



Diocesan Council, Diocese of Cleveland
Society of St. Vincent de Paul

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NEWS RELEASE

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Society of St. Vincent de Paul's Woodland Food Center Receives Greater Cleveland Food Bank *Bag of Hope* Award

CLEVELAND – August 22, 2016 – The [Society of St. Vincent de Paul](http://svdpcl.org) (SVDP), Diocese of Cleveland, was honored recently by the Greater Cleveland Food Bank for its commitment to hunger relief in Cleveland's impoverished Central neighborhood. The Greater Cleveland Food Bank presented **SVDP's Woodland Food Center** with its esteemed *Bag of Hope* Award in recognition of service to the community through both its emergency food program and its *Seeds to Read* early reading initiative to fight generational poverty. Will Skora, Woodland Food Center Operations manager, accepted the award at the Greater Cleveland Food Bank's Sixth Annual Healthy Communities, Healthy Families Conference.

Located at 6001 Woodland Avenue, SVDP's Woodland Food Center serves an area in which 90 percent of residents qualify for food assistance, according to the Greater Cleveland Food Bank. The Woodland Food Center feeds an average of 700 families monthly and has experienced an uptick in additional clients, including the working poor. During the past 12 months, the Woodland Food Center provided nearly 320,000 meals and assisted more than 21,500 people.

In an effort to combat generational poverty within the Central neighborhood, last March SVDP launched its [Seeds to Read](#) early reading initiative at Woodland Food Center by distributing free, age-appropriate children's books (targeted at newborns to five-year-olds) to youth and parents as they visit the center for emergency food. SVDP collaborates with local organizations to provide volunteer "librarians" who assist clients with finding the appropriate reading materials.

SVDP Cleveland has operated the Woodland Food Center since 2013. It previously was managed by the Capuchin Franciscan Brothers under the direction of Brother Walt Robb, but was in danger of closing when it was announced that Robb was leaving for another assignment. More ...

“The St. Vincent de Paul Society is grateful for this award, but also grateful for the opportunity to help so many good people in need,” said John Litten, SVDP executive director. “It takes a team of players to combat hunger in the community, and we are one of many members. We’re blessed to have the support of incredible organizations like the Greater Cleveland Food Bank, as well as the help of our dedicated volunteers.”

“St. Vincent de Paul - Woodland Food Center has been a fantastic partner since they came on board with us about three years ago. When we learned the previous agency that operated the site would be closing, we were worried how the neighborhood, particularly one with such a high food insecurity rate, would continue to be served,” said Kristin Warzocha, CEO and president, Greater Cleveland Food Bank. “St. Vincent de Paul Society stepped up and took over right where the other agency left off, and has continued to build their programming to best meet the needs of the families in the Central neighborhood and surrounding communities. We value St. Vincent de Paul – Woodland Food Center’s partnership and their commitment to feeding our hungry neighbors.”

The *Bag of Hope* Award recognizes organizations that have made significant contributions in the hunger relief network through innovation and excellent service in their region.

Approximately 200 people attended the GCFB conference, which was held Friday, August 19 at the Intercontinental Cleveland Hotel and Conference Center.

Established in 1865, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, Diocese of Cleveland, is a local human service and welfare organization of neighborhood volunteer groups residing in participating parishes (“Conferences”) throughout the Diocese of Cleveland’s eight-county service area. Volunteers (“Vincentians”) provide face-to-face emergency assistance to those in need, regardless of their race, ethnicity or religious affiliation. Last year alone, more than 240,000 low-income individuals in Northeast Ohio received over \$7 million in aid, which included food at SVDP’s multiple food centers, clothing, school supplies and financial assistance with utilities and rent. SVDP’s central office is located at 1404 East Ninth Street, Cleveland. For more information, call 216.696.6525, ext. 3150 or svdpcle.org.

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