



Vincentian Charities

Newsletter and Chronicle of Activities

SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT de PAUL

Louisiana, Capital Region

Easter Edition 2021 Vol. XXX, No. I



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

2020-2021
Impact Grantee



Count Your Blessings To-Geaux Supper a Success

If you missed this year's Count Your Blessings Supper at Our Lady of Mercy, you missed a wonderful drive-thru event on March 12th. Chef John Folse and Bishop Michael Duca joined forces to lead our first-ever Soup Parade.

Chef Folse came up with an amazing Spinach, Artichoke and Crabmeat Bisque. Father Cleo Milano once again put his muscle and support behind the effort. John Pastorek used the OLOM radio channel to share a great Count Your Blessings Supper message for the long line of people in cars that came to partake of some of the great soup. And you can go online to see all the celebrities that joined us in this great event. John Pastorek also produced a special Count Your Blessings Sunday Journal you can see by visiting our website.

Although we could not gather this year as we normally do because of the COVID-19 pandemic, we counted our blessings together to help those in need by supporting the charitable work of St. Vincent de Paul.

We especially count our blessings for Bishop Michael Duca and Chef John Folse & Company who went above and beyond the call of duty to make this a fantastic success. Special thanks to Bishop Robert Muench, Father Cleo Milano, John Pastorek, Becky and Brennan Bourg, and all the volunteers who made this event possible.

Every year, this effort helps us to raise important financial support. Donations are still coming in (and yes, you can still make a Count Your Blessings gift online at svdpbr.org), but it looks like this year's event will be another great success. It will generate critically needed dollars during these difficult economic times. In the 26 years since its inception, the event has raised critical financial support enabling us to extend a helping hand to thousands of people in need.

During the holiest of seasons, the Count Your Blessings Supper reminds us to do just that – count the blessings that God has given to us.

It also gives us an opportunity to pray for those who are struggling. Whether their problems are caused by the pandemic, a floundering economy, poor health, or other circumstances, they need to feel God's loving hand. Please continue to pray for the needy we serve.



Build a Basket

It was a special blessing for St. Vincent de Paul to be there for the poor and homeless this past Christmas. Because of the pandemic, we saw so many new faces of people needing the services we provide, and it was a privilege to be able to give the simple gifts of food, clothing, shelter and medicine.

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Filling Prescriptions – Saving Lives

The everyday mission of our St. Vincent de Paul Community Pharmacy is to save lives. That powerful mission says a lot about our Fill a Prescription for the Needy efforts during this COVID-19 pandemic. Our pharmacy fills life-sustaining prescriptions, providing medicines for the underlying health conditions of high blood pressure, heart disease, diabetes and many other illnesses.

The pandemic and downturn in the economy are forcing more people to break tablets in half or skip doses of life-sustaining medicines in a desperate attempt to make ends meet. Every year, our pharmacy serves patients who cannot afford their critically needed medicines. That's why this effort, led by Pat Shingleton, WBRZ-Channel 2, and the Baton Rouge Clinic is so important.



Whether it's an individual who's fighting a life-threatening health condition and has lost their health insurance; a blue collar worker who has been affected by the decrease in jobs; a single mother struggling to raise her children; or someone who lost their job during a recent lay-off, our pharmacy is truly the light at the end of the tunnel.

With so much suffering because of the pandemic, we know that this year's campaign will be a real challenge. People who go without their prescriptions experience worsening health and complications, and that is the last thing any of us want during the pandemic.

At one time or another, we have all seen someone who was impoverished or ill, especially during this pandemic. Our hearts go out to them. We may have thought, "There, but for the grace of God, go I." People who have had that same thought are now showing up at our pharmacy.

In the face of illness and adversity, you might think that faith would be weakened, or lost altogether. But we see faith that is stronger than ever – despite pain and suffering, life-threatening diseases and financial hardship.

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In this issue – *Thank You for Your Support in 2020!*
2021 Attic Trash & Treasure Sale

Thank You for Your Support!

We want to thank all of you who helped us in our mission of charity in 2020. Your generosity allowed us to respond to the tremendous need in our community.

The end of 2020 and beginning of 2021 was especially challenging for St. Vincent de Paul. We had several staff members that were exposed to COVID and had to quarantine. Everyone that was exposed did okay, and we didn't miss serving a meal or providing shelter or filling prescriptions!

All of the challenges have delayed us in getting our thank you acknowledgements out. We greatly apologize for this delay, and ask for your forgiveness. At St. Vincent de Paul, we have a small administrative team, so the quarantines, freezes and other major disruptions created unprecedented challenges for us. We thank you for helping us to be here for those who had nowhere else to turn for help.



St. Vincent de Paul Thanks the Attic Trash & Treasure Sale

St. Vincent de Paul thanks the Inner Wheel for their support through the 2021 Attic Trash & Treasure Sale held March 5th through 7th. Special thanks to these extraordinary ladies and all those who support the Attic Trash & Treasure Sale.

Through the years, the support generated by this effort has helped us to provide people in need a hand-up of hope through our charitable services. We salute one of our community's greatest assets, our local Inner Wheel. When this newsletter went to press, the sale had just ended, so more information on this year's effort will be forthcoming.

Build a Basket Continued from page 1



We all think of giving at Christmas, but the season of Lent is a time for more than inward reflection and soul-searching. It's also a good time to look outside ourselves for ways to help others. At Easter, we celebrate the life and resurrection of Our Lord, and there is no better time to give and to share the Easter message of hope.

Build a Basket is a program that allows us to share – in a small way – this message of hope. Our goal this year is to provide over 1,000 Easter baskets to needy children in our community.

Many of the baskets are put together by volunteers who fill them with candy, small stuffed animals, crayons and coloring books. The message to the child that receives the basket is simple: someone cares about you. How wonderful that is, to capture the Easter spirit, and pass it on to a needy child.

It also tells them that this Sunday is different from all other Sundays – this special day is cause for joyous celebration. This is the message we want to share with the children who come to our Dining Room, the little boys and girls that call our Sweet Dreams Shelter *home*, and needy school children who have so little joy in their lives. Join us in praying for all the children we serve. And thank you to everyone who helped us make the 2021 effort a success!

Filling Prescriptions – Saving Lives Continued from page 1

People who had been skipping doses of critically needed medicines or breaking tablets in half have never lost hope, nor abandoned their faith in God.

The purpose of our Fill a Prescription for the Needy campaign is to meet this critical need in our healthcare system, and we need your help. Please keep our efforts, and more importantly, the people we serve in your thoughts and prayers. Secondly, if you know of a low-income individual who needs assistance with their prescription medicines, please refer them to our pharmacy at (225) 383-7450. Finally, during this ongoing pandemic, help us to share God's mercy with people who desperately need their prescription medicines. If you are able to help, we ask you to give a financial gift that will be the answer to someone's prayer. You can save a life today by filling a prescription, by making a gift online at svdpbr.org, or by sending a contribution to: Fill a Prescription for the Needy, P. O. Box 127, Baton Rouge, LA 70821.

2020 St. Vincent de Paul Community Impact Responding to Poverty & Homelessness	
Our St. Vincent de Paul Dining Room served	219,712 Meals
Guest nights provided to homeless men, women, children and families by our Bishop Ott Shelter Program (4 shelters and a Day Center)	23,452 Guest Nights
Our St. Vincent de Paul Community Pharmacy filled	Prescriptions valued at almost \$1 million
Our Uniforms for Kids Program distributed	6,993 Uniforms
St. Vincent de Paul Stores provided clothing, furniture, etc. all free of charge to	4,000+ Needy individuals and families
St. Vincent de Paul Conference Volunteers visited needy families	Continuing Home Visits by telephone
Community Support is great – monthly volunteer average	500+ volunteers



Update: As we mentioned in our newsletters last year, our new emergency shelter made a real impact during the tropical storms and hurricanes of 2020.

In 2021, this new facility made a tremendous impact by getting men, women, children and families off the streets during

freezing temperatures. In our pharmacy article we discussed saving lives, and our shelter is also in the life-saving business. Thanks to Debra Blacher, Shelter Director, and her amazing staff, we were the community leader in ensuring that people in need had a place to turn for help. Our small staff are truly community heroes.



For I Was Hungry...

The foundation of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul is the Gospel message in Matthew 25: “For whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.” This is at the very heart of our St. Vincent de Paul mission of charity. It’s why we, as disciples in 2021, work so hard to bring His light into the world. What a remarkable opportunity it is to be a part of something so important and life changing.

In our spiritual journeys, we often ask ourselves, “What can I do? I’m just one person.” Well, with Christ, all things are possible, and with His help, we can literally change lives – our own and others. At St. Vincent de Paul, we see so many people who are living their faith and making a difference: people who face challenges and respond to them as if they were doing it for God Himself – because they know they are.

Every member of our St. Vincent de Paul family is making a difference – in the lives of the needy and in our organization as well. It’s not always easy, but with your support, St. Vincent de Paul is meeting the rising demand for critical services. Our programs continue to grow, and we are looking forward to a bright future as a community leader in our area.

Our strategic planning process (which will continue later this year) will allow us to tackle some much needed projects now, as well as future projects that will continue our important leadership role in making a difference for the most vulnerable people in our community.

Our services have made a difference in the lives of thousands of needy or homeless men, women, and children through the years – a combined 156 years of service to people who came to us in desperate need.

Faith is central to all our programs. The mission of our Society calls us to, “see the face of Christ in each person we serve.” But the biggest challenge for each of us is not only to see the face of Christ in the poor we serve, but to serve them in such a way that they can see the face of Christ in us.

We thank you for being such a vital part of our St. Vincent de Paul family. Your prayers, volunteerism, and financial support enable us to respond to Christ’s call to seek and find the forgotten. We hope this upcoming Easter is filled with blessings for you and your family.

2021 Easter at St. Vincent de Paul

As we celebrate the joy of Easter, we are reminded that, through the miracle of the resurrection, hope was restored, and the faith of Christ’s followers became so powerful that they were able to change the world.

Here at St. Vincent de Paul, faith and hope are renewed daily. Like that first miracle of water transformed into wine, we know that Christ is present when we see hope replacing despair, and a last chance become a new beginning. We see His face in every person we serve, and it is His hand that guides us as we provide shelter, fill prescriptions, and serve meals to the needy.

At our St. Vincent de Paul Dining Room, we’re so grateful that we can provide a nourishing meal to-go, as well as a helping hand to other resources. Our Bishop Ott Shelters provided over 23,000 guest nights of shelter last year to homeless men, women, children, and families. These are the poorest of the poor: people who have lost everything. We offer them much more than a warm bed and safety from the streets; we give them hope for the future. Our Community Pharmacy is also a place where hope is resurrected. Last year, we filled prescriptions worth almost \$1 million, and each prescription improved someone’s health and touched their heart. In some cases, it saved a life.

During this holy season, we are especially thankful for the people who make our work possible. Over 2,000 years after the resurrection of Christ, St. Vincent de Paul is working hard to continue His ministry, and we thank you for your support. Your generosity has truly given hope to those in need.

Leave A Legacy – Join the League of Angels: Ensure that your values and beliefs live forever by remembering St. Vincent de Paul in your will.

Modern Day Disciples

With the beginning of Holy Week, we look forward to Easter and the celebration of Christ’s resurrection. We are reminded of the sacrifice He made and of those who followed in His footsteps so long ago. For them, weakness and doubt became unshakeable faith. They went forward – even unto death – in their roles as disciples, continuing His ministry on earth.

As modern day disciples, our challenge is to transform God’s blessings into a visible sign of His presence in our world today. We are His physical body on earth, and everything we do can be a reflection of His love.

The pandemic is an example of how our journey through life is not always easy. Sometimes the road is steep, and there is no way of knowing what waits for us around the next corner. Regardless of the path we take, Jesus is always with us.

We can feel His presence when we pray. We see Him all around us – in the beauty of nature, in the first spring flowers, in the setting sun. Close your eyes, and you can see His face. If you listen closely, you can hear His voice.

At St. Vincent de Paul, we can see His face in every person who waits in line for our daily meal, in the faces of the homeless who come to us for shelter and those who hope that our pharmacy can ease their suffering.

2020 was a rocky road for us – one of the most difficult years in our Society’s history. Unfortunately, the economy is still struggling, unemployment is high, and prices continue to rise.

We know that God hears the prayers of the poor. They are praying for help with life’s basic necessities – things that most of us take for granted. Their journey has led them to us, and we are His answer to their prayers.

The need is great, and resources are limited. We want to thank you for including St. Vincent de Paul and the needy we serve in your journey as a disciple.

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✝ *Everyday Saints*

good things. In past years, I've had the opportunity to witness ordinary people doing extraordinary things. In my opinion, they are all everyday saints.

In the current pandemic and negative economic climate, everyday saints are critical. They are on the front lines in our daily battle against poverty, and they are the lifeblood of our organization. Serving others is an important part of their spiritual journey. The pandemic has hampered our ability to accept as many volunteers as we really need, but as vaccinations continue and COVID cases decrease, we are looking forward to getting back to normal.

When you hear the word *saints*, you may have a mental image of someone in heaven. Sports fans may think of a football player wearing a helmet and a black and gold uniform. But to me, every time we provide a hot meal, a warm bed or a critically needed prescription, I know there's a saint behind it somewhere.

These everyday saints share their time, talent and treasure with the needy. They stand behind our serving line, visit the poor in their homes, and donate much needed in-kind goods and financial resources. They make sacrifices, giving of themselves to make the world a better place. They share Christ's concern for the poor and reach out to them, even during a pandemic.

I often think about the statement that "Every saint has a past, and every sinner has a future." In the context of our work, that's a very true statement. None of us are perfect, but we can all be everyday saints to people who may have made mistakes and need our help in putting their lives back together.

Every member of the St. Vincent de Paul family is bringing the bright light of Christ to someone who desperately needs a helping hand. During this ongoing pandemic, thank you for making a difference in the lives of those in need.

-- *Michael J. Acaldo, President & CEO, St. Vincent de Paul Charities*