



Vincentian Charities

Newsletter and Chronicle of Activities
SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT de PAUL
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*Serving God's Poor in our
Community Since 1865*



If Every Day Was Like Christmas

The Christmas season is a time of hope that sustains and strengthens us, especially during difficult times. Wouldn't it be wonderful if every day was filled with the

Christmas spirit of giving and caring? During this worldwide pandemic, that's our challenge – to keep the spirit of Christmas alive, not only during the holidays, but throughout the year.

In these difficult economic times, the people who come to us aren't thinking about what they want for Christmas: they are wondering where their next meal is coming from or where they will sleep tonight. And we are there to help them in their time of need. Every day, we share the Christmas spirit with people who need a helping hand.

Continued on page 2; see "If Every Day Was Like Christmas"

Rosie Martiņa Presented the Key to the City!



Long-time supporter and St. Vincent de Paul Top Hat Hall of Fame recipient Rosie Martiņa (pictured with daughter Patricia) was awarded the 2020 Golden Deeds Award on November 10th at the Baton Rouge Marriott. The award was presented by the Inter-Civic Council of Greater Baton

Rouge and The Advocate. The award recognized 97-year-old Rosie for his volunteer work at St. Vincent de Paul over many decades.

Mayor-President Sharon Weston Broome proclaimed the day as Rosie Martiņa Day in the Capital City and presented Rosie with a key to the city. In his acceptance remarks, Rosie reminisced about his time in the army in World War II and his many years of serving those in need at St. Vincent de Paul. Rosie said, "Life is about giving and trying to help people. That's why I continue to do that today, and I am not going to stop. First, my wife and I did it together for decades. Now my daughter and son are helping me continue my volunteer work." St. Vincent de Paul is so blessed to have dedicated volunteers like Mr. Rosie Martiņa that have given the best gift ever – the gift of themselves – to our mission and those we are blessed to serve.



HELP A CHILD IN NEED.

SYLVIA'S TOYS FOR CHRISTMAS

Sixth Year of Sylvia's Toys for Christmas

Sylvia's Toys for Christmas is entering its sixth year of collecting toys for needy children, from infants to 12 years old. Last year was a great success, and we can't thank WBRZ-Channel 2 and Sylvia Weatherspoon enough for, once again, undertaking this important initiative.

As we celebrate Christmas this year, we know that the pandemic has created a tremendous amount of need, and we are doing our best to respond to the needs of the less fortunate children in our area. There



are two ways you can give to this important effort: Buy a toy in the \$10 to \$20 range and drop it off at any St. Vincent de Paul or Chick-fil-A location or Essential Federal Credit Union location. You can also make a financial donation at svdpbr.org for Sylvia's Toys, or mail a check to P.O. Box 127, Baton Rouge, LA 70821. Every dollar will go toward the purchase of a toy for a needy child.

Join St. Vincent de Paul, Sylvia Weatherspoon, WBRZ-Channel 2, Chick-fil-A and Essential Federal Credit Union in this effort to bring the spirit of Christmas into the lives of needy children. In the days leading up to Christmas, we will be distributing toys throughout the community in a socially distanced manner. Please keep this effort in your prayers.



29th Annual Bishop Ott Shelter Collection Drive

In today's difficult economy, our shelters are staying full (men, women, and families-like the mother and son in the picture) – not just during inclement weather, but year-round. Every year at this special time, we begin collecting personal hygiene items for our shelter guests. This is a critical, ongoing need, and this effort ensures that we have a supply of items such as soap, shampoo and deodorant – things that most of us take for granted. This year, we thank WVLA NBC 33 and WGMB FOX 44 for their continued support of this collection effort which is so critical. We especially thank the fantastic sponsors of this effort – The Baton Rouge Clinic, Home Bank and Albertson's.

The number of people facing eviction is at an all-time high, and we have seen that translate into many new homeless
Continued on page 3; see "Annual Shelter Collection Drive"

In this issue - *Turkey Carving Winners
Before the Pandemic...*



After the event, the winners posed for a socially distanced picture. From left to right, George Bell, CAUW President & CEO; Hillar Moore, EBR Parish District Attorney; and Colletta Barrett, Vice-President of Mission, OLOL Regional Medical Center.

Turkey Carving Winners

On the day before Thanksgiving, the St. Vincent de Paul Dining Room held its 11th Annual Community Turkey Carving Contest. The event was originally put together in 2010 to help our Dining Room with the massive task of carving turkeys for our annual Thanksgiving Day meal and to raise awareness of hunger and the critical community work of St. Vincent de Paul.

During the pandemic, we felt it was important not to skip this important event, so we put together a socially distanced event with fewer participants. This year's contestants were: Mayor-President Sharon Weston Broome; George Bell, President & CEO for the Capital Area United Way; Keith Cunningham, Executive Director for the Louisiana Housing Corporation; Hillar Moore, East Baton Rouge Parish District Attorney; Ralph Bender, Chief Financial Officer for Manship Media; and Colletta Barrett, Vice-President of Mission, Our Lady of the Lake Regional Medical Center.

The event kicked off at 1:30, right after the daily meal service at our Dining Room. The judges were Jan Ross, Executive V.P. of Philanthropy for the Wilson Foundation and Pam Hutchinson, community volunteer and leader. They were asked to judge the contestants on the following factors: technique, most entertaining (who's having the most fun), time/speed, appearance/results. These scores were totaled to determine who carved the best turkeys. By the way, it takes a surprising amount of skill to carve a turkey.

We had so much fun, all for a great cause – Thanksgiving dinner for the poor and homeless in our community. During the contest, our contestants had an opportunity for a little friendly rivalry – all in good fun. Some had decorated themes in their carving areas. Hillar Moore creatively and appropriately had a Tiger King themed turkey display. Ralph Bender wore a turkey headpiece mask. Everyone had a great time, and the event reflected what St. Vincent de Paul is all about – experiencing the joy of serving the needy and making a difference.

These individuals who gave so generously of their time and talent helped us to achieve an important goal: giving back to the less fortunate. The holidays are the perfect time to reflect on the many blessings in our lives, and at St. Vincent de Paul, we know we are blessed to have supporters like these. They are all winners! Our judges had their work cut

out for them, and the scoring was extremely close. Having the highest point total was District Attorney Hillar Moore, who was crowned the best turkey carver in Baton Rouge. Coming in a close second was George Bell; with Colletta Barrett close behind him in third place. These three individuals were all awarded with impressive plaques (generously donated by Carco Awards) recognizing them as the top winners of the day.

Thanks to the efforts of these community leaders and so many others, on Thanksgiving Day, we prepared and served over 2,000 meals at our (first ever) drive-thru Holiday Helpers' Raising Cane's River Center effort and at the St. Vincent de Paul Dining Room (our first ever walk-thru, to-go Thanksgiving meals). Then on Thanksgiving Friday, Saturday and Sunday, we also served a large number of guests at our Dining Room. Again, we thank the Irene W. & C.B. Pennington Family Foundation, the Raising Cane's River Center, the Congregation B'nai Israel (for donating 146 turkeys), the 51 volunteers that came out to help, and our financial supporters. This would not have been possible without them and so many others!

Thank You for Supporting Us On Giving Tuesday!

A special thank-you to all who were able to give on Giving Tuesday. This past Giving Tuesday was a great success for St. Vincent de Paul. We raised over \$32,000 in one day! This is a great start to helping us raise \$450,000 during the holiday season. Every year, our holiday fundraising goal is to raise over \$450,000 which is critical to our ability to serve our community's most vulnerable. With the struggling economy and the pandemic, we are very concerned about meeting this goal. This gives us a great start and, hopefully, everyone that can give in the Christmas Season will push us over the top. Every dollar is going to be critical if we are going to meet our goal.

This year, Giving Tuesday was successful because of the generosity of so many people. We want to especially thank 225Gives, which is a fantastic new community effort presented by the Baton Rouge Area Foundation, Capital Area United Way and many supporting outstanding foundations and businesses. 225Gives was a powerful online fundraising initiative that united the Capital Region in support of the nonprofit community. Thank you for helping us get off to a great start.

If Every Day Was Like Christmas Continued from page 1

Throughout this COVID-19 crisis, we are seeing so many new faces at all our facilities. We expect to serve more than 200,000 meals this year to people who are struggling to provide food for themselves and their families. Our shelters for men, women, children and families are full. Our pharmacy is helping people who have lost their jobs or health insurance. Our stores are providing clothing and furniture at no cost to needy families.

It's remarkable to see what St. Vincent de Paul accomplishes during the holiday season – the busiest time of year for us. During the pandemic, we have limited the number of volunteers because of social distancing concerns. While our small staff and dedicated volunteers may be tired at the end

of each day, they are encouraged by the smiles and thank-you's from those who come to us with nowhere else to turn.

We hope your Christmas season is not an exhausting marathon, but a time where you can safely enjoy the season by facetimeing with family and reaching out to friends by phone. We pray that you all stay safe and ask you to keep the poor and homeless in your thoughts and prayers during this special time of year.

Christmas Blessings 2020

As we celebrate Christmas 2020, we are reminded of the blessings of faith, family, health, and home – a place of safety and comfort and love.

Jesus' first home was a stable, and His birth was announced to humble shepherds in the fields. This is how Jesus chose to begin His life on earth – in kinship with the poor and homeless, the meek and insignificant. At St. Vincent de Paul, we follow Christ's example and celebrate His birth with our poorest neighbors.



During the pandemic, we have seen an increase in the number of people who turn to us for help. Our hearts go out to the adults we serve, like Joe,

Leonora, and Fred, in the photos, but it's the children we can't forget. Their trusting faces and timid smiles stay with us long after they're gone. Most of them were born into poverty, and this is the only life they've ever known. Like Annie, Jerome and Amanda, pictured here, they are at the mercy of a world they don't understand and can't control.



Because of COVID-19 and rising unemployment, the holidays will be especially difficult for many individuals and families. During Thanksgiving weekend, demand for the meal service at our St. Vincent de Paul Dining Room was very high, and that trend has continued.

We are also seeing more families come to us in need of shelter. Last year, our Bishop Ott Shelters provided over 25,000 nights of shelter to homeless men, women, children and families. We are here for families that have crossed that line from poverty into homelessness, and we will give them the hand-up they need during this difficult time in their lives. At our Pharmacy, the Christmas present on everyone's list is a life-sustaining medication. The pandemic has put an additional strain on our pharmacy at a time when maintaining good health is a first line of defense against COVID-19.

If you have already given in response to our Christmas appeal, thank you! If you have not already done so, you can still share your blessings by adding one more person to your Christmas list this year. You can use the enclosed envelope or go online at svdpbr.org to make a financial gift that will bring the spirit of Christmas to someone in need.

St. Vincent de Paul Strategic Planning Process

We have just launched a strategic planning process and, as a part of our St. Vincent de Paul family, your input is critical to us! Please visit svdpbr.org and give us your input. Our past strategic plans have helped our organization accomplish some great community outcomes. As we have previously reported, we just opened a new homeless day center and emergency disaster shelter. We also continue to take the steps necessary to construct a chapel on our campus. We further see an opportunity, over the course of the next several years, to continue to strengthen our current programs and make future program visions a reality. Help us to continue our excellence in serving the needy in our community by giving us your input.

Annual Shelter Collection Drive Continued from page 1

cases. We are doing our best, but the rising number of homeless individuals and families has put a tremendous strain on our limited resources and our ability to respond.

Our goal for every shelter guest is not a hand-out, but a hand-up to self-sufficiency. When someone checks in, we are delighted when they ask for a toothbrush or a razor so they can clean themselves up and look for work. This annual collection drive makes sure they have everything they need to restore their dignity and make a good impression during a job interview. Every year, our homeless guests find hundreds of jobs and are able to do what's necessary to end their homelessness.

We need your help to get the word out. Speak to your civic organization, church group or school. Select an item, such as toothbrushes, and get your group to collect enough toothbrushes to help us for a year. Pick an item (or items) to give so that we can continue to provide for the basic needs of those we serve. **St. Vincent de Paul/Bishop Ott Shelter most needed items:** blankets; disposable diapers; men, women and children's underwear; socks; knit caps; gloves; scarves; reading glasses (all strengths); slippers; feminine hygiene products; towels and washcloths; toiletry items such as deodorant, soap, shampoo, body wash, lotion, and body powder; twin, and crib size sheets; paper products (napkins, paper towels, toilet paper); disposable cups, plates, bowls, knives, forks, and spoons; and rain gear. If you are interested in donating items, or if you have questions, don't hesitate to give us a call at 383-7837, extension O. Items can be dropped off at any Baton Rouge location of Home Bank, any location of the Baton Rouge Clinic and Baton Rouge area Albertson's.

It's Not Too Late to Make an IRA Gift

The clock is ticking toward the end of the year and the last chance to make a charitable gift from your IRA. You can give up to \$100,000 from your IRA directly to St. Vincent de Paul without paying income taxes on the money. The transfer does not generate taxable income or a deduction, so you'll benefit even if you don't itemize your deductions. If you have questions, please contact Michael Acaldo at macaldo@svdpbr.com or call (225) 383-7837, ext. O. Remember, always consult with a tax professional before you make this type of gift.

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Before the Pandemic...

COVID-19 has changed our lives in so many ways. So often, we find ourselves beginning a sentence with “before the pandemic.” For the rest of our lives, 2020 will mark the year when everything changed.

Before the pandemic, when I woke up on Christmas mornings, I thanked God for the blessing of a new day. Now, I hope to be able to not only thank God for a new day, but that those I love are safe and sound. This pandemic has really brought home the fact that every day is a gift from God. During Thanksgiving week, I was in quarantine, and someone I love very much had COVID. I felt so powerless. I was only able to help them from a distance. I was also unable to help at St. Vincent de Paul with the Thanksgiving Day efforts.

During this difficult time, I had to remind myself that every day is a fresh start, filled with opportunities. It’s up to us to make each day count, to make someone’s life a little better through our efforts. During this Coronavirus crisis, we are all called to share our blessings with others: our families and friends – and for every St. Vincent de Paul supporter – the less fortunate.

This year, I will celebrate my 31st Christmas at St. Vincent de Paul, and the changes and losses caused by the pandemic bring home the point that every Christmas is special. If only we could wake up every day with our hearts filled with the Christmas spirit! Before the pandemic, we needed and appreciated your help, and we need your help now more than ever before. This past year has been extremely challenging for our St. Vincent de Paul family. COVID-19 and the struggling economy have increased the need for people to come to us for food, clothing, shelter, prescription medicine and other basic essentials. We have taken steps to improve our services, and we have come up with creative ways to do more with less.

What’s on St. Vincent de Paul’s Christmas list? We see prayers being answered every day, and we ask for your continued prayers. God does indeed provide. Every day, we see Him using generous people like you to answer the prayers of people who desperately need a helping hand.

We thank you for your continued support, and we pray that this Christmas and the coming year are filled with blessings for you and your family. We hope you will join us this Christmas season in praying for the people we are blessed to serve, and also that St. Vincent de Paul will grow stronger financially during 2021 so that we are able to help the growing number of people who come to us in need of life’s basic necessities.

– Michael J. Acaldo, President & CEO, St. Vincent de Paul

Beat the Clock! Get your tax deduction before the end of 2020

St. Vincent de Paul needs car, boat, camper and motor-home donations. Proceeds will benefit our programs that provide a hand-up of help to the poor and homeless. Donate online at svdpbr.org or call us at (225) 383-7837!

