Christmas Wishes from our Executive Director, John Patton

As the Christmas season approaches, I would like to take a moment to express my gratitude for what our organization has achieved this year – thanks to the dedication of members like you! Truly, myself and the rest of the Diocesan Council are humbled by this steadfast commitment to our mission. Thank you!

The holy Christmas holiday asks us to prepare our hearts to welcome the miracle of Christ made flesh, but my friends, we know He is already there! We welcome him into our hearts every time we extend acts of compassion and generosity to our neighbors in need. As the executive director of SVDP’s Cleveland Council, I am humbled to be a witness to these quiet but profound acts that you – our Vincentians – perform daily. Thank you!

As we look ahead into the approaching new year, I am excited by the opportunities that await us as we continue to expand the breadth and scope of our services within the Greater Cleveland and Akron District communities in the coming year.

It is with a grateful heart that I wish you blessed Christmas and bountiful New Year. I cannot overstate how profoundly grateful I am to each and every one of you for your time, dedication and service of Christ in others.

Warmest Wishes,

Executive Director
Cleveland Diocesan Council of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul

Another Successful and Well-Attended Ozanam Orientation

Congratulations to our new trainers Cheryl Davis and Kathy Yonto, who presented the Ozanam Orientation on November 10 in Wooster! Based on the feedback provided by the participants, it was a VERY successful day, with a balanced mix of formation and training on the Vincentian pathway. Good job, ladies!!

Congratulations as well to our 28 newly formed Vincentians representing 6 different Conferences. It was a full day focused on who we are, our history, values and beliefs, what we do as well as how and why we do it. As participants often express, “there is so much we don’t know!!”. We do not fully realize it, but continuing education is present even in our Society – there is always something new to learn (whether about the Society or the community), and so much to share! In fact, the sharing in our meetings has always been considered really invaluable.

Thank you all, and to those who were not able to participate this time, stay tuned for upcoming trainings in 2019!

BOARD PRESIDENT RECEIVES AWARD

On Sunday, December 2, 2018 at the Westlake City Hall, the Westlake Town Criers held their annual Tree Lighting Ceremony. Mayor Dennis Clough announced the new couple, Edward & Barbara Leszynski, to hold the title of Mr. and Mrs. Westlake for 2019. Congratulations on this well-deserved award.

POSITION AVAILABLE

STRATEGIC SALES REPRESENTATIVE (PT)
Reports to: President

Position Summary: Catholic Community Connection has an open position for a part-time professional who would be responsible for the growth of the GPO (Group Purchasing Organization) program with primary focus on new membership recruitment and overall business development. Job responsibilities include focus on increasing contract utilization among new and existing members. The position will work closely with authorized vendor representatives to lower member’s supply cost, improve their operational efficiency, and increase their overall satisfaction with program. Interested Candidates should contact Marian Rubin, President, at 216-875-4613 or by email, mrubin@catholiccc.org.

Upcoming Events

How to Donate a Car to Charity
Donating is fast and easy! Simply Call toll-free 800-322-8284 or donate online.

Catholic Community Connection

Caring for our Needy Neighbors Since 1865

An E-Publication of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, Diocese of Cleveland

Executive Director
John Patton
Member, Gesu Parish, University Heights

December 10, Noon
Our Lady of Hope
Bedford, OH

BOARD MEETING
**St. Ladislas Vincentian Charlotte Lee Creates a Holiday Tradition – and a Big Impact!**

St. Vincent de Paul is blessed with many talented volunteers who give of their time and talents in unique and thoughtful ways, and Charlotte Lee is living proof! A long-time member of the St. Ladislas SVDP Conference, Charlotte regularly dedicates her time to the hot meal service and food pantry program. But beyond that, she has generously created a holiday tradition with her Christmas Crafts boutique!

Charlotte collects Christmas decorations throughout the year from estate and garage sales. She fixes and repairs the items, repainting them if necessary. A talented artist, Charlotte’s specialty is hand painting Christmas scenes on vintage sleds and bird houses, creating instant holiday heirlooms. Alongside her niece, Denise, Charlotte also decorates trees and creates beautiful wreaths for the boutique.

After a tremendous investment of time and talent, Charlotte’s stunning holiday display goes up for sale and the proceeds are always directed to charity. This year Charlotte donated $3,500 to the St. Ladislas Conference. We want to thank Wagner’s of Westlake for hosting the Christmas Craft Boutique and all of the volunteers who help Charlotte during the sale. And we thank you, Charlotte Lee, for your very generous heart! As St. Vincent de Paul would say, “Love is creative unto infinity!”.

**St. Pat’s (Bridge Avenue, Cleveland) Acknowledges Valuable Volunteers**

Volunteers are the backbone of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul (SVDP); they bring our face-to-face ministry to vulnerable members of our communities. On October 11, 2018 John Lewis recognized three of his longest serving volunteers as they marked their retirement from the St. Pat’s (Bridge Avenue, Cleveland) meal service. SVDP extends its deepest thanks and appreciation in recognition of the exceptional service of:

- Pat Evans, with 20 years of service
- Eileen Toth, with 20 years of service
- Donna Kunotz, with 20 years of service

SVDP also thanks Mr. Lewis for his inspiring and generous commitment to serving a monthly Thursday meal at St. Pat’s. 2018 marks the 20th anniversary of his service. Last year, SVDP assisted over 200,000 people across its network of hunger centers which would not be possible without the faithful commitment of volunteers like John, Donna, Eileen and Pat. Thank you and congratulations!

**SVDP Seeks to Expand its Volunteer Base with Special Outreach Efforts**

To say volunteers are an essential part of SVDP’s mission is an understatement. Our Vincentians are truly an example of the Word of Christ in action, and robust membership is a vital component of the organization’s long-term sustainability.

We are therefore pleased to announce two new membership outreach initiatives for the coming year, the first of which is our partnership with the organization “HandsOn”, an initiative that connects local high school and college students with volunteer opportunities in their communities. In the coming year, the SVDP team will join HandsOn in presentations made to high schools and college campus ministry centers across the region.

The second effort involves bringing new parish conferences into the fold. We plan to actively invite new parish conferences and members, and you can help! Do you know someone who is interested in becoming a Vincentian? Do you have connections with former conferences or parishes? If so, please let us know by contacting Anelize Nader at anader@svdpcle.org. Thank you for assisting this important effort!

**The New Brookside Family Center Will Play Host to a Christmas Toy and Turkey Distribution on Saturday, December 22**

All are welcome to attend a morning of fellowship and refreshments, as SVDP welcomes the public to its new Brookside Family Center (located at 3764 W. 25th Street in the Clark/Fulton neighborhood). Doors will be open from 9 am to 1 pm. As we are providing a Christmas gift to every child who attends, we are currently collecting toys, coats and monetary donations to support this special Christmas event. Thank you!
SUSAN AND HER PANTRY

This is the true story of how one of our SVDP Conferences helped a searcher discover the Catholic Church

“I’m married, have two children, a good husband, a loving family and worked for a small company. I was brought up Protestant and understood very little of Roman Catholic teachings. I was an active member of my church, one of the large major Protestant denominations, and regularly attended bible studies and retreats. I greatly enjoyed these activities and felt that the Lord was pushing me to grow and learn even more.

Even though I didn’t know what I was looking for, I quit my job so I could start seeking in earnest. Quitting my job resulted in financial problems but I felt this was necessary to more fully immerse in my journey. To help make ends meet, I became a part-time employee of my church, which also offered me more options to grow in my faith.

It was during this time that my church started a community outreach center in a different building. I was offered the opportunity to get the ministry started. This was very demanding responsibility, but small miracles kept happening. The initial money to operate lasted longer than we anticipated. Slowly, other churches, organizations and individuals came along to join in the work. Some of those organizations were several SVDP conferences in our county, and more specifically the conference based at the parish in my town.

After the outreach center had been open a year, this local St. Vincent de Paul asked if they could move their food pantry to the facility. I knew nothing of SVDP. I was surprised to learn that the mission of SVDP was nearly identical to that of the work of the outreach center. The more contact I had with Vincentians, the more curious I became about them.

All this time I felt the Lord was continuing to call me to do more. One day I visited the local SVDP’s church website and found that they were about to start a Symbolon course and I decided to enroll. To my astonishment, I was “blown away” with what I heard. All of my prior knowledge and experience in Christianity were presented in a way I had never known, and even more unexpectedly, it did not conflict at all with what I already believed. At last, I had found what I was looking for.

I now am a Confirmed Catholic and active Vincentian. All my years of study and searching have been finally realized and I believe the Lord has actually “touched” me to bring me to this new beginning in my life. The example and kindness of the members of SVDP was a critical part of the Lord’s work in finally bringing me home.”

Editor Note: I hope this story will inspire all Vincentians to help not only the needy and disadvantaged, but also to extend their love and friendship to ALL our neighbors.

Don’t Lose Your Tax Exemption

In 1990 the United States College of Catholic Bishops ruled that “nonreligious” groups associated with a parish are not considered part of the Diocese organization and should be independent entities. Organizations like the Knights of Columbus, SVDP, Good Samaritans, etc. where affected. Based on this ruling, the Cleveland SVDP Council applied to the IRS and was granted a group 501 (c) 3 tax exemption that covers all our Conferences.

All Conferences must use the 51-0434414 IRS assigned exemption number on their bank accounts, checking, and investment accounts. Conferences were sent the “Annual Conference Report” form in October. The form must be returned to the Central Office no later than December 31st each year. The Central Office summarizes your data and sends it to Malone & Novotny, a local CPA firm, used by the Diocese, and specializes in filling out the Form 990 and filing it with the IRS.

If your Conference name and data are not listed as part of our Cleveland Council you are in danger of losing your tax exemption and will not be covered under our $1 million dollar Conference liability insurance.

If your Conference did not receive the form, or if you have questions and need help filling out the form, please contact Greg Werner, SVDP Controller, at 216 696-6525 x 3590. He will be happy to help you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SVDP DISTRICT MEETING</th>
<th>DATE &amp; TIME</th>
<th>PLACE</th>
<th>DISTRICT PRESIDENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Akron District</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Mike Zorena</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="mailto:akron@svdpcle.org">akron@svdpcle.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East District</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Emma Bednar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="mailto:eastdistrict@svdpcle.org">eastdistrict@svdpcle.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lake/Geauga District</td>
<td>February 12</td>
<td>Our Lady of Mt. Carmel</td>
<td>Bill Brandoni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="mailto:lake-geauga@svdpcle.org">lake-geauga@svdpcle.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lorain District</td>
<td>February 21</td>
<td>St. Joseph Avon Lake</td>
<td>Al Schiazza</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7:00pm</td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="mailto:lorain@svdpcle.org">lorain@svdpcle.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West District</td>
<td>January 10</td>
<td>St. Basil</td>
<td>Mary Flanagan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7:00pm</td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="mailto:westdistrict@svdpcle.org">westdistrict@svdpcle.org</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you can help with the below items for the Brookside Hunger Center, contact James at JBruening@svdpcle.org
- Gently used clothing racks, some on wheels, some stationary
- Folding tables either 4 ft. or 8 ft. lengths
- Metal Shelving
- Heavy-Duty Rolling Cart (Wagon)
- POS System/Cash Register
- Wooden Shelving needed for Community Corner Hunger Center, contact Cathy at ckovacik@svdpcle.org