

THE



SUMMER 2015

# BULLETIN

MAGAZINE OF THE SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL



100 YEARS IN  
THE BACKLANE

MOTHER JONES -  
AN IRISH REBEL

HONOURING  
1916 PLEDGES

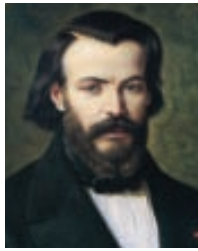
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THE VOICE OF SOCIAL JUSTICE IN IRELAND

When I admire the wonders of  
a sunset or the beauty of the  
moon, my soul expands in the  
worship of the creator.

- Mahatma Gandhi





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 2015  
Published Quarterly

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in their time - people like Mother Jones, past and retired members such as Tom – making way only for new members of a younger generation to pave the way now for those less fortunate in the present and on into the immediate future. But not only that, we can now see our younger colleagues speaking up and supporting the older people, like our SVP Youth for Justice Conferences, SAGE Advocates and Rural Links.

What is made clear throughout this issue is that without the hard work and sheer determination of the older generations, younger people would not have had the role models from which to learn and so, in turn, become teachers themselves, nurturing future generations. It seems as if we are all intimately linked in a continuous flow of passing on the wisdom, skills and passion for all we have learned in our lives, in seeing a bigger picture in which we do not live for ourselves alone but for one another and in the belief that we can all be valued as equals. This, for the Society of St Vincent de Paul, is our primary goal, to end poverty and social exclusion and what better way for us to learn than from those who had already started on that journey many years ago.

In this edition, you will read a story of a man who was homeless and is now speaking out and raising awareness and funds for people at risk of becoming homeless like he was; see where the SVP is opening up new shops in local communities and providing social housing for people struggling in today's economic conditions. An over arching theme throughout is that we as a society, as citizens of this state, need to cultivate the notion of human interconnectedness as a motivating value in tackling problems and in framing solutions; a strong and fair social order comes only from an environment where individuals orient themselves towards each other; not look inward and see only personal perspectives and needs.

*Linda O'Connell*

As I take up the torch as the new editor of the SVP's Bulletin, I am somewhat apprehensive in my task following Tom MacSweeney's retirement from the role, which he carried out for almost 25 years in a voluntary capacity. Tom brought with him a lifetime of journalistic experience, compassion and a very strong sense of the injustices which people face in society. So to say this is a daunting task for me is an understatement.

However, as I prepared this edition I was struck by the content of various articles and the interconnection of many of them. What was stark was how older generations lead the way to end social exclusion and injustices

# TIME FOR GOVERNMENT TO HONOUR 1916 PROMISES



This time of year the Society makes its submission to Government in relation to the forthcoming Budget. From the outline already made available by Government indications are that additional funds will be available to support those in need and the vulnerable in our communities. We will make our submission based on our interpretation of the needs across the country and the feedback from our members. The challenges faced by people are not getting easier; in many cases the demands on our support are increasing.

The purpose of our Pre-Budget submission will be to press for;

- Higher levels of health and wellbeing arising from access to quality, affordable and warm homes in mixed, sustainable communities across tenures.
- Enhanced levels of autonomy for all people through an infrastructure of care and development for children, parents, carers, people with disabilities and people with long-term health needs.
- Increased opportunities for children arising from expanded early childhood care and education.
- Greater prospects for all through access to jobs arising from childcare and afterschool care.
- Protection of our most vulnerable people through provision of minimal standards of living.

SVP currently provides direct financial assistance to make up for deficiencies in public services, particularly in the areas of health, education and housing. We also indirectly subsidise meeting basic needs like food, because people have had to spend such a large proportion of their income on ever-increasing rents and fuel costs, where affordable rented homes are not available and accommodation is poor in terms of both quality and thermal efficiency. Income increases, through wages or social welfare, are vital but insufficient to break the cycle of poverty. Services are necessary to the wellbeing of people and communities and long term, sustained public investment is essential if Ireland is serious about tackling inequality, reducing poverty traps and access to work.

Much is being spoken about 2016 with both an election in the offing and the anniversary of the 1916 Rising. As SVP we have spoken and written in the past about our values as a nation and the reality that we have not managed to achieve a more equal nation for all of our people. We accept that managing an economy is a complex issue; creating employment is key to achieving a vibrant economy that can provide the services that all sections of the community need and deserve. However, we do not believe there is the political will to make real change in how we allocate resources that will give an equal opportunity to all of our citizens.

Much discussion has taken place over the past year in regard to ethics and the type of society we should aspire towards. Whilst these discussions have been useful we fear that they are now largely forgotten. We urge the political system to be radical in their thinking over the coming months to put forward real change proposals that will create a more equal and just Ireland. That would be the real 2016 celebration.

Geoff Meagher  
**National President**  
**SVP Ireland**

# The NESc's New Report on the Private Rented Sector

## - A New Vision and Strategy

by Liz Kerrins, Social Justice

SVP members, from their visitation experience, know that the Irish housing rental sector is in big trouble: the chronic lack of supply of both private and social rented housing; high and spiralling private rents; and weak security from eviction in the private rented sector. Housing options are decreasing: an income well above the average industrial wage is now required to buy a home (if you could get a mortgage); rented homes go to the highest bidder, leaving people reliant on Rent Supplement literally out in the cold; and it has been decades since there was any serious social housing build. It is clear that we need a reformed private rented sector, particularly as the Social Housing Strategy 2020 views the sector as an important means of meeting social housing need for the future.

Ireland's National Economic and Social Council (NESc) published an important report in early May - Ireland's Private Rental Sector: Pathways to Secure Occupancy & Affordable Supply – analysing the insufficiencies of the private rented sector. The report identified high private rent levels and unregulated increases (since 2011, rents have increased in Dublin by 21% and by 8% nationally) alongside the lack of protection for tenants against high increases and being required to leave their home when they cannot pay. SVP is well aware of the increase in economic eviction in Ireland.

The unsustainability in the medium- to long- term of Rent Supplement levels trying to chase unregulated rents within the context of little new housing coming on stream is recognised by the NESc. The private rented sector is now family housing – partly due to the lack of access to home ownership and social rented housing; 35% of families of pre-school children and 29% of families with primary school children call the sector home, according to the NESc. As NESc document, Irish government policy recognises that one-quarter to one-third of the Irish population will find it increasingly difficult to achieve homeownership. This places rental housing front and centre of Irish housing policy and provision for the future.

The NESc report argues for both providing tenants with more secure occupancy and increasing the supply of permanent affordable rental housing available to low and medium-income households. The secure occupancy would come through greater rent certainty for tenants, in a regulated manner that would not scare the market, and also through a move from four-year rental leases to leases which are effectively indefinite. Economic eviction would be difficult to achieve, and tenants could stay in their homes for as long as they need, once they observe the rules of the tenancy.



The NESc report also recommends increasing the supply of rental housing through better land management, and giving priority to investment proposals that support the permanent provision of social and affordable housing, amongst other recommendations.

These recommendations chime with those being impressed on Government by SVP's Social Justice team in National Office. We are lobbying hard for an increase in the supply of rented homes, and for rent certainty and tenancy stability in the private rented sector. We need to see investment in social housing in Budget 2016, and for the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government to commence with private rented sector reform.

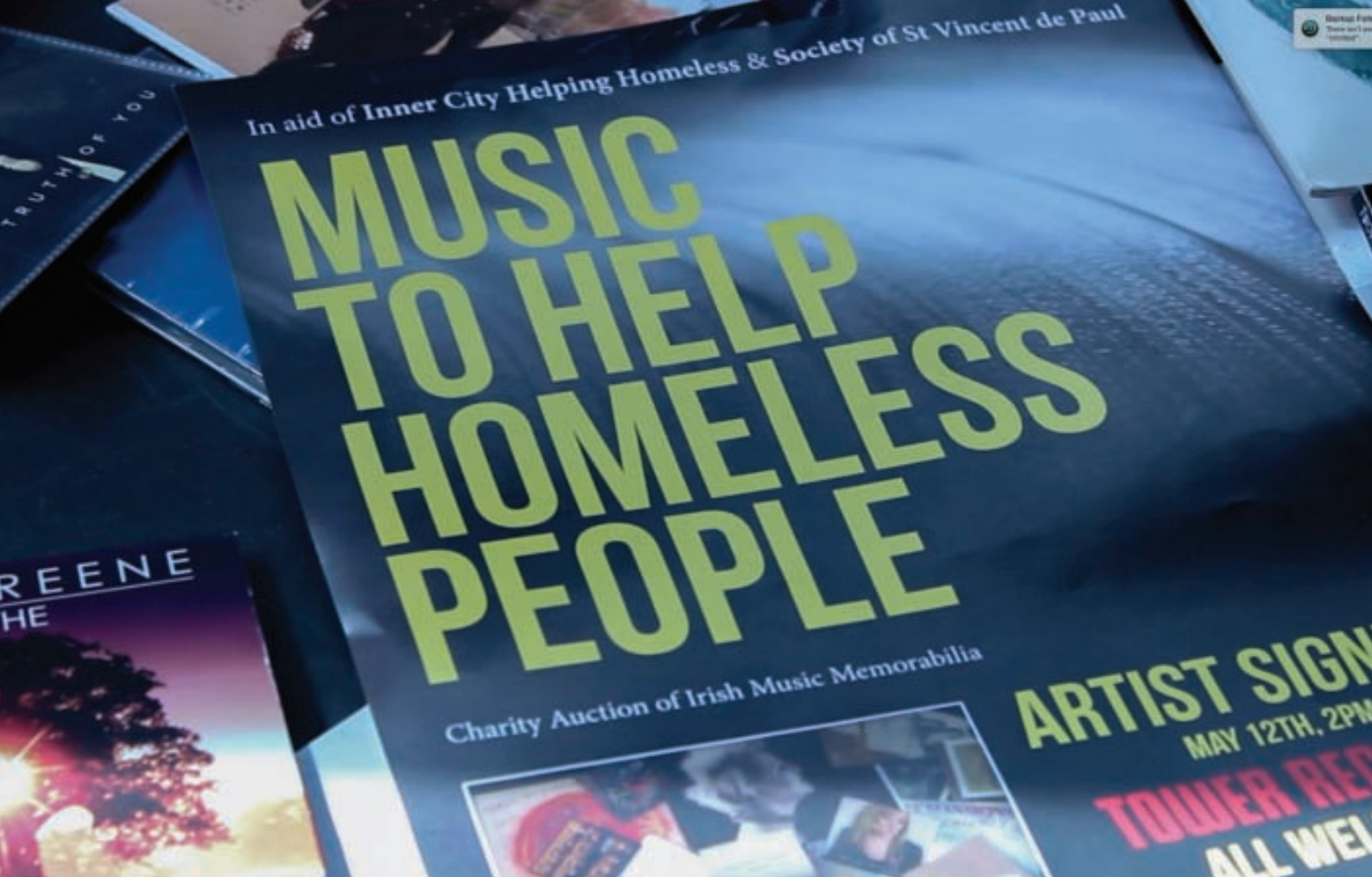
All of these policy roads to be travelled in tandem. We know from bitter past and present experience that half- policy measures not only do not work, but they can also be harmful. <http://www.nesc.ie/en/publications/publications/nesc-reports/private-rental-sector/>

### What is NESc?

The National Economic and Social Council (NESc) was established in 1973 and advises the Taoiseach on strategic policy issues relating to sustainable economic, social and environmental development in Ireland.

The members of the Council are appointed by the Taoiseach, for a three year term. These members are representatives of business and employers' organisations, trade unions, agricultural and farming organisations, community and voluntary organisations, and environmental organisations; as well as heads of Government departments and independent experts.

Member of SVP's Social Justice team in National Office have represented the community and voluntary sector on NESc, providing SVP with a means of influencing high-level policy.



# PETER'S CAMPAIGN IS MUSIC TO THE EARS FOR HOMELESS IRISH

Peter Meade set up the “Man In Hat Music To Help Homeless People” initiative last April and has already received support from some of Irish’s biggest acts such as Hozier, Glen Hansard and Snow Patrol.

Peter started this up because he himself was homeless for nearly seven years and knows how hard it can be. “I was on the way to commit suicide basically and an old lady stopped me and asked me would I help her cross the road and in that ten-second walk a light bulb went on in my head and my whole life changed” stated Peter.

From that moment on he hasn't looked back and got back on his feet and started working with homeless charities and has been trying to raise awareness for mental health since.

Peter has teamed up with RTE 2FM, Whelan's music venue in Dublin and Tower Records to pull together Irish music memorabilia for a live auction.

Peter and his team were at Tower Records on Dublin's Dawson Street on May 12, where they received loads of donated and autographed CDs for the auction.

The collection currently includes signed music from Little Green Cars, Imelda May, The Frames, Horslips, The Riptide Movement,

The Strypes along with a host of other household names.

Peter is pleading to any bands out there who would like to contribute to the charity drive to get in touch. "The plan behind the campaign is I want to get Irish bands to send me a signed CD and making it the biggest collection of autographed Irish music ever auctioned in the world" he says.

"We're aiming to raise an ambitious €25,000 with the auction but we also have a few other things in the pipeline to boost awareness and help bring in some more funds.

The money will be going to the inner city helping homeless and St Vincent De Paul Ireland, who will distribute it across the whole 32 counties of Ireland".

"There are hundreds of homeless families all over Ireland and I don't think a child deserves to be homeless. These children will end up in the long term developing mental health issues and if you look further down the road that's going to cost the State millions." explains Peter and this is the inspiration for the campaign.

Following the Tower Records donation event Dunia Hutchinson, SVP's National Manager of Homeless Services stated "I am delighted SVP has been nominated as one of the charities to benefit from this fantastic project which is sending a clear message of support and solidarity to the many people effected by homelessness all over Ireland. It represents the very heart of volunteerism at its best and looks like great entertainment too!"

Right now, SVP Volunteers are providing support and assistance to homeless families who have been displaced and are living in hotels & B&Bs because of the lack of housing supply. SVP also has 10 fully staffed emergency accommodation services all around the country for men and women, from Donegal to Cork and everywhere in between, as well as a drop-in day centre in Limerick city. "This project is going to raise awareness and much needed funds to help folks who really need that help, right now. For that, we in SVP are deeply grateful." she went onto say.

While Peter feels that homelessness will never be completely abolished and is calling on the Government to step up and help out families that find themselves out on the street particularly when there are so many empty apartments and buildings around Ireland.

The Music Man In Hat massive online auction will announce its results at a celebratory gig in Whelan's venue on Wexford Street in Dublin on June 18, with special performances on the night from Gavin Glass and Cry Monster Cry.

For more information on how to donate or get involved with the campaign visit [www.musicmaninhat.com](http://www.musicmaninhat.com) and don't forget deadline for submission of signed music is June 5th.



# HOUSING CRISIS

## The Perfect Storm?

*John-Mark McCafferty*  
*Head of Social Justice*

The biggest, most pressing issue facing members just now is the lack of affordability in the private rented sector; fear of homelessness as a result, and increasing numbers of families in hotels on an emergency basis. It is important to remember that when members visit people in financial distress in rented accommodation, they often help to prevent homelessness by supplementing incomes, assisting with other outgoings such as food or energy, and even advocate on the tenant's behalf.

However, rent hikes are causing an affordability crisis in the private rented sector and increased homelessness in cities, particularly for low income families. With the advent of hundreds of families needing to be housed in emergency accommodation, in bed and breakfasts and hotels, the homeless situation has deteriorated and gained media prominence. The recovery, coupled with years of divestment in social housing and a laissez faire approach by successive Governments to housing provision for low income households, have created the perfect storm. Recent rent increases have outstripped Supplementary Welfare Allowance (SWA) rent allowance limits in and around Dublin and other urban areas. Recently, members have been telling us of displacement of low income private renters out of cities and into far flung hinterlands (e.g. Dublin to Gorey; Galway to Castlebar) with impacts on the availability of housing in those provincial towns. Banks are now moving to repossess homes at an increased rate. The absence of a mortgage to rent process is disappointing as this would appear to offer a repossession solution that does not create the kind of chaos in peoples' lives that eviction does. Repossessions will impact on local housing markets and supply both in terms of units vacated but also households displaced – which must have an effect on local social housing waiting lists. In addition, a steady stream of renters have been given notice to quit because the house they reside in is being sold by the owner, often due to increasing sales prices.

It is essential that Government's Social Housing 2020 Strategy is resourced and implemented. For the first time in years – probably since the 1980s - there is an ambition in the Customs House that social housing actually matters and warrants substantial investment in the short to medium term. The Strategy won't fully address all social housing need by the 2020 timeframe for all the reasons above, but is a positive departure by Government nonetheless. However, Social Housing 2020 is predicated mostly on the private rented sector to deliver; by a factor of over two to one: 75,000 private

rented units to 35,000 social housing units between now and the end of the decade.

While having grown in terms of units since the 1990s, access to the private rented sector is decreasing for the low income households that the strategy aims to house through this tenure. In any event, the private rented sector doesn't have enough landlords of sufficient scale to adequately deliver the units in a timely way. Two thirds of all landlords let just one property. Indeed many of us, our family members or friends are among such 'accidental' landlords. There are pressures on individual landlords, due to equity issues, tenant disputes or other factors. Nonetheless, there needs to be greater consolidation of the private rented sector, with a smaller number of landlords with larger numbers of units.

Crucially, affordability has to be tackled, through SWA rent supplement limit increases in the short term, and some form of rent certainty mechanism in the medium term. The introduction of the Housing Assistance payment is welcome given that it avoids the poverty trap inherent in the SWA rent supplement system, but will take some time to become established. There are ongoing problems of physical standards and energy efficiency in this sector – a live issue for Social Justice which we'll return to in subsequent Bulletins. While we welcome the new Social Housing strategy, it creates more questions than answers – especially in terms of the capacity of the private rented sector to deliver in the short term and how to pay for social housing build and acquisition given the 'off-balance sheet' nature of so much of the plan. We will be monitoring the Strategy closely.





# NORTH EAST & MIDLANDS REGION MEMBERS DAY 2015

There was a great attendance at the Members Day held in the Headfort Arms Hotel, Kells on Sunday March 29th last. Approximately 140 members from across our six county region gathered for a very productive and reflective day.

The theme of our Members Day which also mirrors that of our Region's Plan was 'back to the core'. Throughout 2015 our Regional Council are debating at length with membership across the region, quality visitation as the sore activity of the Society. Madeline Mellet our Region's Social Justice Representative led the meeting in prayers remembering all those we visit, sick members and those members who have passed.

The meeting officially commenced with a presentation from Prof Tom Collins, former Director of Dundalk IT and former Professor of Education at NUI Maynooth. Tom spoke eloquently on the challenges facing SVP in the 21st Century. Encouraging members to support education Prof Collins reflected on the changes that Ireland has gone through since the Famine. As each generation faced a particular challenge he said the Irish people adapted and embraced that challenge and as a non-Vincentian Prof Collins congratulated the Society on stepping up to the challenges facing it.

Regional President Liam Reilly gave a presentation entitled 'Back to the Core'. In it Liam spoke of the need for Conferences to follow the core principles on which the Society was founded, in essence to offering support & friendship, supporting self-sufficiency and working for social justice in all our communities. Liam went on to encourage existing members to attract new members into their Conference both young and the young at heart.

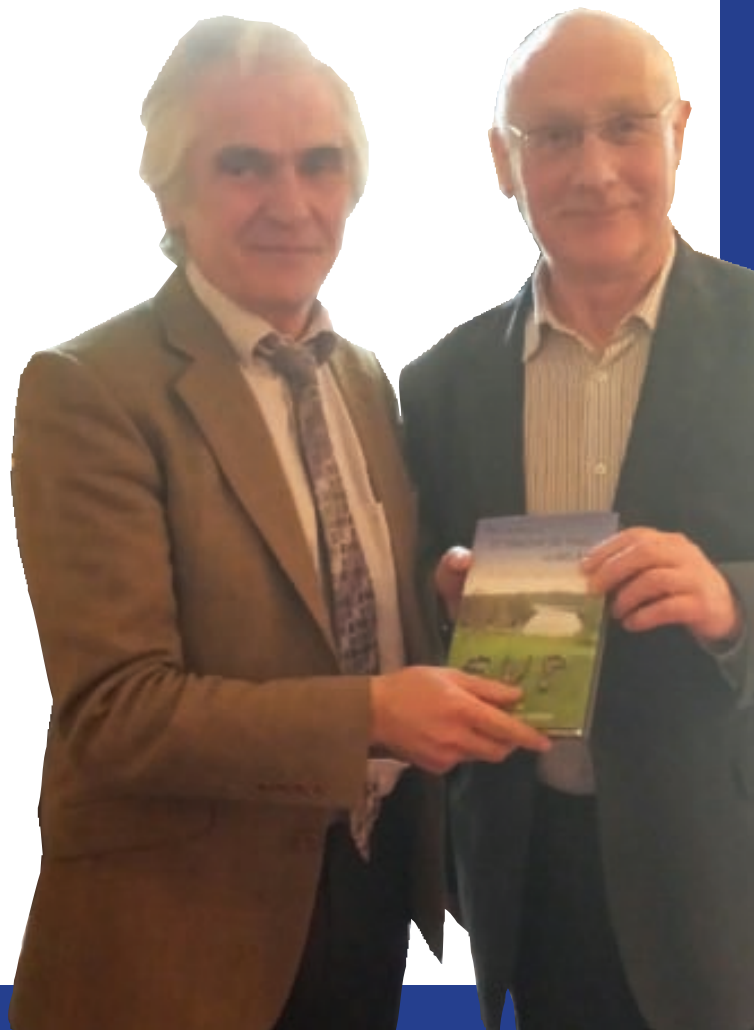
Jean Naughton, the Region's Membership Support Officer gave a presentation on her role and how she is there to assist Area Presidents and members in general. Jean spoke about the importance of members to attend training and to be Garda vetting.

Michael Laffey from MABS gave a presentation on Personal Insolvency & Large Debt and he gave some excellent advice for Conference's dealing with large debt and some useful contacts.

Following a delicious lunch John Mark Mc Cafferty gave an insight into the work of the national Social Justice Team. The presentation entitled 'How well is SVP meeting the challenges of Ireland in the current economic climate?' was well received by all members. John Mark spoke on the need for Conferences to embrace the CRM system as that allows the Social Justice Team negotiate with Government Departments using up-to-date statistics on how best the Society is dealing with poverty on the ground.

Michel Kenny the Region's Twinning officer followed with an uplifting and interactive presentation on our twinning status with Zimbabwe. Michael in his voluntary effort outlined his role and sought willing members to form a Regional Twinning committee. On his first official outing following his re-election for a second term National President Geoff Meagher spoke on the recent changes the Society had undergone and the scale of challenges it has yet to face given the recent appointment of the charities regulator. This was followed by a number of questions from the audience. Mass followed immediately after celebrated by Fr. Neil Collins

*Northern President Aidan Crawford presents the SVP History Book to the Deputy Lord Mayor of Belfast*



# The Challenge of Ageing

## Nothing about you / without you

Ireland is ageing and more and more people are living longer and better lives. However, a minority of older people – probably one in five of the 535,000 people aged 65 years and over – require some form of support and almost 5% live in some form of residential care.

Most older people prefer to live, and to die, in their own home but many face challenges to their independence due to illness, disability, lack of family and community supports or an inability to access public services that meet their needs. Some people face progressive decline in their ability to make and communicate decisions because a condition, such as dementia, develops over time.

In circumstances where people have to depend on others there is a need to ensure that the rights, freedoms and dignity of older people are promoted and protected. Through support and advocacy the voice of the older person can be heard and honoured without undue pressure from family, service provider or systems interests.

**sage**  
Support & Advocacy Service  
for Older People



### Sage Mission

“to promote and protect the rights, freedoms and dignity of older people by developing support and advocacy services wherever ageing poses a challenge for individuals.”

### The role of Sage - Support and Advocacy Service for Older People

Sage is working to expand access to support and advocacy services in all care settings and wherever ageing poses a challenge for individuals. Sage is developing a network of volunteers who can address issues for residents in Nursing Homes, for older people living at home in the community, older patients in hospitals. Sage services have been established all over the country with development workers supporting Sage Representatives in the North West, Galway and West, Mid West, Cork and South West, Dublin South East and Wicklow, Dublin South West and Kildare and North East regions. The services provided by Sage are free and confidential.

Sage sees support and advocacy as part of a continuum which can require a whole range of skills, including brokerage, mediation and befriending as well as legal, financial and health-care expertise. Sage is working to build a team of people capable of tackling the most complex support and advocacy challenges presented by older people. To provide such a service requires people with the qualities of a ‘sage’; wisdom, judgement and experience. At national level a core team will include paid and volunteer staff with a wide range of professional, organisational and personal skills. At local level we are seeking people who can commit time to supporting vulnerable older people in and across a variety of care settings. The qualities we seek are compassion, competence, commitment, creativity and courage. Our volunteers are supported and supervised to act as a Sage Representative in what may be complex and challenging issues.

Recent casework undertaken on behalf of clients ranges from support with Fair Deal applications and other financial issues to support with concerns about medication and other clinical issues. As well as conducting one-to-one casework, Sage aims to strengthen the natural support structures of family and community in partnership with relevant professionals and local development organisations. It is committed to building Circles of Support so that older people can, wherever possible, live and die in the place of their choice and be supported as they experience transitions between home, hospital, nursing home or hospice.

Sage’s Information & Advice is open from 8.00am – 10.00pm daily and is available on 1850 719 400. For general enquiries please contact 01 563 7330. [www.sage.thirdageireland.ie](http://www.sage.thirdageireland.ie)



# SVP RESPONDS TO THE EU COUNTRY SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

*Audry Deane,  
Social Justice*

It would have taken a very keen Europhile to have spotted the European Commission's annual policy recommendations for Ireland, issued on 19th May, which slipped into the public domain with little or no take up or interest by the media. These proposals are part of the annual process of review, correction and monitoring of Member States' economic and social progress. While they are not binding, they do exert political pressure. This time around they focused on

- correcting the deficit,
- making the health-care system more cost-effective,
- getting people back to work - including affordable childcare,
- restructuring mortgages in arrears

As the largest charity of social concern in Ireland we have a strong interest in ensuring that the issues of the people our 11,000 volunteer members assist are incorporated into the design of critical social policies at both a European and national level. That's why we were very disappointed in the lack of ambition in the recommendations, given the deep crisis in our public health system and the ongoing scandal of the cost of child care and lack of after school care services.

While SVP is in agreement with the recommendations on health care and childcare, they did not go far enough to address the very visible fault lines in service provision in this country.

We expected a much clearer emphasis on solving deep structural issues such as the inability of our health care system to provide adequate primary, community and continuing care services. Without timely access to diagnosis and treatment in the community, health inequalities will continue to reflect the social class divide where those who can afford it will access quicker diagnosis and treatment leaving those who cannot to wait their turn on long waiting lists for over-subscribed services.

We would have liked to see the recommendations about work and childcare go further and focus on the lack of policy coherence, evident in the reforms to payments to those parent-

ing alone which will in some cases result in further poverty, deprivation and social exclusion.

Insufficient supply of places in the various child care schemes, difficulties in the design of the schemes and the ongoing question mark about how well the Further Education and Training sector is working with the activation service for jobseekers are challenges which must be rectified in the short term. Very little detail on how this should happen was offered in the recommendation from Europe. SVP expected more explicit enunciation of what needs to happen to address the current partial response to meeting the challenges of quality, access and affordability in child care, including after school.

Access to affordable, quality provision of child care and after school care is a key driver in the reduction child poverty. It would have been useful if the Commission had been more explicit and recommended a funding model for childcare and after school care which links quality provision and high outcomes. This will require investment at a sustained and ongoing level.

It is clear to SVP that without social investment Ireland cannot meet its Europe 2020 targets, therefore we would have welcomed more explicit commentary and recommendations which tackle the challenges and suggest ways of addressing critical problems. Ireland needs leadership which will commit and deliver on addressing the long term structural inequalities, which have been exacerbated by years of austerity budgets.

For us the recommendations were an ideal opportunity for the European Commission to hold Ireland to account for lack of delivery, poor policy coherence and weak implementation of critical reforms. Not taking this opportunity means that for some their experience of life will not improve in the near future, indeed in some cases they will experience further deprivation. SVP will continue to lobby at both European and national levels to ensure that the voice of those who bear the brunt of poorly designed schemes and services and slow reforms will continue to be heard.



# NEW PRESIDENT OF THE MID-WEST REGION JOHN LUPTON

*The new President of the Mid-West Region is John Lupton of St. Cronan's Conference, Roscrea, who had been Area President for North Tipperary. John succeeds Michael Murphy who now has responsibility for Special Works at NMC.*

## “Quality Visitation”

His primary focus is, he says

“like all my fellow Vincentians, to those whom we are privileged to serve. In that regard I feel a very compelling obligation to do all that I can to ensure quality visitation, by which those who visit go to where the needy, marginalised and disempowered are in their lives. Its only when we have listened to a person's full story, he says, and knowing that 'no act of charity is foreign to the Society' that we can then commit ourselves to responding positively and holistically to a person's basic and dignified need for sustainability and self sufficiency”.

## “Ethos”

He welcomes our National President's initiative in inviting discussion on our “Ethos”, as he says “ethos” informs the reason and motivation for what we do and how we do that which we do. John says, that ethos enables us to affirm that, in the words of blessed Frederick Ozanam, “the poor person is a unique person of God's fashioning with an inalienable right to respect”. Thus he commits the Mid West Region to positive input into the National President's initiated discussion process on our “Ethos”.

## Regional Council

Thus informed by our “Ethos” and obligation to ensure “quality visitation” the new Mid West Regional Council is firmly centred on Area Representatives, i.e. Area Presidents. John says the Mid West has a great group in this regard in Mary Stafford, John Cullinane, Tom Landers, Jacqueline Pilkington, Patricia Gleeson, Ger Mockler, Alan Kelly and Denis Buicke, with a vacancy to be filled in Limerick East. The Region's two Vice Presidents are Pat Carroll and Barry Tobin. While Pat will assist with Admin/Finance, training, shops and the geographical areas of Limerick and Clare, Barry will assist with fundraising/developments/projects/hostels and social housing and with the geographical areas of Offaly and Tipperary.

The outgoing Regional Secretary Trish Phayer, will continue as Regional Secretary and Tony Brennan is the new Regional Treasurer. Trish and Tony are both trainers with the Society,

Trish will also help with schools debating in conjunction with a Regional Schools Debating Officer. Tony has been an Area IT Co-ordinator and will play a pivotal role in the roll out of the Agresso system in the region.

The new Spiritual Director of the Mid West is the Rev. Dr. Tom Corbett, pastor emeritus of the Roscrea Group of parishes and also Professor emeritus of systematic theology at St. Patrick's Pontifical College, Maynooth. John says that they will rely on Fr. Tom “to keep us focused, grounded and inspired”! The Region is ably assisted and supported by the Regional Office and its staff under the direction of the Regional Administrator Eileen Hoffer.

## Regional Committees

To allow discussion by Area Presidents in a non-decision making context, a “Membership Structure and Strategic Policy” Sub Committee has been set up. This will be made up of the Regional President, Secretary and Area Presidents. This sub committee, reporting to the Regional Council, will also afford an opportunity to discuss policy matters, to include that which may be referred, from time to time, from N.M.C. to the Regions for discussion and input.

Regional Committees will be set up for Education, Youth, Shops, Hostels/Housing, Social Justice, Twinning and Training. John is most anxious that these be in place before appointing individuals from each of these Areas, where appropriate, as appointees, to the Regional Council. It is hoped, in so far as practical, that some of these committees would be replicated by similar committees at Area level.

## Schools' debating

The Mid West is also setting about to initiate a Secondary Schools' debating competition in the Region. This initiative will create a greater awareness of SVP and Social Justice issues among the young. While support will be sought from all members in the Region to promote this initiative, John Lupton will in particular be seeking support from an “1844 membership linkage group” i.e. members in the Region between the ages of 18 and 44 years.

## To seek and to find

John hopes that every geographical Area within the Region will be served by a Conference of the Society. However, he says that a deeper and more probing focus on the needs of the people we serve will, he suggests, inform the creation of more Conferences dealing with special needs and needs that, for one reason or the other, are not met by existing traditional geographically based Conferences.

# The Minimum Essential Standard of Living data for 2015 has just been launched – Providing vital information for NGOs like SVP preparing for Budget Day 2016

We launched our 2015 Minimum Essential Standard of Living (MESL) paper on Monday the 18th of May in SVP's Ozanam House, Dublin. Key findings, detailing the expenditure need for a range of representative household types is now available online at <http://www.budgeting.ie/publications/technical-a-working-papers>. This new paper includes expenditure & income scenarios for Social Welfare dependent households, households on the National Minimum Wage and calculates the Minimum Income Standard for very many household types.

## Background

Focusing on needs and not wants, it is not a standard for people in poverty; it is a standard for everyone, below which no one should be expected to live. Since 2001 the VPSJ has undertaken a number of studies to establish the cost of a minimum essential standard of living – the minimum required to make possible a standard of living which meets an individual's/household's physical, psychological and social needs. The costs of the baskets are adjusted annually by appropriate Consumer Price Index (CPI) rates. The costs presented in this paper are based on prices adjusted to March 2015. The income calculations are based on the tax and social welfare system as they stand in 2015.

## Average Prices and the Consumer Price Index (CPI)

The paper launched in Ozanam House is a summary of the minimum expenditure and income needs of household types in Ireland updated to this year - 2015. Average prices have declined slightly between March 2014 and March 2015, with the overall Consumer Price Index (CPI) rate being -0.6%. The average core cost of a Minimum Essential Standard of Living (MESL) is higher in 2015 than in 2008 (by 0.35%), while the CPI rates would suggest that prices on average are lower now than in 2008 (by -0.55%).

## Positive Recent Budget Increases, but Most Social Welfare Incomes Inadequate

The situation of households with children and older people living alone and dependent on social welfare has improved between 2014 and 2015. This is due to an increase in Child Benefit and an increase in the Living Alone Allowance. However, this improvement while welcome, is limited. The research demonstrates that in 2015 social welfare cannot meet the cost of a MESL for 191 of the 214 urban sample household types examined in the research - an improvement from 2014 when 199 of the 214 urban sample household types were experiencing income inadequacy when solely dependent on social welfare.

## Costs facing Families

While the increase to Child Benefit, of €5 per month, has helped move some social welfare dependent household

compositions with a pre-school child to income adequacy, child income supports do not meet the direct cost of a child in 3 of the 4 age groups examined. The adjustment to Universal Social Charge has increased the net salary from the National Minimum Wage (NMW) by €124 per annum (for a Single Adult working full-time). However, despite an increase in income and drop in the core cost of an MESL, rising rents mean this household type faces greater income inadequacy in 2015 than in 2014.

## Housing and Childcare Costs and the Minimum Income Standard

Access to social housing and in-work supports such as FIS can enable a number of household compositions afford a Minimum Essential Standard of Living when earning the national minimum wage. The high costs of private childcare and private rented accommodation substantially impact on the cost of a MESL and the subsequent Minimum Income Standard (MIS) required. These high costs drive the MIS gross salary need of households, to heights significantly above the National Minimum Wage.

## Conclusion

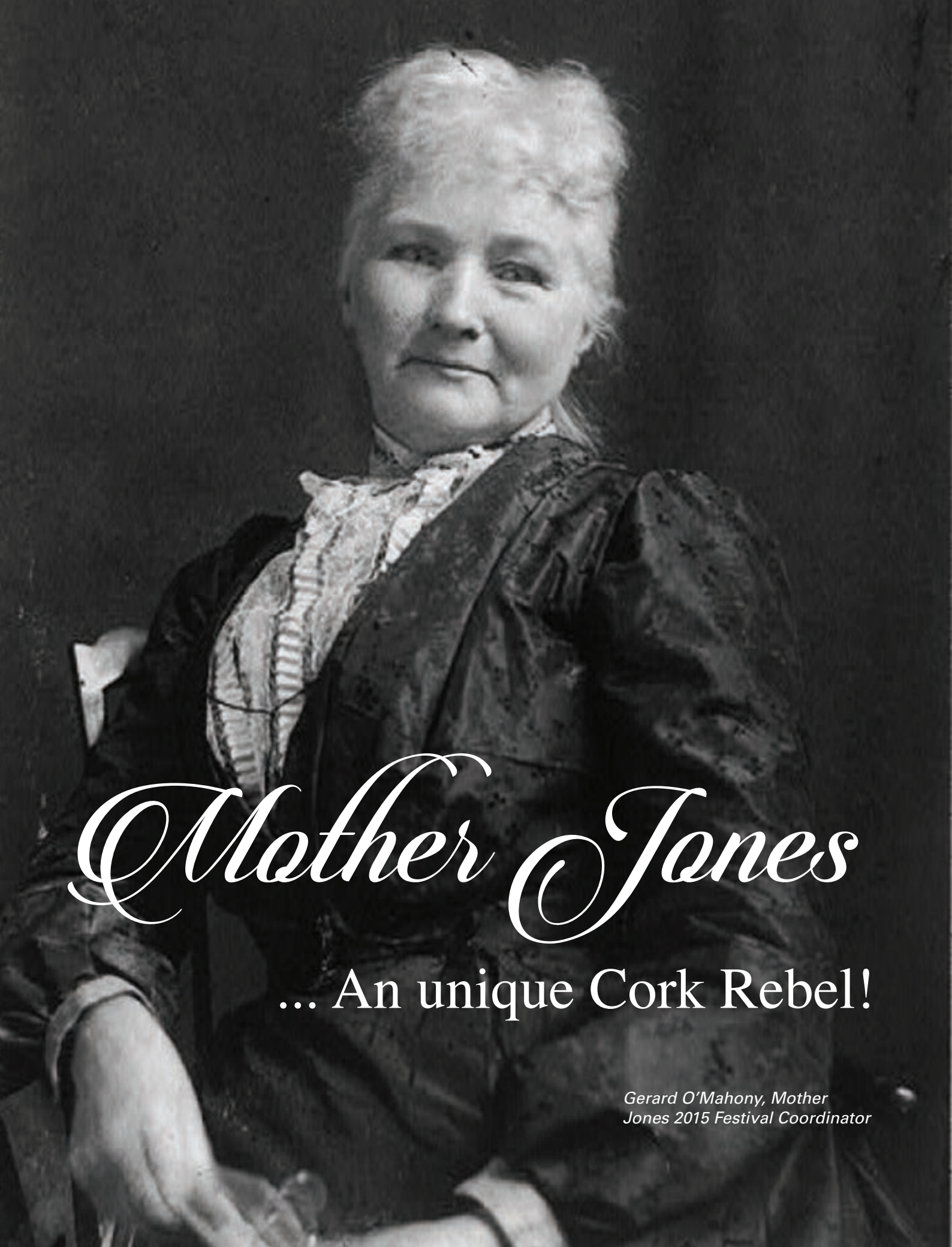
Access to affordable and quality services, in particular housing and childcare, is vital to enable those on low income to afford a socially acceptable minimum standard of living.

## Further Information

This research was supported by the Department of Social Protection. The Budgeting team in the VPSJ is composed of Robert Thornton, Grainne Weld and Dr. Bernadette McMahon DC. Further information on the household budgets, including detailed individual expenditure tables and research reports are available on the VPSJ consensual budget standards website, [www.budgeting.ie](http://www.budgeting.ie)

*Vincentian Partnership for Social Justice  
– Authors Robert Thornton, Grainne Weld  
and Dr. Bernadette McMahon DC.*





# *Mother Jones*

... An unique Cork Rebel!

*Gerard O'Mahony, Mother  
Jones 2015 Festival Coordinator*

Mary Harris was born in Cork in 1837 and like thousands of other children on Cork's north side, she was baptised in the 200 year old baptismal font, which is still positioned at the entrance to the "North Chapel" (Cathedral of St. Mary & St. Anne) by Fr. John O'Mahony on August 1st of that year. Her parents were Ellen Cotter; a native of Inchigeelagh and Richard Harris from Cork city and they had two sons and three daughters. One of Mary's brother's William later became Dean of St. Catherine's in Toronto and was a noted Catholic author and scholar.

The Harris family lived through the Great Hunger, which claimed thousands of lives in the slums of Cork City and then survived the horrors of the coffin ships when the family emigrated to Toronto in the early 1850s. By 1860, Mary had qualified as a teacher and was teaching in Monroe, Michigan.

She later worked as a dressmaker and married George Jones, an iron moulder, who was a member of the International Iron Molders Union. They settled in Winchester Street in Memphis, Tennessee where they raised their four children. However, after living through the American Civil War, tragedy struck the Harris family when George and all the children were wiped out by the yellow fever epidemic in 1867. Mary survived this appalling horror after "sitting alone through nights of grief". She went to Chicago where she resumed her dressmaking, established a little business but again disaster struck when on October 9th 1871 the great fire of Chicago destroyed her premises.

Little is known of Mary for a decade or more however it seems that she became very active in the growing Labour movement which was then organising for fair pay and decent working conditions in the factories, mills and mines of a rapidly industrialising North America.

It was a time of huge labour ferment with rail strikes in 1877 and the 1886 Haymarket incident in Chicago. It seems her political and social consciousness which led her to support the underdog in society developed and she threw herself into active union activity.

In 1890, the United Mine Workers union was formed, many of the tough union organisers were Irish and Mary too became an organiser. She was nearly 60 years old. As a woman operating in a rough male world of miners and mining pits, she was utterly fearless, she was outspoken and she cut an inspirational figure, being immaculately dressed in her long black dress, bonnet and carrying a handbag amidst the industrial debris of coal pits.

She witnessed the terrible conditions under which thousands of men, women and young children worked. In this decade she helped miners to demand better pay and conditions in Alabama, West Virginia, Colorado and Pennsylvania. She had become known as "Mother Jones" to countless thousands of workers.

In 1903, Mother Jones led the March of the Mill Children from Pennsylvania to New York, in which highlighted the

exploitation of young children in the mines and factories in America. By then she had become known as "the most dangerous woman in America". She also organised women workers and she became one of the most famous women in America being front page news for decades as a result of her union activities.

In 1905 she was the only woman at the inaugural meeting of the Industrial Workers of the World (Wobblies). She became a confidant of James Connolly and was arrested and jailed many times in her quest across America for justice for workers. Her cry of "Pray for the dead and fight like hell for the living" has resonated through the decades.

Mother Jones was now in her seventies remained active in the face of injustice. When she passed away at the age of ninety three in 1930, tens of thousands attended her funeral. Over 50,000 people attended the dedication of her grave memorial on October 11th 1936 at Mount Olive in Illinois.

Forgotten in her native city, a Cork Mother Jones Committee unveiled a monument to Mother Jones in 2012, near the famous Bells of Shandon and organised a festival in her honour.

2015 sees the fourth such festival and summer school in Shandon taking place from Wednesday July 29th until Saturday 1st August, now known as Mother Jones' Day in Cork. Dedicated to her memory and to inspirational people everywhere who fight for social justice, the festival will comprise over 30 events such as lectures, films, music, singing, poetry, a garden party, several concerts and a play at venues such as The Firkin Crane and the Maldron Hotel.

Speakers in 2015 include, Chris Mullin, Fr Peter McVerry, Theo Dorgan, Alannah Hopkin, Leo Keohane, Ann Matthews, Dave Hopper and many more. Music will be provided by Jimmy Crowley, Two Time Polka and the irrepressible Richard T Cooke and a cast of hundreds.

A major highlight in 2015 will be the first Irish performance of a play Can't Scare Me... the story of Mother Jones by Kaiulani Lee. Ms Lee is just back from Bangladesh where she performed her play for many garment workers.

Full details of the festival and summer school can be seen at [www.motherjonescork.com](http://www.motherjonescork.com) or phone 0863196063.



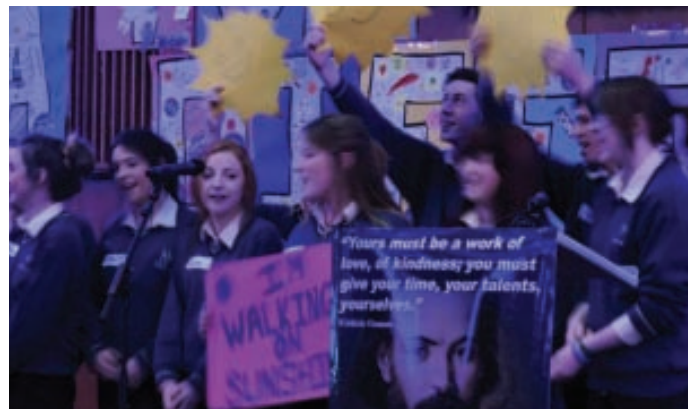
# Producing Students to help others

Becca Gallagher  
(National Youth Development Coordinator)

**When, with ‘Hope and Positivity’, you ‘Shine a Light’ on ‘Love and Justice’, ‘You Make a Difference’ within ‘The Bigger Picture’.**

Over the past few weeks, across five SVP Regions, Youth Development Officers have organised youth events that showcased the extraordinary work of the young people who have engaged in our National Youth Development Programme during the past academic year.

Over 2000 people attended these events in the North, North-east & Midlands, Southeast, Southwest and Northwest regions events including 1888 Secondary School students, their teachers, SVP members and volunteers, and a number of additional representatives and invitees. All those who attended were in awe of the incredible energy, enthusiasm and positivity evident with the work these socially aware and motivated young people have undertaken in their localities and communities this year. Attracta, a Youth Development Officer for the North East & Midlands Region commented “These young people are my heroes, all their projects brought great joy to my heart and I am so proud of them all”



These annual Youth Events are an opportunity for like-minded young people to come together and see that they are not alone in the work that they do, they are part of something much bigger. From this they find not only motivation to continue on the path to helping create a more just society for everyone, but also are inspired by their peers and the work of others.

*“I now realise that young people can change so much by doing so little” (Youth participant South east)*





The SVP National Youth Programme incorporates two main models of engagement namely 'Youth for Justice' and 'Youth Conference' models. Both of which encourage young people in secondary schools to take part in Young SVP groups where they develop social action projects and activities that reflect the values and mission of the Society.

*"The programme is about providing students with the opportunity to help other people in their community in practical ways, through our four main project categories; Befriending, Education, Research & Action and Direct Aid projects."* (Sharon, Youth Development Officer, Northwest).

Many of the Exhibition days included an opportunity for students to present information about their projects and the activities they engaged in throughout the year. "There was an amazing array of wonderful and creative presentations from all the schools" (Diane, Southwest). Students presented their projects through a variety of mediums which included; song, musical performance, live music, song writing, drama, poetry, short film, spoken word, dance, video, photos, speech, power point and there was even a fashion show or two!

*"The presentations were educational, thought provoking and innovative and ensured an enjoyable time was had by all"* (Nichola, National Office)



A variety of themes were explored through the different events which were linked together in various imaginative and inspiring ways – from inspirational speakers like John McAreavy (Michaela Foundation) and Karen Underwood (motivational speaker and performer), to activity hunts, art activities, drumming workshops, interactive workshops, 'selfie' booths, walls of positivity, Social Justice trees and so much more. The themes that featured this year included "Shine a Light", "Justice & Hope", "You Make a Difference", Hope & Positivity" and "The Bigger Picture".

It was very clear at all the events that these young people have developed a genuine sense of empathy and compassion through the work that they have done. They are interested in seeing social change and they will continue to work towards building

better relationships, more inclusive communities and a better world for us to live in.

*"I am very proud and humbled to have the opportunity to work with such kind, compassionate and socially aware young people. If these teenagers are our future, it's looking very bright"* (Sharon, Northwest)

I would like to extend a heartfelt congratulation to all our Youth Development Officers who work with such passion and commitment throughout the year. Without their dedication and energy SVP could not deliver such an incredible programme, WELL DONE!



Lastly I would like to say thanks also to the volunteers, members and supporters who attended different events – I'm sure you will all agree they were truly inspirational – and well worth coming along to. I hope that more members can attend these events in the future.

# SVP Member founded The Legion of Mary

“A man of great humanity, wisdom and trust in the Mother of God, Frank was down to earth, a no nonsense man with no frills or fancies. He was a very earnest, unaffected man with a good sense of humour. It was divine providence that prompted Frank Duff to spread the Legion worldwide”

This was the view of Frank Duff by some Vincentians who acted as spiritual directors to the Legion of Mary.

There are strong links between the Servant of God Frank Duff and St Vincent de Paul. Divine Providence has woven an intricate heavenly pattern between both of them, which links 97 Phibsboro Road, St Peters Parish, the Vincentian Community, Blessed Frederick Ozanam, the Society of St Vincent de Paul, and the Legion of Mary.

Frank Duff was born on 7 June 1889 in 97 Phibsboro Road, Dublin in St Peters Parish, which since 1974 has been run by the Vincentian Community.

St Vincent de Paul was born in the village of Pouy, France on 24 April 1581. Led by divine providence, in 1625 he founded The Congregation of the Mission, often known as Vincentian Fathers, for the evangelisation of the poor. Vincentians now total over 3,000 and serve in 86 countries.

Prior to establishing the Legion of Mary on 7 September 1921, in Myra House, Francis Street, Dublin 1, Frank Duff was a member of the St Vincent de Paul Society, which was founded by Blessed Frederick Ozanam.

The Society greatly influenced Frank Duff particularly in its outreach to the poor. Following a study of the True Devotion to Mary by St Louis Marie De Montfort, Frank Duff along with a small band of people started the Legion of Mary. Their first work was visiting the sick in a huge institution. They undertook to always see and serve Christ in each person visited in the Spirit of Mary serving her divine Son.

From that small beginning of just 17 people, who attended the first praesidium, it expanded across Dublin and Ireland. Next, it spread to Scotland in 1928, England in 1929 and then India in 1931. Today the Legion of Mary has over 3 million active members and approximately 10 million praying members. It is present in over 170 countries.



Frank Duff

In 1965 Pope Paul VI invited Frank Duff to attend the Second Vatican Council as a Lay Observer, an honour by which the Pope recognised and affirmed his enormous work for the lay apostolate.

In 1966, the Irish Hierarchy appointed Fr Thomas O'Flynn CM as Spiritual Director of the Concilium Legionis Mariae, which is the Legion's world wide governing body with its headquarters on Morning Star Avenue, Dublin 7 which is not too far from Phibsboro Road. When Fr O'Flynn first met with Frank Duff, he found him to be courteous, smiling and unostentatious, in short a man of simplicity. He immediately compared Frank to St Vincent De Paul who was renowned for his practise of the virtue of simplicity. He described Frank as "unflinchingly honest in what he believed to be the truth and as a man of courage". Frank told Fr O'Flynn that he went weekly to St Peters Church for confession.

On November 7th 1980 Frank Duff died and is buried in Glasnevin Cemetery, Dublin. In July 1996 the Cause of his Canonisation was introduced by the Archbishop of Dublin Dr. Desmond Connell.



History shows that a Vincentian Fr Joe Donovan CM was instrumental in establishing the Legion in the United States where it started in New Mexico on 27 November 1931, the feastday of the miraculous medal.

Another Vincentian Fr Manuel A Garcia CM set up the Legion in the Philippines against all the odds during the second world war.

In 2014, the provincial of the Vincentians in Ireland Fr Eamon Devlin CM, said Frank Duff was "a man of great humanity, wisdom and trust in the Mother of God". In Phibsboro, these Vincentians included Fr Andrew Spellman CM, who died in 2012 at the age of 92, after giving long years of service as a spiritual director to many praesidia. Fr Michael Dunn

CM another long serving spiritual director who met Frank Duff on a number of occasions, said Frank was down to earth, a no nonsense man with no frills or fancies. Fr Aidan McGing CM, who succeeded Fr Pat Collins CM as spiritual director to another praesidium in St Peters, said of Frank Duff who he met several times: He was a very earnest, unaffected man with a good sense of humour: He shared with St Vincent de Paul the trait of being unable to stop talking about the faith!

Fr Cornelius Nwaogwugwu CM, who attends the African Irish praesidium in St Peters said; the Legion plays a huge role in the church in Nigeria. It was divine providence that prompted Frank Duff to spread the Legion worldwide.



*Pope Paul VI meeting Frank Duff*

The Legion mobilises the Laity. One such mobilisation took place in April 2013, when Fr Paschal Scallan CM, the parish priest of St Peters, invited the Legion to carry out an Outreach. Afterwards he stated: "All of the 1826 houses in the parish were visited by 120 legionaries from all over Dublin, who generously gave up their time. It was very appropriate that we held this Outreach during the year of Faith and the 175th anniversary of the Vincentians coming to St Peter's Parish. The Servant of God Frank Duff would, I believe, have said It was providential!"

Frank Duff during the course of his life wrote over 33,000 letters, in which he encouraged and counselled people in many matters. He however always had in mind the priceless value of a soul. In the Legion handbook, his most famous writing, in a chapter entitled Go preach the gospel, he cites Blessed Ozanam's phrase the attraction of one soul is needed to elevate another. Both Frank Duff and Blessed Ozanam were influenced by St Vincent de Paul whose mission was one of praying, reflecting and acting. As already stated, Frank was a member of the St Vincent de Paul Society for a number of years before setting up the Legion of May on 7 September 1921. While many are aware that this is the eve of the feast day of Our Lady's birthday i.e the 8th September maybe it is not so well known that Blessed Frederick Ozanam died on 8 September 1853!

The hand of God or divine providence as Frank Duff would call it, was clearly at work and continues to this day



# Time to help people spend less on energy

As a result of the huge demand for assistance on energy in recent years the Society has put a lot of emphasis on helping people to pay their bills and manage their arrears. Now, SVP is increasingly looking at finding ways to help people spend less on energy. The Society's national advocacy work is increasingly focussed on promoting the benefits of energy retro-fitting and energy efficiency. Retro-fitting programmes not only reduce costs they improve peoples' health, are better for the environment, and create jobs in the community. Energy efficiency is often also related to education and finding out the best ways to use less energy, coupled with information on the most cost-efficient way to pay for fuel such as oil or solid fuel. The two schemes below set out ways people can budget and save on their energy costs. The fuel saving stamp scheme is a way for households to both budget for their oil & solid fuel bills by weekly savings and to avail of discounts from bulk purchasing. The information from the SEAI Better Energy Warmer Homes scheme sets out the Government sponsored schemes for households on low-incomes.

## **SVP East Region Fuel Stamp Scheme Pilot – By Jim Scurry**

In 2012 St. Brigids Conference in Kilcock initiated a Fuel Stamp Scheme to support households in their area who use home heating oil. The scheme proved to be a real success, with support from both the local community and the business sector.

Following an evaluation between St. Brigids Conference and SVP's Social Justice team, a decision was taken to try and extend this scheme further and a submission was made to the Minister of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources to consider it as one of the initiatives to combat Fuel Poverty. After a number of meetings with the Department they agreed to fund the project giving us the responsibility of developing a strategy to administer, promote, and manage a pilot scheme across the SVP East Region (Dublin-Kildare-Wicklow)

The scheme will offer the following benefits:

- Enable households who rely on home heating oil to have the option of budgeting (spread their costs) and use the Fuel Stamps to pay in full or part payment for deliveries
- Allow customers with sufficient Fuel Stamps to avail of substantial savings achieved through bulk purchasing / buying
- Encourage households to be more aware of the cost saving benefits of home energy efficiency management
- Encourage increased transparency around home heating oil pricing

We intend to establish a number of Retail Outlets and Oil Supplier networks across each town, village and city, who will offer support for the scheme. This will enable potential customers to buy fuel stamps and save for their fuel needs.

Whilst the project is still in its early set-up stages I'm really encouraged and excited by the support it is receiving right across our organisation. I also believe that this scheme has the potential to be of real value not only those we support, but further reaching, to the public at large.

If you would like to know more about this project I'd be delighted to discuss it with you. So please do not hesitate to contact me directly either by phone 01-8198466 / 085-1745070 or email jimmyscurry@svpeast.ie

## **SEAI Better Energy Warmer Home Scheme – By John Flynn**

John Flynn is the Programme manager for the Better Energy Warmer Homes scheme. This scheme has been in existence for over 10 years and has upgraded over 100,000 homes in that period.

The Better Energy Warmer Homes scheme (BEWH), administered by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI), funds energy efficiency improvements to poorly built homes, making them more comfortable, healthier and more cost effective to run.

The service is provided at no cost to the household and the measures currently available under this scheme are:

- Attic insulation
- Draught proofing
- Lagging jackets
- Low energy light bulbs
- Cavity wall insulation
- Energy Advice

Services are delivered nationwide and the time taken from application to actual service delivery in your home is 6-9 months depending on the volume of demand at any point in the year. Winter time is naturally the busy time for application for the free scheme. SEAI's contractors go through a rigorous approval process and are only appointed to deliver services when they have proved that the quality of their works is to SEAI's high standards.

This scheme is available to homes which meet the following criteria

- Owner occupied non-Local Authority homes Constructed before 2006 where the owner is in receipt of one of the following:
  - Fuel Allowance as part of the National Fuel Scheme
  - Job Seekers Allowance for over six months and with children under 7 years of age
  - Family Income Supplement

The scheme is currently open for applications and if you are aware of someone who you think may qualify for the scheme please contact SEAI at the Freephone 1800 250 204. We would be delighted to assist you with any queries you may have in relation to the scheme.

SEAI and the Society of St. Vincent de Paul have a long relationship of working together at local level in identifying eligible homes and at a national level in relation to energy poverty. We really look forward to strengthening our relationship with the Society's local Conference through the Better Energy Warmer Homes Scheme.



# SVP EMBRACES BEST PRACTICE IN VOLUNTEERING

*Celine Martin,  
National Member Support Manager*

Since taking up my position as National Member Support Manager in November 2014 I have spent the last six months trying to meet with as many members as possible. As part of the re-structuring of the Society my role alongside the Membership Support Officers in the Regions is to attempt to establish the needs of members and to begin to put in place the necessary supports to allow our volunteer members to provide the best possible service to those we “assist”. This article will provide an insight into some of the work we have been doing and the challenges we face and how we envisage working with the volunteer members in the future in the hope that we can enhance the practice of Home Visitation.

## **What is the Role of the Membership Support Officer**

For those of you who are not aware Membership Support Officers (M.S.O.) have been appointed in all Regions. Their role is to work specifically with Area Presidents to support them in the work that they do in the hope of re-invigorate their role in order to support Conferences in their work with the people we “assist”. Membership Support Officers have been out in the Regions since January 2015 meeting with Area Presidents and attending Area Council meetings in order to attempt to establish how we can best support our volunteer members. We are encouraging Area Presidents to visit Conferences in their areas so they can begin to establish the Conference needs. Through this process we can then put together in a practical way, the supports needed by our volunteer members to fulfil their role, for example; guidelines on allocating vouchers; workshops signposting members to other community services; enhancement training in visitation skills; money advice and budgeting referral, to name but a few of the area’s already identified.

## **Best Practice for Volunteering**

During the course of the last few months we have attempted to work with members/volunteers and staff to standardise our recruitment process. This will help to ensure we are meeting Best Practice Standards in the recruitment of new volunteers into the Society. A new Membership /Volunteer Policy with a National Application Process will be introduced from June 2015. This has been a huge piece of work and it is hoped will

recognise more clearly, alongside the “Rule” the importance and value we place on our volunteers/members. This document will also ensure we are protecting those we assist by ensuring all volunteers are inducted and trained alongside a robust application process facilitated and supported by the M.S.O’s. We will need the support of all current members/volunteers in ensuring these guidelines are implemented. There was overwhelming agreement by the many members and staff that this standardisation will vastly help to bring consistency and clarity across the Society in this area. The application process alongside the training will support both the current and new volunteer/member in fulfilling their role in a safe and professional manner. Volunteering is a professional service we provide to some of the most vulnerable people in our society, so we need to ensure we are doing everything to support the highest standard of service delivery.

## **Inclusion of Members/Volunteers**

Over the next few months the Membership Support Officers will be out in the regions attempting to establish how we can best support the role of the volunteer/member and to hear their views on how we can enhance the Quality of our Visitation work.

Some suggestions of what might be done in the future are:

- A Conference/members handbook
- Guidelines on Education Grants
- Confidentiality Guidelines
- Training in Skills development for “Visitation”
- Establishing a Members communication tool so members can support each other and transfer knowledge.
- On-line access to supports for Home Visitation

We have over 11,000 volunteer/members in the Society giving up a total of at least 33,000 hours of their time each week. This incredible commitment of time to those struggling in the community needs to be supported and guided. We hope that those we assist will ultimately benefit from the new standards.



# Backlane Hostel

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A Century of Service to  
Homeless People in Dublin

1915-2015

## ORIGINS

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The opening of the Society's Night Shelter in Back Lane, Dublin in May 1915 had its origins in a housing crisis as acute as that experienced in Dublin this past Winter. In 1912, the Archbishop of Dublin, Most Rev, William Walsh appealed for the support of the charitable public "To provide shelter for the crowds of men, decent and honest, but without work and the means to pay for lodgings, who filled the city streets". The Society responded and an old store at 7 Great Strand St was acquired, 44 beds were installed, benches where food could be served were erected and a basic free night shelter service commenced. It soon became apparent that the Strand St premises were inadequate to meet the demand and The Lord Mayor of Dublin, Lorcan Sherlock, and Archbishop Walsh launched an appeal for funds for a new shelter.



Backlane Hostel Dormitory 1915

# ESTABLISHMENT OF BACKLANE

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A site on the other side of the Liffey at Back Lane near Christchurch was found and a sum of £5000 was raised by public subscriptions ( the Archbishop and Lord Lieutenant, Lord Aberdeen, being among the more generous contributors). The new building which was styled “St Vincent DePaul Free Night Shelter for Homeless Catholic Men” was purpose built and well equipped with 140 beds in dormitory accomodation and, with dining room, laundry and other essential facilities. The opening ceremony took place on 9 May 1915. The Archbishop presided and there was a large attendance of clergy, prominent citizens and members of the Society. While it was not the practise in the Society at the time to publicise the names of the members driving the project, the records show in particular the pioneering contribution of Andrew J. Keogh (President), Raphael M O’Callaghan (Vice President) and John Canon Flanagan PP SpiritualDirector all of whom remained actively associated with the Night Shelter until their deaths in the 1930’s.

# EARLY YEARS

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From the beginning the purpose of the Night Shelter (which despite its full title never confined its services to Catholic men) was not only to provide comfortable accomodation and meals but also to assist the men to improve their situation. A particular focus in the early years was to help them gain employment. This extract from a March 1916 report by the Night Shelter Committee illustrates the aspirations “Although nominally a shelter, it is really a home where much human misery is assuaged, where many hearts bruised and deadened in an unequal struggle with a hard and censorious world, have been lifted up again by words of sympathy and kindly encouragement”.

There was a close interaction between the members of the Society and the residents. With due deference to the privacy of each man, there was a formal interview with a member of the Society who endeavoured to identify the needs of the person and how they might be met. It might be the provision of suitable clothing and footwear for a job interview, funds for travel (many of the men came through Dublin on their way to or from work in England or Scotland) often provided in conjunction with the Mendicity Institution, or just friendly advice.

In the early years, and for many years after, there was particular emphasis on the spiritual as well as the temporal welfare of the men. There were prayers and a spiritual reflection led by members every evening. Catholic literature and rosary beads were provided. Mass and Confession were available regularly thanks to the support of the Jesuit Fathers from Milltown Park and Rathfarnham Castle.

In the aftermath of the Easter Rising when there was widespread destitution in the city due to a lack of food and the cessation of employment, the Night Shelter played a key role for a number of weeks as the South City base for the response by the Society’s visitation Conferences when more than 40,000 “tickets” (vouchers for provisions) of half a crown each were distributed to needy families.





Backlane Hostel Dining Hall 1915

# PATTERNS OF DEMAND

From its opening, there was a great demand for the services of the Night Shelter. The following table gives an indication of the growth during the first decade:

YEAR	ADMISSIONS	FREE MEALS
1916-1919	14459	20719 ( average per annum)
1920	16786	24 633
1921	30361	47607
1926	35022	70044

The spike in numbers during the 1920s reflects the disturbed political climate and the aftermath of the Civil War and also for a time an influx of men leaving Belfast because of the sectarian troubles there.

And who else was using the Night Shelter in these early years? The following extract from the 1923 Report tells us this:

“It is a fact that numbers of decent, respectable men are faced in Dublin with the necessity of spending nights in the open or lying in filthy draughty hall ways of tenement houses. The vicissitude of trade, the general character of the industrial system affects working men adversely from time to time, to an extraordinary and alarming extent. They must go for long periods unemployed. For a while they can pay for a bed in a common lodging house. But it often happens that their last penny is gone before they secure work. If the Shelter did not exist they would have no shelter. Hungry, footsore, heartsick men cannot endure in this climate such a hardship without intense suffering and even great danger to life”

What a contemporary note this has about it! What also unfortunately has a familiar ring is the numbers sleeping rough in Dublin. A street count carried out by the police on a single night in November 1925 in Dublin found 116 men and 18 women sleeping rough (or as it was politely described “Travelling for Work”).

# FUNDING THE NIGHT SHELTER IN THE FIRST FIFTY YEARS

The service offered to the men in the Night Shelter was free for almost the first 50 years. It was the proud claim of the Society members running the operation that in that time they did not draw on other Society funds nor get State assistance but depended entirely on the generosity of the charitable public. The main fundraising event for the first 30 years was an Annual Meeting held in the Mansion House presided over by The Lord Mayor and attended by a cross section of the business and professional life of the city. Audited Accounts and a detailed report on the activities in the Night Shelter were presented and formally proposed and seconded by leading citizens (which included such luminaries as John A. Costello SC (a future Taoiseach), William O’B Fitzgerald (a future Chief Justice), the Earl of Wicklow and many Lord Mayors, prominent medical consultants and Clergy.

The motion “That the St Vincent de Paul Free Night Shelter for Homeless Catholic Men is worthy of support of the citizens of Dublin and that a Subscription List be now opened” paved the way for donations to be made.

In looking at the funding of the Night Shelter in the early years, reference should be made to the generous support of successive Archbishops of Dublin. Archbishop Walsh was instrumental in the establishment of the Night Shelter, his successor Archbishop Edward Byrne was very supportive and gave a generous annual donation which was maintained by his successor Archbishop John Charles McQuaid.



## DEVELOPMENT OF THE SERVICE ( 1930-60)

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In the decades of low economic growth, high emigration and unemployment which followed, the capacity of the Night Shelter was stretched and many problems had to be overcome.

During the Emergency rationing brought its challenges. A severe shortage of fuel was solved when the Night Shelter acquired its own bog in the Wicklow mountains and men, all staying at the Shelter, were employed to cut the turf. Despite constraints on resources in this economically lean period, gradual improvements to the service were made. A four course Sunday lunch served by members was introduced. Single cubicles replaced the long dormitories. 20 beds were dedicated for longer term residents who were old or infirm. The dining room was modernised and a billiards room introduced. In June 1951 a fine oratory was built and Mass continues to be celebrated there regularly.

“

*In the decades of low economic growth, high emigration and unemployment which followed, the capacity of the Night Shelter was stretched and many problems had to be overcome.*

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## FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS ( 1960 - 2000)

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In this period, the typical user of the Night Shelter was a middle aged single man, unemployed, often a returned emigrant with alcohol issues staying for a short period before moving on to another hostel in the circuit. The few staff employed were involved in catering and cleaning and while members sought to get to know and assist the men as in the past, there were limitations to the effectiveness of their intervention due to the more complex nature of the problems presented. Resources were constrained. For much of this period, the annual running costs (about £ 7000 in 1966 ,for example) were still met in full by charitable donations. It was only towards the end of the period that grants towards running costs were received from Dublin Corporation and the Eastern Health Board.

When State Capital grants became available towards the end of this period, the Conference of St Camillus de Lellis responsible for running the Night Shelter successfully embarked on a major redevelopment. A new wing was added in 1995 and the hostel was reconfigured to provide single bedrooms for each of the 69 residents. This brought the Night Shelter into the modern era.

# ADAPTING TO NEW REQUIREMENTS (2000- 2015)

State policies towards homeless people changed radically in this period. There was a welcome emphasis on assisting the homeless person toward independent living rather than remain in the short term hostel circuit. This policy change required professional key working staff to be employed. There was also a requirement for the physical facilities in all hostels to be upgraded.

The Society responded in two ways to meet these challenges. It undertook a major reconfiguration of the Night Shelter. The older wing (dating from 1915) was completely modernised to provide 18 ensuite bedrooms to give suitable permanent accommodation to 18 men with physical or other disabilities who would not be capable of independent living. Improvements were made to kitchens, boilers, lifts and the roof, and there was a general modernisation of all parts of the Night Shelter to ensure a warm and welcoming ambience. All this was financed from the Society's own resources, donated by the charitable public.

In 2011, President Mary McAleese in her last day in office honoured the Night Shelter by formally opening the refurbished wing. The other step which the Society took to ensure that its operations and services to the men residing in the Shelter were up to the new standards required was to enter into a partnership with Depaul in 2002. To mark this important development the Night Shelter was renamed Backlane Hostel. This continues to be a fruitful and harmonious collaboration 13 years later.



## DEPAUL A VINCENTIAN PARTNERSHIP

Depaul is part of Depaul International (a sister organisation of the Society's within the International Vincentian Family which shares the Society's ethos and values) and was established in 1989 by a request from Cardinal Basil Hume to the Daughters of Charity and the Society in London to respond to the crisis there among homeless young people. Depaul International is now in six countries (UK, Ireland, France, USA, Slovakia and Ukraine) where, in collaboration with the Vincentian Fathers, Daughters of Charity and the Society, it provides a range of homeless services through its professional staff teams and volunteers.

In Ireland, where it has been since 2002 Depaul, specialises in supporting people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness both in the Republic and Northern Ireland. It has 352 professionally trained staff and 342 volunteers over 20 specialised services serving over 2000 people in need every year.

In Backlane Hostel, Depaul works in partnership with the Conference of St Camillus de Lellis. Depaul is responsible for day-to-day operations and employs all 30 staff, which includes skilled staff engaged in key working with the 42 men who use the Shelter on a short term basis to assist them to deal with the issues confronting them (Backlane Hostel comprises of 42 Supported Temporary

Accommodation [STA] beds for men over the age of 18 referred from Dublin's Central Placement Service, alongside 18 permanent long-term beds, supporting men with a range of complex needs) and helping them to move on to independent living.

A Befriending Service, managed by Depaul and supported by the Society and a team of volunteers, assists men leaving the Shelter to settle in to independent living in their own accommodation. A volunteer team (including members of the student Conference in UCD) provides recreational services and entertainment to residents. A Daughter of Charity provides pastoral services.

The operating costs of the hostel are provided by Dublin City Council and the HSE while the Society endeavours, through fundraising and bequests, to fund the capital expenditure required to maintain the fabric of the hostel to a high standard.





# LAST WORDS - FOR NOW

For 100 years, the Night Shelter in Back Lane has been providing a service to homeless men, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. A distinctive red brick building with its statue of St Vincent outside, it is prominent on the South city landscape and over the years has become a beacon for homeless people looking for a place to rest their head.

In those 100 years, there have been many changes not only in the building itself but in those using it and the environment in which it operates. From working men temporarily unable to afford lodgings in 1915; to the returned Irish navy with an alcohol issue in the 1950's; to the young man struggling to cope with an addiction problem in 2015, the Night Shelter has been there for them not only to provide accomodation and sustenance but to offer friendly advice to open up the possibility for them of remaking their lives and salvaging their destiny as men. From being a completely voluntary service for much of its existence, since 2002 the hostel has had the benefit of the professionalism of the staff team of Depaul which is essential if the complexities of modern homelessness are to be successfully tackled and the requirements of statutory policy to be met.

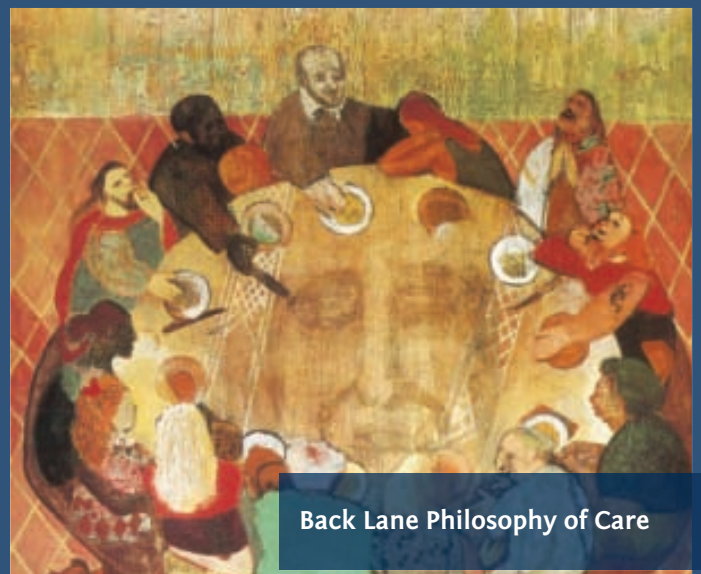
Established before the State was born, it is a sad fact that the need for a service like that provided in Back Lane is greater now than when The Lord Lieutenant made his donation, despite all the progress the Irish State has made. There were more people sleeping rough in Dublin last Winter than in the street count in November 1925. The profile of men who are homeless may have changed and become more complex but it is an inadequate supply of social housing and affordable private sector accomodation that is at the heart of the problem in 2015 as it was in 1915.

In looking back, it is appropriate to remember with some justifiable pride the many members of the Society working in the Night Shelter whose voluntary commitment and hard work kept the doors open in good times and bad and whose vision enabled it adapt to changing circumstances; to pay tribute to the dedicated staff the Night Shelter was fortunate to have over the years (paying particular tribute to two families who gave exceptionally long service – the

Heafey family in the 1950/60s and the Haughton family over the past 25 years); to acknowledge with gratitude the many benefactors whose generosity enabled the Shelter to operate and expand and to recall the thousands of men who lived in the Shelter in the past 100 years. We can only hope that as the founding members wished in 1916, these men found not just a shelter but a home “where human misery is assuaged, where hearts bruised and deadened in an unequal struggle with a hard and censorious world, are lifted up by words of sympathy and kindly encouragement.”

We can be certain that there will be many changes in the homeless scene in the years ahead and that the venerable Night Shelter in Back Lane will be required to adapt and change its service to meet the changing needs of homeless men as it has done in the past century. The Conference of St Camillus de Lellis of the Society of St Vincent de Paul and its partner Depaul look forward to working together to provide high quality homeless services in Back Lane as long as they are required in the spirit of St Vincent de Paul and Blessed Frederic Ozanam.

LJT



Back Lane Philosophy of Care



# SVP Breaking New Ground for Social Housing in Foxford, Co. Mayo

*by Albert Perris,  
National Manager of Specialist Services*

St. Patrick's Conference in Foxford, Co. Mayo, was joined on Friday the 10th April, by V. Rev Padraig Costello PP and Rev. Andrea Wills, SVP Members, Local Councilors', T.Ds. and officials, for the blessing of the site, and breaking of ground, for a new development of SVP Social Housing, in the centre of the town. A total of 14 new units are to be developed in two phases on the site which was donated by St. Nathy's Trust. The scheme is being financed under the Department of the Environment's Capital Assistance Scheme (CAS), and will be called after St. Michael, the Parish Patron.

Addressing the gathering, Regional President, Mr. Pat KIELTY paid tribute to St Patrick's Conference, which celebrated its Golden Jubilee in 2014, and all involved in the project locally. Special acknowledgment was paid to Mr. Joe Davitt, SVP Regional Vice President, who has been the driving force behind the development.

St. Patrick's Conference had visited a number of SVP Housing schemes throughout the country in researching best practice,

both in the design, and management of social housing, and have worked closely with SVP National Office in developing their plans. The Conference has been assisted by other SVP Housing Conferences, in lending their experience, expertise and resources, notably by their colleagues in Castlebar.

According to Albert Perris, National Manager of Specialist Services, the scheme in Foxford is one of a number of current Social Housing projects in development. Plans are at an advanced stage for the development or extension of a number of SVP Housing schemes in Malahide, Co. Dublin, Ballymote, Co. Sligo, and Ballinamore, Co. Leitrim.

The scheme in Foxford is the latest in a long line of SVP Housing projects in the West of Ireland. There are existing schemes in Charlestown, Ballaghaderreen, Tubbercurry, Swinford, Ballymote, Ballinamore, Tuam, Galway, Westport and Castlebar.

## Stop feeling useless, says Fr. McVerry



Drogheda Area members gathered to celebrate another successful year.



Michel Murphy, Regional President, Mid West, mingles with Drogheda Area Vincentians before their Social gathering.

A most wonderful and memorable night was held in Ozanam Holiday Home, Mornington for the Drogheda SVP members on January 23rd.

Guest speaker for the night was Fr. Peter McVerry SJ – the nationally well-known Jesuit Priest and campaigner for homeless people.

Fr. McVerry said Mass for our members and thanked them for their concern for the poor and vulnerable in our society. He said that “In my experience the worst effect for those in poverty has been the sense of uselessness and pointlessness. The feeling that they had no value and nobody would notice if they were not around.”

He praised Society members who offer people back their sense of self-worth and dignity and said that this, more than all the material help we give, is our greatest contribution to people in need.

Municipal Mayor Cllr. Kevin Callan was also present and thanked all SVP members for the great work they do in the community. As an elected representative he sees at first hand this work and the positive impact it is having.

Following Mass and homily the members sat down to a lovely meal provided by the staff of our Ozanam Holiday Home, followed by music and dancing.

The night was very much enjoyed by all and was a excellent opportunity for members from different Conferences to get to know each other. It is hoped we will have a night like this every year to acknowledge the great work done by our members.



## DO YOU KNOW SOMEONE WHO NEEDS A WELL DESERVED BREAK?

Would you like a holiday beside the sea or help someone you know who deserves a well-earned break? The **Ozanam Holiday Centre**, Mornington, Co. Meath can do just that!

### A HAVEN BY THE SEA!

The Ozanam Holiday Centre has a great atmosphere of friendship that vibrates with music, laughter and dancing every night with live music. Nested away on over 4 acres of lush green land just 5mins walk to 6 miles of beautiful beaches overlooking the Irish Sea.

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6 nights, full board accommodation in ensuite twin rooms.  
Outdoor seating area | beautiful garden | Bowling green | Putting Green  
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# Increase donations for SVP today at NO EXTRA cost



## Did you know?

ALL receipted donations over €50 received could be worth up to an extra €13 to us.

Through the CHY3 Tax Effective Giving Scheme, Revenue allows charities to claim tax relief on all\* eligible receipted donations over €50 made within one calendar year. Both PAYE and Self Assessed donors can now be included. All tax refunds received on foot of eligible CHY3 donations go back to your Conference.

## How to claim?

To claim the tax relief on eligible receipted donations and increase the value of donations, be you a donor or an SVP Conference, just follow these easy steps:

1. **Conference Treasurer:** Record details of each donation received (monthly, annual or other) by donor name in the Treasurers Ledger. Records of each donation must be maintained as Revenue may ask to see them. Send all donors whose donation(s) amount to €50 or more in one year a CHY3 cert and return envelope with their thank you letter / receipt.
2. **Donors:** Donors simply sign the form once and return to National Office in the freepost envelope provided. As this is an enduring cert, it covers any future donations received from donors for 5 years.

3. **National Office:** National Office then processes the claim directly with Revenue and will return eligible funds directly to the local Conference.

## Not claimed previously?

Conferences can claim the tax on any receipted donation for 4 previous years including 2014, 2013, 2012 and 2011, however these must be submitted by September 18th 2015 to be included in this years claim. Any forms received after that date will be included in 2016 claim.

## Where can I get CHY forms and information packs?

Your Conference or Regional Office will send you the CHY3 form. Conferences can request more CHY3 certs, freepost envelopes and letter templates simply call Deborah Costello on 01 829 9029 or email Deborah@svp.ie.

\* Donations from Ltd Companies are not included in CHY3 Tax Effective Giving Scheme. €900



# **An incredible €65,000 raised by Irish 'Jailbreakers'**



At 9am on Saturday 7th March 88 teams from eight Irish universities gathered at Collins Barracks, Dublin, to take part in the annual Jailbreak competition run by Trinity VDP, Law Soc. and DU Amnesty. This year was the third year for the hugely popular event and arguably the most successful yet.

With new rules in place, teams of two had to race to reach an unknown destination within 36 hours, without taking a flight of more than two hours, flying out the same country they flew into, or using any of their own money. They also had to complete at least four charity challenges before they crossed the finish line.

Before competitors raced off they were told only that the location was in the Balkan Peninsula, with further clues to the exact place to be given over the weekend.

Sam Holt, a member of Trinity VDP said "I first took part in Jailbreak in my second year in college, and I loved it so much I decided to do it again! Originally, it just seemed like a fun thing to do. My partner and I had no idea how big this was going to become and so we really didn't know what to think.

"This year it was entirely different, it was a race, and anyone's to win. It was probably one of the most exciting things I've ever done in college. It turned Jailbreak into a real participant sport. Racing to a location in Europe you aren't entirely sure of against all your peers has to be one of the most bonkers things I've ever heard and I am so proud I've done it. I would be gutted if I had let this pass me by in college!"

For the first 24 hours teams blagged, bartered and schemed their way towards the peninsula, before finally being told at mid-day on Sunday the exact location – Lake Bled, Slovenia. This proved a little late for one of the competitors who a few hours earlier, while in Slovenia, had traded his flip flops for a seat on a bus to Croatia – certain that it would be the final destination! But it is not all about the adventure. Sam McMahon another Trinity member who took part in Jailbreak with James Orr told us

"James and I are heavily involved in our college society of Trinity Vincent de Paul. James is an Activity Leader for the SVP Kids' Literacy programme and I'm the Activity Leader for the SVP Soup Run. Through our involvement in SVP we have first-hand experience of where some of the money we fund-raised would be going to, and who it would be helping.

"We understood the importance of fundraising for both these charities. We were able to raise almost €1,600 - mainly through our success over the weekend of Jailbreak, but also by holding fundraising games nights and dinners prior to Jailbreak taking place."



Sam Holt added "The bottom line is that none of the things that SVP do can happen without fundraising. Jailbreak raises thousands for Vincent De Paul, creates amazing awareness for Amnesty, all whilst college students are out living their lives to the fullest. It really is a wonderful combination. Charity doesn't have to be all work and no play!"

The winners, Trinity students Ahmad Mu'azzam and Hugh Weldon, arrived in Lake Bled at around 1pm on Sunday, seven hours before the 8pm deadline, after fundraising for flights on Grafton Street; bartering for a taxi to Dublin Airport; taking a flight to Paris; fundraising in Charles de Galle Airport; taking a train to Brussels and being upgraded to first class on a flight to Ljubljana! They raised over €2,000 for St. Vincent de Paul and Amnesty International

Sam McMahon and James Orr came in a close second "Coming 2nd place was pretty a complete surprise! We had the times of our lives - hopping on flights to Brussels, getting night trains to Munich - before getting on another flight to Ljubljana, which happened to be the closest airport to Location X which was revealed as soon as we landed. We were very lucky with our timing and decision to get a flight there!"

Sam Holt and his team mate didn't fare so well. After narrowly making an overnight train from Munich to Croatia by just 3 minutes, they woke up in the morning to find themselves in Hungary, 600km from where they were supposed to be, after half of their train detached and headed to Budapest!

Overall, Jailbreak raised an incredible €65,000 this year for The Society of St Vincent de Paul and Amnesty International, as well as raising awareness in Ireland and across Europe for the important work carried out by the Society.

Congratulations to all the teams and thank you to everyone who supported them this year!



By Johnmark McCafferty,  
Head of SVP Social  
Justice and Policy Team

# Managing Great Expectations: Speaking to Government Leaders about Future Social Challenges

Given my SVP perspective and work as a social advocate, I was asked by a civil servant from the Department of Communications to speak to the Assistant Secretaries General of Government recently. These are senior officials who are the level below the Secretaries General of each of the Government Departments. From the front podium, I counted roughly 100 civil servants gathering in Farmleigh House, Phoenix Park in late April for a day to consider their role in delivering better public administration.

At a time of economic recovery, at least in the Greater Dublin Area, and as the general election and the centenary of 1916 approach, thoughts and media discussion turn to 'payback' of some kind – mostly in the tax and pay area. So there are Great Expectations. This was the title of the day in Farmleigh, and is a story full of big themes - love and rejection, poverty and wealth, and good eventually winning over evil. I asked the audience whether we will have better policies post-austerity, or if Government risks making the same mistakes again just to make quick wins?

I was also asked to consider future social challenges which implies an element of prediction. Now prediction is very difficult, especially when it relates to the future, according to Niels Bohr, the Danish physicist. As it happens, the origin of this quote is contested – as are the possible solutions to the big issues of the day: childcare; housing; climate change; an aging population; and

how public services are going to be paid for given the expenditure ceilings we now have as a Eurozone country.

From the perspective of Conference Visitation and our services, it appears that the biggest issues are: housing and rental cost problems; energy poverty; barriers to accessing the labour market and intergenerational disadvantage, or the persistence of poverty. An essential contribution to addressing the last two issues is the provision of early childhood care and education, and also afterschool care. So in a nutshell, the social challenges that present to us – and therefore the solutions - are mostly about access to services. An adequate income is vital, but alone it is insufficient to tackle inequality across the board or meet Ireland's broader objectives.

SVP is associated with cash payments as an organisation, but so is Government policy. Irish social policy is skewed; with an orientation leaning toward the provision of income (through measures such as tax reliefs or tax cuts) at the ongoing expense of service provision. It is my firm belief that Ireland will fail to adequately meet current and future social challenges if we continue to neglect the provision of public services in the way that we have done to date. Only a broader network of supports – in the form of a long-term social investment package encompassing Housing, Warmer Homes (retrofitting), Early Childhood Care and Education, Health and Public Transport- can help us realise our potential.

The tendency for pro-cyclical economics in Ireland (spending during a boom, cutting during a bust) and the inevitable temptation for Governments to opt for give-away election budgets, in terms of tax cuts and other promises, appear too strong for politicians to resist. Public Sector Pay increases are in the ether, as are cuts to income tax / USC and related measures. I told the Assistant Secretaries gathered that I hoped I had some resonance with them regarding investment in public services over the long term. Public services aren't cheap, and compete with many other legitimate demands, yet they are vital if we hope to respond effectively to current and future social challenges. Supporting these is my great expectation of the Civil Service.

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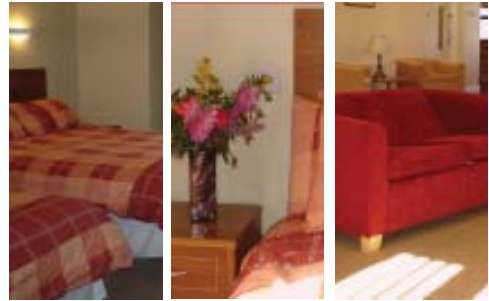
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*Happy to Help*

## SVP Jobs Shadow

Job Shadow Day is a national project organised by the Irish Association of Supported Employment (IASE) bringing people with disabilities and local employers together for one day to promote equal employment opportunities and highlight the valuable contribution people with disabilities can and do make at work.

Participants explore the world of work by 'shadowing' someone in the workplace as they go about their normal working routine. SVP participated this year with Dermot Redmond supported by his job coach Brian O Toole shadowing National Secretary Andy Heffernan for the day. We also had participants in a number of the shops whilst Keith Harvey shadowed the team in the warehouse in Dublin.

The Society's participation in this initiative is important and is very much aligned with our support of inclusion and for people accessing mainstream work.



*Pictured above are Andy Heffernan, Nichola Mullen, Dermot Redmond and Brian O Toole.*

# Intergenerational Poverty

By Peg Hanafin

All research and data provided by many different organisations dealing with the causes of intergenerational poverty say that its elimination can be achieved by education and productive employment. At this moment in time, in Ireland, we have 137,000 children who live in consistent poverty, an indictment on the way our Governments have chosen to abandon a whole section of society with the policies they continue to pursue.

We all know families who are consistently poor from generation to generation and life appears to have dealt them a raw deal. They are excluded from society and are in constant difficulties. Disadvantages are transmitted to children and following generation is socially excluded.

A wide range of issues are associated with the intergenerational transmission of poverty from parents to children. A complex set of negative factors make up the package that is transferred from generation to generation.

Discrimination and intolerance by society surrounding those far from the labour market adds to the problems of children from poor families. If you live in a home where early childhood education is not easily accessible and school education may not be a priority for parents, a child is disadvantaged through no fault of their own. Addictions, domestic violence, poor nutrition and healthcare, exclusion associated with class, ethnicity, gender or religion are all signs known to be the pathway to poverty. A poor child who is disadvantaged from birth will be more likely to eventually become a poor adult. This is what the statistics tell us.

Other factors that keep people poor are sickness, adolescent pregnancies (although most one parent families do not fit this profile), early school leaving, coping with family conflicts, household breakdown and challenges to mental health. Those with little coping skills and low educational levels will find themselves poor and isolated and excluded from society at large when trying to deal with all these negative issues.

Household income and individual assets are another facet of intergenerational poverty. Where parents have no disposable income, have no savings or assets and who continually struggle

to pay the day to day costs of running a home, have no way of giving their children a helping hand when they need assistance. The breakdown in relationships with the resultant fall in income for the family all add to rates of poverty that is unacceptable for the children and adults who suffer.

According to EU Survey of Incomes and Living Standards (SILC) for Ireland in 2013, the latest for which there is data, 12% of children between the ages of 0-17 live in consistent poverty. How do those in authority condone such disadvantage that will have long-term negative consequences for other citizens in this country into the future?

The poverty figures surrounding children have doubled from 6% in 2008 to 12% in 2013 in spite of the fact that our Minister for Social Protection tell us differently. In July of this year all lone parents for whom their youngest child is over seven will move to the Job Seekers (Transitional) Allowance payment, losing the One Parent Family Payment and related supports. Given that 63% of lone parent households experience deprivation, it is unconscionable that further poverty will be inflicted on these children. To escalate childrens' lives into a poverty trap belies the equality that Government claim to be promoting. In order for the root causes of poverty to be addressed, the question that we should all ask ourselves is how we want our country to progress. Education and gainful employment supporting a living wage is not too much to be able to offer the 'children of the nation', and bring a secure future which will benefit every citizen and allow a better standard of living to all. This can be delivered if the will and the policies are implemented by Government.

Until such time as Government policy changes in favour of a just income for parents with children and the educational system erases literacy and numeracy problems, we will continue to have intergenerational poverty. Intergenerational poverty affects us all either directly or indirectly and its consequences have far reaching circumstances for all of society. We need to address poverty in all its forms to make our society just and equitable and each one of us are duty bound to achieve this goal.





## WHAT DO PARENTS NEED TO EARN TO AFFORD CHILDCARE?

The VPSJ has recently published a Working Paper which looks at Ireland's high childcare costs, and how much parents would need to earn to afford both formal childcare and to provide a socially acceptable minimum standard of living for their family.

The ongoing research by the VPSJ on Minimum Essential Budget Standards has repeatedly demonstrated the difficulty low income households face in affording a socially acceptable minimum standard of living, and has found that the high costs of formal childcare are a significant element in driving up the expenditure and income requirements of households with children.

The Working Paper examines One Parent and Two Parent household types with one child, and how needs change with the age of the child. The paper considers children in three age-groups:

- A baby – approximately 9 months old
- A pre-school age child – 3 years old
- A primary school age child – 6 years old

The paper calculates how much these households need to spend, in order to have all the elements required for a Minimum Essential Standard of Living, and what they would need to earn to afford these costs.

## COST OF A CHILD & CHILDCARE

The cost of a child's Minimum Essential Standard of Living starts at €89 per week for a baby, dips for a pre-school age child and then rises again as the child gets older. However, when the costs of full-time formal childcare are included, the cost of a child can increase by up to 4 times.

The average weekly cost of full-time formal childcare in Dublin is:

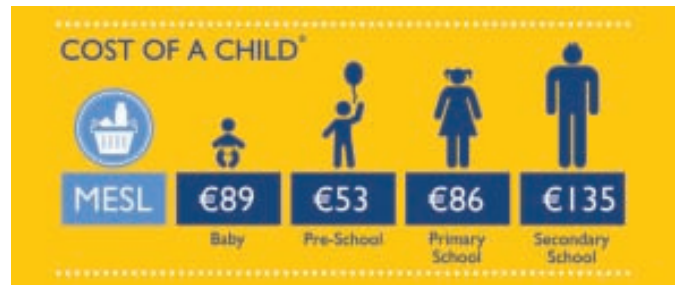
- Baby €210
- Pre-School €180
- Primary School €122

## INTERNATIONAL CHILDCARE COSTS

Childcare costs in Ireland are exceptionally high. The OECD compares childcare costs internationally, and measures the cost of full-time formal childcare against average wages.

Childcare costs in Ireland are more than double the EU average, and that is after taking account of Child Benefit. Furthermore, public spending on childcare in Ireland is amongst the lowest in the EU.

The European Commission and the OECD have both noted the high costs of childcare in Ireland; how they act as a barrier to taking up work, are a notable factor in limiting women's employment rates and contribute to female under-employment.



## MINIMUM WAGE INADEQUACY

The National Minimum Wage (NMW) of €8.65 per hour does not provide the basis of an adequate household income for either a Two Parent or One Parent household, with one child, living in Dublin.

A Two Parent household, with both adults employed full-time earning the NMW, will have a weekly household income (after taxes and including Child Benefit) of €664 per week.

A One Parent household, with the adult employed full-time earning the NMW, and one child (aged 6 or under), earns a net salary of €318 per week. In addition, they would qualify for social welfare supports including the One-Parent Family Payment and Family Income Supplement. The total weekly household income is €516.

Childcare costs can take up to 40% of a household's net income, when earning the National Minimum Wage.

In all six cases the income from the minimum wage and social welfare supports falls far short of what these household compositions need to spend for a socially acceptable minimum standard of living, including the cost of formal childcare and rented housing in Dublin.

- Two Parent household would need to spend between €740 and €830 per week
- One Parent household would need to spend between €632 and €722 per week

To afford childcare, and a MESL, salaries notably above the minimum wage are required.

- Two Parents – each adult needs a salary of up to 1 ½ times the NMW
- One Parent – the adult needs a salary of up to 2 ½ times the NMW

## WHAT CAN BE DONE?

It is clear that childcare costs in Ireland are too high and unaffordable for those on lower incomes. The Working Paper examines hypothetical scenarios, including the impact of Scandinavian style subsidised childcare and free childcare.

It finds that the households could afford a Minimum Essential Standard of Living on the minimum wage, if they did not have to pay for childcare directly.

The paper also finds that a Scandinavian style system of childcare would mean Two Parent households would have to earn only marginally above the minimum wage; but further supports would be required for One Parent households.

The full paper presents the findings in more detail, it is available online at [www.budgeting.ie](http://www.budgeting.ie)

Robert Thornton VP



*The direct costs are based on what children need for a minimum essential standard of living in Ireland today. Although the standard of living is set at a minimum level, it is not a standard dictated by affordability or mere survival. The standard is grounded in social consensus about the goods and services children need to have if they are to enjoy a minimum essential standard of living.*



# TACKLING POVERTY IN RURAL AREAS

*By Seamus Boland  
CEO Irish Rural Link*



One of the more successful social welfare means of tackling poverty in rural areas is the farm assist scheme. Aimed at farmers whose income is usually well below any measurement of real poverty, the scheme seeks to provide what is a lifeline to farmers who for all sorts of reasons cannot make ends meet. It is means tested and because of the presence of assets such as land and stock, the test is severe. So much so that many fail to qualify despite their dire circumstances and even worse many don't even apply on the basis that probably won't qualify.

In 2006 the number receiving payments was on the 14,000 mark. Yet despite the recession and the extra burdens it has brought on families that number is down to 8,928 as stated by Minister Joan Burton in March of this year. One of the reasons advanced is that the eligibility entry has changed with the effect that a scheme already difficult to enter is even more restrictive. Currently weekly rate as of 2015 are:

Farm Assist	Maximum weekly rate
Personal Rate	€188.00
Qualified Adult	€124.80
Qualified Child dependent	€29.80 (full rate) €14.90 (half rate)

To qualify for this there is a range of tests that the person must meet in terms of income received on the farm, spousal or partner income, income from property and so on. Also the capital value of the assets is taken into account. As a means test it is extremely thorough and from a taxpayers point of view rightly so.

The means test takes account of almost all forms of income and assess accordingly. Separate rules apply to income from farming and other forms of self-employment, income from certain schemes such as the Rural Environmental Protection Scheme (REPS) and Agri-Environmental Options Scheme (AEOS), income from employment and income from property and capital.

On application for the scheme the applicant is visited by a social welfare officer. Their job is to examine various documents such as accounts prepared for tax purposes, creamery returns, cattle registration cards, details of headage payments, area aid. They will examine information on the sale of crops, cattle, milk and other produce. The officer will assess the costs actually and necessarily incurred in connection with the running of the farm. These costs may include rent, annuities, and the cost of inputs like feed and fertiliser and the depreciation of farm machinery. Labour costs are taken into account, with the exception of the labour of the farmer and spouse, civil partner or cohabitant. You are entitled to receive a copy of the farm income calculation. Spousal or partner income will also be taken into account.

Unfortunately for many of the applicant's point of view it is extremely difficult and bureaucratic. In effect the test eliminates many of the applicants who are already well below the level of measurable poverty. Farmers are often in this situation because of illness, large debts accrued because of enterprise failure, bad weather or an unexpected crisis that demanded high resources in terms of time and money. Sadly mental illness is also a factor and although the farmer may have more land than the normal expected, their financial situation especially for the family is often perilous. The strict means test often means that the farmer will still be unable to improve the income situation and in many cases the situation worsens.

From its own assessments Irish Rural Link believe that the current scheme could be extended to accommodate up to twenty thousand farmers in any given year. Their situation may well be temporary and with a proper financial and socially based plan the farmer will most likely extricate themselves from their situation.

It is time to look at this scheme in a more holistic way. As well as income support the farmer will need a range of supports, which if supplied at the right time and in a planned way would allow the family to improve their situation over a medium to long-term period.



# SVP SHOPS ENJOY UNRIVALLED CONNECTIONS IN THE LOCAL COMMUNITY



The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul has over 180 shops across Ireland selling a huge range of goods from sofas to wedding dresses, vintage wear, back to school clothes, bric a brac, books, and much more.

Due to the fantastic work of our employees and volunteers, our shops enjoy unrivalled connections in the local community. They offer a local blend of fantastic value for money, great customer service and, just as importantly, an opportunity for social interaction in a unique environment.

Our shops not only provide new and lightly worn items at affordable prices, but also support local Conference with Vincent's Gift Tokens for clothing and furniture, which enable the people we support to pick out what they need. In addition, with an average of 20 million sales a year, they form an important source of income for the Society, which is recycled directly back into the communities they serve.

Recently, we have celebrated the opening of several new shops across Ireland including the SVP Curiosity shop in Oranmore, opened recently by popular rugby star Robbie Henshaw. Lots of local families turned out for the opening and were delighted with the opportunity to meet Robbie and get his autograph. The shop is a treasure trove of exciting finds, based in a newly refurbished retail unit, with its own car park, in the centre of Oranmore village. At a glance, you will see a wide choice of second-hand and nearly new clothing for men, women and children, footwear, antiques and collectables as well as household items, games, books and CD's.

Ann Coyle, President of the volunteer group which oversees the operation of the Curiosity Shop in Oranmore and its sister store on Merchants Road, Galway welcomed all guests and spoke of her vision to open a shop in East Galway and her delight at being present for the official opening after all the planning and organisation. She wished Rob Pierce Martin the best of luck as manager of the Oranmore store.

Also speaking on behalf of SVP, Gerry Watters, Galway Shop Manager said, 'We would like to thank all the supporters who helped in the realisation of the new shop opening, these include Madge McGreal, SVP regional administrator and a number of volunteers including Michael Begley and Jim Harrington. Several locals assisted with the refurbishment of the property including Jarlath Sweeney who supplied the shop fittings and undertook internal building works, John O'Brien installed the fittings, our thanks also go to David Healy, electrician, Niall Carroll, plumber and Tom Dempsey who supplied the flooring. This project received great support from Tony Buckley and the team in Galway City Partnership, TÚS workers and Julie McGrath of Galway Rural Development Co.'

'We are really pleased with the bright and modern shop, and we hope that customers will enjoy the experience. We are most grateful for all offers of support and donations of saleable items,' commented Rob Pierce Martin, manager of the new Curiosity Shop Oranmore, 'there's definitely something for everyone here, from clothing, footwear, games and books for kids and adults, to everyday wear as well as occasion outfits for all the family.' When you step inside, not only will you have a fantastic shopping experience, but you will also be helping to make an important contribution to the work carried out by SVP to combat poverty and support people in need in Galway. Other shop openings around Ireland....

## Hundreds turnout to support the opening of the new Vincent's facility in Cookstown



After 10 months of extensive refurbishment, the 'Grand Opening' of the transformed St Vincent de Paul shop on Loy Street in Cookstown took place with more than 400 people from the community coming out to celebrate and see the facilities on offer.

The 'Vincent's' shop is now unrecognisable and would give any high street store a run for its money. With a bright, spacious interior, the store offers something for everyone. The ladies, men's and children's departments are clearly laid out with colourful stock, both new and pre-loved. There is also an ample selection of accessories including shoes and handbags with many bargain designer gems on offer.

John Meenan, chairman of the local SVP shop committee explained: "We could not be happier with how the shop has turned out and going by the reaction of those who were there at the grand opening, I think the public will be extremely impressed with the new shopping experience offered by Vincent's!

"What is different about the shop is that although it might look like a stylish boutique, the prices certainly do not reflect that. The main theme running throughout the outlet is 'value for money' and central to the St Vincent de Paul ethos, the shop remains a place for the local community to pick up affordable goods that they may not be able to get elsewhere. To meet local demand for cheaper furniture and white goods, there is also a newly built 'home' showroom with everything for the household from beds and sofas to washing machines and children's toys.

"Another important aspect to the St Vincent de Paul shops is the social opportunities they offer. To enhance this we have opened it up to be more inviting to people to come in and enjoy the company of our friendly volunteers. We have therefore included a coffee machine and a small seating area in store which will be a great place to catch-up with others in the community. We would welcome everyone to call in and take a look around and can't wait to see the reaction of our regulars as well as many new faces."

Denis Loughrey, president of St Vincent de Paul in Cookstown added: "The support shown to SVP from the local community has really been outstanding and I would like to thank everyone who came along to the opening and to those who have worked so hard to get us where we are today.

"The new 'Vincent's' facility is much more than just a state-of-the-art charity shop. It is a real community hub and an exciting new development for St Vincent de Paul. As our work is fully-funded by donations and delivered by volunteers, our shops are an essential stream of income for the charity so this improvement will allow us to expand our much-needed services further in the area."

SVP is also looking for new volunteers of all ages to help out in the shop. "If anyone has a few spare hours every month that they would like to put to good use, we would love to hear from you!" said Denis. "We welcome volunteers from all sections of the community and age and experience need not be barriers as we have a range of roles available with full training provided. For

a young person this could be a great achievement to put on a CV or UCAS form and valuable experience for anyone hoping for a future job in retail!"

The Vincent's shop will be open Monday to Friday 9am to 4pm and Saturday 10am to 3pm. To find out more about volunteering in the new Vincent's facility please call Denis Loughrey on 028 86769400 or visit [www.svp-ni.co.uk](http://www.svp-ni.co.uk).

### **A first for a Vincent's shop in Northern Ireland**

A new Vincent's shop in Meadowlane Shopping Centre, Magherafelt is the first Vincent's outlet to open in a Shopping Centre in Northern Ireland, marking new terrain for the charity

The new store was officially launched by Kate McEldowney, Chairperson of Magherafelt District Council and Geraldine Kieft, Conference President, St Patrick's Magherafelt.

Shops Coordinator, Ruairi Murray, commented "we are delighted that after 120 years of service SVP can now bring affordable goods to the people of Magherafelt, through this accessible outlet in a busy shopping centre". The shop will be an important source of revenue for the charity which allows us to expand our work further into the local community and help even more people in the area. The footfall of the shopping centre will also help to raise the profile of the Society in people's day to day life.

There is also good news for the fashion conscious as high street and designer clothing in our shop will be easily identifiable through our 'Vincent's', 'Elegance' and 'Vintage' clothing labels.

### **Third shop opens for Navan**

Navan SVP has opened its third shop in the town in recent months. The new venture, a ladies' fashion outlet aptly named Navan Labels Boutique, is centrally located at Kennedy Road. The range of stock, including designer label items at bargain prices, aims to appeal to women of all age groups, but many of the modern and vintage dresses, jackets and shoes on offer are especially attractive to younger generation customers. The enterprise, which looks to a high standard of retail excellence, has already featured on a well-received television production.

Sky Channel 191 highlighted the charity shop on a recent Meath Matters programme. This latest Meath SVP project will reinforce the work of the existing Navan Vincent's premises at Brews Hill and the Curiosity and Furniture Shop at the Balmoral Industrial Estate, Kells Road, both of which support the efforts of the Society in Navan in aiding the needy.





# MABS - the Gateway for those seeking Mortgage Debt Advice

By Michael Culloty

Mortgage debt has been in the news for a considerable time now with particular focus being on those who are in serious arrears and have not yet reached a resolution of their particular difficulty. While there are nearly 760,000 mortgages on private homes in the country, 110,000 mortgages are still in arrears and almost 38,000 are in arrears for more than two years. So the problem is still an acute national economic problem as well as one causing considerable stress and worry at an individual and family level.

The Government, in its recent announcement of new measures on May 12th, is eager to alleviate the impact of debt on families across the country so that people can move forward with their lives.

The new measures announced include a major reform of the insolvency framework, appeal to the courts for insolvency deals rejected by the banks and an expansion of the Mortgage to Rent Scheme to assist those whose mortgages are unsustainable.

The Government also announced, as part of the new measures, the strengthening of the role of MABS to enhance its existing role of providing independent information and advice to borrowers in arrears on the options available to them and to provide assistance to them in pursuing those options where necessary.

MABS has always assisted people in mortgage difficulty. In fact, almost 50% of clients now coming to MABS have a mortgage. MABS staff each and every day assist people struggling to pay their mortgage to reach affordable and sustainable agreements with their mortgage supplier. We anticipate that the new strengthening of MABS will enhance its existing role and extend it to provide a more complete and comprehensive independent service to clients in mortgage difficulty.

Struggling with mortgage debt is very stressful and it can be hard for people to know where to start. In the MABS

experience people go into denial when experiencing over-indebtedness. People in mortgage difficulty are no different and it seems that there is a considerable number who have not or are not presently engaging with their lender. While this reaction is understandable it is not a solution and can, and often does, result in the problem intensifying leading to the further stress which the threat of repossession will most surely bring.

It is the MABS view that as well as being in denial many households in mortgage difficulty, who are not engaging with their lender, are fearful and unsure of where to go to seek independent advice. Some MABS advisers, from their experience of being in court, are reporting that those who do attend a repossession hearing, (and many do not), are intimidated by the process and attend without any advice whatsoever. Some courts, when adjourning repossession cases are now advising people to go to MABS.

The Government's new initiative places MABS as the gateway for those in mortgage arrears to commence addressing their mortgage and all the other debt issues they may have. MABS anticipates that it will be in a position to offer those distressed borrowers a fuller suite of supports in coming to a resolution of their mortgage difficulty with the clear objective of keeping families in the homes.

As MABS is a free service, independent of the banks and other credit institutions, available nationwide, people should not have to face a court appearance or deal with the threat of losing their home without the independent advice and support available to them in MABS.

Through its work members of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul are likely to be in touch with individuals and families with a mortgage debt difficulty. If you as a member know someone who is struggling let them know about MABS. It's always their choice to talk to us but we are here to help them. We won't judge. We will listen and provide advice and support.

## Drogheda SVP benefits from 'Winner Takes all' Competition 2015



On Wednesday April 1st Drogheda's SVP Annual 'Winner Takes All' draw took place in Scholars Town House Drogheda.

Now in its 7th year the draw has become a major feature of SVP fundraising in the Boynesside town. Drogheda Municipal Mayor Cllr. Kevin Callan drew the winning card and the Chairman of Louth County Council, Cllr. Oliver Tully was on hand to pick the winning number. The lucky winner was Una Jein from Forest Park, Drogheda.

As the title of the draw states Una won the entire prize money – it's no wonder when we telephoned she thought we were playing an April fool joke on her!!

The prize itself contained a fantastic hamper; vouchers from many businesses including Gosh Cosmetics who have been supporters of the draw from the start.

Martin Mc Gowan from Scholars provided the beautiful setting and also the sumptuous food for the many people who turned up on the night.

Sincere thanks to the people of Drogheda and the surrounding area for supporting this draw and to the many SVP members and Transition Year students of St. Marys Diocesan School who sold the tickets.

Drogheda SVP continues to organise fundraisers on a regular bases – we wish them success!!

## Florin Fund raises €34 million

The AIB Florin Fund is the all-Ireland, voluntary subscription staff fund for SVP. The AIB Florin Fund was established in 1942 'to provide significant financial support for SVP' - When the fund began, AIB staff contributed two shillings or a 'florin' - which is how the fund got its name. Since the fund was established, it has contributed over €3,400,000 to SVP.

SVP thanks the staff of AIB Bank for their recent donation of €100,000. Their support of SVP has been invaluable in helping us meet the need we face in communities throughout Ireland.





## Secondary Schools in North County Dublin

An event to recognise the contribution of Secondary Schools to Saint Vincent De Paul activities in North County Dublin was organised by North County Area Council on March 12th. The event was kindly hosted by Lusk Community College.

Groups of students accompanied by teachers from eight Secondary Schools, two of which have SVP School Conferences, attended the event. Each school displayed a poster themed Together against Poverty highlighting activities they undertook in support of SVP in the past year. These were displayed at the gathering.

The meeting was addressed by Area President, Mary Ita Niall who thanked the students and their teachers for their fantastic contribution including fundraising efforts in the past year and especially in the lead into Christmas. Informative presentations on forming a Secondary School Conference were given by Loreto College, Swords and Loreto Secondary School, Balbriggan.

Students from St Joseph's Secondary School in Rush gave a presentation on their inspiring fundraising initiatives which raised €0,500 at Christmas through a variety of events and activities. The funds raised were used to provide hampers for distribu-

tion by the local Conference. Ardgillan Community College also presented the proceeds of a fundraising effort to support Sunshine House, a Society of St Vincent de Paul run scheme which provides week-long Summer holidays for children, aged 7 to 11, from disadvantaged parts of Dublin, Meath, Wicklow and Kildare.

Certificates of recognition and gratitude were presented by the North County Area Council which, included inspiring words from the founder of the Society Frederic Ozanam "I wish that all young people might unite in head and heart in some charitable work and that there be formed, throughout the whole country a vast generous association for the relief of the people".

After the meeting some refreshments were provided by our hosts Lusk Community College which, provided the North County Saint Vincent De Paul members, students and teachers a well deserved opportunity to relax and chat. The event has inspired Secondary Schools to be more proactive and a number are currently working towards establishing School Conferences. The afternoon proved to be a great success in highlighting and raising awareness of the work the Saint Vincent De Paul Society in the schools of North County Dublin carry out.

# 6th SVP Combined Teenage Celebration 2015

Liam Murphy,  
Munster Express, Waterford.  
Photos Joe Dalton

The Combined Teenage Celebration at Waterford Institute of Technology College Street Chapel, now in its 6th year, is a fine example of Secondary Schools putting on and sharing in a non-competitive way their musical and choral talents. The event is organized locally by SVP Member Joe Dalton with nine schools taking part.

This year the Celebration opened with a beautiful Enya song, Only Time, performed by Mercy Convent and was followed by a rendition of the Frozen song, Do You Want To Build A Snowman by Laura Broderick. Other performances included a beautiful tribute to the late Gloria Mulhall (who studied music at WIT) with her emotional piece, Garden of Graves; All I Want from Kodaline; Whitney Houston's hit, I Want To Dance With Somebody; and a beautiful Spanish guitar solo La Folia to name just a few.

The Celebration finished on a high note with a three guitar, drums and soundbox group performing Bruno Mars Funk It Up accompanied by four singers in dark glasses who energetically danced throughout the piece. It was easy to see why De La Salle College do an annual musical such is the confident display of talent.



## Contractors' hand over keys of newly rebuilt Clare Lodge Centre



At the beginning of May a significant milestone was reached in the redevelopment of Clare Lodge in Newcastle, St Vincent de Paul's only holiday centre in Northern Ireland. The keys of the new building were handed over by the construction team and the property is now in the hands of St Vincent de Paul.

Aidan Crawford, president of SVP's Northern Region commented, "So much hard work and planning has gone into this development so to reach this significant milestone in this project is very exciting! We would like to say a huge thank you at this stage to everyone that has put so much time and effort into the rebuild of Clare Lodge including the local St Vincent de Paul team and to the architects and contractors – they really have done a first-class job. The building is exactly what we wanted – a modern, spacious centre that is more suited to the 21st century and one that maximises the superb location and unbeatable views that our site has to offer.

"We are delighted that the construction phase is now complete and that we now have control of the premises. We are looking forward to getting the centre up and running and the Clare Lodge team will spend the next couple of months furnishing the building, recruiting new staff and putting the finishing touches to the facility to ensure it is top condition before opening it to the public. Watch this space!"

PHOTO: Spencer Savage from MSM Contracts hands over the keys of the newly rebuilt St Vincent de Paul premises to Brenda McLarnon, Clare Lodge centre manager. They are joined by Aidan Crawford, president of SVP in Northern Ireland, Pat Mackey, site manager, Tom Mulholland from SVP and Kathleen McGrath Area President for SVP in Kilmeggan.

## Mid-summer Ball

The Carrigtwohill Family Resource Centre is to hold a Mid-summer Ball on Friday June 19th at Middleton Park Hotel from 7.30pm in order to raise much-needed funds for the centre.

In order to help women prepare for the special night the staff and volunteers held a pre-event Fashion Show fundraiser in the centre where all the ladies could set their eyes on some stunning ball gowns which could be purchased the following day in the local Vincent's shop at amazing prices. Hair and makeup experts were at hand on the night to provide some invaluable advice and tips so that heads could turn on the dance floor at Middleton Park in June.

They also held a raffle where the money raised is to be sent to Nepal following the disasters which struck. One of the local volunteer members daughter happened to be in Nepal at the time of the earthquake and saw first hand the devastation it caused so everyone was happy to support this worthy cause.

There will be live music from "The Laughing Shamrocks" followed by a DJ until late on the night of the ball and the hilarious comedian Ross Browne will be MC for the night. There will be a drinks reception followed by a 3-course meal.

Tickets are €50 and available from Carrigtwohill Resource Centre or Vincent's Shop in Carrigtwohill.

CARRIGTWOHILL  
FAMILY  
RESOURCE  
CENTRE

Midsummer's  
Ball

FRIDAY  
JUNE 19<sup>TH</sup>  
2015

CARRIGTWOHILL FAMILY RESOURCE CENTRE  
INVITES YOU TO OUR

**Midsummer's Ball**

FRIDAY JUNE 19<sup>TH</sup> 2015  
AT MIDDLETON PARK HOTEL  
7.30PM

DRINKS RECEPTION FOLLOWED BY A 3 COURSE MEAL.

LIVE MUSIC FROM: *THE LAUGHING SHAMROCKS*, FOLLOWED BY DJ 'TIL LATE  
MC FOR THE NIGHT  
COMEDIAN: *ROSS BROWNE*

€50 PER PERSON

THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT

No.  



## Lord Mayor Hosts Civic Reception for Armagh Saint Vincent de Paul

Lord Mayor Cathy Rafferty of Armagh City & District Council held a civic reception for Conference members and shop volunteers in recognition of their long-standing commitment to charitable work within Armagh and its surrounding areas. The Lord Mayor recognised the quiet and often unrecognised work that SVP members undertake to alleviate the poverty and hardship that exists for many within the local community. The civic reception was her way of saying thank you. Northern Regional President Aidan Crawford and Vice President Cormac Wilson were also in attendance on the evening and Aidan thanked the Lord Mayor for providing recognition to the local SVP for all their work stating; 'The SVP Northern Region branch of the society has over 1,600 volunteers working tirelessly 365 days a year. We make 2,500 visits a week which amounts to 10,000 hours weekly helping all sections of the community.'



## East Region Car Raffle

The East Region is holding its biennial Car Raffle this Summer to raise funds for Conferences throughout Dublin, Wicklow and Kildare.

The Prize is a brand new Skoda Fabia, Style and tickets are on sale for €5 each or three for €10. The Raffle takes place on 1st September 2015.

Tickets will be sold throughout the Region and the Car will be displayed at various events, including the Tinahely Agricultural Show and the Kildare County Show.

Conferences are being encouraged to sell as many tickets as possible and all proceeds will be retained at Conference level.

Anyone wishing to buy tickets should contact their local Conference or [fundraising@svpeast.ie](mailto:fundraising@svpeast.ie)



## Sinn Féin Ard Fhéis

Representatives of the Society have attended all political party conventions and most recently the Sinn Fein Ardheis which took place in The Millennium Forum, Derry on Friday 6th and Saturday 7th March in order to raise the SVP's profile and highlight to the MLAs and MPs the level of poverty that SVP members encounter on a daily basis.

Many good contacts were made and the Sinn Fein members were most respectful and complimentary. Being aware of the works of the Society they have agreed to hold follow up meetings in the future.

Those who attended the conference were Aidan Crawford, SVP North Regional President, Cormac Wilson, Malachy McKernan and Joann Barr:



Cormac with Mary Lou McDonald TD



Aidan & Cormac with Daithí McKay MLA



Aidan and Cormac with Martin McGuinness Deputy First Minister

## Black Santa Liam Braves the Elements for those in Need

Ballymoney's own "Black Santa" Liam Beckett presented a cheque for £1,330 to Noel Burns, St Patrick's Ballymoney Conference's out-going president following his 8th pre-Christmas sit out on the High Street in Ballymoney Town Centre.

Liam, who is very well known in Northern Ireland footballing circles, braved the nippy conditions for a total of 10 days to collect money for five local charities of which St Vincent de Paul was one. The other charities Liam fundraised for were the Salvation Army, Drop Inn Ministries, the Samaritans and Best Buddies NI (Can Can). Liam is himself an ambassador for the Samaritans and a patron for CAN CAN.

The Ballymoney Conference wishes to thank Liam for his fantastic contribution to our funds.



# In Tribute

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

### **Jim McKeever**

Navan SVP has lost one of its most wholehearted members with the death of stalwart Vincentian Jim McKeever, who in 1972 joined the local St. Patrick's Conference, of which he was President from 1986 to 1994. He also held various roles within the Conference and the Area Council at different stages.

A farmer by occupation, his kind, cheerful and non-judgemental attitude endeared him to his SVP colleagues and all the needy people with whom he came in contact. The nature of his life's calling demanded long hours of work, but his family recall that on Tuesday evenings, come 7.30 p.m., things on the farms had to stop so that their dad could attend the weekly St. Vincent de Paul Society meeting.

His work for the Society included the organisation of SVP collections at his local church; involving the area's school in SVP Christmas fundraising and hamper distribution, as well as addressing the senior classes there on the activities of the SVP. Jim received an SVP long service medal in 2012 in recognition of his endeavours for the Society over 40 years. He is survived by his wife, Ann; sons, Kieran and Declan and daughter, Sonia, to all of whom deep sympathy is extended in their sad loss. His son Brian predeceased him.

### **Kevin Burke**

Clontarf Conference of the Society, mourn the sad loss of their President Kevin Burke who died after a short illness just before last Christmas. He gave many years of dedicated service to the Society, but also to other charitable causes.

### **Norah Owens**

Members of St Michael's Conference bid a final farewell to Norah Owens last November. Norah joined the Society in 1976 and remained an active member until five weeks prior to her death. She had been both Secretary and President of the Conference over the course of many years.

Sadness was no stranger to Norah's own life but her personal tragedies did not deter her from her wonderful work in SVP. Norah dedicated her life to the work of SVP and she was a kind, caring and compassionate lady who not only listened and advised but gave so much practical help to those in need in the community. Our thoughts and prayers go to her family. We shall miss Norah's great sense of humour and her wonderful engaging smile.

### **Briga Murphy**

The Sligo Area council would like to remember the late Briga Murphy who sadly passed away last October. Briga was a loyal member of SVP for many years and one of the founder members of the "Thrift Shop". She showed understanding and compassion to all customers, who were made to feel welcome at all times. She worked very hard in the shop to ensure that stock was presented as attractively as possible. They will all miss Briga very much.



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DONATION  
COULD BE WORTH

AN EXTRA  
**113**  
EURO  
PER YEAR

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...Continued inside on p31

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