



# Vincentian Charities

Newsletter and Chronicle of Activities  
SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT de PAUL  
Louisiana, Capital Region  
Lenten Edition 2024 Vol. XXXIII, No. 1  
*Serving God's Poor in our  
Community Since 1865*



Lathan Alexander presents a donation check of \$63,000 to St. Vincent de Paul's Michael Acaldo. See more in the story below.



## Alexander's Raises Over \$63,000 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 18, 2024.

Lathan, Kelly and their son Ethan teamed up to make this effort an outstanding success. Their hard work and the generosity of everyone participating in this event will benefit those in need served by St. Vincent de Paul.

This event had all of the ingredients for a perfect outcome. Alexander's Market was packed for the event which lasted about several hours. The result was \$63,000 all raised to benefit our effort to build a Chapel on our St. Vincent de Paul Campus. See exciting Chapel announcement below.

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



## Chapel Construction Beginning

The St. Vincent de Paul Special Works Board of Directors approved the lowest bidder which was Deumite Construction at their February Board Meeting. Construction will begin in the coming days, and is scheduled to be completed before the end of the year. We will keep you updated as we make progress on this exciting project.

Continued on page 2; see [Chapel Construction Beginning](#)

TICKETS AVAILABLE FOR PURCHASE AT SVDPBR.ORG

BACK BY POPULAR DEMAND

# LIVE IN CONCERT

BISHOP DUCA AND CHEF JOHN FOLSE



BISHOP ROBERT MUENCH, FATHER CLEO MILANO AND JOHN PASTOREK

MARCH 15TH THE COUNT YOUR BLESSINGS KREWE 4PM- 6:30PM

GREAT MUSIC AND HEAVENLY SOUP

PLAYING AT A CHURCH NEAR YOU - OUR LADY OF MERCY!

## 29th Annual Count Your Blessings Supper

We invite you to join Bishop Michael Duca, Bishop Robert Muench, Father Cleo Milano and Chef John Folse as we celebrate 29 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 singing!

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.

Continued on page 2; see [Count Your Blessings](#)

## Fill A Prescription and Save Life!



Over 27 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.

Continued on page 2; see [Fill A Prescription](#)

In this issue - [Build a Basket Begins its 19th Year](#)  
[Thank You for Your Support!](#)





*In February, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul National Board of Directors visited Baton Rouge to visit our Vincentian Family. They enjoyed our Louisiana hospitality, and really were impressed with all of our programs that serve our neighbors in need. Bishop Duca visited with the National Board and thanked them for all they do for the Society in the United States. Kim Boudreaux, Diocesan Council President and Michael Acaldo gave the National Board a tour of our main charitable campus. They were blown away by the impact we are making, and were so excited about our new Chapel going up in the heart of our St. Vincent de Paul campus.*

**Chapel Construction Beginning Continued from page 1**

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 when someone is experiencing homelessness, hunger, or poverty, they have a sense of desperation and hopelessness. 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.

Each of us is on a spiritual journey, and we are all called to nourish our faith through prayer and action. This new Chapel will enable us to achieve this most important objective. Continue to keep this project in your prayers as we construct and open this long-time dream of our Vincentian family!

**Count Your Blessings Continued from page 1**

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.



2023 was another difficult year because of how the economy impacted those we serve. Last year, our Dining Room served 310,897 meals (an all-time record) to those in need. We assisted men, women, children, and families experiencing homelessness by providing 31,230 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 twenty-ninth Count Your Blessings Supper.** Chef John Folse will prepare a special Lenten soup of *Creamy Potato and Shrimp Soup*.



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 6:30 p.m. (drive-thru at your convenience) on Friday, March 15<sup>th</sup>, at Our Lady of Mercy Parish. Order your tickets today online at svdpbr.org, or give us a call at (225) 383-7837, ext. 0.

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

We hope you can join us on March 15<sup>th</sup>, but if you can’t attend and are able to assist us in our important community work, please consider making 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!**



*Pat Shingleton poses for a quick photo with SVDP Pharmacist Kellie Elisar, SVDP Community Relationships Director Debra Blacher and SVDP BRAVO Coordinator Kay Kyes. The group thanked Pat and WBRZ for the almost three decades of support of the pharmacy.*

**Fill A Prescription Continued from page 1**

Through 27 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 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 people who need prescription medicines. Last year, we filled prescriptions for people who came to us as a last resort. 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.

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](http://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.

### *Build a Basket Begins its 19<sup>th</sup> 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.

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. 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](http://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](http://svdpbr.org) or call us at 225-383-7837, ext. 0.



### *Thank You for Your Support!*

We want to thank all of you who helped us in our mission of charity in 2023. Your generosity allowed us to respond to the tremendous need in our community. Like last year, 2023 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.

#### **2023 St. Vincent de Paul Community Impact Responding to Poverty & Homelessness**

<b>Our St. Vincent de Paul Dining Room served</b>	<b>310,897 Meals</b> <b>(An All-Time Record)</b>
<b>Guest nights provided to homeless men, women, children and families by our Bishop Ott Shelter Program (4 shelters)</b>	<b>31,230 Guest Nights</b>
<b>Our St. Vincent de Paul Community Pharmacy filled</b>	<b>Prescriptions valued at \$690,709</b>
<b>Our Uniforms for Kids Program distributed</b>	<b>12,432 Uniforms</b>
<b>St. Vincent de Paul Stores provided clothing, furniture, etc. all free of charge</b>	<b>5,000+ Needy individuals and families</b>
<b>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</b>	<b>Thousands of Home Visit Contacts providing \$600,000+ in assistance with rent, utilities, food and other basic needs.</b>
<b>Community Support is great - monthly volunteer average</b>	<b>1,500+ Volunteers</b>



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

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## *Everyday Saints*

Lent is a time of spiritual reflection, and when I reflect on the many blessings God has given me, I realize once again what a gift the past 34 plus years with St. Vincent de Paul have been. I've met so many good people, and we've worked together to accomplish so many good things. I've had the opportunity to witness ordinary people doing extraordinary things. In my opinion, they are all saints in training.

When you hear the word *saints*, you may have a mental image of someone in heaven. Sports fans may think of a man 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 our concern for our neighbor in need and reach out to others. In the current 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.

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. As we are just days away from Holy Week and Easter, [thank you](#) for making a difference in the lives of our neighbors in need. During this Holy Season, may God bless you and your family.

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

**If you want to watch some uplifting television, tune in to Catholic Life Channel Cox 15 for our local St. Vincent de Paul Beacons of Light TV Series! Several of our National Society of St. Vincent de Paul Board Members will appear on our show. Great interviews, great national insight into the work of the Society, but most of all, a chance to see our mission come to life. The schedule is: Sunday at 3:00 p.m.; Monday at 7:00 p.m.; Tuesday at 1:00 p.m.; Wednesday at 9:00 p.m.; and Saturday at 8:00 p.m. on Catholic Life Channel Cox 15 or go to [catholiclifetv.org](http://catholiclifetv.org) for ways to see Beacons of Light.**