



# Vincentian Charities

Newsletter and Chronicle of Activities

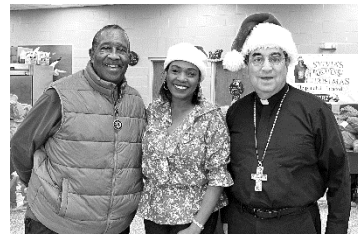
SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT de PAUL

Louisiana, Capital Region

Thanksgiving Edition 2023 Vol. XXXII, No. IV

*Serving God's Poor in our*

*Community Since 1865*



*Reginald Brown, SVDP Board Chair; Sylvia Weatherspoon, WBRZ Anchor; and Bishop Michael Duca pose for a quick picture before the 2022 Christmas Gift Distribution.*

## Preparing for Christmas

Our 2022 Christmas gift distribution was a great success at St. Vincent de Paul because of so many generous people throughout our area. Thanks to the outpouring of community support last year,

we assisted over 4,000 children. At our dining room alone, Bishop Duca distributed Christmas gifts to over 500 needy children.

Recognizing the tremendous need in our community, Sylvia, WBRZ and local Chick-fil-A restaurants and Essential Federal Credit Union will help us to collect toys for the children we serve here at St. Vincent de Paul, as well as needy children we have identified throughout the community. You can drop gifts off at these locations after Thanksgiving.

The St. George Fire Department will continue their outstanding community leadership by collecting gifts through their Santa parades. If you live in the St. George Fire Department area, look for a Santa Parade near you, and you can donate gifts and food to our efforts to make an impact in our community!

For decades, local law enforcement and the Pennington Family Foundation has supported this effort to help us make a Christmas community impact that's priceless to the children we serve. We are so thankful for their support!

We thank all of you who have given gifts in the past because of the impact it has made in the lives of children in need. Collecting gifts for children experiencing poverty or homelessness is an effort the entire community gets behind! Please consider donating a gift for a needy child. If you would rather make a financial contribution for the purchase of gifts, you can do so by sending a check to P.O. Box 127, Baton Rouge, LA 70821, or go to [svdpbr.org](http://svdpbr.org) to make a gift. Your support will help us bring the Christmas spirit to vulnerable children throughout the community.

## "Thank God for St. Vincent de Paul"

Every time we serve a meal, fill a prescription or provide shelter, we are doing more than filling a basic need. We are providing hope. Time after time, we hear the words, "Thank God for St. Vincent de Paul" from people who have nothing else to give in return for the assistance they receive.

Their humble expressions of gratitude are meant for you, our supporters, and we are honored to pass their thanks on to you. **We are so thankful for you who make our work possible.**

The people who come to St. Vincent de Paul are so thankful for all the basic necessities of life. They know what it's like to wonder where their next meal is coming from. The photos in this article are representative of the thousands who come to us for help. This year, we will serve over 260,000 meals and provide over 30,000 guest nights of shelter for men, women, children and families.



In 2021, we served over 215,000 meals and provided 20,000 guest nights of shelter. That is an explosion of need, and for us those numbers are startling, but we don't serve numbers – we serve people. Everyone we serve has a story

and is so thankful for the help we provide. Thank you for helping us to help so many in need in this difficult economy.

## Bishop Ott Shelter Collection Drive

We are pleased to report that WGMB Fox 44, WVLA Channel 33, and their family of stations have come together for the 32<sup>nd</sup> year to support our Bishop Ott Shelter Program. Please consider joining the Baton Rouge Clinic, Albertson's and Louisiana Healthcare Connections in collecting these critical items. All of these items are critical to the people who come to us with little more than the clothes they are wearing. Things such as toothbrushes, disposable razors, shaving cream, soap, and shampoo are so important to someone's dignity and self-esteem, and without these critical items, it's impossible to

**Continued on page 2; see "Shelter Collection Drive"**



## A Community Thanksgiving

As we prepare to celebrate Thanksgiving with our families and friends, it's time to bring out those tried-and-true recipes – those special salads, casseroles, and desserts – that must be on the holiday table every year. We also look forward to sampling new dishes.

At St. Vincent de Paul, we're ready to put our tried-and-true recipes together, but we're also preparing to respond to a growing need in our area because of the economy.

On November 23<sup>rd</sup>, Thanksgiving Day, we will continue our tradition of serving the annual Thanksgiving meal at the **Continued on page 2; see "A Community Thanksgiving"**

**In this issue – Exciting St. Louise de Marillac Chapel Update Always Thankful for You at Thanksgiving**



*Just before Thanksgiving this year, members from the Unified Jewish Congregation of Baton Rouge posed for a quick picture with St. Vincent de Paul staff. We love the Unified Jewish Congregation of Baton Rouge! Every year, they come through for the community, donating the turkeys (a thousand pounds) for our Thanksgiving meal. They make sure that every Thanksgiving is a great one. They collect the turkeys and deliver them in plenty of time for us to get them ready for our Thanksgiving meal. Read more in our December newsletter.*

### **A Community Thanksgiving Continued from page 1**

St. Vincent de Paul Dining Room and the Raising Cane's River Center. We will also serve at St. Gerard and the McKinley Alumni Center. We continue to expand our reach to the most vulnerable during these inflationary times. What a blessing it is to be a part of this community effort, which has touched the lives of the needy for the past 41 years.

We serve meals at many locations to ensure that we provide maximum coverage of our community on this special day. For individuals who have no families to share this special day with and have no financial resources for a traditional Thanksgiving meal, we will be there for them. For the homeless who live at our St. Vincent de Paul shelters, for others who live near our main charitable campus or in north or south Baton Rouge, we will be there for them.

We thank the Pennington family for their many years of support! We thank Mayor-President Sharon Westin Broome, Wayne Hodes, Chef Craig Bergeron, and the entire crew at the Raising Cane's River Center. We also thank the Louisiana Housing Corporation for joining us for this year's event to celebrate Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week. These leaders are once again playing a critical role in reaching people who truly need a helping hand this holiday season.

Turkey is the main dish at every Thanksgiving meal, and we thank The Unified Jewish Congregation of Baton Rouge for doing their annual Turkey Train! They collect enough turkeys to ensure that we can continue this Thanksgiving tradition. Annually, this wonderful congregation is the single largest contributor of turkeys for our Thanksgiving meal service to those experiencing poverty. Their help is even more critical this year because of the difficult economy.

At St. Vincent de Paul, the most critical *ingredient* in our Thanksgiving recipe is you – our supporters. Our guests are so grateful for the meals you make possible. During these difficult times, we are all called to share God's blessings with the less fortunate. First and foremost, we ask you to join us in praying for those we are blessed to serve. By the end of this year, we will serve over 260,000 meals, so your support is needed as we combat hunger in our area. For a gift of just \$1.00, you can help us provide a hot, nutritious meal. \$100 provides a hundred meals, and \$400 typically feeds all the

guests at our dining room on any given day. You can make your gift online at [svdpbr.org](http://svdpbr.org) or by mailing a check to our Dining Room at P.O. Box 127, Baton Rouge, LA 70821.

We wish everyone a happy, wonderful and safe Thanksgiving! Thank you for your support in helping us to make a difference in our community.

### **Shelter Collection Drive Continued from page 1**

make a good impression when someone is trying to find a job.

Below is a list of the toiletry items we need at our shelters. The list also appears on our website at [svdpbr.org](http://svdpbr.org). When you look at this list, think of the people who will be using them, and you'll understand just how important this annual effort is to our Bishop Ott Shelter Program and the people we serve. We also ask you to encourage your family, friends, church or social groups to participate in a collection drive for this worthwhile effort. You can collect these items and donate them by dropping them off at the Baton Rouge Clinic, Albertson's or at the Bishop Ott Shelter located at 1623 Convention Street. More information is on our website, and if you have any questions, please don't hesitate to give us a call at 383-7837, extension 0.

**Bishop Ott Shelter urgently needed items:** toiletry items such as deodorant, soap, shampoo, body wash, lotion and body powder; paper products (napkins, paper towels, toilet paper), disposable cups, plates, bowls, knives, forks, and spoons. We also urgently need twin & Crib size sheets, towels and washcloths, blankets; disposable diapers; men, women, and children's underwear; socks, knit caps, gloves, scarves, and rain gear; and reading glasses (all strengths).



## **Always Thankful for You at Thanksgiving**

At this time of year, we are so thankful for your support. You are what makes the St. Vincent de Paul Family special.

We have been told time and time again by our supporters that thank you acknowledgements are not important, but they are extremely important to us because your support allows us to fulfill our mission of serving the truly needy.

The Society continues its 158-year commitment to being good stewards of your support. Our Society sees your support as a sacred trust, which we fulfill by:

- pursuing the Society's mission with excellence
- spending all funds with the donor's intent
- showing the public results and direct charitable services
- using donated funds wisely for maximum community impact
- keeping administrative and fundraising costs to an absolute minimum – last fiscal year was 7% which meant 93% of donations went to our mission of serving those in need!
- being annually audited
- using volunteer support to minimize staffing needs
- keeping a small qualified staff willing to work multiple jobs within the organization

We have stayed true to our mission for 158 years. We will continue our commitment to excellence as we make our mission a reality to those who desperately need our help.

# GIVING TUESDAY

## Remember Us on this National Day of Giving!

Don't forget to give to St. Vincent de Paul on Giving Tuesday – November 28th! There are several different ways you can give on this National Day of Giving, and really help our vital work.

**Two great ways to give.** One way is that you can give the old-fashioned way, and write a check and send it to: St. Vincent de Paul, P.O. Box 127, Baton Rouge, LA 70821 or go online and give at [svdpbr.org](http://svdpbr.org).

Another terrific way to give on Giving Tuesday is **iGiveCatholic**. St. Vincent de Paul has participated in this effort for many years. **iGiveCatholic** is a national Catholic Giving Day that kicks off the charitable season and brings the community together to give thanks and give back. This day of giving inspires faithful stewards to give to Catholic organizations on Giving Tuesday, a global day of giving. St. Vincent de Paul's work is built on Christ's message of love for all of God's children, and **iGiveCatholic.org** is built on that foundation. It's a great way to help with our work.

Whether you give to us via **iGiveCatholic** or you do it the old-fashioned way, you are making the critical charitable work of St. Vincent de Paul a reality. Your support will feed the hungry, fill a prescription, or provide a place to call home for families in need. Thank you!



*Deacon Randall Waguespack kicked off a Day of Prayer and Service for the alleviation of suffering and the dignity and integrity of all people at the St. Vincent de Paul Dining Room on October 26<sup>th</sup>. After the small service, volunteers worked together to serve over 400 individuals experiencing poverty by serving meals and visiting with our guests in need. This will become an annual event, and will be one of the many faithful events that will occur at our new St. Louise de Marillac Chapel.*

From our beginning in 1865, St. Vincent de Paul has been known for our commitment to Gospel values in serving the most vulnerable. As a unifying force in our community, we are finally able to move forward with our St. Louise de Marillac Chapel because of the generous support of so many people in our community! Although we still have some money to raise, we know that the good Lord and those who follow Him will help us make this happen.

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 homeless, hungry, or in need, 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

needy guests 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. We continually receive requests from volunteers for a place where they can quietly pray to connect their service to their faith.

Chapels are recognized throughout the world as an important part of daily life. Chapels are on college campuses, hospitals, prisons, funeral homes, military ships, etc. As construction begins on this new chapel, we will work to get the word out to faith communities throughout our area. We already have great participation from local churches and synagogues. Local private and public schools are also very involved with us. Students from schools like St. Joseph Academy, Episcopal, The Dunham School, Catholic High School, St. Michael's, Parkview Baptist, volunteer their time and energy to our St. Vincent de Paul services. Many schools go beyond just volunteering; they establish ongoing projects to benefit those in need.

This chapel will provide these young students the opportunity to connect their faith to action in service to others. It has been our experience that when a young student volunteers at St. Vincent de Paul for the first time, their eyes are opened. Many of them have never experienced poverty, and they are shocked that so many people in our community are hungry and homeless. Our chapel will give these students an opportunity to pray and reflect on their experiences in serving the poor. It will give them an opportunity to assimilate what they have seen and develop ways to respond. Often, when faced with difficulty, faith is strengthened. A chapel provides a place a student can use to grow spiritually.

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. This chapel will enable us to achieve this most important objective. Keep this project in your prayers, as we build the future at St. Vincent de Paul!

### 2024 Is Only A Few Weeks Away

Did you know that if you are 70½ years old or older, 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 haven't taken your required minimum distribution for 2023, your IRA charitable rollover gift can satisfy all or part of that requirement.** If your spouse is 70 ½ years old or older, they can also give up to \$100,000 from their IRA. If you have questions, please contact Michael Acaldo at [macaldo@svdpbr.com](mailto:macaldo@svdpbr.com) or call (225) 383-7837, ext. 0.

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

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*We Are So Thankful For You!*

At St. Vincent de Paul, we really started to see an increase in need last Thanksgiving. On Thanksgiving Day and Thanksgiving weekend, we saw more people at our Dining Room than we had ever seen before.

The high demand continued into December 2022, and then on Christmas Day, we again saw high numbers. Not just at our Dining Room, but our shelters are on track to reach new highs this year. As Thanksgiving 2023 draws near, we expect the higher numbers to continue, but with your support, our programs will be able meet the growing need.

For me, Thanksgiving is all about family. Unfortunately, many of those experiencing poverty and homelessness have no one else, and on this special day, *we* are their family. The individuals who make financial gifts, those who donate turkeys and hams, the volunteers who prepare and serve the food, and of course, our guests, are all members of one big family on this day of thanksgiving.

On Thursday, November 23<sup>rd</sup>, our volunteers will be dishing up big helpings of turkey and gravy, cornbread dressing, cranberry sauce and green beans. In addition to the single men and women joining us for this delicious meal, there will be mothers and fathers with their children, couples, grandparents, and volunteers everywhere. Many of our guests have very little food at home and cannot afford to prepare the traditional Thanksgiving meal, but it's not just the food they come for. They need the social interaction, the sights and sounds of a joyous occasion shared with others.

They also need the bright light of hope and compassion, and that's what we are giving every time we provide food, clothing, shelter and prescriptions. We are showing that every individual is important and that someone cares about them.

**St. Vincent de Paul has a remarkable 158-year history of service here in our community, and nothing lasts that long unless people put their hearts and souls into it. Every time you help someone else, you are following your heart, and we are so thankful and grateful for every St. Vincent de Paul supporter and volunteer.**

**During these difficult economic times, we appreciate your support more than ever. Please accept our heartfelt thanks for all you do. May God bless you and your family this Thanksgiving, and may the blessings you share with others come back to you a thousand times over. -- Michael J. Acaldo, President & CEO, St. Vincent de Paul**