



Vincentian Charities

Newsletter and Chronicle of Activities
SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT de PAUL
Louisiana, Capital Region
Lenten Edition 2023 Vol. XXXII, No. I



Serving God's Poor in our
Community Since 1865



Back By Popular Demand

*28th Annual
Count Your
Blessings Supper
To-Geaux*

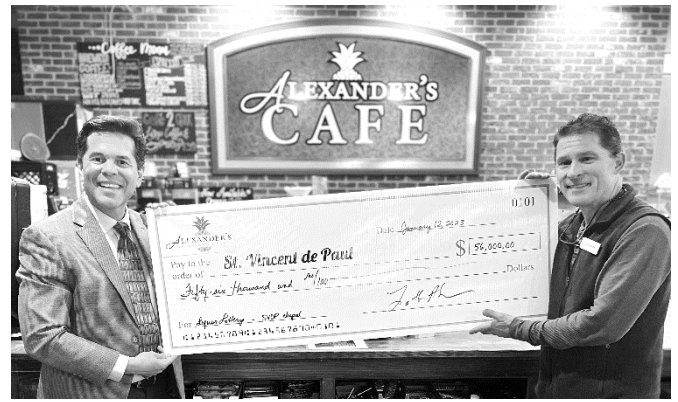
We invite you to join Bishop Michael Duca, Bishop Robert Muench, Father Cleo Milano and Chef John Folse as we celebrate 28 years of coming together to count our blessings.

If you missed last year's event, it was a blast! This year, don't miss a great soup (that can't be purchased anywhere else) and a lot of fun! WBRZ's John Pastorek will be present and everyone in attendance will have fun and be entertained as Bishop Duca and Chef Folse serve up a great soup to go! If you would like to see some of the fun from last year's event, go to svdpbr.org to see a video of Bishop Duca and the whole group sing *You Are My Sunshine!*

Our Society of St. Vincent de Paul has so many things to be thankful for, and one of the things we are most grateful for is you. We count our blessings for those of you who support our work, either through prayer, volunteerism, financial support, or all three. In a very true sense, your support of St. Vincent de Paul is an act of faith – faith in God and faith in our ability to do His work. It's your support that makes it possible for us to serve those who are hungry, homeless, in need of prescription medicine, or other basic necessities.

2022 was a difficult year because of how inflation impacted those we serve. Last year, our Dining Room served 255,229 meals to those in need. We assisted men, women, children, and families experiencing homelessness by providing 26,327 guest nights of shelter. Because of your support, we were there when people had nowhere else to turn for food, shelter, clothing, and prescription medication. We were there because people like you shared their faith, enabling us to overcome every obstacle and respond to many people in desperate need.

Come Count Your Blessings and be a blessing to someone in need by supporting the third Drive-Thru To-Geaux Soup Parade. Chef John Folse will prepare a special Lenten soup of *Belle River Crab and Artichoke Bisque*.
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Lathan Alexander presents a donation check of \$56,000 to St. Vincent de Paul's Michael Acaldo. See more in the story below.



Holly Jolly Raises Over \$56,000 for our Chapel!

The Annual Holly Jolly Event at Alexander's Highland Market was another great success! This Annual Event that benefited St. Vincent de Paul was held on January 12, 2023.

Lathan and Kelly Alexander are a couple filled with faith! They knew this event was important and that their hard work would benefit those in need served by St. Vincent de Paul. Lathan, Kelly and their son Ethan teamed up to make this effort an outstanding success.

Chef John Folse was the official celebrity master of ceremonies for the event. Like every great recipe, this event had all of the ingredients for a perfect outcome. Alexander's Market was packed for the event which lasted about two hours. The result was \$56,000 all raised to benefit our effort to build a Chapel on our St. Vincent de Paul Campus.

We thank Lathan and Kelly Alexander and the Alexander Family for their generosity! These dollars will go directly to impact our work by providing a Chapel for those we serve and those who volunteer at St. Vincent de Paul.



Fill A Prescription and Save Life!

Over 26 years ago when Pat Shingleton first envisioned the Fill a Prescription for the Needy effort, he thought the Lenten season would be the best time to focus on this important community need. Lent is a time of almsgiving,

a time when we think of the less fortunate who need our help. Through 26 years, this effort has improved quality of life and, in many instances, saved the lives of patients who can't afford the life-sustaining prescription medicines they need.

You can't turn on the television or go online without seeing changes in healthcare. As changes are being made, our goal at the St. Vincent de Paul Community Pharmacy remains the same: to make sure that needy individuals in our community receive the medications they desperately need. Our Fill a Prescription for the Needy Campaign is one way of generating

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In this issue - *Build a Basket Begins its 18th Year*
Thank You for Your Support!

Count Your Blessings Continued from page 1



For convenient travel and to avoid hot soup spills, we will distribute frozen soup in 2-lb. bags (each serves four, 8-oz. servings). Heating instructions are included. This year's *Count Your Blessings Supper To-Geaux* is scheduled from 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. (drive-thru at your convenience) on Friday, March 3rd, at Our Lady of Mercy Parish. Order your tickets today by using the order form in this newsletter, order online at svdpbr.org, or give us a call at (225) 383-7837, ext. 0. Currently, no on-site tickets will be sold the day of the event. Deadline for mail-in orders, phone orders or online ticket sales is Wednesday, March 1st by 1 p.m.



Every dollar raised through this annual event makes a difference in our community.

We hope you can join us on March 3rd, but if you can't attend and are able to assist us in our important community work, please use the form below to make a *Count Your Blessings* financial gift to our vital community services, or give online at svdpbr.org. **Come and Count Your Blessings with Bishop Michael Duca, Chef John Folse, Bishop Robert Muench, Father Cleo Milano and John Pastorek who will be at the event!**

Count Your Blessings Ticket Order Form -----Clip and send in-----

Yes, I want that Soup! I would like _____ bag(s) at \$40.00 (four servings). Enclosed is my check for \$ _____.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Make checks payable and mail to: *Society of St. Vincent de Paul*, P.O. Box 127, Baton Rouge, LA 70821-0127. For more information, call us at (225) 383-7837, ext. 0, or online at svdpbr.org.

Fill A Prescription Continued from page 1

much needed funding that will be used so we can provide the life-sustaining prescription medicines for people who have nowhere else to turn.

St. Vincent de Paul, Pat Shingleton, WBRZ-Channel 2, and the Baton Rouge Clinic extend a special invitation to you. We invite you to join in our efforts to respond to the thousands of people who need prescription medicines. Last year, we filled prescriptions for people who came to us as a last resort, some who had their health insurance dropped, and others who were just a year or two away from being eligible for Medicare.

Most of the patients who come to us in need of prescription medicine are suffering from life-threatening illnesses such as heart disease, high blood pressure, or diabetes. Before coming to us, many of those we serve were skipping doses of critical medications or breaking tablets in half, trying to manage their illnesses on budgets that just couldn't stretch any further.

Please join us in this year's Fill a Prescription for the Needy campaign. You can help in a number of ways. You can pray for all those in need of life-sustaining prescription medicine. You can send a financial contribution to: Fill a Prescription for the Needy, P. O. Box 127, Baton Rouge, LA 70821, or go to our website at www.svdpbr.org and make a gift online. You can also drop a donation into one of our collection canisters at the Baton Rouge Clinic or local participating pharmacies.

Please consider making a gift for someone who is praying for a miracle. You can be the helping hand they need and the answer to their prayers.



St. Vincent de Paul Conference Members from throughout the Diocese of Baton Rouge gathered on January 21, 2023 for an Ozanam Orientation. The orientation is named in honor of Frederic Ozanam, founder of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul.

The Ozanam Orientation is a training developed by the National Council of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. The purpose of the orientation is to introduce new members to the Society and to help existing members to continue to grow in their Vincentian spirituality. New members benefited tremendously from this orientation because it provided an overview of the history, spirituality, structure, and current endeavors of the Society, as well as in-depth understanding of poverty and home visitation. However, even the most experienced members gained new insights by attending this formation event. The orientation also allowed for sharing and learning to take place as members of different conferences had opportunities to interact with each other.

Build a Basket Begins its 18th Year



During this holiest of seasons, we want every child to feel God's presence and loving hand in their lives.

What better way to reach out to a needy child than to provide an Easter basket that includes a special card with a simple message about Christ's ultimate sacrifice. Some of the children we serve have never been told the greatest story in the history of the world – a story of supreme love and surrender to God's will. Please help us to get the message of God's love into the hearts and hands of needy children throughout our community.



We distribute baskets to the children served at our St. Vincent de Paul Dining Room and also to needy children identified throughout the area. We provide Easter baskets for the children at our shelter, as well as other area shelters. In addition to candy and small toys, each basket also contains a card explaining what Easter is about in a brief story of Jesus' resurrection. These young boys and girls have so little, and something as simple as an Easter basket can create a wonderful memory that will last a lifetime. Groups and families can make a big impact, but so can individuals.

Our goal this year is to, once again, distribute several thousand baskets to needy children in our community. In order to reach that goal, we need many people to support this effort. We encourage you to talk to your church groups, civic groups, or co-workers, about building baskets for needy children. It's easy to do. You can purchase an Easter basket that's already filled with candy and ready to give to a child. You can also purchase items like Easter grass, candy, crayons, and coloring books for our volunteers to use in assembling baskets. You can also make a donation that can be used to purchase the supplies we need.



We invite you to join St. Vincent de Paul, Catholic Arts and Gifts Store, and many others throughout our community in this effort to provide Easter baskets to needy children. You can build a basket, purchase a ready-made basket, or you can make a contribution and mail it to: St. Vincent de Paul, Build a Basket Effort, P.O. Box 127, Baton Rouge, LA 70821.

You can also go to svdpbr.org to make a donation that will help our volunteers to build a basket. If you have questions about this effort, give us a call at (225)383-7837, ext. 0.

Most importantly, we also ask you to keep the children served by this important project in your thoughts and prayers.

Build a Basket Instructions for a Happy Easter

- A new or gently used basket.
- Easter candy of all sorts. (No peanut products.)
- Easter related toys, small toys, stuffed animals, crayons, coloring books, etc.
- Wrap the basket with Easter cellophane.
- **Most importantly, lots of love and prayers! For drop off instructions go to svdpbr.org or call us at 225-383-7837, ext. 0.**



***St. Louise de Marillac
Chapel Update***

As we reported in our last newsletter article about our Chapel project, Bishop Duca wrote, "May the spirit of Saint Vincent de Paul guide our efforts for the glory of God and for the support of the spiritual needs of

our whole Vincentian family." St. Vincent de Paul Board leaders are in the process of finalizing plans for the project, and we are looking forward to putting the project out for bids.

Over the last 150 years, St. Vincent de Paul has been a community leader in providing food, clothing, shelter, healthcare, and other basic necessities. From our beginning in 1865, St. Vincent de Paul has been known for our commitment to Gospel values in serving the most vulnerable.

This project is important to the community because individuals who come to us seeking help often ask for a quiet place where they can reflect and pray. When someone is experiencing homelessness, hunger, or poverty, they have a sense of desperation and hopelessness. Many people we serve are experiencing emotional and psychological stress, and they find strength and comfort in prayer and reflection. This Chapel will provide our neighbors in need the opportunity to

strengthen their faith and also help them to realize that many of the volunteers that come to serve do so because of their faith. That connection is important in bringing people together.

Many people who volunteer at St. Vincent de Paul do so because of their faith. Over the years, many of our volunteers have said that they came to us hoping to change someone's life and found instead that their own lives were transformed. Finally, volunteers will have a place where they can quietly pray to connect their service to their faith.

Some St. Vincent de Paul volunteers have spent over 50 consecutive years in volunteer service. In fact, one volunteer started as a teenager and then served as a volunteer for almost 70 years until his passing. Ask any of these many volunteers why they were so connected and committed and they will tell you that it was because of their faith. Each of us is on a spiritual journey and we are all called to nourish our faith through prayer and action. We believe this chapel will enable us to achieve this most important objective.

The chapel will be built in the heart of the St. Vincent de Paul charitable campus. Once the final set of plans are complete they will be posted online at svdpbr.org. Continue to keep this project in your thoughts and prayers as we move to ground breaking and completion of this long-time dream of our Vincentian family!

Thank You for Your Support!

We want to thank all of you who helped us in our mission of charity in 2022. Your generosity allowed us to respond to the tremendous need in our community. 2022 was especially challenging. Inflation was really rough on those we serve. We thank you for helping us to be here for those who had nowhere else to turn for help.

2022 St. Vincent de Paul Community Impact Responding to Poverty & Homelessness	
Our St. Vincent de Paul Dining Room served	255,259 Meals
Guest nights provided to homeless men, women, children and families by our Bishop Ott Shelter Program (4 shelters)	26,327 Guest Nights
Our St. Vincent de Paul Community Pharmacy filled	Prescriptions valued at \$774,384
Our Uniforms for Kids Program distributed	11,272 Uniforms
St. Vincent de Paul Stores provided clothing, furniture, etc. all free of charge	5,000+ Needy individuals and families
St. Vincent de Paul Conference Volunteers visited families in need - over 400 St. Vincent de Paul Volunteers give of their time and talent to serve our neighbors in need	Thousands of Home Visit Contacts providing \$600,000+ in assistance with rent, utilities, food and other basic needs.
Community Support is great - monthly volunteer average	1,000+ Volunteers

Society of St. Vincent de Paul

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Focus on Jesus

If you have watched the wonderful series *The Chosen* or just watched normal television and have seen the Jesus commercials, there is definitely a new focus on Jesus. It doesn't matter if you call it a Jesus movement or revolution, it's good. I believe we should all come together and turn to God!

No matter what your faith or spiritual path is, God should be central to your life. For Christians, the cross is a powerful symbol of our faith. It reminds us not only of Jesus' death, but of His life, and the impact He has in our world today. His death was much more than the ending of a human life; it was a new beginning for all of us. Truly, His love never ends.

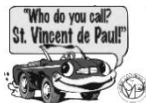
Lent begins our journey. Easter commemorates the most wonderful event in the history of mankind – the resurrection of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. As Christians we are all called to have a passion for Christ – to live our faith following His example. But at some point, every Christian asks the question, “Where can I find Jesus?” The answer can be found in Matthew 25 when Christ says: “*When you do it for the least of my brethren, you do it for me.*” Every time we serve someone in need, we catch a glimpse of His face. We see Him in the faces of little children in need, men with broken spirits, elderly grandmothers and grandfathers.

At one time or another, we all have a “cross to bear” – whether it's a financial setback, poor health or the loss of a loved one. The Lenten season is a good time to reflect, not only on the crosses we have to bear throughout life, but also on the many blessings that God has given us.

For many of the people we serve, life itself has begun to seem like a burden. When every day is a struggle just to survive, it would be so easy to give up. But so often, in the darkest hour of need, someone extends a helping hand, shining the bright light of Christ into a life that is almost at the breaking point. Over 2000 years after His resurrection, St. Vincent de Paul is continuing Christ's ministry. In 2022 we provided 255,000 meals, over 26,000 homeless shelter guest nights, and the list could go on and on.

Poverty is hunger and hopelessness, despair and desperation - but there is always hope. We are all called to answer the call for help. Every time we answer that call, we keep hope alive for those in need.

We are all God's instruments, and we are called to reach out to the least among us. During this Holy Season, we thank you for all you do for St. Vincent de Paul's mission of serving all of those in need. May God bless you and your family during this Lenten and upcoming Easter Season. -- *Michael J. Acaldo, President & CEO, St. Vincent de Paul Charities*



Get an early start in getting your tax deduction for 2023 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!