



The Voice

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul Newsletter

Columbus Diocese

Summer 2015

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President's Message Warren Wright

Hope everyone is enjoying their summer! As SVDP in the Columbus Diocese continues its works of charity and justice, the Vincentian Ohio Action Network (VOAN), birthed by a grant from the Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD), celebrates its first birthday. The two chapters of VOAN, the Newark Think Tank on Poverty (NTTP) and Restored Citizens and Communities for Change (RCCC), are making strides around issues of their choosing, particularly breaking down barriers for restored citizens (formerly incarcerated persons who served their sentence and returned to society) to live more fully human lives. One particular issue NTTP and RCCC has been engaged with is “banning the box” on employment applications.



HB 56, the Ohio Fair Hiring Act, is currently before the Ohio Legislature. This bill would remove the box on the first page of applications for public employment which applicants must check if they have ever been convicted of a felony. Checking the box is almost a guarantee of having one's application discarded. **Banning the box is a big step forward.** Unfortunately, even with the box removed, there are ways of using background checks which pose significant barriers to returning citizens from obtaining good jobs. I

had the opportunity, along with members of NTTP and RCCC, to present testimony to the House Commerce and Labor Committee prior to their unanimous approval of a “watered-down” substitute HB56. Our testimonies brought out the need to look with a spirit of forgiveness at restoring HB56 in its original version that included less obvious provisions than the notorious box that keep returning citizens underemployed, if not totally unemployed. Here are some lines of my testimony:

“In addition to our charity work, the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul supports systemic change efforts to bring about justice for those we serve. For returning and restored citizens, this includes efforts to bring about restorative justice, breaking down barriers to obtaining good jobs, housing and other necessities for living a fully human life. Thus we are in support of sub HB-56 and urge its passage. Banning of the box on public sector employment applications is a step forward towards restorative justice in the area of employment for returning and restored citizens.

But it is not enough. We are disappointed that language from the original bill addressing background checks (actually delaying them until after a conditional job offer is made), and common sense measures to guide hiring managers after a background check has been removed. Why not let a person's qualifications speak for themselves in a job interview? Isn't that what each of us expects? Why not require an employer to document their analysis of the background check findings and not discriminate if the findings are not relevant to the person's ability to do the job? How long will we let fear govern our policies and actions toward returning and restored citizens? When will the punishment end, and restoration begin? Haven't most of us made mistakes, shown remorse, experienced

forgiveness, and been allowed to move on with our lives?

Two of the greatest figures in salvation history, Moses and King David, had criminal backgrounds. Moses murdered an Egyptian in a fit of rage and had to flee. He wound up leading God's chosen people out of bondage to the brink of the Promised Land. King David was an adulterer and accessory to murder. After being warned by Nathan, showing remorse and being punished, God continued to use him for good. In every Our Father, we pray "...Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven..." God is waiting for our returning and restored citizens to be given opportunities they deserve to live more fully human lives."

I go on to share a personal story of accompanying a young man as he struggles to restore himself after being imprisoned for a drug conviction.

Go to the first page of our website <http://www.vincentianvoice.org> to download my complete testimony and moving stories of some returning citizens seriously damaged by unnecessary provisions in background checks.

Mark Your Calendar! Save these dates!

August 23, Sunday, 2015 Day of Recollection – Martin de Porres Center, Dominican Sisters of Peace, 9 AM – 3:30 PM

October 3, Saturday, 2015 Friends of the Poor Walk – Columbus St. Francis DeSales High School, sign in 9am, walk starts 10am

Day of Recollection

Registration is now open for our annual Day of Recollection to be held on Sunday, August 23, 2015 from 9 am to 3 pm at the Martin de Porres Center on the campus of the Dominican Sisters of Peace. Our facilitators this year will be Cajie and Fidelis D'Cunha from the SVDP Detroit Council. They will lead us in prayer and reflection on "Recognizing the Multi-Cultural Face of God". Their presentation will be an expanded version of the one they gave in St.

Louis to the National Council at the start of this year's Midyear Meeting in April. It was very well received by the National Council. Cajie is a member the SVDP Detroit staff. Registration will be from 9 am to 10 am. The day will conclude with mass in the Motherhouse chapel from 2 pm to 3 pm

Continental breakfast and a lunch will be provided. Cost per person is \$25. To register, please contact Pat Summers at 614-221-3554 or psummers@colsdio.org. Checks payable to SVDP Columbus Diocesan Council can be sent to Pat at 197 E. Gay Street, Columbus, OH 43215. Deadline for registration is Monday, August 17 so we can give the Martin de Porres Center a final head count for meal planning.

Friends of the Poor Walks

2015 Diocesan Friends of the Poor Walk

Each of the past six years of the Friends of the Poor Walk has seen an increase in attendance and money raised. This year is again looking promising. The event runs Saturday, October 3 at De Sales High School. Starting time is 9:00 AM.

There are three things we're working to highlight this year says John Willig – this year's Chairperson: increased attendance of our High School and College students, greater highlighting of Columbus Diocesan Ministries, and increased corporate sponsorship.

All money collected goes directly to serving the needs of most needy in Columbus. Money collected by Diocesan Ministries such as JOIN or St. Vincent Family Center goes directly to that ministry.

To walk, register online at <https://www.svdpusa.net/fop/> at the top of the page (Blue Line) click on "Walkers" and click on the drop down "Become a Walker"; choose "Ohio" and click on "St. Francis DeSales High School" then "Continue Registration". Fill in the form. Under "Walk Beneficiary" you have the opportunity to specify your parish conference or ministry. The final step is to click on "Add a Walker."

Circleville Friends of Poor Walk

"St. Joseph's SVdP is sponsoring a Friends of the Poor Walk/Run in Circleville, OH, in Pickaway County on Oct. 3rd, 2015. The event will be at Mary Virginia Crites Hannah Park on the corner St. Rt. 188 NW (from Circleville) and Pontious Lane. Registration is 8:30 am and the Walk/Run will start at 9:00 am and finish at 11:00 am. If anyone wants to join us, go to <https://www.svdpusa.net/fop/> choose WALK or DONATE. Choose OH, MVCH. Call Pat Meves, if you want information. 614-203-7978 or 740-983-3132."

Voice of the Poor

The committee continues to work with credit unions, such as Wright Patt and TrueCore, to set up a LowIncomeLowInterest (LILI) programs. Go to front page of our website <http://vincentianvoice.org> to download an outline of our committees plan for a LILI program.

Report to CCHD on work of our Community Organizer, Wendy Tarr

During the second half of the grant year, we formally launched the Restored Citizens and Communities for Change (RCCC) Program in the Columbus area.. This group has become quickly recognized and our organizer, Wendy Tarr, was approached by the head of Franklin County Re-Entry Coalition to co-Chair the county committee on 'faith, family, and community'.

The Newark Think Tank on Poverty continues to grow and gain accomplishment locally. Our forum at Denison University on Fair Hiring changed the mind of the law director for the city, paving the way for fair hiring legislation that was introduced with his office's support in June 2015. Two members were approached by employers after giving their public story and one single mother who has multiple felonies was

given a job after she was profiled in the local paper by a businessman who read about her plight.

We have provided over 20 public testimonies primarily by restored citizens in front of legislative committees on Fair Hiring (HB56), and mental health budgets for those incarcerated. Our members have also been profiled in television, radio, and local press for their advocacy. In early June, the Ohio Governor took administrative action to adopt fair hiring practices at the state level. HB56 "Ban the Box" was voted unanimously out of the House Labor and Commerce Committee after testimony by over 20 restored citizens and allies throughout the Spring and Summer. A citywide bill, that includes fair hiring provisions, was also unanimously voted out of the HR committee at Newark City Council directly due to the work of the NTTP.

This Summer, the NTTP also hosted a roundtable at Licking Memorial hospital attended by 40 business leaders to educate private employers on fair hiring practices and to begin to change the culture in that sector of society.

SOAR

What is SOAR and why should we care? **SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access, and Recovery (SOAR)** is a program designed to increase access to SSI/SSDI for *eligible adults who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness* and have a mental illness, medical impairment, and/or a co-occurring substance use disorder. With its roots in a 1993 one-year demonstration project in Baltimore, MD, the **SOAR Technical Assistance (TA) Center** has been funded by the [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration](#) (SAMHSA) since 2009.

SOAR has an on-line course for becoming a SOAR counselor. The article about Deb Gorsuch below shows how being a SOAR counselor can help Vincentians serve those in need of help from the Social Security Administration. We encounter so many people on our home visits who have no income, and have been denied many times in their applications for

disability income, with no rhyme or reason as to why. Here is the link to learn more about becoming a SOAR counselor. .

<http://soarworks.prainc.com/course/ssisdi-outreach-access-and-recovery-soar-online-training>

St. Francis DeSales, Newark

Deb Cook-Gorsuch , president of the St. Vincent conference at St. Francis, is also a SOAR counselor. Wearing her SOAR hat she has helped countless people get their SSI/SSDI, in a very streamlined, and sequential way. She has an amazing success rate!

She recently got SSDI approved for one of the members of the Newark Think Tank. When the letter came back to this individual declaring a very low monthly amount, Deb appealed it because the math didn't work, and got the amount tripled! This will change the lives of this family pretty dramatically! There were months and months of work. Deb persevered and was victorious - again! She is an unsung hero in our community and among our Vincentians. Leshia Farias

Newman Center Conference

On the third Monday of June, a small group from the Newman conference served dinner to the recently formed SVdP Action group called Restored Citizens and Communities for Change. We prayed and heard stories from our sisters and brothers as they face the challenges of returning citizens after incarceration.

Restored Citizens is facilitated by our amazing SVdP community organizer, Wendy Tarr, and she informed us of upcoming legislation that will impact our community. We heard about the challenges of finding housing and jobs with a felony record, even after 20 years.

Our Newman conference was inspired by the courage, honesty, and determination of the participants. We were warmly welcomed! We feel this is a great way to show Christ's love and we were privileged to be there. As Christians we believe in forgiveness for the children of God, as

we are so graciously forgiven, and we believe in the God of second (and third...) chances. This is a great way to put our faith into action.

We brought 7 large pizzas, carrots, celery, peppers, cucumbers and dip, lemonade, paper plates, napkins, and cups, and 6 dozen chocolate chip cookies for the 25 people in attendance and there was plenty to send home. You might have something else in mind. St. Francis has a great kitchen set-up in the basement with pitchers and serving utensils etc.

The Restored Citizens committee meets every 3rd Monday at 5PM in St. Francis of Assisi. The meeting finishes at 7 as people need to catch the bus and/or get to work.

Contact Wendy Tarr @ 614-512-7106 to volunteer for a 3rd Monday dinner.

Linda Cannon

“Poverty calls us to sow hope...Poverty is the flesh of the poor Jesus, in that child who is hungry, in the one who is sick, in those unjust social structures...” Pope Francis

Opening at the Haven

Vincentian volunteers are committed to their service; as much as, if not more than salaried workers. A member of the Wednesday serving team, Terry O'Loughlin, needs to resign. But Terry is reluctant to leave until a replacement has been found. Contact Heather Swiger, hswiger@colsdio.org 614-241-2569

New Presidents

St. Mary, Bremen Conference – Angi Skinner replacing Tyna Fox.

Remember in your prayers

George Klein, father of Heather Swiger, our St. Lawrence Haven and Clothing Center Manager

Shirley Ervin SVdP dispatcher for Our Lady of Mt. Carmel

DIOCESAN COUNCIL**Officers:**

- Diocesan Council President: Warren Wright
- Diocesan Council Vice President: Bob Zabloudil
- Past President: Bill Sparks
- Treasurer: Janet Jobko
- Secretary: Marie Placide
- At Large: Jody Stahr, Maureen Meck, Sylvia Siemer, Will and Jennifer Matson
- Spiritual Advisor: Fr. Charles Klinger

District Council Presidents:

- East: Carl Smith
- East Rural: Richard Shannon
- N-NW: Charles Kielkopf
- N-Central: Maureen Preston
- N-NE: Rich Rossi
- E-SE: Barb Spangler
- South Rural: David Lanning
- Inner-City: Gina Langen
- S-SW: Joffre Moine

Website address:

<http://www.vincentianvoice.org>

Committee Chairs:

- Ozanam Orientation: Maureen Meck, Kevin Murphy
- Voice of the Poor: Danielle Gray
- VOICE & Website: Charles Kielkopf
- 2015 Friends of the Poor Walk: John Willig
- Publicity: Dianne Keller-Smith
- Music: Joann Wright
- Photographer: Angela Ray

Secretary, Pat Summers

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

In this, and in subsequent issues, the issue will conclude with brief excerpts from Frederic Ozanam's letters from *Frederic Ozanam: A Life in Letters* edited and translated by Joseph L. Dirvin C.M. St. Louis 1986. They show us the real person behind our founder who may be canonized, struggling to seek holiness. Here, on p. 117, we read from a letter by 24 year old Frederic to a law school friend about his fear of commitment and dismissal of a vocation to marriage. In the next issue we will read from one of his love letters.

“the question of marriage presents itself frequently to my mind; and it never departs and the wanderings of my imagination have the power of leading my heart far astray.

It could be that there is some unjust disrespect for women there. While the Blessed Virgin and my mother and some others bring me to pardon the daughters of Eve many things, I admit that general I do not understand them. Their sensitivity is sometimes admirable, but their intelligence is of a light and despairing inconsequence. Have you ever seen conversation more capriciously interrupted, less logical than theirs? And to bind oneself to an association without reserve and without end, with a human, mortal, infirm and miserable creature, however perfect she be! It is this perpetuity of the bond, especially, which is a thing of terror for me and it is why I cannot help shedding tears when I attend a wedding, and the same when I attend an ordination or the taking of the habit.”