



The Voice

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul Newsletter

Columbus Diocese

April 2014

Volume 34, Issue No 2

President's Message Bill Sparks

In October of 2008 I had the honor of taking over the presidency of the Diocesan Council from Patty Doyle of St. Michael's Parish. This October another Vincentian will take over this position of leadership of the 62 conferences in our diocese, our diocesan ministries, our 10 youth conferences, and most importantly, will represent those we serve. The Rule of the Society wisely limits the terms of the servant leaders of our councils and conferences to two consecutive three year terms. I am now



completing my 6th year in this position. The Diocesan Council will select a new Diocesan Council President at its May Council meeting. To celebrate this new leadership, we will have an **installation mass, ceremony and a reception on October 2nd at 7PM** at St. Paul's Church in Westerville. Be sure to mark this date on your calendars and watch for more information in coming months.

Much remains to be accomplished and enjoyed in the next five months. The April 26 Top Hat mass, dinner and award ceremony may already have occurred by the time that you read this, but this event brings us all together while honoring significant Vincentian service. A committee from the Diocesan Council will study how to improve the Top Hat nomination selection process. If you have any suggestions on ways to improve our Top Hat Program (or any other program that we have throughout the year),

please let me know by return email. Don't hesitate to think "outside the box".

Plans are being made for the August 24 Day of Recollection, again at the St. Martin de Porres Center this year. Gene Smith, a former National SVDP President and a deacon in the church out in California will be coming to town as our facilitator for the day. Gene is a wonderful speaker and presenter so please save that date.

Finally there is our Friends of the Poor walk on September 20th, again at St. Francis DeSales High School, so look from information from your conference's Walk representative.

Besides these diocesan events we are currently moving forward with implementing systemic change in our diocese-- that is, trying to zero in on and root out some of the underlying causes of poverty. First, we are hoping to mentor those we serve to find solutions to situations that tend to hold them in "generational poverty." We are learning how to better understand the situations those we serve face and mentor through the "Bridges out of Poverty" program. On a Saturday in February, members of our Diocesan Council and the Voice of the Poor Committee met to review and discuss seven videos diagnosing features of systems which trap people in poverty. Several conferences are already viewing and discussing these videos at their meetings.

A second action that we are taking is to try to bring together groups of people we serve and help them to form groups that can effectively speak up for things that they need and feel are important. Those we serve will lead these groups and be provided with leadership and organizational training. We have applied for a Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD) grant to hire a person to help form these groups of people we are serving.

A third direction that we are taking is to develop a micro-lending program to compete with exploitive Pay Day lending services. See article below for additional information on this wonderful program which we hope to adopt.

Mark Your Calendar! Save these dates!

Friday, May 16, Biblio J.O.I.N. fund raiser dinner and show by priests, sisters, and deacons of the diocese, Call J.O.I.N. Call 241-2530 for information

Saturday, May 17, Ozanam Orientation, at Holy Redeemer in Portsmouth, Ohio, 9AM – 3PM, Call 614-221-3554 to register.

Saturday, June 29, Fund raiser for St Vincent Haven in Newark honoring Kevin Murphy. See below for information.

Sunday, August 24, Day of Recollection: 9:30 registration at St. Martin de Porres Center; Gene Smith, former SVdP National President, will be the facilitator of the day.

Saturday, September 20, Friends of the Poor Walk, St Francis DeSales High School,

Newark Honors Service at Its Haven

On Saturday, June 28, 2014, St. Vincent Haven has the very great honor to host a special benefit event recognizing the service of Kevin Murphy. Kevin and his wife, Mary, truly epitomize the Vincentian spirit, giving generously of themselves and their resources to assist those in need.

St. Vincent Haven is a 26-bed emergency and transitional living program serving males 18 years and older who are homeless from all over Licking County and central Ohio. In addition to other Vincentian service, Kevin Murphy was significantly instrumental in helping to bring St. Vincent Haven, the St. Vincent de Paul Center, Thrift Store and Food Pantry into being. He continues to give of himself by serving as Vice President of St. Vincent Haven's Board of Directors. Kevin is a leader and facilitator for our Ozanam Orientations as well as a member of the St. Edward's Knights of Columbus. He works actively with his brother Knights to host an

annual golf outing which provides critical funds for St. Vincent Haven.

The event, "We Honor Those that Serve," will be a fun-filled evening that includes music, a Reception and a Silent and Live Auction, with dinner catered by Skip Salome Enterprises.

The need for St. Vincent Haven continues. In 2013, we provided safe shelter and supportive services for 209 residents, 40% of whom were young men 30 and under. Our residents are veterans, they are men who have lost their job and been evicted from their homes.

Approximately 20% of residents have serious medical issues. All are in need of the caring support provided by St. Vincent Haven that assists our residents to obtain and maintain employment and move toward permanent housing – to get back on their feet. Since we opened our doors in January 2010, we have provided over 27,000 nights of safe shelter for over 600 residents.

This special event will be held at the Elks Club, Newark, with a reception and Silent Auction at 6:00 p.m., followed by dinner and a Live Auction. Tables of eight are \$400 and individual tickets are \$50. Table reservations, individual tickets or more information may be obtained by calling 714/670-0822 or emailing svh@svdphaven.org.

Top Hat Award

The Top Hat award nominations remind us of the significant services and spiritual growth of a few of our fellow Vincentians. Of course, the Christian growth and service of many others is not cited in these nominations. Nevertheless, it is inspiring to reflect on those who are listed here. In the issue of the VOICE these are only synopses of the nominations. The full nominations can be read on our website. <http://www.vincentianvoice.org/events.html#2014nominations>

Toni Ventresca, St. Elizabeth, was nominated by members of her conference: Marguerite

Marshal, Robin Racine, et al. . In their nomination, they call attention to the valuable resource book she develops and maintains. "It contains so much helpful material used not only by our conferences on home visits and in our food pantry, but also by other conferences as well as J.O.I.N." . . . "The manual also includes information on Federal Poverty Guidelines, Charitable Pharmacy of Central Ohio, and a referral list of low income apartments, Hospital Financial Assistance Programs and a listing of temp. agencies, just to name a few. This manual is ever-changing as Toni continually adds periodic updates."

Michael Lynch, St. Brendan's, Hilliard, was nominated by fellow Vincentian and Knight of Columbus, Michael Gagel. Mike Gagel emphasized Michael Lynch's service as conference president.

"Served as the SVdP Conference President for St. Brendan's from 2009 through 2012; during his tenure we annually collected and distributed more than \$25,000 in cash resources, successfully completed semi-annual food drives for the Hilliard Food Pantry and served as a leader of our home visitation teams."

Mark Meinhart, St. Paul's Westerville, was nominated by his conference president, Joe Anclien. Along with Mark's many Vincentian services, Joe called attention to a rather unusual one.

"For many years decorated his home with thousands of lights at Christmas and donations from people visiting were provided to Saint James Food Pantry. This amounted to over \$1,000 each year"

Marge Hendey, St. Edwards, Granville, was nominated by the president of her conference: Gregg J. Hinterschied. One paragraph of Gregg's nomination called attention to a special achievement.

"In an extraordinary effort, Marge helped set up a county-wide "St. Vincent de Paul Help

Line" so that anyone in need could call one central phone number and be referred to the proper parish conference in Licking County. She also maintained records of calls and visits to prevent duplication of effort and aid among the conferences."

Lesha Farias, Newark, St. Francis deSales, was nominated by a member of her conference, Jeffrey A. McDaniel. Jeffrey wrote:

"Lesha always goes over and beyond when doing home visits. I have partnered with her on occasions and she always has the love of Christ in her heart. Her caring, calm reassuring demeanor has never failed to set at ease any of the people we have visited."

Twinning with Haiti Underway

In the April 10 issue of Frederic's E-Gazette – an on-line newsletter from the U.S. National SVdP –it was announced:

"We are pleased to welcome the first 3 U.S. conferences approved to twin with Haiti. Please keep them in your prayers as they begin to build Vincentian connections and solidarity with our International family."

Included in the three conferences is **Immaculate Conception** here in Columbus. They twin with the St. Vincent de Paul conference in the parish of **Notre Dame Immaculee Conception, Cite Coleil, Haiti**. Presently the Immaculate Conception conference sends \$80 per month through the National office to its Haitian twin.

For more information on twinning with Haiti or any other international twinning questions, contact:

Maria Villa-Garcia

International Twinning Coordinator

Email: mvilla-garcia@svdpusa.org

The notion of reaching across national borders has been an ideal of our Society from its beginning.

"We should love one another now and ever, far and near, from conference to another, from town to town, from nations to nation." -Original Rule 1835

From the Clothing Center and St. Lawrence Haven

St. Elizabeth's Margaret Kennedy writes about her experience of the recently instituted cooking program at the Haven. Margaret has been a longtime team leader at the Haven. "A lot of cooking and meal preparation has been going on at St. Lawrence Haven. The St. Elizabeth conference has a crew there on the third Thursday of the month. The Bishop Watterson alumni group does a session on the second Wednesday of the month. Terri Kernan, alumni assistant at Watterson, writes: "On December 11th, six members of the Bishop Watterson community kicked off the Alumni services program by volunteering at St. Lawrence Haven. Volunteers prepared and packaged hundreds of grilled cheese sandwiches and bowls of tomato soup. In addition, several trays of chicken were prepared for another meal . . . The staff at St. Lawrence Haven was thankful for our help."

Any conference or interested group is welcome to take a turn. Any group is welcome to meet around 9:30AM, Monday through Thursday. The session is usually over somewhere between 11:30 to noon. The cooking takes place in the Cum Christo kitchen. Joe, the supervisor of the Haven, leads the cooking and sets up what everyone needs to do.

It is gratifying to know you are helping to feed the hungry. It is also a time to strengthen the friendship of the group, Vincentian or otherwise. Heather Swiger, the manager of the Haven, would like to see 3-5 people each day to help with cooking. Please consider taking a turn at this important diocesan ministry."

Heather Swiger who manages both the Haven and the Clothing Center answers calls about volunteering at (614) 241-2569

Conference's Spirituality Programs

Conferences were asked how they are promoting Vincentian spirituality in the

spirituality portion of their meetings. Are the National Office's Serving in Hope modules helpful?

The spiritual advisor for **St. Elizabeth**, Margaret Kennedy responded positively.

The St. Elizabeth conference uses the "Serving in Hope" modules. It is a tool for deepening our Vincentian spirituality. The faith sharing that occurs strengthens the bond of friendship between us. With these two aspects, we are more productive in aiding those we serve.

Each session in the module is divided into two parts. We do only one section at a meeting. We take turns reading a paragraph at a time and then have our discussion. This take place immediately after the opening prayer.

We have been through all six modules and are currently starting over with Module I. The older members of the conference find this to be a refresher. It is similar to hearing the Gospel reading in the liturgical cycles; over the years and months different perspectives open up. It also helps reinforce what was learned at the Ozanam training. The new members find it helpful in tying together all the things they are learning about being a Vincentian. It helps them realize there is a Greater Power in helping those we serve. The modules are also helpful to all members in learning and remembering the history of the society.

Occasionally we will use other materials for spiritual reflection. For example, for the feast day of Sr. Rosalie we used a reflection from "A Heart of Fire." We usually do a Christmas potluck. At this time we use different materials from the modules, but ones that are Vincentian in spirit. We also have a spiritual reflection at the prayer breakfast before the "Friends of the Poor Walk."

Deb Cook-Gorsuch, president for the **St. Francis de Sales SVdP conference in Newark, Ohio**, wrote for their spiritual advisor Jim Otto.

At each of our meetings we dedicate the first 20-30 minutes towards Spirituality. Jim usually leads these meetings. We consider it to be a very important part of our meetings. At about half of our meetings we use the "Serving In Hope" modules for our Spiritual discussion. We are now using Module VI. The other

half of these meetings we use some other medium for our discussion. We have found the Serving in Hope modules to be very helpful. Also the topics in the modules book help us to remember what our SVdP focus should be.

Serving in Hope & Social Media

A suggestion has been made to use social media for an on-line diocese-wide study of the Serving in Hope modules. For instance, there would be a Face book page "Serving in Hope." A moderator of the page, who sets up the page, would be the moderator of the discussion group. The moderator would select "friends" who would be the participants in the discussion and the moderator would control the postings. If you are interested in exploring such a cost-free use of the internet to discuss Serving in Hope, contact Charles Kielkopf kielkopf.1@osu.edu

Voice of the Poor & Micro-Loans

The Voice of the Poor committee is exploring the possibility of developing a ministry to compete with PayDay and AutoTitle loan services who exploit the poor. Information was requested from the Executive Director of the Bellville, Illinois conference since they have had such a ministry for five years. Patricia Hogrebe, the Executive Director kindly wrote the following reply.

"Low Interest Loans for lower income (LILLI)

The Belleville Council Society of St. Vincent de Paul began "LILLI" (Low Interest Loans for the Low Income,) in August 2009, to assist the working poor to help meet unexpected and critical expenses such as for car repair, home repair, medical & dental expenses. The program seeks to establish fiscal responsibility and educate the borrower in budgeting and finance.

This program developed directly from our Voice of the Poor Committee and its work to curtail payday lending. Loans up to \$300 are given at

just 4% interest to the low income who qualify. The loans are administered through the Catholic & Community Credit Union.

The interest paid in 12 months on a loan of \$300 at 4% interest rate is \$6.48. The monthly payment \$25.54

In order to obtain the loans, we require a budgeting class and frequently a follow-up budgeting class.

There are, however, frequent referrals for the loan when a loan does not appear to be the best answer to the problem:

- There is an inappropriate request.
- A known history of fraudulent check writing.
- Inadequate income.
- The loan maximum will not make any positive difference or change.
- The borrower is experiencing a crisis situation.
- The borrower is overwhelmed, overextended, and overburdened.
-

For every approved loan request, there are at least three to four requests that direct assistance is the more appropriate action. Education continues to be the underlying foundation for both.

Currently, we are doing an average of three loans per month with an overall repayment record of greater than 65 percent. "

Remember in your prayers

Joe Buttress, St. Christopher,

Rosemary Smith, Joann Wright's Mother (Warren's Mother-in-law), St. Cecilia

Harry Erb, St. Agatha

DIOCESAN COUNCIL

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Website address:

<http://www.vincentianvoice.org>

Committee Chairs:

- Ozanam Orientation: Maureen Meck, Kevin Murphy
- Voice of the Poor: Warren Wright
- VOICE & Website: Charles Kielkopf
- 2014 Friends of the Poor Walk: John Willig
- Publicity: Dianne Keller-Smith
- Music: Joann Wright
- Photographer: Angela Ray

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Send news items and articles for The VOICE
to Charles Kielkopf kielkopf.1@osu.edu or to
the Diocesan office.

Vincentian Reflection from Harry Merchant, formerly SVdP Billings MT Executive Director

It struck me that each time you and I receive Christ in the Eucharist at Mass, we become a living Monstrance. We accept the responsibility of being a living display of Christ for our world today. As we leave church, we are sent to make Christ visible to those around us. Each person leaving with us is as special as that Monstrance displaying Christ on the altar. But I wonder. Do we show the same reverence toward one another that we show toward the Monstrance carrying Christ? Do our actions tell our family that we are Christ bearers? Do we sense the sacredness of the gift we carry? Does the stranger who sees us today realize the gift of love that we received, digested, and that has now become a part of who we are?

For those of us who are members of the St. Vincent de Paul Society, we sometimes forget that we may be the only Monstrance, the only displayer of Christ that this person in need will ever encounter. Do our actions, and the attitudes we bring to our contacts with those in need attract them to Christ, or drive them away? The food we bring may feed them for a few days, but the love with which we bring it can inspire them for a lifetime. So bring out the polish, work out the dents, shine up your Monstrance, and have a great Lent. Christ needs you to shine!