

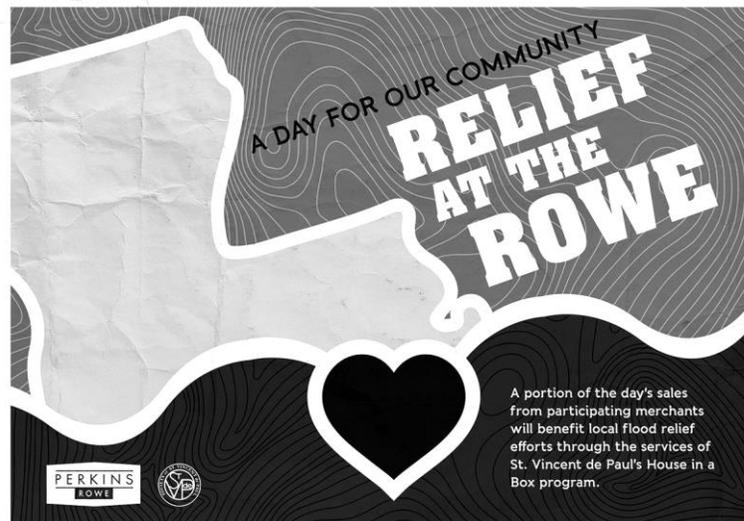


# Vincentian Charities

Newsletter and Chronicle of Activities  
SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT de PAUL  
Louisiana, Capital Region  
Fall Edition Vol. XXV, No. III



*Serving God's Poor in our  
Community Since 1865*



A portion of the day's sales from participating merchants will benefit local flood relief efforts through the services of St. Vincent de Paul's House in a Box program.

*We thank Perkins Rowe, Trademark, all of the merchants and restaurants for holding the Relief at the Rowe event. This was a day for our community to raise critical dollars for our furniture assistance program. More on this great event and its results in an upcoming newsletter.*

## August 12<sup>th</sup> – a Day We Will Never Forget

Friday, August 12<sup>th</sup>, was a day that we will never forget. That, of course, was when a rainy weekend forecast changed from a normal summer weather pattern to a thousand-year flood that devastated our community. As the rivers, bayous, and creeks overflowed, the water flooded areas that had never flooded before. It invaded the homes of rich and poor alike, and thousands became homeless for the first time in their lives.

As we have for over 150 years, St. Vincent de Paul stood ready to respond, despite the fact that many of our volunteers and staff were also affected by the floods. Just when we needed all hands on board, we were facing the possibility of a reduced workforce. But within days, it was full steam ahead, with employees and volunteers returning to work before the flood waters had fully receded. We worked together to provide services, identify gaps, and then fill those gaps. We weren't concerned with who was getting credit for what was going on in our community. We focused on what needed to be done and how we could alleviate suffering.

Our shelter staff, which has a ton of experience in providing shelter to the homeless, recognized that many of the temporary shelters that popped up in community centers and local churches would not have adequate supplies of toiletry items, blankets, pillows, or mattresses. Joe Keegan, Laura Martinez, and all the wonderful staff members at our homeless shelters identified the needs of temporary shelters and got the items to them as quickly as possible. When someone becomes homeless overnight, they suddenly realize the value of everyday things. When you've lost everything, a blanket, pillow or toothbrush is worth its weight in gold.

Denise Terrance, our Dining Room Director, had over four feet of water in her home, but she made sure that St. Vincent de Paul continued to get meals out to the needy – not just in the Baton Rouge area, but to surrounding communities like French Settlement and Maurepas.

Lucille Cox, our Stores Director, had waist-high water in her  
**Continued on page 2; see "August 12<sup>th</sup> – a Day We Will..."**



## Flooded by Love

Here in the Deep South, we all get a little nervous during hurricane season, and mid-August is the beginning of the most dangerous period, when tropical storm activity spikes. But our luck held during the first week of August, and we were well into the second week with no hurricanes in the Gulf, just a slow moving area of low-pressure. No one could have imagined the devastation that awaited our community. Record breaking rainfall resulted in record flood levels, and thousands of people became homeless overnight.

Our Bishop Ott Sweet Dreams Shelter has a lot of experience in helping the homeless, specifically, homeless women and children. This continues to be the most vulnerable segment of the homeless population, and there are very few options for them in our community.  
**Continued on page 2; see "Flooded by Love"**



## Furniture Assistance Program Will Provide Hope

St. Vincent de Paul's leadership and the Diocese of Baton Rouge are working together to establish a furniture assistance program. This program, which is in the implementation phase, will provide furniture items such as mattresses and bed frames, sofas, and dinette sets to families who lost furnishings in the recent flooding. Our goal is to assist over 400 vulnerable households, and these items will be provided at no cost to individuals in need. This assistance is for people that had no flood insurance on household contents, have exhausted all their FEMA assistance, and have nowhere else to turn for these basic items. Crystal  
**Continued on page 3; see "Furniture Assistance Program"**

*In this issue - Uniforms for Kids Revamped  
Get the Word Out*

**August 12<sup>th</sup> – a Day We Will...** Continued from page 1  
home, but hasn't missed a day of work since the flood. She knows that every person at our Essential Needs Distribution Center is needed to receive, sort, and distribute supplies that have been given for flood victims. So far, we have received over 30 truckloads of items from all over the country!

Bishop Muench had someone contact him about donating professional dress clothes, which we gladly accepted, all the way from New Jersey. The Gildan Company contacted us and provided a truckload of new socks and underwear. Jeremy Hill, running back of the Cincinnati Bengals and formerly an LSU Tiger, sent us 15 big boxes of Adidas underwear, socks, and other much needed items.

The Baton Rouge Area Foundation recognized that many flood victims may have lost their prescription medicines, and they provided a \$50,000 grant to fill this gap. The list of individuals, businesses, and organizations providing assistance could go on and on. The response from so many caring people – both near and far – has truly been remarkable.

We are now working on a furniture assistance program to replace furniture as people are able to move back into their homes, and we want to thank the Diocese of Baton Rouge for their support of this program. We know that the demand for furniture will exceed our ability to provide it, but we will do our best to help as many people as we can through this effort. We are working with great people like Tom Olinde of Olinde's Furniture and many others to make the greatest impact possible. Our furniture assistance efforts will be an important part of recovery from this disaster, but there is much more to be done. Let's remember that this disaster is like no other our community has ever seen. Recovery will not be measured in months; it will take years.

If you or someone you know needs assistance, please don't hesitate to contact us through our website at [svdpbr.org](http://svdpbr.org), or by calling us at (225) 383-7837, extension O. We are here to help, and our efforts will continue as long as there is a need in our community.

### **Flooded by Love** Continued from page 1



Before the flood, plans were already under way to expand this shelter, and we hope to begin construction within the next several weeks. With the flooding and destruction of so many rental properties, we know that the number of homeless women and children seeking shelter will be higher than ever. There

was already a shortage of affordable, permanent housing in our area, and for mothers that were barely making it from one paycheck to the next, finding another apartment will become an almost insurmountable problem.

It's impossible to calculate the long-term effects of stress and emotional devastation suffered by people whose homes were flooded, but without a doubt, children are the greatest concern to us. Children like James, in the photo, need the

safety and stability that we can offer at our Sweet Dreams Shelter. Children need to know that their favorite stuffed animal is waiting for them at bedtime and that mom will tuck them in every night.

We know that we will see more children like James and his little sister in the coming months, and we want to be there to provide them a home that is safe, not only from the dangers of the street, but also from mold and mildew caused by flood waters. Our goal is to continue to provide a hand-up, to provide homeless mothers with the case management, job counseling, and life skills education they need. We don't want them to become dependent; we want to help them regain their independence.

As we did last year during our Sweet Dreams campaign, we ask you to use the Sweet Dreams Prayer in this newsletter to pray for the homeless. We've changed the prayer a little to include those who were displaced by the floods.

August 12<sup>th</sup> was the beginning of a catastrophic disaster, but it also triggered a remarkable flood of love and compassion throughout our community: neighbor helping neighbor, strangers reaching out to others, and countless prayers for people who were impacted. We also need your prayers that God will give everyone affected by this disaster the strength to overcome what lies ahead, especially those who may be more vulnerable and unable to deal with this tragedy.

Some people have shown remarkable courage, capability and resilience, gutting their homes themselves and immediately beginning the hard work of restoration. They have an inner strength that is phenomenal. But not everyone is that strong or capable, and that's why we need your continued support of our shelter. We want to offer a helping hand to homeless women and mothers with children like James and his sister.

We need your support to help us continue to provide sweet dreams. We ask you to use the Sweet Dreams prayer in this issue to pray for this vulnerable population, but we also need your financial support. A gift of only \$10.00 will provide night shelter. If you are able to give at this time, please consider how many nights of shelter you can provide. You can send your gift to: Bishop Ott Sweet Dreams Shelter, P.O. Box 127, Baton Rouge, LA 70821, or make a gift online at [svdpbr.org](http://svdpbr.org).

### *Sweet Dreams Prayer*

*Lord God, Giver of Life,  
Fill us with your Spirit.*

*Use our hands to shelter the homeless;*

*Use our hearts to enable sweet dreams;*

*Use our voices to alleviate suffering.*

*May our actions improve life for those*

*Displaced or affected by the floods*

*And reflect your abundant love.*

*Through Christ our Lord, AMEN.*

**Sweet Dreams  
Shelter Expansion  
More Important  
Than Ever**



For quite some time, we had recognized a need to expand our Sweet Dreams Shelter and, since the recent flooding, the need is even greater. Our expansion project is currently out for bids, and we are prayerful that the bids will come in at a level that will allow us to go forward and break ground on the expansion of this facility before the end of the year.

Please continue to keep our Sweet Dreams Shelter and the homeless women and children we serve in your thoughts and prayers.

**Furniture Assistance Program** Continued from page 1  
Chatelain, St. Vincent de Paul Council President, stated, "We are so grateful and excited to have the support of Bishop Muench and the Diocese of Baton Rouge in leading this important effort. Vincentians throughout the Diocese are working diligently to do the best job we can in providing this important service."

The assistance will be provided through the St. Vincent de Paul Conference ministries in our Diocese. We will also work with parishes that have a Social Responsibility Committee, but no St. Vincent de Paul Conference. In addition, we will work closely with Catholic Charities, who is performing important long-term recovery case management services. We look forward to working in partnership with Catholic Charities who will refer those in need of furniture to our program.

We want to thank Olinde's Furniture for working with us so that we can make the greatest impact possible. After Hurricane Katrina, Olinde's was there for St. Vincent de Paul, providing furniture at a very low cost to families that had lost everything during the hurricane. Once again, Olinde's has stepped up to the plate to help St. Vincent de Paul in this new mission of mercy.

If you would like to help with our furniture assistance program, please consider making a gift of \$50, \$100, \$250, \$500, \$1,000 – or more if possible. Any donation will be greatly appreciated. Because of the generosity of the Olinde family, we are not paying retail prices, so your contribution will really make a difference in the lives of needy people throughout our community.

Please fill out the form below or go to [svdpcb.org](http://svdpcb.org) to make your gift online.

**Furniture Assistance Program**

**Yes, I want to help! I have enclosed a gift of \$\_\_\_\_\_ for St. Vincent de Paul's Furniture Assistance Program.**

**My name is:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**City:** \_\_\_\_\_ **State:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Zip:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Mail your gift to St. Vincent de Paul, P.O. Box 127, Baton Rouge, LA 70821-0127 or call us at (225) 383-7837.**

## Uniforms for Kids Revamped

As the creeks and rivers were rising, our Uniforms for Kids efforts in the 12 civil parishes we serve were beginning to slow down. But things are gearing back up since so many families lost everything, including school uniforms.

Gerry Malone, our long-time Uniforms for Kids volunteer leader, had recently moved to more of a macro-level status as a volunteer with this effort. Instead of working every day at the uniform room, Gerry had reduced her hours and begun helping out at our St. Vincent de Paul Essential Needs Distribution Center. Before the flood waters had receded, Gerry called us and said, "I'm coming out of semi-retirement to help St. Vincent de Paul reach out to all the needy kids in the school districts that were affected by this disaster." Thanks to Gerry, and so many other dedicated volunteers, we have helped hundreds of children that lost everything. Our goal is to help thousands, and we need your help.

Please consider filling out the form below to make a donation to Uniforms for Kids. Help get the word out to family members and friends who may want to help. Spread the word through social media. Let everyone know how they can help with our Uniforms for Kids effort. This is how they do it: Fill out the form below or go to [svdpcb.org](http://svdpcb.org) and make a Uniforms for Kids donation so that we can reach out to children who are now turning up at school in damaged uniforms or without the proper attire. Help us to make a difference in the life of a child.

**Uniforms for Kids**

**Yes, I would like to help clothe school children devastated by the recent flood. Please find enclosed my gift of \$\_\_\_\_\_.**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please mail to the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, P.O. Box 127, Baton Rouge, LA 70821 or call us at (225) 383-7837.**

### Get the Word Out

Throughout this newsletter, you will see wonderful stories of how St. Vincent de Paul is responding to the devastation caused by the recent flooding, and we need all the help we can get with assistance efforts. We have been contacted by many of you who have said, "I have family members living in other parts of the country who want to help. What can they do?" We have received so many clothing donations, both locally and from other areas. What we need more are financial contributions that can go directly to our new furniture assistance program, our Uniforms for Kids effort, our Community Pharmacy, or our disaster relief efforts to help people with some of the items they've lost such as towels, linens, kitchenware, furniture, etc.

Use social media to spread the word to your out-of-town family and friends. Let them know how they can help someone in need. Tell them to visit the [svdpcb.org](http://svdpcb.org) website and make a disaster relief contribution or ask them to donate to one of our other efforts that will really make a difference in the lives of those we are blessed to serve.

*Society of St. Vincent de Paul*  
*P. O. Box 127*  
*Baton Rouge, LA 70821-0127*  
**Address Service Requested**

Non-Profit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
P A I D  
Baton Rouge, LA  
Permit No. 1272

## *Quiet Heroes*

Every day, St. Vincent de Paul volunteers and supporters respond to poverty, homelessness, hunger, and healthcare needs, but a disaster really highlights the quiet heroes among us – those everyday people who think first of others and rarely of themselves. They don't want honors or accolades; in fact, they would be embarrassed by any attempt to recognize them for what they do. To them, a good deed is simply an expression of their faith and a way of giving back. I've been seeing a lot of that lately.

For me, it's been especially uplifting to see volunteers and staff members who are eager to help, despite the fact that their own homes were damaged by floodwaters. Many of them had four or five feet of water in their houses, but their philosophy is that there are others who are worse off than they are.

At a meeting recently, I spoke with a man who said he had gotten two or three feet of water in his house. When I learned that he didn't have flood insurance, I asked how St. Vincent de Paul could help. He replied, "There are a lot of people out there who need your help more than I do. I'll be able to come back from this, but this is going to knock some people down. I want you to go out there and pick them up." Wow! To lose so much and think of others rather than yourself.

I would like to take this opportunity to salute all of you who have suffered devastating losses, yet have the courage and determination to rebuild your homes and your lives. I pray that God will give you the strength you need to get through this difficult time.

For those who have reached out to others, I can't thank you enough. Your help – both now and in the future – will play a critical role in the lives of people who are overwhelmed by what lies ahead. Recovery will take years, and our assistance efforts will be a marathon, not a sprint. If you need our help or know someone who does, please feel free to email me at [macaldo@svdpbr.com](mailto:macaldo@svdpbr.com) or call (225) 383-7837, extension O. We will do our best to help in any way we can. -- *Michael J. Acaldo, President & CEO*

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: Tune in to Catholic Life TV on Cox Channel 15 or watch on [Catholiclifetv.org](http://Catholiclifetv.org) to see St. Vincent de Paul's Beacons of Light series.  
: This year's series focuses on our 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Season of Beacons of Light. We will look back at some of our favorite shows  
: and look forward to what is happening today with great interviews, and great insight into the work of the Society. Our schedule is:  
: Sunday at 3:00 p.m.; Monday at 7:00 p.m.; Tuesday at 1:00 p.m.; Wednesday at 9:00 p.m.; and Saturday at 8:00 p.m.  
: .....