

Conference Presidents:

Lenten blessings to you and all of your Vincentians!

As you know, SVdP has adopted the goal to "End Poverty Through Systemic Change". At the Diocesan Level, we are engaged in some very exciting and worthwhile systemic change works. These are:

. 1. Microloan Programs in Licking County and Franklin County, with the goal of expanding to all counties in the Columbus Diocese. Licking County has made 3 loans, and the microloan board in Franklin County is being assembled. We have \$7,000 in donations for opening the Franklin County acct at Metro Federal Credit Union. Expansion into the other counties of the Diocese will depend on locating partnering Credit Unions in the different areas. You are the best persons to make this happen.

2. Vincentian Ohio Action Network (VOAN) with its Newark Think Tank on Poverty (NTTP) and Restored Citizens and Communities for Change (RCC4C) chapters. VOAN is led by our community organizer, Wendy Tarr, and has given many of the people we serve the opportunity to engage with Vincentians and find their voice on issues impacting their lives. Primary issues that have been acted upon include issues facing restored citizens and criminal justice reform. Wendy's salary, and VOAN's organizational and leadership development expenses have been funded by grants from the Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD). We are currently in the 3rd year of funding with a possibility for 3 additional years. Thanks to the efforts of Vincentians at the St John Neumann conference, an active VOAN group appears to be forming in Delaware County. We need to be thinking now about how this work can be sustainable in the long-term after CCHD funding ends.

Also, in collaboration with the Diocesan Office of Social Concerns, the Accompanying Restored Citizens with Hope (ARCH) ministry is being launched to provide mentoring opportunities with returning citizens (i.e. persons released from jail/prison) as they reestablish their lives in society. Parish and business outreach, and advocacy will be components of ARCH as we attempt to further break down the barriers restored citizens face to thriving in their new lives. The Catholic Foundation is providing generous funding of ARCH over a 3-year period. Again, how can this work be sustained in the long-term?

3. Our Diocese now has 41 persons trained to facilitate the aHa Process' Getting Ahead in a Just Gettin' By World course. This is the 16-week program that will allow interested persons we serve to investigate their lives and develop and plan their own future stories. They will have the opportunity and support to break free of the Tyranny of the Moment so prevalent in the lives of persons living in poverty. We are about to start sessions of the Getting Ahead course in the Columbus diocese in conjunction with Mt. Carmel Health, Alvis House, and other collaborators. With investigators being paid for their expertise \$25 for each session and facilitators receiving a stipend for each session, a 16-week program with 12 investigators would

cost an estimated \$8,000. The Diocesan Council does not currently have funding set aside for this work.

Our SVDP charity work in the Columbus diocese at the Clothing Center, St Lawrence Haven, Saturday Food Program and the Funeral Fund is well funded through conference donations, numerous private donations, endowments, the Bishop's Annual Appeal, and the Catholic Foundation. ***As we strive to end poverty through systemic change, now is the time to financially support the systemic change activities above so that they will become sustainable in the short- and long-term. To that end, I request that each of your conferences consider making a yearly \$1,000 twinning donation to the Diocesan Council for our systemic change activities (by April 1 of each year - halfway through our fiscal year).*** This money will be available to help fund microloan programs as they develop in other areas of the diocese, larger loans through existing microloan programs, Getting Ahead Sessions throughout the Diocese for those we serve, organizational/leadership development/operating expenses for VOAN chapters, and potentially hiring, as an additional VOAN organizer, someone we serve. Also, as the CCHD funding comes to an end in 3 years, funds will be used for our community organizer's continued salary.

Some may say that making this contribution will take away from your direct assistance to those in need. I don't think so. This is not an either/or proposition. If an expense cannot be met entirely by a conference, twinning never fails to cover the worthy costs. As Vincentians, we are not supposed to hoard funds, relying instead on Divine Providence.

Please discuss this request with your conference. If you would like me to come to a conference meeting to discuss it with you and provide a more detailed discussion of our systemic change work, just contact me and I will be there. I realize that some conferences may not have funds now. Consider making a donation of some or part of the \$1,000 after one of your 5th Sunday or other collections. When you do donate, send your check, marked with Systemic Change Fund in the memo block, to Pat Summers, SVDP Diocesan Council, 197 E Gay Street, Columbus, OH 43215.

Persons served by our SVdP conferences will be BETTER SERVED when we show our commitment to charity and justice (systemic change) activities. Only then can we have hope of ending poverty through systemic change.

Many blessings,

Warren