



Vincentian Charities

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



Serving God's Poor in our
Community Since 1865



A Season of Hope

By now you've gotten our annual Christmas appeal with the theme of *The Season of Hope*. Every day, St. Vincent de Paul volunteers are keeping hope alive in our community. Of all the gifts we provide, hope is the most important. Hope enables the poorest person to see beyond today and into a future filled with promise. With hope and faith, all things are possible.

Knowing that you'll be home for Christmas is such a wonderful feeling. This is the place that comforts you, where people welcome you with love and open arms. This is where memories are made and shared. Home is where you want to be to celebrate Christmas.

For those who have no homes or families to turn to, St. Vincent de Paul provides much more than a place to stay. We want every person we serve to remember this Christmas as a wonderful time when they felt Christ's love through the kindness and generosity of others. This year, we have served over 270,000 meals and provided more than 30,000 guest nights of shelter for homeless men, women, children and
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32nd ANNUAL HOLIDAY COLLECTION DRIVE
PLEASE DONATE TOILETRIES TO THE ST. VINCENT DE PAUL HOMELESS SHELTER

MOST NEEDED ITEMS:

| | | |
|------------------|-------------|------------------|
| NAPKINS | DEODORANT | BLANKETS |
| PAPER TOWELS | SOAP | GLOVES, SOCKS |
| TOILET PAPER | SHAMPOO | DISPOSABLE SHOES |
| DISPOSABLE CUPS, | BODY WASH | KNIT CAPS, MENS, |
| PLATES, BOWLS, | LOTION | WOMENS, AND |
| UTENSILS | HAIR POWDER | CHILDREN |
| | | UNDERWEAR |

FOR MORE DETAILS VISIT:
WWW.BRPROUD.COM/SVDP-DRIVE

32nd Annual Shelter Collection Drive

2023 marks the 32nd year of our annual Bishop Ott Shelter collection drive. WVLA, NBC-33, Fox 44, The Baton Rouge Clinic, Albertson's and Louisiana Healthcare Connections are supporting this effort to provide much needed items for the homeless men, women, and children we serve. Through this effort, we collect items like toiletries, disposable diapers, gloves, caps, and underwear for the

homeless who come to our shelters. Our Bishop Ott Shelter Program has made a tremendous impact in the Capital Region by being a leader in providing shelter to men, women, and children. We see every day as an opportunity to provide a
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Dressed in a pink sports coat (in honor of LSU Women's Basketball) and a national championship ring (in honor of LSU Baseball) Hillar Moore holds up his winning plaque for this year's turkey carving contest. D.D. Breaux smiles and shares in Hillar's excitement in this community event.

And the Winners Are...

On the day before Thanksgiving, we held St. Vincent de Paul's thirteenth annual turkey carving contest. Community leaders that participated included: Bishop Michael Duca, Rabbi Sarah Smiley, Mayor-President Sharon Weston Broome, District Attorney Hillar Moore (as the LSU National Champion), Councilwoman Carolyn Coleman, Manship Media CFO Ralph Bender (as Elton John), Councilman Darryl Hurst, Coroner Beau Clark (as St. Vincent de Paul), Our Lady of the Lake Vice-President Coletta Barrett, W-Consulting Group President Tara Wicker, Ascension Parish Sheriff Bobby Webre, Louisiana Housing Corporation Marjorianna William, and Hall of Fame LSU Gymnastics Coach DD Breaux. We are so thankful to these community leaders who came together to give of their time and talent and share the true spirit of the holiday season.

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HELP A CHILD IN NEED.
SYLVIA'S TOYS FOR CHRISTMAS

Christmas Toys

This year is shaping up to be another great success, and we can't thank WBRZ-Channel 2 and Sylvia Weatherspoon enough for, undertaking this initiative.

As we celebrate the birth of Christ, it's appropriate to remember that He has told us to care for the less fortunate among us. That philosophy is one we follow year-round, but during the Christmas season, we are especially mindful of children in need. It is not too late to give. You can also make a financial donation for toys at svdpbr.org 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 child in need.

Join us 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. Our own St. Nick, Bishop Michael Duca and Sylvia Weatherspoon will be at our Dining Room. We will also be distributing gifts
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Experiencing Homelessness at Christmas**

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families. Although those numbers are impressive, what's most important is the fact that every number marks a day in someone's life when prayers were answered and hope was renewed. For many of us, childhood was a long time ago and some of those Christmas memories have faded over the years. For children like those in the photos, this Christmas at St. Vincent de Paul may be the one they never forget. We hope all the children we serve remember this Christmas as a time of love and laughter, happiness and hope, even though they may be experiencing difficult times – poverty and in some cases, homelessness.



On Christmas morning, children in our shelter will wake up in a warm bed, quickly realizing that St. Nick visited the Sweet Dreams Shelter while they slept. As they open their presents, we hope they will forget for a while that their lives are changing in ways beyond their control. The happiness of this moment is what we want them to remember.

Our Bishop Ott Shelter Program gives homeless men and women the time they need to get their lives back together and start over. But just as important is the sense of safety and stability that is so critical to the well-being of young children.

Christmas is also a wonderful time at our St. Vincent de Paul Dining Room. Laughter fills the air as our volunteers serve a traditional holiday meal to our guests. Every guest is encouraged to come back for seconds. They're invited to shop at the free Christmas "store" we set up in the parking lot, and they leave with needed items like socks, caps, and gloves.

At our community pharmacy, we decorate a Christmas tree with empty prescription bottles and colorful boxes that once contained over-the-counter medicines – a wonderful way of putting a cheerful spin on a serious subject.

As a St. Vincent de Paul Family, we are called to see the face of Christ in each adult and child we are blessed to serve. We recognize that whether someone is eight or eighty, they are a child of God whose life is a precious gift. This is why we work so hard. We know that people in need are depending on us for their very survival.

We see the face of Christ in every person we serve and feel His presence as we follow in His footsteps. Your prayers, volunteerism and financial support are all critical in our efforts to serve God's children in need! **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 gift of hope and spirit of Christmas to someone in need.

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on the days leading up to Christmas and on Christmas Day.

The St. George Fire Department continued their outstanding community leadership by collecting gifts through their Santa

parades. The St. George Fire Department collected thousands of toys and food for our work. Thank you!

The Pennington Family Foundation continued its priceless support of this effort to make Christmas bright for children in need. We are so thankful for their support!

Our partnership with local law enforcement was also a great success helping us to reach so many children in need of Christmas presents. Please keep this effort in your thoughts and prayers.

And the Winners Are... Continued from page 1



All the contestants had a blast carving the turkeys, which are so important to the annual Thanksgiving Day meals served at our St. Vincent de Paul Dining Room, the Raising Cane's River Center, the McKinley Alumni Center and St. Gerard Church. This event is a way to get our turkeys carved, create community awareness about poverty and homelessness, and have some great fun at the same time.

If you have ever carved a turkey, you know it takes a surprising amount of skill. Of course, this is a contest, so contestants were judged in a number of categories, which included: how much fun the contestant was having, how the turkey was presented after carving, and in St. Vincent de Paul's "no waste tradition," how much meat was left on the bone. We served over 3,000 meals to those in need on Thanksgiving Day!

All of our contestants are winners because they truly care about the less fortunate, we are so blessed to serve. Based on our volunteer judges, this year's winners were: first place, Hillar Moore; second place, Mayor-President Sharon Weston Broome and third place, Councilwoman Carolyn Coleman.



Mayor Sharon Weston Broome, United Way President George Bell, and Rabbi Sarah Smiley take a quick picture during this year's event. Again, we thank the Unified Jewish Congregation of Baton Rouge for donating all of the turkeys needed to make this year's Thanksgiving meal possible. We served over 3,000 meals just on Thanksgiving Day.

Leave A Legacy – Ensure that your values and beliefs live forever by remembering St. Vincent de Paul in your estate planning.



St. Louise de Marillac Chapel Update

As we reported in our last newsletter article, our Chapel project continues to make progress, trees have been removed, and the project is now out for bids. Pray that the bids come in at a reasonable level.

We hope that by next Christmas our Chapel will be open for those we serve and our dedicated volunteers.

As you may know, the chapel will be built in the heart of the St. Vincent de Paul charitable campus. 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. Hope, faith and prayer gets so many people through those tough times.

We will be able to help so many in need, and so many people who volunteer at St. Vincent de Paul. Volunteers do so in order to grow in their spiritual lives. Through the years, we have witnessed so many volunteers coming to us with the hope to change someone's life and found instead that their own faith lives were transformed.



Experiencing Homelessness at Christmas

Whether at Christmas time or any time of the year, St. Vincent de Paul is the leader in providing homeless services in our community. Our services are built on the philosophy of giving a hand-up of hope while helping people to break the cycle of homelessness.

This year, we have seen an increase in the number of men, women, children and families that need our help. We are especially seeing more families that are experiencing homelessness. We are the only shelter in our community that provides services to homeless mothers with male children over the age of 5, fathers with children, and couples with children.

On behalf of the individuals, families and children we serve, we express our heartfelt gratitude for your support. Because of your investment in our work, their dreams of a bright future can come true. Thank you & Merry Christmas!

Shelter Collection Drive Continued from page 1

hand-up to someone who wants to break the cycle of homelessness. Many people who are homeless don't have a toothbrush, toothpaste, shaving cream, or deodorant, and when they come to our shelter, we provide these items – things

that most of us consider necessities. Dropping off one of these items at the Baton Rouge Clinic, Albertson's or any St. Vincent de Paul location can do so much for the self-esteem of someone who is at a low point in their life. Our guests are grateful for every item we provide, and these can truly be life-changing. A razor and shaving cream can make a difference when you're applying for a job. For children, being neat and clean when they go to school means they can look forward to learning rather than dreading ridicule.

The expansion of our Sweet Dreams Shelter means we can serve more homeless individuals and families, but it also means that the need for these basic necessities is even greater. Please consider donating a few of the items on the list below for our shelter guests, and help us get the word out about the importance of this collection drive. Tell your family, friends, and co-workers to spread the word through Facebook and social media. Get your church group involved.

Items can be dropped off at any of the above locations. For more information, call (225) 383-7837, extension 0.

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.

It's Not Too Late to Make an IRA Gift

The clock is ticking toward the end of the year, so time is running out to make a charitable gift from your IRA. If you are at least 70 ½ years old, you could give up to \$100,000 from your IRA directly to St. Vincent de Paul without creating taxable income.

If you have questions, please contact Michael Acaldo at macaldo@svdpbr.com or call (225) 383-7837, ext. 0. Remember, always consult with a tax professional before you make this type of gift.

"Christmas came without ribbons!..."

It came without tags! It came without packages, boxes or bags! These words from Dr. Seuss's classic tale of *The Grinch Who Stole Christmas* put the holiday season into proper perspective.

At the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, every day gives us an opportunity to share the true spirit of Christmas with those in need. We work hard to do our best for those in need, and that will always be our number one focus. We see your support as a sacred trust and a tremendous gift.

Throughout the years, the Society has experienced tremendous growth. **With deep appreciation for your support, we wish you and your loved ones a blessed and wonderful Christmas and holiday season.**

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

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Address Service Requested

If Every Day Was Like Christmas

If Every Day Was Like Christmas...What a Wonderful World This Would Be.

This is one of my favorite Christmas songs, and today that message rings truer than ever before. As Christmas draws near, we think of family and friends. Our hearts are filled with love, compassion, and gratitude for our blessings. How wonderful it would be if that feeling could remain in our hearts throughout the year. This is my 34th Christmas at St. Vincent de Paul, and I have so many priceless memories.

What better gift than to share that feeling of joy with others – people like the elderly grandmother in the photo above who came to us with an empty heart, left with a renewed feeling of hope. She could never have imagined that after more than 75 Christmases, she would be a guest at our Dining Room on Christmas Day. We were there for her, and we are here every day of the year for those who are hungry and in need.

The next picture is an annual Christmas tradition – gift giving. In this photo, Bishop Duca has just given presents to a mother for her daughter who would have had nothing under the tree on Christmas morning. How happy and grateful they are. So often, I hear people say that Christmas is for children, and I agree: It's for all God's children!

Now look at the photo of the little girls in their school uniforms. Those big smiles hide the fact that they and their family were homeless before coming to our Bishop Ott Sweet Dreams Shelter. It takes so little to make a child happy. What they need most is the security of their parent's arms and a place to call home. We are home to more than 1,000 homeless men, women and children every year.

At first glance, the final photograph above looks like just a patient getting their prescription filled. But if you look closely, you'll see that the happiness on the face of the gentlemen getting his life-sustaining prescriptions. Yes, he works hard, but the small business he works for doesn't provide health insurance, so he came to us desperate and we were able to help him. The best gift you can give to anyone that has a life-threatening illness is the gift of health, and we continue seeing more people who have never had to ask for help before.

This Christmas, we thank you for being an angel and helping us to bring hope to those in need. We pray that every day in the coming year will be like Christmas Day for you and your family! --*Merry Christmas, Michael J. Acaldo, President & CEO*

