of fruit  
2 loaves of bread  
Cake mix  
Frosting  
**Total: Approximately \$ 47.00**  
(less if you find items on sale)

2. **Write a check** to St. Vincent de Paul, and we will do the shopping for you.  
For more information, please email [secretary@svdp-olmc.phxcoxmail.com](mailto:secretary@svdp-olmc.phxcoxmail.com) or call 480-966-1974.