

THE

SVP

SPRING 2022

BULLETIN

MAGAZINE OF THE SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

WE MUST RETURN
REJUVENATED
TO OUR CORE
WORK

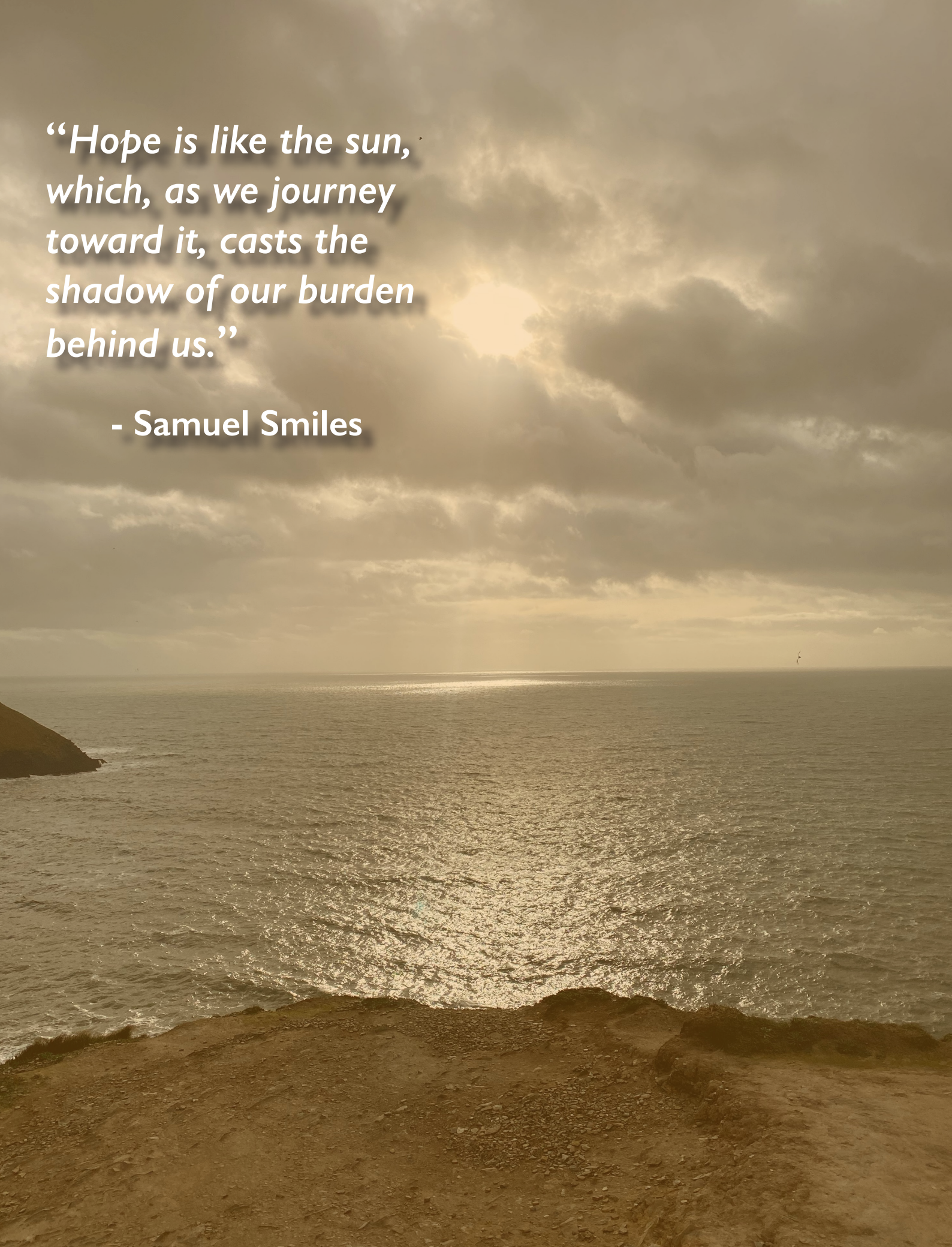
MEMBER
SURVEY
THE RESULTS ARE IN

IT TAKES A LOT TO WELCOME SVP
STRANGERS INTO YOUR HOME

The Voice of Social Justice in Ireland

*“Hope is like the sun,
which, as we journey
toward it, casts the
shadow of our burden
behind us.”*

- Samuel Smiles





This magazine is named in honour of the principal founder of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, Frederic Ozanam

THE IRISH SVP OZANAM BULLETIN

SUMMER 2021
Published Quarterly

BULLETIN EDITORIAL ADDRESS
SVP National Office, SVP House,
91-92 Sean MacDermott St, Dublin 1
Phone: 01 8848200
Editor's Email: web.editor@svp.ie

Contents

4	ROSE MCGOWAN REFLECTION
6	A THIRD TIME
7	THE PRESIDENT GENERAL'S CIRCULAR LETTER
8	MEMBER ONLINE - SURVEY THE RESULTS ARE IN
11	IT TAKES A LOT TO WELCOME SVP STRANGERS INTO YOUR HOME
12	SVP ASSESSMENT OF NEED FORM
14	CARLOW EDUCATION PROGRAMME
16	ST MARTHA'S FOODBANK
17	SVP AT MIDLANDS PRISON
18	SCHOOL KIDS LEAD THE WAY IN SUPPORTING THEIR LOCAL COMMUNITY
19	OZANAM VILLAGE UPGRADE & REFERBISHMENT
20	CHERISHING OUR YOUNG
22	SVP WORKING FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE
24	THE COST OF POVERTY
26	VINCENTIAN FAMILY NEW WEBSITE
28	SVP HR STRATEGY
30	VINCENT'S OLYMPICS - A RETAIL RECOVERY SHOWCASE
32	THE VINCENT'S EXPERIENCE
35	YOUNG SVP
37	LATE LATE SHOW RAISED AN INCREDIBLE €1.5 MILLION FOR SVP
39	SVP NATIONWIDE
52	IN TRIBUTE

EDITOR:
LINDA O'CONNELL

ASSISTANT EDITOR:
MARY MOYLAN

EDITORIAL ADVISOR:
JIM WALSH

PRINTED BY: W&G BAIRD LTD
GREYSTONE PRESS, ANTRIM

ADVERTISING RATES ON
REQUEST TO THE EDITOR

RELEVANT ARTICLES ARE
WELCOME. SEND TO THE EDITOR.



It was easy for many of us to think COVID-19 was on the wane six months ago. Vaccinations were progressing as case numbers went down. Summer sunshine made hanging out outside actually enjoyable after a cooped-up winter of socialising with just our pods. Maybe, just maybe, Zoom fatigue would soon be a thing of the past.

Then came the Omicron variant on November 26, 2021, and we all cried, "No, not again!" It moved at lightning speed and, in less than three months, had spread around the world, causing record peaks in cases in many places. Presently, it seems to be declining just as quickly, leading to a loosening of public-health measures to a degree not seen in almost two years.

The pandemic has robbed people not only of joy but also of ways to process grief. As many people grasp "every opportunity to reconnect" and find new normals, others are still mourning the loss of loved ones, especially as COVID-19 restrictions prevented the kinds of healing and commemoration families may once have taken for granted.

We must pay tribute to our health workers, who have borne the brunt of this crisis.

"We cannot say that they have come out intact: research shows that as many as 43% of frontline health workers are experiencing significant levels of anxiety, and a large proportion of clinical staff working in intensive care now meet the clinical threshold for post-traumatic stress disorder. Supporting them and their mental health must be a central pillar of building back better. With them, we recognise the sacrifices made by almost all of us, knowing that these sacrifices have been much bigger for the people already underserved in life".

Dr. Hans Henri P. Kluge (Source: WHO Europe)

The Society's work continued throughout the pandemic as it has done for over 176 years. Our volunteers, members and staff adapted in order to ensure the most vulnerable in society were not forgotten and still received the help they needed. But, we also had to ensure that we ourselves were okay; after all, this pandemic affected everyone.

We lost many people close to us - members, friends, family - and it was unbearable, lonely and isolating for so many of us at times. Still, with all my heart, I can say I have never felt so proud to be a member of the SVP family as I witnessed the strength, compassion and courage that imbues all of what we do as an organisation. This became extremely apparent when we interviewed some of our members and staff around the country last summer to speak about their hopes for the future. All of us laughed, joked and cried during this, and the sense of suffering for everyone was palpable at times.

In the latest edition of the Bulletin, we want to pay tribute to the tremendous work carried out by the Society and all involved during what was, for sure, one of the most challenging periods any of us had experienced in our lifetimes. We had to adapt in so many ways: in how we convened as Conferences; in how we helped the vulnerable; by adjusting our fundraising methods; by changing how we operated our retail services; and so much more. But we did it; we rose to the challenge and came out strong. Thank you, to each and everyone one of YOU.

Linda O'Connell



SVP

Society of St Vincent de Paul

After the past two years we must return rejuvenated to our core work

The past two years are those that most people wish to forget.

For many it was missing being with their loved ones, parents, children and grandchildren, for much of the time, for others it was the loneliness, and isolation, becoming unemployed, struggling to pay bills and for many not being able to mourn properly for so many who had died during the pandemic.

But now the tide has turned, the country is opening up again. Since 28 February most restrictions have been lifted. While we remain cautious and for some an understandable nervousness remains, hope is returning. Hope that we can put the past two years behind us and resume what we may consider a normal life. We now need to harness that hope and turn it into a strong positive.

Our Society faced similar challenges to many organisations but we managed extraordinarily well to continue to support those who sought our help. That is down to all our members, volunteers and staff who worked so diligently during the past two years. We are extremely grateful to everyone. That thanks extends to those who saw that stepping away from their voluntary roles to protect themselves, their families and those whom they would normally visit, was the right thing to do for them. We look forward to welcoming many of those back to active visitation.

As members and volunteers know 2021 was an extraordinary year for the Society in terms of calls for help. There were just over 191,000 calls recorded on our CRM system. A record number.

One very pleasing aspect of the past two years was the way the public and corporate bodies continued to support us. Despite losing considerable money with church gate collections halted and our shops closed for long periods we continued to receive support from a strong donation stream and a host of fund-raising efforts.

As a result we were able to continue to provide help through telephone and online contact with food, vouchers or other needs. Stories of the creativity of our members and volunteers in finding ways to provide help were impressive. From co-operating with other organisations and frontline services,

such as fire fighters, the army and the police; establishing food banks or individuals cycling around to drop off vouchers.

Now it is back to what we do best and to what we are renowned for, home visitation. Many Conferences have returned to active visitation and many others are assembling their resources to do so in the coming weeks.

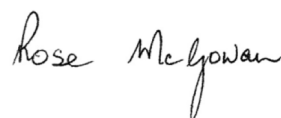
We are about responding to need and the best way to do that is by sitting with people, spending time with them and listening. That has been the ethos of the Society from the days of our founder Blessed Frederic Ozanam.

Our mission is to provide support and friendship and this has been difficult to do over the telephone or through emailing or texting.

At every level of the Society; Conferences, Areas, Regional Councils and NMC, we are able to get back to meeting face-to-face again and renewing the friendships with those who found Zoom or Teams meetings difficult or unsatisfactory ways of communicating.

To support visitation Conferences and other areas of our work; shops, children and family support services and social housing, we have embarked on a national recruitment campaign. The response to-date has been very encouraging and with regional campaigns continuing over the coming months we are very confident that we will have the resources to continue to support those who seek our help as strongly and with as much empathy and friendship as ever.

My hope is that we all return to our role in the Society rejuvenated and more determined than ever to serve and advocate for those in need as well as the marginalised in our society.



Rose McGowan,
National President, Society of St. Vincent de Paul



... a third time

By Fr Paschal Scallon CM,
SVP Spiritual Advisor



It occurred to me the other day that the country fell a third time recently. The whole country, the whole planet, has spent two years negotiating its way through a landscape we never thought we'd see. Our step has been at times expert and assured but we have lost our footing as well along the way.

And, just as we thought we may have come through, we seem to have fallen a third time.

Now, it's the economy. It's shifting and prices are banjoed. It's hard to say why. There's a lot of comment, explanations (or just eruptions). And no-one's to blame. Could it ever be that easy?

So, we're still picking our way out of the last two years and everyone's tired. Moving from one landscape to another, from infection to inflation, as it were, seems appallingly unfair. Can't the road just rise with us for a change?

At the beginning of Lent, Christians face the same journey that Jesus makes in the Gospel. We make for Jerusalem. For Jesus, that journey was the heart of his mission, to be in person the breathing presence of God among people who had reason to feel they had been forgotten.

Members of the Society of St Vincent de Paul choose to stay in step with Christ. However much we share the astonishment or

inspiration of Jesus' companions, their sense of curiosity or their caution, we want

to renew a sense of hope in people who ask for help. We want to share what we have received so that everyone can eat.

The road to Jerusalem was a hard one. Along the road, as Jesus moves from Galilee into Judea, he is both hero and villain. He is welcomed in places and he is run out of town as well. He is acclaimed and denounced. His *via dolorosa* begins early.

But Jesus keeps faith with the incisive promise he brings to people he meets, that made in the image of God everyone has dignity. That is what he sees in everyone and why he has such respect. It is why he works to remove shame in the lives of people who are despised, giving life where there is death.

Jesus walked a road that was both welcoming and suspicious of him. So do we. And like him, as we stumble and struggle to keep our feet, we keep faith, we live in hope and love will lift us the third time and every time.

Go n-éirí an bóthar libh!

Paschal Scallon CM

The President General's Circular Letter 2022

By Larry Tuomey



Introduction

It has been the custom since 1841 for the President General to write annually to all Members addressing current issues in the Society; giving guidance on how Members might respond and describing what the Council General is doing.

In his 2022 Letter the President General, Renato Lima de Oliveira, writes of the hardship caused by the pandemic and on what we should do; of the importance of education to alleviate poverty; on respect for the environment in the interest of the poorest; on the encouragement of young members and on attention to the Rule and the traditional basic principles we should observe in such situations as managing special works, holding elections and working together with fellow Members.

A few key points of particular relevance

Space does not permit an account of all that the President General deals with but the following are a few reflections of his, relevant to the Society in Ireland:

- The value of education in effectively reducing poverty is an accepted fact. We have a moral duty to be more involved in educational projects (including the fight against digital exclusion, a major obstacle to entry into the labour market).
- The inequalities arising from the pandemic affect poor people disproportionately. We need to up our creative response. Are we exercising true charity or content with virtual charity. *"Christianity without contact with those who suffer is a Christianity unable to touch the flesh of Christ"* warned Pope Francis. We have to return! Of course following the health protocols but we must return, urges the President General.
- The obligation as Vincentian's to be charitable towards our companions who journey with us on the Vincentian path so that our Conferences and Councils may be truly *"a place of holiness"* is highlighted by the President General. He defines the goal of the Society as *"the holiness of its members standing beside those who suffer on a path of charity."*

This call to holiness is fundamental to what being a Member entails (see International Rule 2.2) and perhaps has been neglected in Ireland in recent years.

Archbishop Diarmuid Martin drew attention to the down-playing in Ireland of the essential Christian character of the Society when addressing our 175th Anniversary Celebration in April 2019. In any post pandemic reinvigoration, it is to be hoped that corrective action may be proposed and this dimension not neglected.

Other issues highlighted in letter

- The obligation on us to manage our activities and special works properly.
- The need to respect our Rule and Statutes. Where this does not happen, difficulties are certain.
- An update on the election for the next President General which occurs in June 2023.
- Fasting for Ozanam's canonisation (23rd of each month)
- Implications of "Laudato Si" for the Society.
- International activities to promote young Members.
- Extension of the Society.
- Overseas aid for developing countries and emergencies / natural disasters.

Conclusion

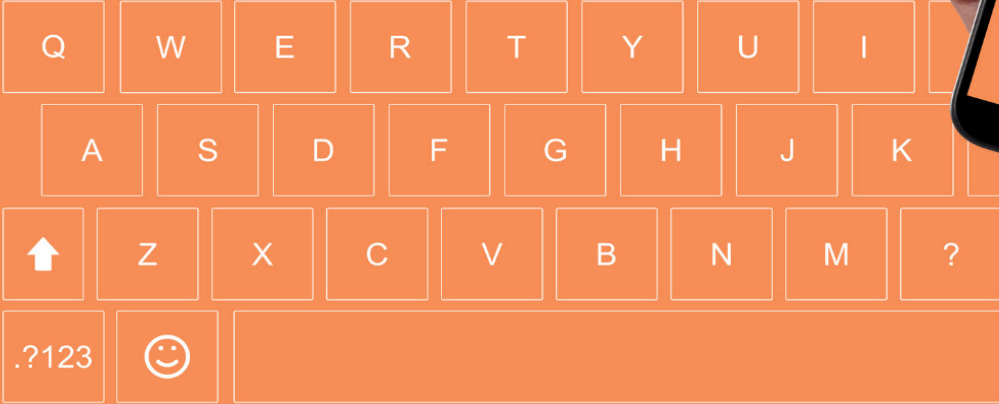
The President General has given us an in-depth reflection on the challenges facing the Society today, a short summary of which is given here. The Letter is well worth reading by every member. The full letter can be accessed online here:

<https://www.ssvpglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/r-carta-circular-en.pdf>





MEMBER ONLINE SURVEY



... the results are in

Responses to the SVP Membership Survey

By Brendan Hennessy



“Thanks for the opportunity to voice my opinion on matters relevant to our conference. I hope it helps in the survey”

In November 2021, 715 SVP Members took the time and effort to respond to 25 questions about being an SVP member. At the time, our hope was we would be seeing an end to Covid restrictions and a return to visitation. Then Omicron struck, but thankfully since then restrictions have been eased and Members are returning to physical meetings and gatherings and a mix of remote and face-to-face visitation and training.

The questions ranged from the impact of, and innovations from, Covid; assessment of need; training and development; visitation and people in need; technology and support. Members contributed 2,500 individual comments, all of which were read and an analysis of which have been submitted to the National Membership Support and the National Training and Recruitment Committees.

Positive feedback

“I have to say I find being a member of SVP very rewarding, a brilliant organisation and a real honour to be a Member.”



Positive feedback to SVP reflects the importance of ‘the work’, the fraternity of Conferences, the support received from the organisation and fellow volunteers. Often positive feedback is quite personal, reflecting the opportunity and impact of being a volunteer for the Society.



“I consider it a great privilege to be a Member of the St. Vincent De Paul Society. I feel blessed in sharing and I know I receive more than I will ever give.”

Members also reflect the levels of support they receive from fellow Conference Members, Area Councils, Regional Offices and staff as well as some of the technological and governance innovations that have been introduced in recent years.

“Because of tight governance controls, over many years, we can be proud of SVP. Please keep it that way.”



13. How would you rate your ability to assess the need of people who approach SVP for help?

[More Details](#)

Very good	202
Good	325
Ok	166
Poor	18
Very poor	2



Suggested

improvements



“I do understand the need for corporate governance and procedures, particularly in the charities sector, but how does a lot of this assist Volunteers if met with a household without electricity at 7pm of a winter’s evening or other such emergencies.”

Of course, Members are acutely aware of the need to keep improving and such improvements carry across a series of issues, reflecting the broad work and broad church that is the Society. Improvements were suggested in areas such as the perceived corporatisation of SVP, the Society’s relevance in modern Ireland, staffing concerns, volunteer relationships and both lack of Volunteers and succession in Conference roles.

“SVP also need to remember to say thank you to their Members, while Conference Members always say thanks to fellow Members, it is rare that a more Senior Member / office holder or paid staff might say thank you for our time and contribution.”



One common theme in the feedback was acknowledgement of one another; however small the gesture. Perhaps the lack of opportunities of interaction during the Covid pandemic exacerbated this feeling? Acknowledging not only the work, but also the spirit it is done in and the ethos it strives to uphold is something we can all seek to improve in the post-pandemic environment. Without doubt Covid-19 was a challenge to the Society, but also one we rose to meet.

14. Are you asked to do tasks that you don't have the necessary experience or expertise for?

[More Details](#)

Regularly	13
Sometimes	118
Rarely	361
Never	218



5. Since the Covid restrictions began in March 2020, how would you describe your level of activity in your conference?

[More Details](#)

Very active	148
Active	346
A little bit active	108
Not very active	85
Not active at all	26



Covid-19

It is testament to the dedication of SVP Members and Volunteers that the vast majority of respondents reported that their Conferences remained either active or very active throughout the pandemic. However more than 25% reported being less active. Naturally our aspiration is to have all Conferences active and now, in an improving environment, it is important we reach out to Members who may have become semi-detached from their Conference and bring them safely back into the fold. For some Members, understandably, their priorities remain keeping safe, both for themselves and their families, but the survey happily reported that 64% of Members were happy to return to meetings. At the time of the survey, in November 2021, less than 50% of Members were ready to return to regular visitation, however we must hope that the easing of restrictions will have given hope and confidence to many Members.

8. As the majority of Covid restrictions have been removed, are you happy to go back visiting people in your community?

[More Details](#)

[Insights](#)

Yes	303
No	213
Not sure	197



Post-Covid SVP

It is not surprising that when asked about post-covid innovations members mentioned both Conference meetings and meeting people online. However, what surprised in the survey was the large number of respondents who considered posting vouchers to be a covid-option to be continued.

- 58% of respondents considered posting vouchers a Covid innovation to be continued
- 46% of respondents chose meeting online
- 11% of respondents chose meeting people in need online

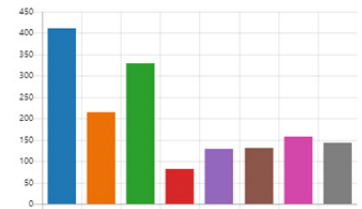
These findings present a unique opportunity to us all to put the person-to-person, face-to-face spirit and ethos of SVP firmly on our agenda. Posting vouchers may indeed be a safe way to

ensure a person receives assistance, but nothing compares to someone receiving the kindness and lift of a Volunteer of the SVP physically responding to their call for help. That surely is why we are here. We may not know the exact response of the person when we leave their home, but they know we were there. Perhaps this is why respondents felt that 'listening and friendship' was what respondents felt people in need appreciated most from SVP.

10. What, if any, ideas or innovations used by your Conference during Covid, would you like SVP to continue using?

[More Details](#)

Posting vouchers	411
Hamper drops	214
Conference meetings online (...)	330
Meeting people in need online	81
Closer relationships with other...	129
Online fundraising	131
Using generic vouchers (e.g. O...	157
Other	143



“I do think that the role of SVP is important in our community. I see that the public consider it as important also. Therefore, delivering the role successfully continues to be important.”



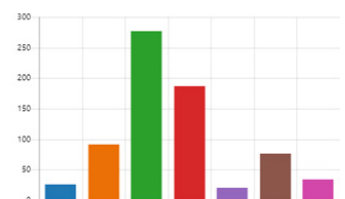
Supporting you in the Year Ahead

When asked how SVP can support Members two related matters took centre stage, training and recruitment. Thankfully, these key aspects of being a successful volunteer are being supported by a national recruitment campaign and regional and national volunteer training. Training exists for both new and experienced members, and in the year ahead the Member Support agenda will include Area Gatherings, briefings and webinars. A mix of both the old and the new as we look forward to meeting one another again, but also continuing to embrace the technology that allows us to interact from our homes.

19. In terms of ongoing training & development for Members, approximately how often should Members be asked to participate in relevant events for visitation?

[More Details](#)

Every 3 months	26
Every 6 months	91
Every 12 months	277
Every 24 months	187
Never	21
Don't know	77
Other	34





Marion and Treasa, St John the Baptist Conference Tralee Members with the Bishop Ray Browne, November 2021

It takes a lot to welcome SVP strangers into your home

By Paddy Kevane
St John the Baptist Conference, Tralee

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul has a long and outstanding history in Tralee. The first Conference that was created was St John the Baptist Conference in 1857 and continues today. The Conference has existed and supported individuals through, war, global pandemics, and economic recessions. At this stage the Conference has probably seen it all! Every individual or family they assisted have their own story to tell. One story, however, will always remind our members of why we joined SVP.

A few years ago, St. John the Baptist Conference received a call from the SVP Kerry office about a man who for the purposes of this writing we will call "Mike". Mike was in his early sixties and had lost a son through suicide a few years beforehand. Mike had worked all his life, but since the death of his son he could no longer work. He moved to Kerry after his son's death and was living in substandard accommodation. His home was rat infested, had no working shower, and had a broken bedroom window. Mike due to his poor health was receiving an invalidity pension.

Mike simply didn't care anymore and did not seek any assistance from SVP before, but he had received an eviction notice due to rent errors and he was running out of time. He privately rented this little two-bedroom house in the heart of

Tralee, paid cash monthly for this house. With all its problems, it was his home and safe place.

Visitation is an amazing blessing for SVP Members because it brings them to the heart of where and why people who are asking for our assistance, request it. It takes a lot to welcome SVP strangers into your home and for you to ask for that help. Marion and Treasa of St. John the Baptist Conference called to him that evening. It was a cold November evening. The living conditions were quite poor. Marion and Treasa sat with Mike and just left him speak.

He talked about his life and current living situation. Marion and Treasa particularly noticed the cold in the house. With Mike's permission, they arranged a food hamper to be delivered and ordered coal. They arranged Meals on Wheels for him and assisted with clothing and other needs. Mike was referred to Kerry County Council for alternative housing. They worked and supported him every week and made sure he had a warm home and Christmas Dinner.

They did that while advocating for him to get extra support and suitable housing. Sadly, Mike passed away a few weeks later. He was discovered by an SVP member. Hopefully, SVP gave Mike some bit of light at a very dark time for him.

VISITATION – ASSESSMENT OF NEED

Conference: _____ Client N°: _____

HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION ADULT(S) CHILDREN AGE(S)

1 - WEEKLY HOUSEHOLD INCOME (Excl. Children's Allowance)

Adult 1 Income (Earnings / Social Welfare) _____ € _____

Adult 2 Income (Earnings / Social Welfare) _____ € _____

Child Related Payments (Qualified Child Increase / Maintenance) _____ € _____

Housing Related Payment (R.S. / RAS / HAP) _____ € _____

Caring (Carer's Allowance / Domiciliary Care Allowance) _____ € _____

Other Benefits (Medical Card / Fuel Allowance / FIS) _____ € _____

A - Total Weekly Income _____ €

2 - WEEKLY HOUSEHOLD COSTS

(calculate Standard Living Expenses using table opposite)

Standard Living Expenses _____ €

3 - WEEKLY HOUSEHOLD EXPENSES

Rent/Mortgage _____ € _____

Loan Repayments _____ € _____

Maintenance Payments _____ € _____

Childcare Costs _____ € _____

Other _____ € _____

SUBTOTAL _____ €

B - Total Living Expenses (2+3) _____ €

C - Shortfall or Surplus (A - B) _____ €

4 - WHAT OTHER WAYS CAN SVP ASSIST THE HOUSEHOLD (ADVICE, ADVOCACY, INFORMATION, FRIENDSHIP)?

THE SVP ASSESSMENT OF NEED FORM

Part of the Visitation toolkit

By John Lupton

Over years of visitation with my Conference I thought I'd learnt most of the questions to ask and how to listen for the answers. Yet, one night I returned to the Conference meeting and when asked an obvious question to which I didn't have an answer, I thought "I wish I had a note of that".

The purpose of the SVP's Assessment of Need form is not only to get and give information, but to remind us of some of the basic and advanced questions which help us assess need. Ahead of visitation now I take a look at the form and remind myself not to forget to ask about 'X,Y or Z' and remind myself of the all-important non-financial support our Conference can offer.

By considering the household expenditure I try to do so from the standpoint of the person I'm visiting. If it's a family I am visiting - and it's been years since I raised my family - I need to understand the present-day costs of the household. Likewise, a single person paying rent must also contend with and cover living costs out of one income. If we as a Conference really

want to make a difference, we must know the impact our assistance might have. We can't bridge all the gaps, but our assistance may be more meaningful if we know the expense we are targeting.

Bridging the gap

Regional volunteers of the National Membership Support Committee, which I have the honour of chairing, held regional briefings throughout the Society last year. Amongst the feedback from some members was a concern that Conferences felt they could not bridge the financial gap between the income and expenditure which the Assessment of Need form highlights. This is not the purpose of the form, and nor is it expected of Conferences. However, it is this gap which should inform your assessment of need.

Many members are shocked with the income gaps the form exposes, but this is what explains the statistics about poverty

TABLE OF REASONABLE LIVING EXPENSES*

WEEKLY FIGURES		CAR REQUIRED?	
HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION			INSERT APPLICABLE LIVING EXPENSES
ADULTS' STANDARD COSTS			
SINGLE ADULT NO CHILDREN	€216.50	€242.42	
COUPLE NO CHILDREN	€348.37	€343.09	
SINGLE ADULT WITH CHILDREN	€218.03	€252.98	
COUPLE WITH CHILDREN	€317.02	€327.91	
CHILDREN'S STANDARD COSTS - MULTIPLY AS APPROPRIATE			
INFANT	€53.60	€53.60	
PRESCHOOL	€15.81	€12.99	
PRIMARY SCHOOL	€48.31	€45.49	
SECONDARY SCHOOL	€97.43	€94.60	
Standard Living Expenses - Total			€

*August 2020 - Reasonable Living Expenses from the Insolvency Service of Ireland based on the Vincentian Partnership for Social Justice Minimum Essential Standard of Living (see www.misc.ie).

EVALUATION/RESPONSE

ASSISTANCE

- Immediate Need €

- Self Sufficiency Plan €

REFERRAL / OTHER AGENCIES

- Budget / Debt Advice
- Community Welfare Office
- Housing Advice
- Community Supports / Family Resource Centre
- Health Services
- Utilities
- SVP Social Justice
- SVP Area or Regional Level

CONTACT DETAILS

(Please ensure household fills in consent form if required)

EDUCATION/TRAINING

Grants €

Next Steps: _____

Next Meeting: _____

Conference Case Review Date: _____

Completed by: _____

Visiting Partner: _____ **Date:** _____

Issued by SVP National Office, contact info@svp.ie or 01-8848200.

in Ireland and Northern Ireland, and why our Society is still in existence. Despite these large income gaps, SVP has been assisting these households through thick and thin, we will continue to do so, but now we are more informed about the challenges households are facing.

Reflection and review

The Assessment of Need form asks us to reflect on the amount and type of assistance we have been traditionally giving, whether it is sufficient, appropriately targeted and ultimately is it meaningful to the person or household in need? Likewise the form asks Conferences when they are reviewing their cases to consider the impact they are having, whether there are other organisations who may also be in a position to help or offer advice.

Our Committee is also open to hearing your feedback on the Assessment of Need form. Perhaps it is more useful in some

situations over others, perhaps you have a query about the income costs in times of inflation, perhaps there are changes to the form you would like to propose?

Please do so, by contacting us on membersupport@svp.ie.

SVP Ethos

The ethos of our organisations requires us to 'seek and find those who are forgotten'. Now, with the help of the form, we have a tool to assess need based on feedback directly from people in need, leaving us in a better position to offer the generosity our prayer asks of us.

As Frederic Ozanam said:

“Let us do without hesitation whatever good lies at our hands”.



Carlow Education Programme

by Gerry O'Malley
St. Bridget's Education Conference Carlow

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul Carlow Area Council launched a new initiative in December 2016 to assist students who because of issues of affordability could be excluded from pursuing further education and training courses.

The programme accepts applications for a wide range of courses including Apprenticeships, Post Leaving Certificate courses, University or Institute of Technology courses and mature students returning to education. The programme also supports unemployed people undertaking training in the hope of returning to the workplace.

Eligibility is limited to applicants with a family home in Co. Carlow and also Paulstown and Graiguenemanagh, Co. Kilkenny which are part of the area covered by the Society of St. Vincent de Paul Carlow Area Council. The programme is mainly funded with income from the Vincent's shop Carlow. It is operated by St. Bridget's Education Conference Carlow which was set up to run the programme in 2017.

The Conference includes three existing Society Members and five new Members with educational and business backgrounds. The new Members were recruited to bring a fresh perspective to the Society's education programme.

The current Student Universal Support Ireland grants (S.U.S.I.) are not adequate to cover the full educational costs of students with affordability issues. The Carlow Education Programme therefore approves grants for eligible

students to assist with booking deposits for accommodation and purchase of laptops or other course equipment. It also tops up the monthly SUSI grants where applicants are having problems funding their monthly rent payments or living expenses.

The Education Conference is based in the St. Vincent de Paul Ozanam Centre Carlow town. It issues a detailed application form to all new applicants who must also submit a copy of their SUSI decision letter including the income calculation page to support their application. Students attend an interview with two Conference Members to discuss their application but this moved to online interviews with the outbreak of Covid-19. The interviewing Members then submit the application with their recommendation to the full Conference meeting for a final decision.

Successful students submit confirmation of their course registration prior to the release of funding. The Conference maintains regular contact with them and they are asked to submit course results on a regular basis. Contact is maintained with the students either by email or by phone during the academic year.

Returning applicants are required to submit a single page application at the start of each academic year supported by their SUSI decision letter and ongoing course registration confirmation.

The focus of Carlow Area Council and St Bridget's

Education Conference is on trying to break the cycle of disadvantage by supporting students who might otherwise be excluded from pursuing further educational qualifications.

In 2021, the Conference spent €88,624; funding 55 students in a wide range of courses, and we would hope that we will be able to further expand our programme over the coming years.

The education programme has been a significant help for students as confirmed by the following quotes taken from recent correspondence from students:



"The grants provided played an essential role in allowing me the opportunity for a great start in college. Although I do receive a maintenance grant from SUSI, the grants provided by SVP allowed me to purchase a computer alongside being able to pay for deposits before the college year began. The Education grant provided me with security I wouldn't have had otherwise, and I would like to say thank you for that."

"I received assistance during my first year in college which was massively beneficial for me. Living independently for the first time while trying to keep on top of college work was challenging but the support SVP provided made it possible."

"The grant helped me during a time when it was most needed. It took off the pressure and allowed me to be financially stable enough to focus on my studies."

"I'm currently in my 3rd Year Bachelor of Business Studies (4 years). The grant allowed me to stress less about the financial strain caused by accommodation prices etc."

St Martha's Conference Foodbank

By Michelle Scott
St Martha's Conference, Dublin 2

St Martha's Conference was established in 2017. Its primary aim was to provide food to those in need. Initially the foodbank operated in Pearse Street, Dublin 2 and provided food on a weekly basis to clients from the Pearse Street and Ringsend Area in Dublin.

The Conference also provided good quality food bags to other local Conferences who called to the foodbank and collected the bags, delivering them to clients as part of their weekly visits. Starting with a weekly demand of 37, St Martha's Conference grew quickly as the demand quickly increased to over 200 bags a week. We are now delivering 400 bags of food a week.



Unfortunately, with the impact of Covid-19, St Martha's original premises had to close and had to move three times during Covid, the latest temporary premises for the depot is in Donnybrook. The demand for food just grew and grew and St Martha's responded despite all the restrictions. 350-400 bags of foods were delivered weekly to families in the Inner City. A number of foodbanks, serviced by St Martha's foodbank were opened, including Nelson Street, Park Community Centre, Pearse Street, Ringsend Community Centre, CYMS Irishtown, Sheriff Street and Mackin Street. Working hand-in-hand with other local Conferences, food was also collected from St Martha's depot and delivered to families who could not attend any of the foodbanks.

Christmas time proved to be very busy and over the month of December, when St Martha's provided 2,500 bags of very good quality food, including extra special Christmas food to families in the Dublin Region.

The number of families who need food continues to grow. A small army of drivers deliver and collect food, along with a group of other volunteers who sort and pack the food bags. We have been lucky with the number of volunteers who support us as well as a number of students from local schools. Most of the food comes from the EU sponsored Food Supply, 'F.E.A.D'. Food is bought to make up the deficit between our FEAD allocation and the number of bags needed weekly. Surplus food is also collected from Tesco and Donnybrook Fair six days a week. One potato grower gives us a pallet of very popular Rooster potatoes every week. The biggest problem facing St Martha's is the need for a more permanent premises as once again we are facing yet another move over the next few months. This remains our number one priority.



SVP at Midlands Prison

By Catherine Coleman
Guild of St Philip Neri

One project in Portlaoise has continued uninterrupted throughout the pandemic. Guild of St Philip Neri Members transferred seamlessly to online video visits in March 2020.

They faithfully connected with their inmates throughout the two years and now look forward to seeing them in person again when physical visits open up fully this year. Video visits happen seven days a week - this allows great flexibility for busy Members who can fit in a visit on Sunday morning, Friday evening or any time that suits them, without even having to leave home. These visits are much appreciated by inmates who always enjoy what may be their only outside connection.

Some members have already resumed physical visits which are available three days per week. They were delighted to re-connect with inmates who have had a tough two years of constant lockdowns without any visits. Screened and masked visits can be difficult but Visitor Centre Manager, Anne McLoughlin, tries to book a Professional Box, if it's available, for Guild members. This is a welcome concession and reflects the respect shown to the Guild by Prison staff.



Many members kept in touch with inmates during the last two years by sending letters, occasion cards and even calendars were appreciated! We are fortunate in Midlands to have four chaplains who work closely with the Guild to facilitate these visits and sort out any difficulties that may arise.

Another Project which has flourished during the pandemic is the provision of clothes and shoes for inmates, requested through chaplains. Our Manager Anne, and her staff purchase items locally at reasonable prices with funds from Courts, Visitor Centre donation box and the support of the Governor. Members and staff also make donations and Duffle bags are provided, in place of clear plastic bags, for inmates on release.

Midlands Visitor Centre

Midlands Visitor Centre is funded by the I.P.S. (Irish Prison Service), managed by SVP volunteers and staff uphold SVP values in all their activities. Some visitors need help booking a future visit online and staff are on hand to discreetly facilitate this in new Booking Booths in the Centre.

Staff are presently being trained to become JAM card friendly (Just A Minute). These cards are worn by people with a hidden disability and indicate that wearers need a little extra help or time.

New Directions, headed by Sr. Imelda Wickham, is also a familiar service in the Centre and continues to offer support and counselling to families who visit Midlands.

Inmates in Portlaoise Prison did some beautiful picture framing and made wonderful handcraft gifts for sale in SVP shop before Christmas.

Great SVP volunteers and staff do invaluable work in our prisons and Visitor Centres. New Members are always welcome and we look forward to a time when we can meet freely and support a section of society that is often forgotten.



School kids lead the way in supporting their local community



This article was penned by pupils of the Leaving Cert class 6D at St Oliver's Post Primary school, Oldcastle.

During our 2022 Link Modules class, we as class 6D at St Oliver's Post Primary school, Oldcastle, Co Meath, decided to try and better our own local community. While brainstorming ideas we came across St Vincent De Paul annual food collection. SVP represent a prominent charity here in Oldcastle and our class thought it would be a brilliant idea to contribute to this excellent cause.

We as a class defined poverty as the condition where the basic needs of a family, like food, shelter, clothing, and education are unfulfilled. We discovered it quite troubling that families in our local area would experience such horror this Christmas.

After we had organized the dates, our mission was in full swing with all 22 classes here at St. Oliver's bringing in their own designated food items. Our team collected the items once a week and we soon began realizing the immense amount of food we had accumulated. The collaboration within 6D was most certainly paramount to our success.

Not only did our school make great contributions to this substantial cause but also our local community such as parents and local businesses. Super Valu Oldcastle provided us with sustainable cardboard boxes to use for storage and transport to our local SVP office. During this project we observed how generous our local community was here in Oldcastle and surrounding areas. We would also like to thank our teachers here in the school as they were very accommodating and gave significant guidance and cooperation to us as a class group.

We thoroughly enjoyed participating in the SVP annual food collection of 2021 and would like to thank St. Vincent De Paul for all the excellent work they continue to do. Class 6D hugely benefited from this experience as we learned many valuable skills as well as improving our team building.

We as a class decided we could establish a serious difference towards this issue within our local community. 6D decided to pursue our ideas and began to establish plans to successfully carry out and promote our food collection.

We began by distributing the workload throughout our class including groups such as advertising, transport and communication. As a class group we all put in an even effort and worked both in class and at home to create the fruitful food collection. We initially contacted the lovely team at our local SVP office and acquired all the necessary information.



Ozanam Villas Upgrade and Refurbishment

St. John's Conference
Ballybunion, Kerry

St John's Conference, Ballybunion commissioned an independent Architect / Surveyor to design and project manage an energy upgrade and refurbishment of the six bungalows, and to oversee the project.

The tenants were supported by the Conference Members to relocate to the adjacent SVP holiday home apartments 'The Towers' for the duration of the work. From start to finish, the project took 11 weeks to complete.

The properties, which were built in 1991, had solid fuel ranges which the elderly tenants were finding difficult to manage.

The upgrade works included:

- Removal of solid fuel ranges and installation of Air-to-Water heating system
- Conversion of bathrooms to wet rooms with level access showers
- Installation of cavity fill insulation to external walls
- New flooring
- Window replacement
- New front door
- Electrical wiring checked and updated where necessary
- LED lighting installed throughout all the properties
- Redecorating internally and externally
- Installation of Heat detectors and Smoke detectors
- These works improved the properties BER rating from E2 to B2

The overall cost of the work, including professional fees, was 196,000 euro, offset by an Energy Grant through SEAI of €82,00 and a local authority Mobility Grant of €27,500 for the installation of the wet rooms.

The projected project cost was exceeded by €4,949.55 due a limited number of unforeseen snags that needed to be corrected.

At the end of November 2021 the tenants were delighted to move back in to their warm and comfortable homes.





**Cherishing
our young**
Is reform on
the way?



By Marcella Stakem
Research & Policy Officer

There has been a series of policy developments recently intended to enhance the quality of early childhood care and education provision. SVP welcomes these developments as members through their visitation work understand and appreciate the importance of all children getting the best start in life, particularly children experiencing disadvantage.

The ages of zero to six are critical in terms of a child's development. However, research conducted by the European Commission found that the participation rate of children from low-income families in formal childcare was a quarter of that of their high-income peers.

First 5: A Whole of Government Strategy for Babies, Young Children and their Families prioritises quality, affordable and accessible childcare. In 2021, a number of initiatives were rolled out to work towards those objectives. A Workforce Development Plan, a review of the National Childcare Scheme and a proposed new Funding Model for the sector.

The Workforce Development Plan commits to strengthen professional development and career pathways for educators and practitioners and provide supports for improved pay and conditions. Currently, low pay levels have resulted in high staff turnover rates of on average 40 per cent for full day care services. Research has highlighted that a high staff turnover undermines the delivery of high-quality services. This is worrying for SVP as we know how influential these services are for children experiencing disadvantage. Also, many of the households that SVP Members support are employed as early years professionals. They consistently speak of low pay as a contributory factor to their daily financial struggle to meet bills and plan for their families future.

The National Childcare Scheme introduced the first statutory entitlement to financial support for childcare in Ireland. However, the recent review of the scheme found that participation as a proportion of the population was poor; it is estimated that around 9% of children had an application and around 5% had a claim. Interestingly, uptake was higher for families on low incomes. However, the review found that the sponsor referral process suffers from a number of weaknesses thus reducing its effectiveness for families experiencing disadvantage and additional vulnerabilities

In SVP, we have witnessed the flaws of the scheme particularly through our early years education and school aged services. Staff and volunteers are concerned that the children most in need of their support are not getting it because of the design flaws of the referral system.

A further development to be announced for the sector has been the proposed introduction of a new funding model. Those reforms are on foot of an Expert Group report, which was published in December 2021. It details 25 recommendations to progress the successful implementation of this new funding model, grouped under five headings:

- Core Funding,
- Tackling Disadvantage,
- Affordability Measures,
- Fee Management, and
- The Role of the State.

A key priority of the Expert Group is the development of mechanisms that provide support to mitigate the impacts of early disadvantage. It is anticipated that tackling disadvantage will be given priority in two ways; a stronger universal focus that will benefit all children and a targeted strand informed by the DEIS model in schools.

However, a consistent flaw SVP have pointed out about the DEIS model is that increased supports follow the school rather than the individual. Members are aware that some children experiencing disadvantage do not attend a DEIS school and therefore lose out on the supports that are available to assist them.

While all of the initiatives outlined above are a step in the right direction, SVP would have liked to see more ambitious proposals that would involve a publicly funded model similar to the primary education system.

A publicly funded model would help address the inequalities outlined above at a systemic level. This would assist the families that SVP support to have access to free, quality, and accessible early years education and care.

Working for Social Justice

Why does SVP work for Social Justice?

SVP is committed to making Ireland a fairer and better place for everyone to live. Along side providing friendship and support, working for social justice is one of the key pillars of SVP's mission and requires us to challenge the root causes of inequalities in Ireland today.

Poverty, homelessness, low pay, inadequate social welfare, lack of opportunity, isolation, the high cost of housing, energy, childcare and education are some of the social injustices that SVP is challenging.

How does SVP work for Social Justice?

Working for social justice means ensuring that the decisions made by Government bring about positive change for the people SVP assist.

We identify areas of concern based on the experience of our members who are befriending and supporting people who may be experiencing poverty and social exclusion. Based on this on-the-ground experience SVP can speak with authority and influence policymakers to make changes that have a real impact on people's lives.

Using traditional and social media, submissions to Government departments, engaging and meeting with policymakers, and by working jointly with other NGOs, we raise awareness of issues of concern and propose solutions.

Want to get involved? Join the SVP Social Justice Network!

The SVP Social Justice Network was established in 2017 as a way to identify the issues people SVP assist are facing and the key social justice areas of concern for SVP volunteers working in communities across Ireland.

Who should join?

The network is open to any SVP Home Visitation Member (new or existing) who is interested in social justice and passionate about making Ireland a fairer place to live.

What does it involve?

- Responding to short online surveys on specific social justice issues relevant to visitation work (e.g., school costs, housing issues, fuel poverty).
- Communicating new or emerging issues that your Conference is seeing to the National Social Justice Committee.
- Attending workshops (once or twice a year) to discuss issues of concern, develop solutions, hear about and feed into the work of the National Social Justice Committee and meet fellow SVP Members who are interested in social justice.

What impact does the network have?

The information gathered through the network is used to strengthen SVP policy submissions, provide real-time information on emerging issues to policymakers, and highlight the lived experience of poverty in Ireland today to the public through traditional and social media.

How can I sign up?

To sign up to the network you can contact sjnetwork@svp.ie and you can visit www.svp.ie/socialjustice to find out more about social justice.





The Cost of Poverty

By Tricia Keilthy
Head of Research & Policy

The financial impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has not been felt evenly across the country. We know that many of the groups that were more vulnerable to poverty prior to the pandemic including low-income families with children, lone parents, renters, and people with disabilities have been hit hardest.

With the worst of the pandemic hopefully behind us, and the restrictions lifted it is more important than ever that people are given the supports to help rebuild their lives and the inequalities that the pandemic exposed are addressed.

But unfortunately, just as one crisis abates another comes around the corner. Inflation is now at a 20-year high, and the cost-of-living crisis is hitting those on the lowest incomes hard. As SVP research from last year shows the impact of the pandemic on low-income household budgets has left families more exposed. While better-off families tended to build up their savings during the pandemic, providing a shock absorber for rising prices, lower income families have no savings and are already in debt.

For people already living in poverty on fixed incomes or in low paid work they are already faced with impossible choices. Most social welfare rates are set at a level below the poverty line and below what is required to meet a minimum standard of living. Now with this level of price inflation, the decisions people must make are made even more difficult. If you're already spending mainly on essentials, where are you going to cut back if prices continue to go up?

Results from a new RED C poll commissioned by SVP in February 2022 shows the depth of financial difficulties being experienced across the country and throughout the population as a result of rising prices.

The decisions people are being forced to make are stark with 37% of people cutting back on essential heating and electricity use and 17% cutting back on other essentials such as food. Almost half of single parents (47%) and unemployed people (48%) have cut back on essential heating and electricity and 37% of

single parents have cut back on other essentials like food. For private renters 55% are worried about their ability to pay their rent, 9% are already behind on their rent and 29% are worried about facing eviction in the next six months.

With the impact of rising costs being much harsher for households on low incomes and groups already at risk of poverty, there was a clear case for targeted protections to prevent serious hardship in the coming weeks and months. The energy credit and increase in the Fuel Allowance are welcome but we are concerned they won't go far enough to ensure people can keep the lights on and food on the table.

Some of the proposals SVP put forward included the establishment of a dedicated hardship fund for utility costs and rent arrears to prevent disconnections and homelessness. Increasing the limits for the Housing Assistance Payment and Rent Supplement would also reduce the financial impact of unaffordable top-ups to landlords and help keep people in their homes.

We also needed to see an increase in social welfare payments and supports for low-income workers through the Working Family Payments to at least match inflation. Just increasing the Fuel Allowance, while important, will not reach everyone who needs it as it is very means tested. In our Budget 2022 submission, SVP had recommended that the Fuel Allowance be extended to those in receipt of the Working Family Payment and that the wait period is removed for Jobseekers Allowance.

With inflation forecast to continue rising the gap between incomes and expenditure for people on the lowest incomes will grow. The real-life impact of this as seen by SVP will be bills that go unpaid, increased food poverty, evenings spent without heat and light and more isolation for those who cannot afford to leave their homes.

SVP will continue to advocate for a strengthened social protection system to ensure it provides people with the means to meet their living costs and to ensure our minimum wage is a real living wage for workers.

Reflection Of The Week

"God does not consider the outcome of the good work undertaken but the charity that accompanied it"

-St. Vincent de Paul

Who are the Vincentian Family?

AN INTRODUCTION
to the branches of the Family.



St. Peter's Church PHIBSBOROUGH, DUBLIN

Heart of the Vincentian Family in Ireland and home to the



Vincentian Family New Website

Sr. Claire Mc Kiernan DC
Co-ordinator National Council Vincentian Family Ireland

"We should assist the poor in every way and do it both by ourselves and by enlisting the help of others...to do this is to preach the gospel by word and by work"

— St. Vincent de Paul

While at secondary school, our class went for a day's retreat to a beautiful monastery in a place called Benburb in Co. Tyrone. The day's retreat was given by the Servite retreat team and to this day I can vividly recall the experience of that day; so much so that when I was asked to write a short piece about the Vincentian Family Website it was this story that came to mind.

During the day's retreat in Benburb, we were invited to construct the tower of Babel, a tower which features in a well-known bible story from the Old Testament. Firstly, we were divided into groups and each group was given a variety of materials to construct their tower. The challenge

was that no group had all the materials they needed so we had to bargain and exchange our materials with the other groups in order to procure all the necessary materials to construct our tower.

Once the work got underway, there was a lot of to-ing and fro-ing and exchanging of goods between us, each group determined to complete the task first. We had a lot of fun but the competition was serious! About an hour later the time was up and as we looked round to see who had 'won' it appeared that none of us had managed to complete the building of our towers.

We were a bit crestfallen and after a few minutes when things settled down, we were asked, 'why do you think that none of you were able to finish your tower? It seemed pretty obvious to us that it was because no group had managed to obtain all the materials, they needed to finish

their tower. This however didn't seem to satisfy, and we were left to ponder the deeper meaning of the question.

Slowly the penny dropped, and it dawned on us that together we had everything that we needed to build the tower, except that no one had the idea that if we had come together and shared all the materials we had, we could have built a tower together, and probably a magnificent one at that. This was a light bulb moment for most of us in which we learned through this experiential exercise, the power of teamwork and collaboration.

The decision by the Vincentian Family Council to build a Vincentian Family website mirrors this story to some extent in that it demonstrates the power and the benefits of a collective endeavour. Challenged to find a collaborative project during lockdown, we identified this one as a possibility. We have much in common. All 9 branches of the Vincentian Family are founded by or inspired by the life and work of St. Vincent de Paul and St. Louise de Marillac. Their vision is found in Chapter 4 of St. Luke's gospel where Jesus announces His mission, "*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor*".

This mission is also the mission of the Vincentian Family. The poor, whom we serve, when viewed with the eyes of

faith, take the place of Christ and give us the opportunity to love and serve Him.

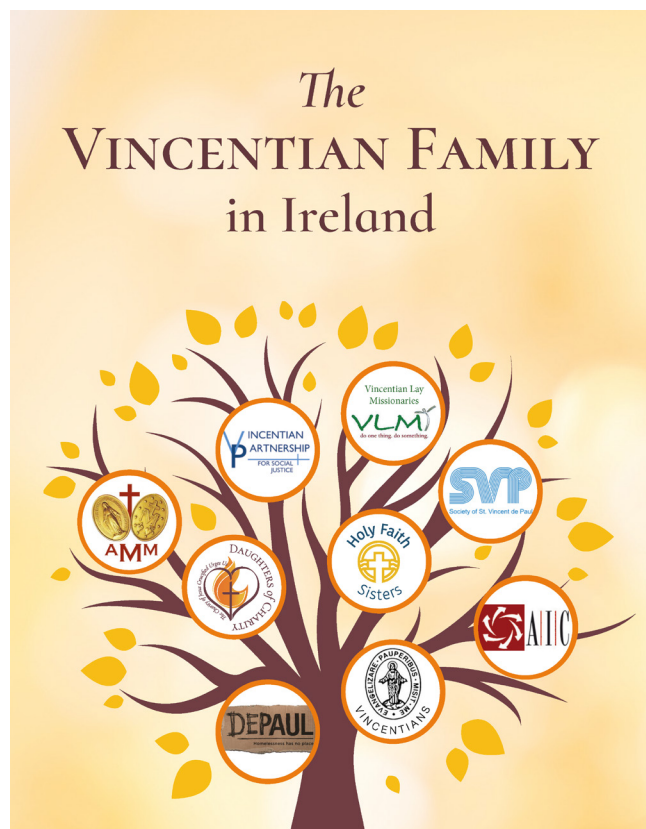
I invite you to watch the 3-4 minute videos on the website. You will learn more about the Vincentian story and about the nine faces of the Vincentian Family. Each branch of the Family gives its own unique expression to the Vincentian mission, highlighting the rich heritage that is ours.

Back to my retreat story - collaboration can work and has the potential to be an enriching and productive experience. The benefits from engaging in this project released within us a new energy, to continue our collaborative efforts with a renewed sense of purpose and commitment.

We launched the Vincentian Family Website on 27th September 2021, Feast of St. Vincent de Paul. The launch took place in the Vincentian parish of St. Peter's Church in Phibsborough and the event was livestreamed to the wider audience of the National and International Vincentian Family.

Check out our Vincentian Family Website to learn more about the Vincentian Family in Ireland.

www.vincentianfamily.ie



SVP HR Strategy

SVP PEOPLE STRATEGY 2022-2025

To deliver an aligned People Strategy that enables and contributes to an environment that supports our Vincentian ethos and values to enable our people to fulfil their full potential and deliver the SVP aims and objectives



Human Resources coordinates personnel activities for a staff of over 800 full-time and part-time employees across the island of Ireland. Key areas of responsibility include:

- Recruitment & Selection
- Benefits, Compensation
- Policy Development
- Legal Compliance & Reporting
- Change Management Support and advice
- Development and training.
- Employment Relations that promote a positive working environment.

Between the team have more than 140 years of HR experience!

As we enter a New Year and a different way of working, we will be concentrating on a number of key areas all underpinned by the implementation of an SVP organizational People strategy. Currently in draft, this strategy aims to deliver an aligned People Strategy that enables and contributes to an environment that supports our Vincentian ethos and values to enable our people to fulfil their full potential and deliver the SVP aims and objectives expressed under 6 key pillars we aim to achieve over the next three years.



1 - CULTURE & ENVIRONMENT



2 - STRUCTURE & CAPACITY



3 - COMPENSATION & BENEFITS



4 - RECRUITMENT



5 - EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT & WELLBEING



6 - ENABLING GREAT PERFORMANCE

Key Enablers required to support the People Strategy



Clear values that underpin and support all our People initiatives



Clear Strategic Goals to foster collaboration and sense of the 'mission'



Collegiate, inclusive, collaborative organisation where senior leaders will role model behaviours and act as mentors for emerging leaders.



People managers will be confident and capable in their role supported by HR partners to add value around strategic people matters.

Specific areas this year:

Flexible Working

The Society launched its updated/revised Flexible Working Policy in January. We will be working to support the full implementation of this policy including the Society's commitment to a hybrid working model, where appropriate, to attract and retain talent to the organisation.

Recruitment

The last two years have seen an increase in recruitment activity and like all in the country and charity sector we have experienced an increase. We are revisiting our recruitment processes and approaches to ensure we streamline and increase the efficiency of our processes, roll out Phase 2 of our HR Information System and continue to attract the right talent for SVP.

Learning and Development

The last two years the focus has been on supporting employees during the pandemic and new ways of working. Our attention now is to continue to support employees and to offer a more flexible approach to development and ensure our offering enables all employees to reach their full potential to support SVP to achieve its aims. A number of new programmes will be rolled out both on our virtual platforms and in person.

In addition we have developed a new online induction which will be further developed this year.

Compensation and Benefits

Further implementation and development of our existing offering as part of our commitment to the Living wage, operating within an increasingly competitive job market.

Technology

Further roll out of electronic payslips and utilisation of the HR Information System to provide accurate data on our employees and enable more informed decision making.



Compliance with new legislation

We will continue to monitor changes in the employment legislation and incorporate into existing or new policies as appropriate to ensure the Society is not only compliant but leading by example.

Promote Wellbeing

To ensure the Society provide a healthy, happy and purposeful environment that promotes the physical and mental wellbeing of all our staff.

Ensuring a workplace where staff wellbeing is integrated into day-to-day practices and in a collaborative, engaging method.

OPPORTUNITY: Become the employer of choice in the Sector



Vincent's Olympics - A Retail Recovery Showcase

By Dermot McGilloway
Head of Retail

The context

Following the severe disruption of the Covid-19 pandemic and associated restrictions, which saw SVP retail income plummet by €7.6 million, or 24% in 2020, our fantastic retail team returned from lockdown in May 2021, full of enthusiasm, and determined to reconnect with our customers whilst putting our business back on the front foot. We also saw unprecedented generosity from the donating public and wanted to capitalise on this enthusiasm and good will with an exciting retail recovery showcase to end the year. This recovery period however also presented the retail team with an exciting research opportunity!

Should our focus be on selling or serving?

Vincent's Retail in Ireland has become synonymous with authentic customer care and the Vincentian values of social justice, self-sufficiency, and the promotion of friendship, with retail management advocating the view that customer engagement and service are more important than making a sale. Donated items are sorted and placed into three pricing brackets: Value, Style, and Designer, to ensure that essential clothing and household items can be accessed by all, regardless of budget and our Conference referral system and Emergency Assistance programme ensures that everyone can access our products.

In addition to meeting the functional needs of our customers, our network of 224 shops, evenly located across our cities, towns, and villages, have become recreational hubs where local people, possibly disconnected from society by poverty, can re-connect with society without the pressure of needing to spend a lot of money.

The retail team are deeply committed to inclusion and the celebration of diversity and have developed a "*Hand of friendship*" leaflet in 11 languages to ensure that not even language is a barrier to people accessing our Vincentian space as well as our affordable range of products. Regardless of budget or where customers are on the spectrum of needs or wants, Vincent's can meet those needs.

This unique "service first" approach has always distinguished us from every other retailer on the High Street but is it also good for business?

As customers returned to our shops in 2021, craving the type of engagement they had been denied during lockdown, a research opportunity presented itself to scientifically test the hypothesis that a programme of customer engagement tactics could impact positively on sales. Our colleagues in St Vincent's Charity shops in England and Wales were also eager to test this theory.

Within our wider research topic, we also wanted to test a four-week discount programme recommended by our SVP colleagues in the USA, with clothing items identified with coloured labels, put on a highly regimented 4-week markdown programme, from full price down to €1, and then removed if unsold at the end of week 4, making way for new stock. A Value Board was placed on each shop floor to ensure that customers could see what discounts were applicable at their time of visit. This Markdown programme had shown impressive results in our American shops, with participants seeing an uplift in sales of over 20% where comparisons were LFL (Like for Like). Could this stock markdown programme impact positively on sales?

The Competition:

The scene was set for a busy end to 2021, with an American inspired discount programme and our own customer engagement programme both under scrutiny, we just needed to add those special ingredients of fun and healthy competition and we were all set. All paid shop managers across Ireland, England and Wales were invited to compete at our Vincent's Olympics and 201 answered our call!



Between Monday 4th October and Saturday 4th December 2021, our retail teams tested a blend of customer engagement tactics to test which, if any, had a positive impact on sales. All shop managers measured their performance against the same period in late 2019, to identify any discernible growth in sales and any contributory factors. Over 30 shops also tested the markdown programme. Shops were invited to compete for either a bronze, silver or gold medal, dictated by the combination of tactics tested and all participants received a weekly update on sales performance and best practice from across the network. All 201 shops will now receive a beautiful Olympic certificate jointly signed by Rose McGowan our SVP National president and Helen O'Shea, National President for England, and Wales, both of whom have been extremely supportive of this valuable research.

The Results:

The level of engagement from our teams across Ireland, England and Wales was superb. Participating shop teams had a lot of fun and showed great creativity and team spirit, engaging with our customers on many things from social events to activities to promote our strong *Reuse – Reduce – Recycle* message. Tactics have been noted and sales have been tracked across both participating and non-participating shops. A student from TU Dublin is writing her dissertation on the campaign and will test the results statistically but it is already very clear that customer engagement tactics, enthusiastically implemented, impact positively on sales.

- Shops in Ireland not participating in the Olympics delivered LFL growth of 1%
- Shops in Ireland participating in the Olympics delivered growth of 17%
- The Markdown programme delivered growth more than 15%

VINCENT'S
SUPPORTING THE WORK OF **SVP** THE SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

OLYMPICS

MONDAY 4TH OCTOBER TO SATURDAY 4TH DECEMBER 2021

OUR **RETAIL RECOVERY SHOWCASE**

HAVE YOU GOT WHAT IT TAKES TO BE A GOLD MEDAL OLYMPIAN IN OUR **RECOVERY SHOWCASE?**

So what do you need to do?

COMPULSORY ELEMENTS	ADDITIONAL ELEMENTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare your team Plan your shop floor Complete your wall chart Submit your weekly update Introduce one sustainability tactic Plan one BIG weekend 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Run the stock markdown programme <p>OR ANY 2 OF THE FOLLOWING:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Click and Collect Click and delivery Customer loyalty programme Track & Grow your Average Transaction value Track & Grow your donation to sale ratio – sell thru rate

VINCENT'S
SUPPORTING THE WORK OF **SVP** THE SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

VINCENT'S
SUPPORTING THE WORK OF **SVP** THE SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

PEAKS 2022

ACHIEVING EXCELLENCE THROUGH SERVICE

PEAK 1	PEAK 2	PEAK 3	PEAK 4
<p>DURATION 6 DAYS MONDAY 7TH – SATURDAY 12TH MARCH</p> <p>THEME: NEW PRODUCT LINES Use new range of labels to promote new lines</p> <p>TOTAL SALES FOR CAMPAIGN % GROWTH ON PREVIOUS YEAR</p>	<p>DURATION 6 DAYS MONDAY 9TH – SATURDAY 14TH MAY</p> <p>THEME: CREATING A SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENT Sustainability Window Competition – Closing date Saturday 7th May (window must feature upcycled product)</p> <p>TOTAL SALES FOR CAMPAIGN % GROWTH ON PREVIOUS YEAR</p>	<p>DURATION 3 DAYS THURSDAY 25TH AUGUST – SATURDAY 27TH AUGUST</p> <p>THEME: BACK TO SCHOOL Family Fun Weekend</p> <p>TOTAL SALES FOR CAMPAIGN % GROWTH ON PREVIOUS YEAR</p>	<p>DURATION 6 WEEKS MONDAY 24TH OCTOBER – SATURDAY 4TH DECEMBER</p> <p>THEME: LET'S CELEBRATE Christmas Window competition – closing date Wednesday 23rd November (window must feature gift sets)</p> <p>TOTAL SALES FOR CAMPAIGN % GROWTH ON PREVIOUS YEAR</p>

The great news is that our Vincentian style of community retailing, operating from a mixed portfolio of urban, suburban, and rural locations, by our fantastic teams, was already known to put the customer first whilst differentiating us from the competition but these results prove that it's also better for business. On that basis, we'll keep that flame burning bright!

Following on from this very positive campaign, we will run four shorter customer engagement campaigns in 2022 including two window dressing competitions, in May and again in November. This is very exciting and valuable research and vindicates the emphasis we have collectively placed on serving our local communities.

We'll keep you posted on the results for 2022.



The Vincent's Experience



With over 230 shops, SVP has the largest network of charity shops through Ireland, North and South. The shops bright and cheerful signage, window displays and interior décor are designed to bring a fresh, bright, uplifting, timeless and modern look to the shops.

Signage on the SVP shops throughout the country include both the name Vincent's and the full name of the Society of St Vincent de Paul. Vincent's signage is not new. It was first introduced in 2004 as the network of shops was being expanded.

From Fred's Fashions to Vincent's

SVP charity shops have been trading in Dublin since 1988. Until 2004, the shops traded under the name 'Fred's Fashion', in honour of the founder of SVP, Blessed Frederick Ozanam, but many regular customers actually referred to the shops and indeed the Society as 'The Vinnie's'. The name 'Vinnie's' is incidentally the trading name for the highly successful SVP charity shop network in Australia.

Customer feedback was sought on the brand name and perceived values of the shops and recurrent themes started to emerge:

Negatives: The shops were viewed as untidy, disorganised, and unprofessional and dull with strong associations with 'Being poor'. Volunteers were described as 'Old'. The name Fred's Fashions seemed to cause confusion, especially amongst foreign customers.

Positives: The shops were also described as being familiar, local, convenient, friendly reliable and great value for money. One customer described his visit to the shops as being like "getting a dig out from my big brother".

In September 2004, a project was undertaken to establish and develop a modern brand and logo for the shops.

Following customer feedback, The Society sought a brand name and logo which could deliver the following:

- A fresh, bright, timeless and modern look for the shops.
- A clear but subtle reference to SVP.
- A name which would be easy to spell pronounce and memorize for customers of all nationalities, which would help to celebrate the diversity of our customers and volunteers.
- A recognisable name which would re-enforce the emerging characteristics and personality of the shops as described by customers.

The name 'Vincent's' was introduced in Dublin in late 2004. The rainbow logo was introduced to celebrate the growing diversity of our customers, volunteers and staff and was designed to re-enforce cherished principles of optimism and tolerance. Our 'Vincent's' loyalty card was first introduced in early 2008.

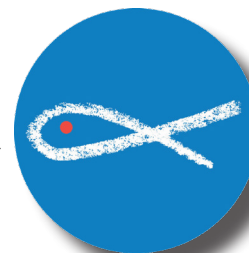
In early 2010, Vincent's launched new labels at both ends of the pricing spectrum, Elegance and Vincent's Value.

Vincent's logo

The Vincent's logo is firmly rooted in Vincentian ethos and values. When introduced in 2004, the logo was designed to



celebrate the diversity of the customers, donors, volunteers and staff.



Many shops at the time never actually traded under the name 'St Vincent de Paul' but traded with a variety of names deemed appropriate to the local community at the time. The logo also includes the ichthus, or fish symbol, now an icon of modern Christianity.

Vincent's shops

The Vincent's shops are important in driving vital funds for the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul. They are not only a destination for those in need of affordable clothing and other goods but they maximise the incredible generosity of donors, turning their donations into revenue for the Society.



Vincent's shops also focus on serving their local communities with many programmes of family and community orientated events.

The main objective of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul is to serve the poor, promote social justice, social interaction and spread Vincentian values to the widest possible audience.

The Vincent's shops contribute to that objective in many ways including the display of a wide range of Vincentian literature, now translated in to more than 11 languages.



Young SVP Programme

**By Clodagh Lenihan
Youth Development Officer (Mid-West Region)**

Hello there, my name is Clodagh Lenihan and I am the new Youth Development Officer for Saint Vincent de Paul in the Mid-West Region. I started this role at the end of September 2021. I love my new job and I am delighted to be part of the Young SVP Team.

My role entails visiting secondary schools giving presentations on the work carried out by the Society of St. Vincent de Paul and delivering workshops based on topics such as poverty and social exclusion, human dignity, social justice and engaging in social action. I also help establish Young Saint Vincent de Paul Conferences in schools and help the students get involved in projects and fundraising activities on behalf of SVP.

I have really enjoyed visiting the schools and delivering the Young SVP Programme to the students over the past number of months. It has been a busy few months visiting many different schools in the Mid-West Region covering the counties of Limerick, Clare, Tipperary and Offaly but it has been fantastic to see the enthusiasm from students and teachers about getting involved in the Young SVP programme.

Before Christmas, the Young SVP Conferences in schools were very busy engaging in many different fundraisers and events in aid of SVP. Some schools organized food appeals and Christmas Hampers (Scoil Mhuire agus Ide, NewCastle West, Co. Limerick, Coláiste Nano Nagle, Limerick City and St. Joseph's Secondary School, Spanish Point, Co. Clare).

Many schools such as Salesian Secondary College, Pallaskenry and Scoil na Tríonaide, Doon, Co. Limerick held Christmas Raffles which raised over €2,225 between them. The pupils of Laurel Hill Secondary School in Limerick organized a Coat Drive which was a huge success and managed to collect two



carloads of high-quality winter coats which they donated to the homeless and others in need. Schools in Tipperary have also been busy, the Presentation Secondary School in Thurles raised over €1,000 through a Colours Day event in the school and pupils in Loreto Secondary School in Clonmel held a bake sale and were involved in Education Projects too.

The pupils of C.B.S Ennistymon, Co. Clare held a trilogy of events before Christmas in aid of SVP including a Christmas Jumper Day, 5k Santa Dash Run and a Food Appeal. St Caimin's Secondary School, Shannon, Co. Clare completed many fundraisers in aid of SVP including a Hot-Chocolate Day, Colouring Competition and selling Toy Show Goodie Bags for Late Late Toy Show. Their fundraising efforts raised a total of €2,700 for SVP. In addition to their fundraising initiatives, they also created goodie packs for each teacher in their school on World Teacher Day. They are a very active Conference and have many more plans for the New Year.

The Young SVP Conference in Gaelcholáiste an Chláir, Ennis, Co. Clare have also been very active this year and managed to raise over €4,000 for the charity through doing a 'sleep-out' in the school to raise awareness for homelessness and by running the Vincent's Shop in Ennis for the day. All the efforts of the schools are greatly appreciated by SVP and we look forward to continuing to work with these schools and many others in the future.

Right now, schools are in full planning mode for the Youth Event Day being held in the Radisson Blu Hotel in Limerick on the 23rd of March. This is a fun day for students, highlighting and celebrating all the fantastic work that is being done in schools on behalf of SVP and a great opportunity for students to showcase the projects they have been involved in.



The Late Late Show raised an incredible €1.5million for St Vincent de Paul

Honorary member and ambassador of SVP, Ryan Tubridy, said he was “bowled over” with the reaction to the Late Late Show special in aid of the Society which raised an incredible €1.5million.

The popular RTÉ show shone a light on the work of the Society on the 17th December 2021 and featured stars such as Colin Farrell, Bob Geldof, Majella O'Donnell, Robbie Keane and Mrs Brown's Boys star Brendan O'Carroll.

“I'm delighted and really moved to tell you that the number raised is €1.5million,” said Ryan.

“I think I've said it so many times, I'm just bowled over but I really am. €1.5million that close to Christmas, in the middle of a pandemic – thank you to everybody for doing that. To dig so deep at such a tricky time is remarkable and kind and generous and loving. It puts a little bit of love in the air, and joy in the air when you see that and it's going to make an enormous difference.”

Thank you to all the people who work in SVP but also to the people who donated and to everyone who got involved on the show on Friday night, we really appreciate that.”



Thank you for supporting the **SVP** Annual Appeal.



Thank you for helping save families from
impossible choices.

Your generous support enables us to provide food, heat and
other practical assistance to homes throughout Ireland this
winter.



Society of St. Vincent de Paul

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul is a registered charity - CHY6892 / CRA 20013806

WEST REGION



Vincent's Portumna 2021 Olympics Campaign

*Caroline McGrath
Regional Retail Manager West Region*

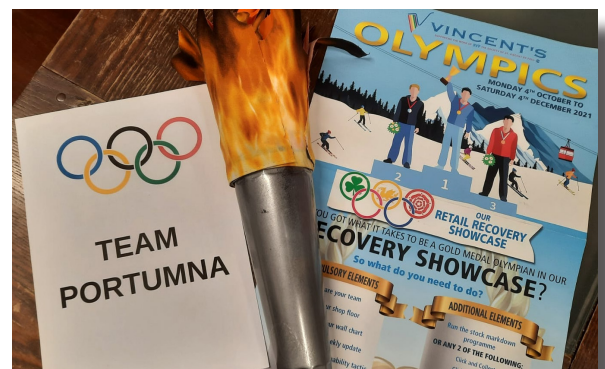
Over the last two years Vincent's Retail has suffered greatly through the pandemic with closures, teams of volunteers stepping back and an overwhelming volume of donations. However, one particular volunteer-run shop in the West of Ireland has taken this in their stride.

Vincent's Portumna took the opportunity to rebuild their standing in the community for both retail and, fundamentally its purpose in the community, to support visitation. Our annual campaign this year was the Olympics, a customer focused campaign with an hypothesis exploring the correlation between customer engagement and sales growth. The results have shown there is a strong correlation and Vincent's Portumna was a prime example of this primarily driven by two scheme members: Marie Reilly and Patricia Shiel with the support of Conference President Austin O'Toole and Conference Member Breeda O'Connor.

Various engagements ensued over the nine-week period including, window displays, afterhours team building events to upcycle products and inviting An Garda Siochana on site to promote the importance of road safety while walking at night with free high visibility vests on the day.

Vincent's shops across Ireland and the UK were inspired and motivated in Dermot McGilloway's weekly email on the campaign of which Vincent's Portumna always brought something different to the table. Not only were this team inspirational and motivating but this small volunteer-run shop were so driven they ended up with sales growth so off the charts that they beat off all competition in their region, the country and the UK.

A massive congratulations to of all of Team Vincent's Portumna who truly deserve to be recognised for their inspirational time and effort which has continued well past the campaign.





MID-WEST REGION

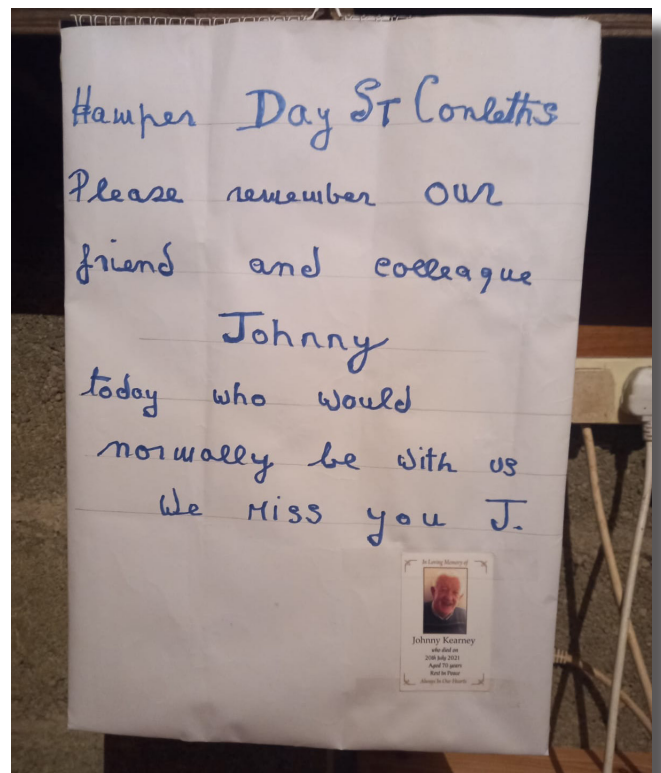
St Conleth's Christmas Hampers

The Christmas hampers were delivered the 17th of December, by the volunteers in St Conleth's SVP group.

We were thrilled by the local donations from the community including the local school. Many families and individuals were happy and grateful to receive them.

Many thanks to all the volunteers and those who donated.

Thank you.



NORTH REGION



Challenges and Opportunities

The past two years have provided some wonderful opportunities for assisting the local community in the North Region while people found themselves facing unimaginable challenges due to reductions in benefits, the ongoing impact of the pandemic on their finances and rising costs.

While our faithful volunteers were not able to meet in person or offer vital visitation to the most vulnerable, we were able to provide a listening ear and much needed practical help by way of vouchers to help families put food on the table and keep their homes warm.

Christmas

Our 176 Conferences have built up a wonderful relationship with corporate organisations and local schools and their support, along with donations received from our Blue Envelopes campaign, is vital in ensuring that no child living in poverty in the North wakes up to an empty Christmas.

The generosity of Young SVP members, the general public and our loyal partners was overwhelming as calls for help tripled on last year. For the fifth year, bus and rail organisation Translink joined with radio station U105 and online news platform Belfast Live to embark on a 'Stuff A Bus' campaign. Due to restrictions, the campaign was virtual and more than £100,000 was raised from online donations for the joint Family Appeal with The Salvation Army.

Area Gathering

The first in person Area Gathering since the pandemic began was hosted by the Armagh Area in the Armagh City Hotel, with 60 guests attending an informative evening in preparation for helping the most vulnerable in local communities throughout the area in winter 2021. Brendan Hennessy of SVP's Membership Support team travelled from Cork to present a session on how to evaluate and calculate the help those on benefits may require.



Mary Waide, Regional President for SVP North Region, is pictured with her grandchildren Sophie, James and Fintan Waide at the launch of 'Stuff A Bus'.

Social Justice

A new Social Justice Committee has been formed and in the North Region during the past year SVP has:

- Made a submission to the Committee for Work and Pensions on the impact of the five week wait for Universal Credit
- Made a submission to the Department for Communities on the independent review of the Discretionary Support Scheme
- Joined the "Keep the Lifeline" campaign organised by Joseph Rowntree Foundation calling on Government to retain the £20 uplift in the Universal Credit
- Engaged with the media on social justice issues to mark the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty.

Retail

Lockdowns and restrictions aside, 2021 was a busy year for Vincent's. We were grateful when restrictions eased and we could once again open our doors to the 33 shops which serve as community hubs.

From beautiful blue window displays to celebrate SVP Week, to going green during the Olympics campaign, when managers and teams were challenged to reach for gold in the run up to Christmas. One of the tactics focused on sustainability with Vincent's shops across the Region tasked to make one small change to improve their green credentials. Ideas included changing to energy saving bulbs or introducing some plants instore which looked pretty and had health benefits too!

During Second Hand September, shops received a special visit from their local Mayor on a factfinding mission to discover the importance of the work done by Vincent's in the local communities – some even netted a bargain!

UTV Life viewers were treated to a sustainable fashion feature when reporter Rita Fitzgerald met enthusiastic

SVP models showcasing a range of looks on a wonderful waterfront setting.

In late autumn the government's Spend Local pre-paid card proved to be a hit with Vincent's shoppers with 23 shops across the Region welcoming the card.

Staff and volunteers really let their creative juices flow during special seasonal promotions like Hallowe'en and Christmas and instore projects included upcycling with wellie boots turned into planters in Ballymena and broken decorations used to create Christmas wreaths in Newcastle.

Tracy Scott-Stewart, Manager of Vincent's Kircubbin, celebrated her 100th open water swim at Cloughey Bay Beach with 35 friends who got 'Into the Sea for SVP' raising £850 for local Conferences. And Santa even brought his reindeer to launch his grotto in Keady!

Vincent's Newcastle extended its footprint on the Main Street by moving the furniture department next to clothes.

Archbishop Celebrates St Vincent de Paul Mass

Archbishop Eamon Martin, Archbishop of Armagh, Primate of all Ireland, celebrated a special St Vincent de Paul Mass on St Vincent de Paul Day for members of SVP in the Armagh and Craigavon area, at St Therese's Church in Banbridge.

He described the response of SVP members in the area to COVID-19 as 'amazing' saying that he had witnessed how they were filled with the spirit and willingness to help others. He said: *"I want to thank you the members of St Vincent de Paul for providing a lifeline during the pandemic. The work you do is truly the work of God."*

Following the mass, he congratulated new SVP Conference Presidents who have been elected to represent their area and presented certificates to local members who had completed training in Mental Health First Aid.

Brendan McKernan, SVP Armagh Area President, addressed the assembled congregation and said:

"I just want to use the opportunity this evening to say thank you to you, the members of SVP for the tireless work that you do to support those in need. Especially since the start of the pandemic,



Regional President for SVP North Region, Mary Waide, is pictured with Very Reverend Patrick Devlin, Chaplain to the Deaf in Down and Connor Diocese; The Most Reverend Noel Treanor, Bishop of Down and Connor; and St Vincent de Paul Spiritual Director, Fr Perry Gildea

I can sum up what SVP have done in this area of Armagh in one sentence, "We did as we have always done".

We continued to provide help to those in need, quietly, in the background. We supported people while maintaining their dignity and respect.

As our founder Frederic Ozanam said:

"Charity must never look to the past but always to the future, because the number of its past works is still very small and the present and future miseries that it must alleviate are infinite".



Archbishop Eamon Martin, Archbishop of Armagh, Primate of all Ireland, celebrated a special St Vincent de Paul Mass on St Vincent de Paul Day for members of SVP in the Armagh and Craigavon area, at St Therese's Church in Banbridge. Pictured with him are Sr Elise Gorman, Area Spiritual Director; Rosemary Cunningham, Area President of Newry and Mourne; Peter Cairns, President of St Patrick's Banbridge; Brendan McKernan, Area President of Armagh Area Council; Eileen McKenna, President of St Patrick's Portadown; Marianna Mackey, New President of St Brigid's Newry; Mary Rose Elliott, New President of Sts Peter and Paul Lurgan; Peter McVeigh, Area Vice President of Armagh Area Council and Twinning/Prisons; Anne Mallon, President of Tullysaran; John McKeown, New President of St Joseph's Magherry and President of St Colman's Dromore; Malachy McKernan, President of Holy Family Seagoe; Roseanne Murphy, New President of St Patrick's Keady; P J McClean, Area President of Killeagan Area Council representing Regional President North Region, Mary Waide.

Encirc recycles with Vincent's

Encirc, a Derrylin based beverage supply chain manufacturing company, has joined with Vincent's to primarily provide its 450 staff with a unique way to recycle their uniforms and to also give them a drop off point for unwanted clothing from home.

A Vincent's clothing bin has been placed in the factory's car park and John Brough, Encirc Team Leader, has been instrumental in forging this partnership which is a win-win for the charity and the organisation. John said:

"Placing a Vincent's clothing bin in our car park at Encirc is definitely a win win for us and St Vincent de Paul. As well as fitting with our overall corporate social responsibility strategy it provides a focus on sustainability. I have recently moved to our Derrylin site from England where we already have a very successful partnership with SVP and it made perfect sense for me to replicate the initiative here in Derrylin.

"Our staff are very enthusiastic about the initiative as they understand the real benefit of having the bin located on our site. As well as helping us reduce what is going to landfill, it helps encourage staff to be mindful of the importance of recycling an old item of uniform before ordering a new one. We plan to use the bin to recycle everything from trousers to boots and t-shirts to sweatshirts.

"From the initial contact I made with Vincent's in Enniskillen to enquire as to the possibility of positioning a recycle bin here at

Encirc to its installation, was a seamless process and I'm looking forward to expanding the relationship with SVP."

Brendan McKernan, Chair of SVP's Retail Committee, said: *"We are delighted to establish this new partnership with Encirc. We have almost 20 Vincent's clothing bins in various locations across Fermanagh already and we are glad that this new site will enable us to receive unwanted items from staff of Encirc."*



John Brough of Encirc is pictured taking delivery of a Vincent's recycling bin with SVP representatives Peter McVeigh, SVP Regional Board Member, and Joe Maguire.



Relocated Vincent's officially opens

Vincent's on Magherafelt's King Street has been officially opened by Chair of Mid Ulster District Council Councillor Paul McLean. In its newly relocated premises, customers can browse the latest in Vincent's treasures from fashion to accessories.

Chair of Mid Ulster District Council, Councillor Paul McLean, said, "I would like to congratulate Peggy McLernon and all the staff and volunteers involved in bringing this new Magherafelt store to fruition. I extend my thanks also for the remarkable work they carry out as part of St Vincent de Paul in general, and for the immeasurable contribution they make to the local communities in which they serve.

"Almost 1,800 dedicated volunteers work tirelessly within the Society to help those in need, including the most vulnerable in our communities. I have no doubt that this new store will be a welcome addition to the already impressive St Vincent de Paul offering, and will be hugely popular with the people of Magherafelt and even further afield."

Brendan McKernan, Chair of St Vincent de Paul, Retail Committee said: "We have been working for some time to renovate the premises owned by the Society on King Street, to provide the local community with a hub for browsing the latest fashions and for connecting with each other. This new location for Vincent's is thanks in no small part to our member and former Conference President, Peggy McLernon, who was instrumental in SVP purchasing the building and organising fundraisers to refurbish it, as she had great vision for what it could become.

"Previously used for SVP meetings, and after unsuccessfully applying for planning permission for the shop, a second application was granted and

P&A Contracts did a fantastic job in completing the refurbishment.

"The relocation of Vincent's is already proving to be a hit with local fashionistas in Magherafelt as sales have increased compared to those achieved in the former premises and we would encourage anyone who has yet to visit the shop to call in and see our staff and volunteers who will make you most welcome and help you find the perfect outfit."



SVP Member Roadshow visits Belfast

The Society of St.Vincent de Paul has hosted a series of Member Roadshows, visiting towns and cities across the province, to engage with members in person for the first time since March last year.

As well as providing representatives of more than 1,600 members from 167 SVP Conferences across Northern Ireland with an overview of the Society and how it has responded to the tens of thousands who have needed its support most in the past 18 months, together with its plans for Christmas 2021 and beyond, the events provided delegates with an opportunity to meet Mary Waide who was elected Regional President for the North Region at the beginning of the pandemic.

Following opening prayers and a welcome by Mary Waide, regional board members of SVP took to the stage to present various aspects of the Society's work to assembled guests representing their local SVP Conferences. Following a thought-provoking spiritual reflection, board members presented the Society's retail strategy for its 33 Vincent's shops in Northern Ireland, a report of the outreach into prisons, details of how each Conference should report on its finances and new ways of adhering to policies and procedures for those being assisted by the charity and those providing the assistance. An interactive element encouraged guests to engage in a healthy discussion with board members before closing prayers.

Speaking about the Member Roadshows, Mary Waide, Regional President of SVP North Region, said: "I am absolutely delighted with the success of this series of SVP Member Roadshows and the feedback from those who were able to attend. It



Mary Waide, Pauline Brown, and board members Brendan McKernan, Patrick Friel, Peter McVeigh, Henry O'Loan, Anne McLarnon & Anne Irwin

was important for the SVP regional board to get out into our local communities having had such a long time apart from our members face to face. The focus of the roadshows were to primarily express our gratitude to our members for the sterling work they have been continuing to do on the ground to help those who have needed it most, during the most trying of times, and to share with them our SVP vision for the longer term. The dedication of members of SVP has never been more important than it has been in the past 18 months. I know from experience how daunting it has been trying to help the vulnerable in our community without compromising or risking the health of those who are supporting those in need.

"As we move forward, it is my hope that our Conferences in Belfast continue to go from strength to strength under the guidance of Frederic Ozanam who founded SVP almost 180 years ago."

Vincent's opens on Armagh's Scotch Street

Co. Armagh Environmental Ambassador Emer Rafferty joined St Vincent de Paul Regional President for the North Region, Mary Waide; Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Lord Mayor Glenn Barr; Archbishop Eamon Martin, Archbishop of Armagh, Primate of all Ireland; and Revd Canon Malcolm Kingston, to officially open a new Vincent's on Armagh's Scotch Street.

Students from City of Armagh High School & St Catherine's College added to the atmosphere and excitement of the opening by providing entertainment and shoppers queued along the street ahead of the doors opening. The shop has an extensive range of ladieswear, footwear, menswear, childrenswear and accessories and occupies a prime location in the heart of the cathedral city.

Mary Waide, SVP North Region Regional President, said: "Our new Vincent's Armagh really has the wow factor! I have no doubt that the range of clothes on display and the choice of giftware and homeware are sure to be a hit with price conscious shoppers who are passionate about sustainability. I would like to congratulate the

staff and volunteers on their dedication in getting the shop ready for trading in time for the festive season and would wish them every success as they serve the local community."



Emer Rafferty, Mary Waide; Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Lord Mayor Glenn Barr; Archbishop Eamon Martin, Archbishop of Armagh, Primate of all Ireland; and Revd Canon Malcolm Kingston.

Newry and Mourne Chair visits Vincent's to celebrate Second-Hand September



Newry and Mourne Chair Cllr Cathy Mason visited her local Vincent's in Newcastle in celebration of Second Hand September.

Vincent's Newcastle is one of 33 St Vincent de Paul shops across Northern Ireland which provides new and lightly worn clothing at affordable prices, as well as providing an income for the Society which is used to support those in need in the local community.

Speaking about the visit by the Chair of Newry and Mourne District Council, Brendan McKernan, Chair of SVP Retail Committee, said:

"We were delighted to welcome the Chair of Newry and Mourne District Council to Vincent's Newcastle to see first-hand the valuable work of our shop in serving the local community.

"We were grateful that Cllr Mason took time from her busy schedule to meet with our shop staff and volunteers who worked tirelessly to bring Vincent's back to life safely after lockdown.

"During Second Hand September we urged people to dig deep into their wardrobes and donate their unwanted clothing, as well as visiting their local Vincent's to browse the treasures in store and it was a terrific success."



Student Volunteers in Ormeau Road 'Vincent's'

By Peggy McCann,
St Bernadette's SVP Conference, Belfast

The well-known American black civil rights activist Martin Luther King wrote of giving and serving; "you only need a heart full of grace. A soul generated by love". On the island of Ireland, we are lucky to have such a rich tradition of service and volunteering.

Indeed, in writing this I am reminded of how much of today's society depends on volunteering to reach others in need. Within SVP we are particularly blessed to have a long tradition of serving others in a volunteering capacity. That this service is founded on the highest ideals of non-judgementalism and respect is its greatest strength.

Our Conference became aware of a need for additional volunteers in our local Vincent's shop due to the retirement of a number who had served in this capacity for many years. One of our members with links to St Joseph's College on Ravenhill Road approached the principal with a view to asking about the possibility of recruiting some young students to help in the store on Saturdays. This resulted in a number of students agreeing to become involved in helping.

Our volunteer Mary Grace, who had initiated this request agreed to attend at the shop on Saturdays to facilitate this process. A number of students turned up and have shown a huge commitment to this project. They became engaged in a number of tasks. Some of the students were able to empty bags of clothing donated to the shop (of which there were many) due to a recent request for donations. In addition, they separated the garments into clothing which would be suitable for resale and some for recycling. They sorted the clothing into styles, themes and sizes e.g., evening/formal wear, leisure wear, men's wear, outdoor wear etc. They then hung them on rails in the stockroom, leaving them ready to be placed in the shop by the manager as required.

In addition to all of the above some of the volunteers (with particular artistic ability) helped in decorating the shop window for Halloween and later for Christmas. They were helped and guided in this by a local artist. Some of their efforts are visible in the accompanying photographs. They are now looking forward to redecorating the window for Spring!

The students also put on a fashion show whilst modelling some of the clothing and videoed this as a possible shop promotion attempt. The weekend prior to St Brigid's day they assisted in helping to make St Brigid's crosses for lots of the local community. Donations amounted to £120. They are planning another day to make Easter baskets.

From time to time on weekdays some of the students even call in on spec to see if the manager needs any help. This is

surely a measure of their commitment. Many of the students are members of the local community which helps to advertise the shop and the welcoming space it is for those who call in.

There is no question but that these students have brought new life to the store with their youth, energy and enthusiasm. It has also helped grow their awareness of SVP and the work it does. (Hopefully some of them might even become volunteers in other capacities for SVP as they grow and mature). It may be helpful for them too in their future endeavours to be able to demonstrate their ability to commit to a project and to help it to grow.

In speaking to a youth gathering in Brazil Pope Francis said:

"I ask you to build a future. Make the world a better place. Please don't see life from afar, live it."

This project is a beautiful example of how these students are bringing life to his words.





EAST REGION



Hampers with a Smile

The Most Precious Blood Conference Cabra, Dublin were delighted when they received these Christmas surprises from St Dominic's College Cabra!

Conference members Tom Summerville, Lorraine Swan and Jimmy Scurry were only too thrilled to collect the hampers from the school and distributed them to those in need in the community.

Just another day in Vincent's

Luke Mullen
Warehouse Team Leader

A woman was donating in Vincent's Blanchardstown and her handbag inadvertently fell into a bin and was collected by the warehouse team. Her phone, purse, keys, inhaler and life were in the bag.

Fortunately, Dorcas, the shop manager got to us on in rapid time and Dave and Carl located her possessions and we were able to return to her in the shop within the hour.

A small story that ends well and all concerned are happy.

Just another day in the SVP.



NORTHEAST REGION



Hand-Made Hazel Walking Sticks in aid of SVP

Rian a Transition Year student from St Oliver's Post Primary School started making walking sticks as a transition year project. He got hazel sticks off a man from Banbridge and sold them in his school, to family and friends to raise money for the local conference of the St Vincent de Paul and another local charity.

If you are keen to get your hands on these sticks... contact Rian in September when he will be getting his next delivery.



5th year student from St Oliver's Post Primary Rian Mulvanny presenting a donation to Siobhan Mullen of Oldcastle SVP.



SOUTHEAST REGION

Years of Service to SVP in Waterford

Winifred (Winnie) Power

Retires after 60 years' service to SVP in Waterford

Before Christmas a long service medal was presented to Winnie Power on her retirement from SVP. Winnie joined the Society in St Angela's secondary school, Waterford over 60 years ago as a young student and did some hospital visits and fundraising in her early years as a student. Winnie progressed in her adult life into the Society and joined family visitation. Winnie had a huge heart for many families in need and in her later years working in back in the same school she was thought had advocated with many young students over the years to hold and maintain the baton in the now SVP Young Programme. Winnie has decided after 60 years of service to retire from the Society and stated "I love helping people and I got more out in giving to those in need."

St Munia's SVP Portlaw, Co. Waterford honours 30 years' service members

Peggy Cuddihy and Biddy O'Hanlon have given 30 years' service and continue to do so with St. Munia's SVP Portlaw. Also pictured in the middle is Ann Nolan who has recently joined with a wealth of experience in community volunteer work.

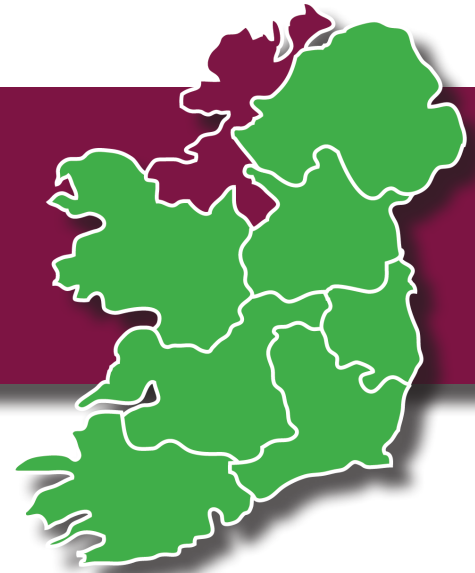


Gabriel Kent

Retires after 45 years' service to SVP in Waterford

Secondly Waterford loses another member Gabriel Kent who served for 45 years in the Society in Waterford city. Gabriel for many years served on the Area Council in Waterford City as secretary and for many years her primary activity was hospital visitation visiting the elderly.

NORTHWEST REGION



Sligo Area SVP Education Committee

By Peggy McCann,
St Bernadette's SVP Conference, Belfast

Several Years ago, Sligo Area SVP Council received a series of bequests which enabled it to extend its service within the county. The Area Council embarked on an extensive period of consultation to decide on how these bequests could be put to best use within the vision and policies of St Vincent De Paul. It was eventually agreed that it should be used for Education as a means to address the causes as well as the consequences of deprivation.

While Conferences were given the responsibility of meeting the needs of families with children in primary and secondary schools, a separate Education Committee was formed to manage an Education Fund to address the needs of those in or aspiring to third level. Its aim was to help students who could not enter or remain in third level education without the assistance of the fund.

Since then, over thirty students have been helped to continue in their studies with grants ranging from 750 euro to 5000 euro, the maximum recommended by National Council. Needs have varied from simply being unable to buy a laptop to having absolutely no other source of income as a full-time student without SUSI. In the last few years, even students with SUSI have found it very difficult to make ends meet due to the drastic increases in rent.

All applicants are invited to complete a digital application form and then take part in a Zoom interview based on the application with at least two members of the Education Committee.

While all successful applicants were deserving, some were absolutely heart-rending; including: a young mother being helped out of homelessness by Focus Ireland who wished to pursue a third qualification; and a final year student who, without SUSI, due to leaving

his first degree course through illness, had worked full-time to support himself while doing a full-time professional degree.

We asked the seven students who had been helped during the 2020/2021 academic year to evaluate the impact of the fund. Here are two excerpts from the five replies which we received.

I can not express how grateful I am to receive support from SVP, as a mature student trying to work after twelve hours shift on placement. I truly know the value of money and every cent counts. This grant has been a lifeline and, without it, I am not sure I would have been able to continue in the program.

The whole application process was so easy, and Vincent was such a pleasure. He made me feel safe and relaxed in all regards. He made sure to keep me updated and contacted me multiple times to make sure I was doing ok too.

The rest of the team were amazing the made me feel at ease regarding getting the grant as I felt that there were people who needed it more. I also want to thank the people who support this grant as without your help I wouldn't have got it. You have made such a difference to my life in the last academic year. I am so deeply grateful to you all.

Our colleague in Focus Ireland has written:

'Thanks so much for the support of the SVP Education Committee. It is very fulfilling to see a person supported to work towards a goal that will ultimately allow them to have independence and security'.

In Tribute

To Deceased Members of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul

Brian Brennan

*Former SVP National Treasurer,
St Conleth's Conference, Kildare*

Brian Brennan, who was a member of the Society for almost 70 years, sadly passed away on 3rd November 2021 at the age of 88. Brian joined the Society's Youth Conference in his sixth year of secondary school at Colaiste Mhuire CBS in Dublin visiting older people in the area.

After qualifying as a chartered accountant, Brian became a member of the Irish-speaking Conference based in Ozanam House which was engaged in family visitations in the north inner city. Brian also joined the National Youth Committee charged with promoting the position of young people in the Society in Ireland. This led to an invitation for Brian to take on the role of National Treasurer, a position Brian fulfilled with great distinction for seven years. A change in job brought Brian to Newbridge, Co Kildare in his forties and he lived there for the rest of his life.

Brian became treasurer of his local conference, St Conleth's, a position he held for forty years. Brian was very much to the fore with the help of other Society members in establishing the sheltered housing scheme in Ryan's Field in Newbridge and the associated Day Care Centre. Ryan's Field is regarded as one of the leading examples of its kind in Co. Kildare and provides high-quality housing for over thirty people. Brian had a great interest in social housing and in ensuring that the Society maintained the necessary standards. He served as a member of the SVP East Region Social Housing Committee until shortly before his death.

A quiet gentle person, Brian will be remembered as one who gave his professional expertise generously to whatever Society enterprise he was involved with and gave outstanding service to the Society throughout his long life.

Brian's wife, Mary, did voluntary work at the Day Care Centre over many years and helped to set up the Newbridge Meals on Wheels. Mary passed away on 25th April 2021.

May they rest in peace.

Ar dheis De go raibh a n-anamacha dilse.

Tom Carey

*St. Brigid - St Anne Conference,
Carrigtwohill, Co. Cork*

It was with great shock and sadness that the members of St. Brigid-St Anne Conference in Carrigtwohill, Co. Cork learned of the very sad and sudden passing of our great friend and colleague, Tom Carey, on 10th January 2021. Tom's passing was a huge loss to our Conference but even more so to this devoted wife and fellow Conference member, Mary, along with his daughter, Maria, and son, John.

Tom was a native of Drumshambo, Co. Leitrim and spent the early part of his working life in London, where he met Mary. They both returned to live in Carrigtwohill and to raise their family there. Tom was a retired community worker; having worked in the community and voluntary sector in relation to childcare and the provision and development of local democratic participating structures and social enterprises.

Tom represented communities on several working groups including the local drugs task force and he brought all his experience from his daily working life to our Conference and Carrigtwohill Family Resource Centre CLG.

Tom was the "go to" person in the Conference when advice and guidance was required and he always ensured that every request for assistance was dealt in a very fair and understanding manner.

Whilst Tom was an ever-present member of our Conference, he also devoted his time to helping his community in several other ways including being a leading member of the Men's Shed, Residents Association, Parish Pastoral Council and Family Resource Centre.

St. Brigid – St. Anne Conference managed the Family Resource Centre in Carrigtwohill since 1991 and this Centre expanded greatly over the years to meet the demands of the less fortunate in our community. In 2017, it became very obvious to our Conference that we, as volunteers, could not continue to manage the Resource Centre in a professional manner that complied with all statutory regulations. Accordingly, a decision was made to transfer the management and operational duties of the FRC to a new Company Limited by Guarantee and which would receive funding from Government sources.



Tom, as part of our Conference team, played a pivotal role in ensuring that all aspects of the FRC, including all our existing employees, were transferred seamlessly from SVP to the new Company. This was a major achievement and Tom's input will always live on in our memory as part of his legacy to SVP.

Tom will always be remembered by all of us who knew and worked with him in SVP.

May his gentle soul rest in peace.

Joseph Carlin

*St. Joseph's Conference,
Crossroads, Killygordon,
Co. Donegal*

It is with great sadness that our Conference has lost our dear Member Joseph. Joseph battled with his terminal illness with great dignity and fought the bitter fight to the end.

Joseph was a valuable member of our Conference who gave of his time freely and often above and beyond what was expected of him. His involvement in working with the families within our remit was always to the forefront of Joseph's concerns, and always explored the best way to support them and get the best and most from supports available to them.

Such was Joseph's affection for our Conference, he requested that donations in lieu of flowers at his funeral be given to us and for this we are extremely grateful.

We have great memories of working with Joseph and indeed shared lots of funny stories and experiences of life with him. Our meetings were always light hearted when Joseph was present and made our work so much easier. Our Conference was truly the richer for having Joseph as one of our members. We will miss him greatly.

We extend our deepest sympathy to his wife Andrea, his mother Eileen, his children James, Anna, Stephen, brothers Sean, Eugene, Marty, Declan sisters Deirdre, Bernie and extended family.

Ar dheis Dé go raibh a hanam dílis.

Frank Casey

Former SVP Area President, National Finance Committee, St Francis Xavier Conference & OLV Conference in Myra House, Francis St. Dublin

Frank Casey, who died at the end of December, aged 95, was a lifelong member of the Society. While at school in Synge St CBS, Frank joined the Conference of St Francis Xavier there visiting older people in Iveagh Buildings. After UCD (where he earned two first class honours degrees) Frank became a member of the OLV Conference in Myra House, Francis St which engaged in family visitation in the south inner city and ran a successful youth club.

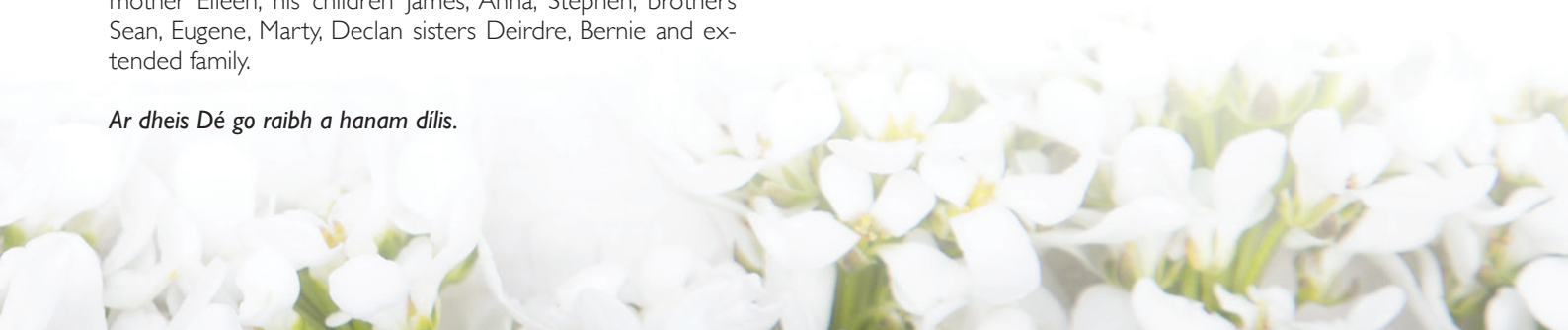
Talent spotted early on for responsibility in the Society, Frank soon became an Area President and in the early 1960s headed up the Council of Ireland's newly established Communications and Development Committee. Thus began for Frank an association with the National Council which continued unbroken for over 50 years. He undertook many roles at National level in that time being regarded by successive National Presidents as someone with a safe pair of hands imbued with the Vincentian spirit who could be relied upon to act with efficiency and discretion in the most challenging of roles.

In his day job, Frank was Managing Director of ICC Bank (originally Industrial Credit Company, the State development bank) and made his financial expertise available to the Society through membership of the National Finance Committee for over twenty years.

A kind and considerate man with a great sense of humour and a wonderful mimic, a dedicated music lover and keen fan of cricket, Frank is greatly missed by all who knew him.

He is survived by his two daughters, Philippa and Jane, and their families to whom our deepest sympathies are extended.

Ar dheis Dé go raibh a hanam dílis.



Margot Hartnett

*St. Brigid - St. Anne Conference,
Carrigtwohill, Co. Cork*

Our great friend and colleague in St. Brigid - St. Anne Conference, Carrigtwohill, Co. Cork, Margot Hartnett, passed away recently on 21st November 2021, after a long and brave battle with illness, which she fought with great dignity and fortitude. Despite her serious illness, Margot continued to work with our Conference and the Carrigtwohill Family Resource Centre right up to just before she passed away.

Margot spent her entire teaching career; from once she graduated from UCC, in St. Aloysius College, Carrigtwohill, initially as a teacher and in more recent years as a most respected and loved College Vice-Principal.

Margot was a passionate advocate of promoting education as way out of poverty and she firmly believed that, to make a difference in someone's life, one did not have to be brilliant, rich, beautiful or perfect, but one just had to care.

The tributes paid to Margot on the condolences section of her death notice in RIPiE came from all over the world. Tributes such as "only for you, Mrs. Hartnett, I would not be where I am today" bear testimony to the brilliant work Margot did in her community and particularly the young adolescents who struggled educationally, socially and with their mental health and wellbeing.

Margot played a huge role in our Conference for over 35 years and was a leading member, who worked tirelessly in the development of our Taylor Centre and Family Resource building in Carrigtwohill. Margot recognised the vital necessity for these facilities and these buildings today form a key element, in enabling us to deliver a wide range of vital services to those in most need in our community.

Margot is greatly missed by all of us and she is also very sadly missed by her husband, Paidi, her daughter, Noelle and her two sons, David and John, together with her extended family.

May her gentle soul rest in peace.

Anne Johnson

Our Lady of Mount Carmel/Holy Rosary Conference, Firhouse

It was with great sadness that members of Our Lady of Mount Carmel / Holy Rosary Conference, Firhouse, heard news of the death of Anne Johnson, just before Christmas. Anne was a long-serving and dedicated member of our Conference and touched the lives of many of those we visited. She acted as a mentor for a number of new members and was our Conference secretary for many years.

She was interested in everyone she met and helped develop relationships among Conference members by organising our annual social outing. She was a constant champion for our Conference, resulting in generous donations from many of her friends.

We will long remember her kindness, her generosity and her great courage in the face of her illness.

We send our most sincere condolences to Anne's husband Alan, her children Rachel and Ben, and her extended family and wide circle of friends.

May her gentle soul rest in peace.



THE SVP BULLETIN

The full archive of The SVP Bulletin is available online.
svp.ie/bulletin



REGIONAL OFFICES

National Office

SVP House, 91-92, Sean MacDermott Street Lower, Dublin, D01 WV38
Phone: 01 8848200, Email: info@svp.ie

East Region

SVP House, 91-92, Sean MacDermott Street, Dublin, Dublin 1
Phone: 01-8550022, Email: info.east@svp.ie

South West Region

Ozanam House, 2 Tuckey Street, Cork
Phone: 021-4270444, Email: info.southwest@svp.ie

Mid West Region

Ozanam House, Hartstonge Street, Limerick
Phone: 061-317327, Email: info.midwest@svp.ie

North East & Midlands Region

Tiernan House, Fair Green, Drogheda, Co. Louth, A92 TF3P
Phone: 041-9873331 Freephone number 1800 677 777,
Email: info.northeast@svp.ie

West Region

Ozanam House, Augustine Street, Galway
Phone: 091-563233, Email: info.west@svp.ie

South East Region

Unit 3, Six Cross Roads Business Park, Waterford
Phone: 051-350725, Email: info.southeast@svp.ie

North Region

196-200 Antrim Road, Belfast,
Northern Ireland, BT15 2AJ,
Phone: (028) 90351561, Email: info@svpni.co.uk

North West Region

The Diamond, Raphoe, Donegal
Phone: 074-9173933, Email: info.northwest@svp.ie

