

THE



BULLETIN

MAGAZINE OF THE SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

SUMMER 2019



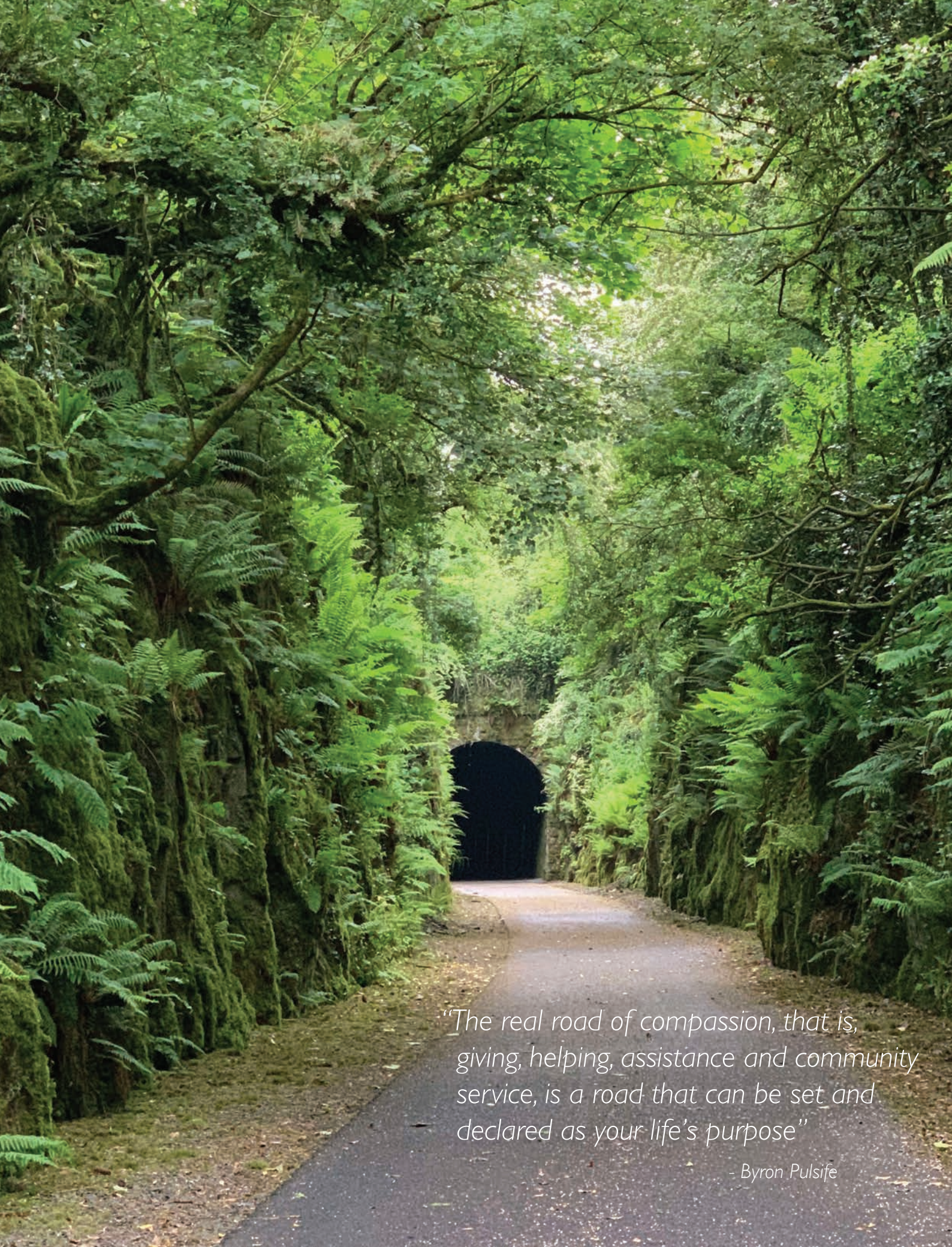
**BRINGING
CHARITY
AND JUSTICE
TOGETHER**

There are very few
problems we can't
solve if we all work
together.

**SERVING
IN HOPE**

1844 . 2019

**The Convention Centre, Dublin
Saturday 13th April 2019**



“The real road of compassion, that is, giving, helping, assistance and community service, is a road that can be set and declared as your life’s purpose”

- Byron Pulsife



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 2019
Published Quarterly

BULLETIN EDITORIAL ADDRESS

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

CIRCULATION: 6,500

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As we pass the halfway mark of this important year for the Society of St. Vincent de Paul during which it celebrates its 175th anniversary in Ireland, we should reflect and ask ourselves "Is this something we should be proud of, or embarrassed about, as a country?"

Of course we should be proud of, and acknowledge, those who are willing to give of their time so freely and selflessly to help others who are struggling, assisting in whatever way possible to try and alleviate their suffering in the hope of bringing an end to poverty and social exclusion.

If the thousands of volunteers were not there, what kind of society would we be looking at today? But in the same breath, however, as a people, as a country, should we also feel somewhat embarrassed? The fact that there is still a need for organisations like the Society of St Vincent de Paul – 175 years on - can bring a level of sadness and disappointment with regard to the way our society has developed, under foreign- and self-governance structures.

The fact that injustice is still endemic and has proved to be resistant to design modifications in welfare structures not only in Irish society but worldwide gives food for thought. The notion of the common good seems constantly to be at odds with that other aspect of human nature - personal gain – such that an equitable balance between the two seems forever beyond reach. Even though it requires societal enlightenment to make it come to pass, it should remain the aspiration of any charity like SVP, in effect, to do themselves "out of a job". In an ideal world, there should be no need for SVP.

Meanwhile, as we await the coming of age of a species, it remains to those in the vanguard, those who see the need in the now and cannot look away, to do what they can. It has been that way for 175 years.

So, we offer one another that helping hand, that listening ear; that support to let someone know they are not alone. Someone does care about them and wants their suffering to end. That is SVP volunteers' sole aim and ultimate mission.

This heartfelt effort and aspiration to help others permeates the many weekly activities carried out by SVP throughout the four corners of Ireland and many of these undertakings are highlighted in this edition. Conferences support people to develop and grow by providing educational support and offering low cost clothing via the 230 Vincent's charity shops dotted around the country. The social justice team continues to highlight issues such as the current housing crisis, the cost of living, and gaps in our education system. An excerpt from a book by Una O'Hagan entitled "The Village of Bernadette", to be published in late September, tells the story of how a group of Irish people, on a pilgrimage organised by the St. Vincent de Paul Society to Lourdes, was lucky to escape from France in 1939 before hostilities commenced at the outbreak of World War II.

There is also a supplement featuring many photos and quotes from the special 175th Anniversary Day held at the Convention Centre in April.

Linda O'Connell

175 YEARS OF SERVICE



At the time Tony Gregory reported that there were 5815 families on the Dublin Corporation housing list, 2407 families were sharing accommodation with other families and 2162 families were waiting for transfers because the accommodation they were living in was too small for their needs. Does any of this sound familiar? I recollect this time well, as a young man, I was one of the many forced to emigrate due to unemployment. My own parents also emigrated to England in the 50s and ironically in recent years friends of my parents confided in me that in that decade they received the price of tickets for the boat to England from the Society to seek work. In fact, they boarded that ferry to the U.K. only yards from where the National Convention Centre now stands the location for our 175 members gathering.

It is a fair question for anyone to ask why the problems that affect those experiencing poverty have still not been addressed after all this time. SVP members are sadly the historians of poverty in Ireland and have seen at first hand up to the present day the sadness and despair of those we visit. Good people trying to do their best but unable to pay their rent, put food in the cupboard, or pay for their children's school requirements.

The Society of St Vincent de Paul was started here in 1844 at the onset of the terrible famine. Since then, SVP members, past and present, have bore witness to the people and communities affected by poverty in all its forms.

Our great colleague Prof John Monaghan RIP contextualised the time span of our service in Ireland by saying *"we have been here assisting those in need through the famine, two world wars, a war of Independence, Civil war and numerous economic recessions"*. The service we have given to the people of Ireland week in week out over this period has been outstanding, but as a Nation, the fact that we have had to this is of great shame.

On a personal level, if I needed reminding of the reoccurring social issues for those living in poverty, it was while listening to RTÉ's Drama on One - Haughey/Gregory. It retold the story of the late Tony Gregory TD's negotiations in 1982 with the late Taoiseach Charles Haughey to allow the latter to form a Government. Part of the deal agreed was the building of 440 houses in North inner-city Dublin (Tony Gregory's then constituency and also where SVP's National office is located) and a further 1600 to be built in the rest of the city. It was also decided that substantial money would be invested to create jobs and support education in the North Inner City, one of the most deprived areas of the Capital.

Larry Tuomey's excellent historical presentation on the Society's work down through the years at our 175 conference was a sobering reminder of the slow progress we have seen in the plight of those experiencing poverty.

Can we say things are not as bad as there were in the 60s 70s 80s? Ask that question to a mother existing with her kids in a hotel room or the people queuing for food. What would their answers be?

We continue to answer the thousands of calls that come into us every year because that is our core work and calling, but above all, we want to see the day when we are no longer needed, I doubt anyone of us believes we will see it.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kieran Stafford'.

Kieran Stafford
National President



SVP introduces 'Tap to Donate' contactless card machines

Traditionally fundraising in Ireland is associated with volunteers on the streets, coin buckets in-hand. Yet in an increasingly cashless society that may be about to change. London-based strategy firm The Future Laboratory has said that Ireland's tech scene, coupled with its population demographics, will make cash payments a minority in the next five years. Research by the consultancy firm estimates that 440 million people will use contactless mobile payment services across the world this year – feeding a market that will be worth €120 million by 2022.

In Ireland, there has been significant growth in card payments, according to the latest Banking & Payments Federation Ireland report. Contactless payments grew by about 66% year-on-year both in volume terms and in value terms to 158 million payments valued at €1.9 billion.

To address this trend the SVP National Fundraising team decided to test a new contactless donation solution called the Collectin. The device was developed by SumUp and contains one of their card reader machines inside. Visa sponsored this trial, one of the first of its kind, over a three-month period in 2018. SVP trialed the Collectin for ease of use for volunteers and willingness of donors to give non-cash payments.

SVP was provided with five Collectin devices which included a SumUp Air® card reader and a smartphone with the companion donation app installed. The solution provided an easy way to collect contactless donations with just two actions. The volunteer clicks the donation amount on the mobile device and the donor just taps their card.

The Collectins were tested at four different fundraising events

including a church gate collection, bag pack, raffle and clothes swap, raising over €800 in donations. Volunteers said they loved the design and ease of use of the Collectin, finding the card reader easy to operate and the companion app simple and quick to use.

Based on this positive outcome, SVP have purchased 80 Collectins for the next stage of trialling with Conferences across the eight regions. To find out more information about how your Conference can be involved in this next stage, please contact your Regional Office or fundraising@svp.ie.

Nichola Mullen, Head of Fundraising, had the following to say:

"Bucket collections by volunteers throughout the country still provide a considerable amount of SVP's annual fundraised income. To protect this revenue stream, we wanted to move with the times and give donors an option to use their payment cards or devices. We were delighted to partner with SumUp and Visa for this trial. We were unsure how donors would respond given that we were one of the first charities to trial this, but the engagement far exceeded our expectations!"

"Events with older donors still showed a preference for cash donations but when we trialed them at events with younger donors, the engagement was far higher. For example, at a raffle held during a tech company's Christmas market day, almost 50% of the donations received were through the contactless Collectin. This is definitely the way forward for bucket collections and events and we look forward to rolling out the use of the Collectins to volunteers around the country."



What is the cost of a healthy food basket?

by *Tricia Keilthy*,
Social Policy Development Officer

It is estimated that one in eleven people are experiencing food poverty in Ireland, which is defined as the inability to have an adequate and nutritious diet due to issues of affordability.

Safefood Ireland, in conjunction with The Vincentian Partnership for Social Justice, recently published a report which examined the cost of a healthy food basket for six household types in the Republic of Ireland. As well as basic food costs, the Healthy Food Basket includes occasional 'café, take-away, etc.', and to provide 'extra for visitors'. This ensures that the social and cultural aspects of food are reflected in the healthy food baskets, and the households can participate in activities and practices considered a normal part of everyday life.

The findings showed that some families on low income need to spend up to one third of their income to afford a basic healthy food basket. They found that households with older children must spend significantly more to afford an adequate diet. Rural households also must spend more as it is not always possible to take advantage of deals and offers in larger supermarkets due to transport issues. Households where the only income was from social welfare spent a larger percentage of income on food than those households where one adult is in employment.

The report found that the cost of food has decreased in recent years, but we know that the inability to access a healthy diet is a complex issue that incorporates issues of low income, lack of transport and the cost of education, housing and utilities.

"It is sometimes very difficult to cope; we're doing without anything extra. First I pay the bills and then I use what is left over for the shopping ... it can be a nightmare." (Stories of Struggle, 2018)

It is SVP members' experience that food is what families on low incomes cut back on when times are tough, as it is easier to control than the cost of rent, utilities or education. Rising housing costs means more households are now going without or are being forced to opt for low cost and high calorie food with little or no nutritional value. That's why approximately one in three calls to SVP are related to food poverty.

"I buy the cheapest food, mostly processed is what I can afford but once or twice a month I make a big pot of stew. I get the best deals and offers which are often chicken nuggets, burgers and fish fingers. Good food is expensive. I don't want them to go hungry so I buy what will fill them." (Stories of Struggle, 2018)

The long-term health and well-being impacts of food poverty cannot be underestimated. Food poverty can result in a poor diet, which is linked to diet-related ill health. It can also impact children's social, emotional and educational outcomes. When children go to school hungry their well-being, concentration, behaviour, learning and motivation are affected. This has

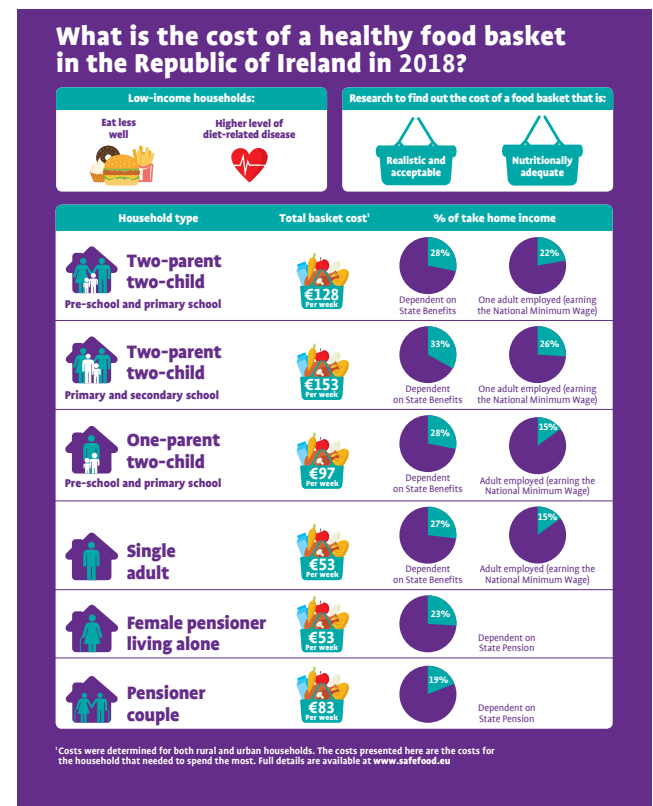
longer term implications for their educational progression and attainment.

"My brother helps me in ways, sometimes. I cook large meals and freeze them; I have a meal plan that gives stability but not variety... when my freezer broke down my brother put our food in his freezer"

(Stories of Struggle, 2018)

The School Meals and Community Food Initiatives can be a key part of the response to food poverty, but we also need to look at longer term solutions that tackle the underlying causes of food poverty such as low income, high living costs and poor service provision in rural and deprived areas.

The Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection will shortly publish a new National Action Plan for Social Inclusion. It is critical that this plan is ambitious, properly resourced and deals effectively with the issues of low pay, the adequacy of social welfare, and the accessibility and affordability of public services. Otherwise, food poverty will continue to impact large sections of Irish society.



If one word sums up our work it is Respect

by Noel O Callaghan,
President of Conference of the Immaculate Conception,
Mullingar.

I joined Mullingar SVP over 20 years ago, as I was referring so many people to them I felt compelled to help out. Very soon I learned the mantra *"If in doubt, give it out"* - something I have carried with me since, in all walks of life.

If one word sums up our work it is Respect - without it we have nothing. As a great man once said *"Those who know the way to the poor man's house never knock at his door without feelings of Respect"* - Frederic Ozanam.

I have been privileged to have known and worked with so many great people in SVP Mullingar - in supporting venerable members of our community - People helping People.

In our Conference some of us have appointments as a formal committee if needed to conduct our work. However, our title matters not, no one is any more or less important than anyone else. And the decisions and direction is given from our Conference as a group. We may not agree on everything, but we all agree of why we are members - people. Those who serve our community under the umbrella of Mullingar SVP are dedicated, true and good friends - they do in fact live their religion.

"There is no true friendship without frankness" - Guess who said this?

Mullingar is supported really well in terms of financial and actual physical support, helping us helping people they don't even know.

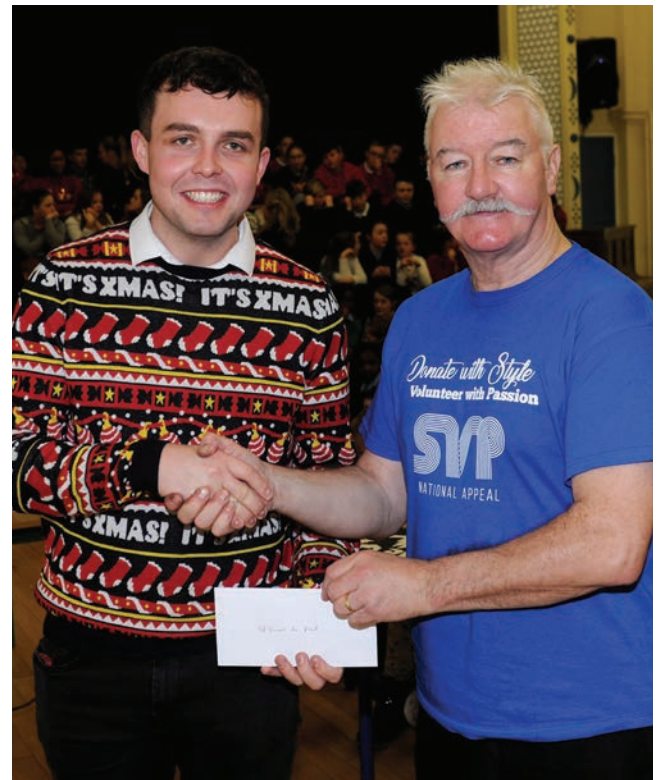
Our network of statutory bodies and local organisations is a huge help to our Conference.

As banks, shopping etc goes "online" and faceless, I would caution against such a move. We are becoming a cashless/faceless society, and while seeing first-hand the way it is affecting rural Ireland, it is starting to creep in to the larger towns and cities as well. This all adds to a disconnect with our communities. Telling a machine "No" is much easier than telling a person.

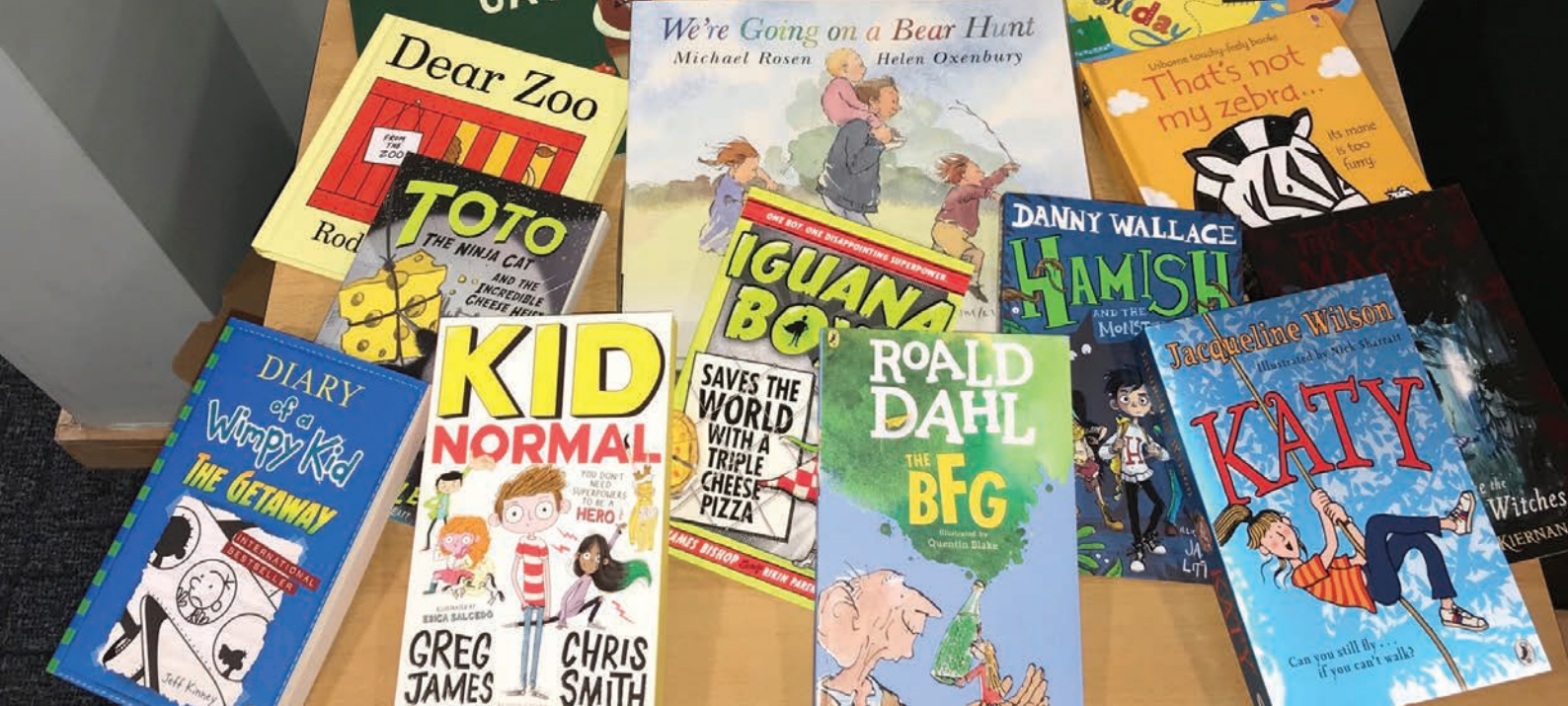
Our fundraising, church gate collections, bag packs etc project the physical manifestation of our Society at local level, and is more important than the money collected. The face behind the names as it were, is vital to our continued work.

I often meet members of our community in the street, a shop etc who we have helped through a difficult time, and assisted them as they swam against the tide. And seeing them when they have come through to a safe and secure place is very rewarding. A slight nod and sometimes a reminder from them of how SVP kept them afloat ensures the legacy of SVP will carry on through those people, and by extension, their children. 20 Years- where did it go - retaining the continuity of assistance and compassion - Respect - while constantly changing to the needs of our communities.

"We took this road together, we will finish it together" Frederic Ozanam 1833.



Noel O Callaghan pictured last Christmas receiving a donation from the Presentation Convent Mullingar- the whole school was there! What an amazing group of young people, and representative of all the other schools etc who donated.



WordPower

"A book is a dream you hold in your hands" – Neil Gaiman
 WordPower is coming to an end of its first year running as an initiative in the East Region of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul.

WordPower has been distributing books to families and children during home visitations since September 2018. A lot of progress has been made in that time.

Reading from a young age provides many benefits to children; such as helping to develop a child's imagination, neurological, and linguistic skills, providing the child with a chance at early academic success, improving the child's concentration level, growing the child's self-confidence and independence, igniting the child's creativity, and developing the social bond between parent and child.

WordPower has been a great success across the 70 participating Conferences in Dublin, Kildare and Wicklow. Altogether, approximately 3,054 children have received brand new books through WordPower, with a total of 1,493 book packs having been distributed to families. The feedback from the Conference members and from the families has proven that this scheme is vital to many young children.

"As well as the educational benefit I feel there are additional benefits derived by the clients. The delivery of the books brings some happiness into their lives such as the joy of receiving gifts, the realization that somebody cares for them, and the excitement of what the bags contain. Keep up the good work." - Thomas Nugent; Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Firhouse

World Book Day took place on the 7th March 2019. This event was an opportunity to promote WordPower. A video was put together as part of a campaign to explain what WordPower is. A fundraising page was set up where people could buy book tokens costing €50. The money raised was used to purchase books and supplies for the scheme.

In May 2019, WordPower became a charity partner of Scholastic books. When parents buy books on Scholastic's website, they can choose to donate 20% in free books to a school of their choice, or to Scholastic's charity partner. This is free of charge to both the parents and the supported charity. They can then use the donations to order books on Scholastic's website. So far, over €1,200 worth of books has been donated to WordPower through Scholastic's website. This wonderful opportunity has allowed us to continuously replenish our stock of books. The future of WordPower is looking very hopeful. Throughout the next month an evaluation on the first year of the scheme will be put together. This will include statistics, detailed feedback, the story of WordPower so far and any proposed changes for the upcoming months.

Our main aim for the future is to provide parents with some help on reading with children. We plan to introduce a Guidance Leaflet to the book packs which will contain support on how to read with children, information on joining the library, and practical additional resources that parents/guardians can use if they wish to do so. It is our hope that this Leaflet will support parents in helping improve their child's literacy skills.

We would love to keep expanding WordPower by promoting the scheme to more Conferences in the East Region. If you would like to find out how to request books for your Conference, or if you would like to make a donation to WordPower, please email wordpower.east@svp.ie or phone (01)8198430.

United in Head and Heart A Year with Young SVP in the East Region



Clare Mander and Síofra Dempsey

It has been another busy and exciting year for Young SVP in the East Region. Over 50 groups participated in the programme this year through guest speaker talks, social justice workshops, class projects, forming Conferences, attending events and taking action!

In October we received a mini grant from the National Youth Council of Ireland which allowed us to host a One World Week event in Sunshine House. March saw many of the College Conferences from the East represented at the annual Young SVP Intersarsity Weekend in Mornington Co. Meath. In April around 300 young people gathered in City West for the Young SVP East Region Youth Day. In May three schools from the East were represented at the National Members Day to mark 175 years of SVP in Ireland.

Young SVP One World Week 2018

One World Week is a week of youth led awareness raising, education and action that takes place in Ireland during the third week in November every year. We marked One World Week with two events. The first was a workshop hosted by the Conference in TU Dublin (formerly DIT), called 'Far & Near: Young SVP Thinking Globally and Acting Locally'. This workshop encouraged us to develop our understanding of different approaches to development and consider the links between development and the work of Young SVP.

The second event was a Young SVP School Get Together in Sunshine House on the 22nd November 2018. Students and teachers from nine schools came together to learn how to be peer facilitators. The students then returned to their schools to facilitate their own workshops on Sustainable Development Goal One 'No Poverty'.

Young SVP East Region Youth Day

Around 300 young people gathered in City West in Dublin on the 4th April 2019 for the Young SVP East Region Youth Day. This event was a celebration of the hard work and dedication of the Young SVP volunteers in Dublin, Kildare and Wicklow. Participants created displays of their work, gave presentations, networked with other young volunteers and attended talks. The theme was 'United in Head and Heart', inspired by the words of Blessed Frederic Ozanam, who said "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 and generous association for the relief of the people".

SVP member Nessan Vaughan opened the event, telling the Young SVP members that "the creativity and effort you have put in this year is overwhelming. You should all be very proud of yourselves for the work you have done to make your communities more just and fair places". During the school



United in Head & Heart

Young SVP East Region Youth Day 2019



year; students involved in the Young SVP programme carried out a range of actions to give back to their communities, including projects and actions on: food poverty, climate justice, homelessness, loneliness and isolation, kindness, equality and mental health.

The students also heard from Caroline Fahey, SVP Head of Social Justice and Policy, who spoke about the importance of standing in solidarity and encouraged the attendees to challenge the common myths about poverty. Dr Noel Keating, Coordinator of Meditation with Children, spoke to the students about meditation as a universal practice for human flourishing. Bobby McCormack from Development Perspectives discussed how we can all work together to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Also in attendance were representatives from the Gaisce Award and the Society of African Missions.

Certificates were awarded to the young people by SVP National President Kieran Stafford. The event was brought to a close by SVP East Region President Liam Casey who thanked the schools, teachers and young people for bringing their enthusiasm, creativity and innovation to the work of SVP. He reminded the students that they are the future of SVP, but also very much the present, already making a difference in the lives of others.

East Region College Conferences

The 2018/2019 academic year got off to a flying start all across Young SVP, including our college Conferences! There are ten college Conferences, with five of these in the East- TCD, UCD, TU Dublin (formerly DIT), DCU and Maynooth University.

The college Conferences are engaged in all different types of activities. Trinity College run a lot of befriending and education activities. For example, homework, drama, music and art clubs with local schools. Later in the year the children from these clubs took part in the annual Panto. This year it was the Lion King and was really great! They also took part in the annual Jailbreak Race- Ireland's largest student fundraising event. Organised by students from TCD in aid of SVP and Amnesty, the race saw 70 teams of two racing across Europe to a secret destination.

In UCD the focus is much more on homeless activities, with their main activity being Street Outreach- students walk around Dublin to meet with people sleeping on the streets and offer them some company, a little food or hot drink and information about the various services available to them. They also organised their annual Social Justice Week in March with the theme this year being 'Mental Health'.



TU Dublin have had a huge increase in membership of their Conference this year. They held a Sustainable Fashion Show which was hugely successful and well received by students and staff. They used clothes from the Vincent's shops for the show which was co-organised by the Arab Society.

Over at DCU the main event was their annual 24 hour sleepout on campus. The students slept on the main concourse and raised money and awareness of some of the experiences of people sleeping rough. The funds raised were given to SVP Homeless Services.

The Conference in Maynooth University have been working on campus with other student societies to raise awareness of their work and the work of SVP in general. Some of their members are studying Music Tech and used their skills to organise events and fundraising around music.

The annual Young SVP Intersivity Weekend brought together students from 7 out of the 10 college Conferences (including four from the East) for a weekend of social activities, opportunities to connect and plan projects together and social justice and development workshops. The Intersivity Weekend is always so much fun and wonderful to see everyone getting to know each other and finding out ways to work together.

National Members Day



In April at the National Members Day to mark 175 years of SVP in Ireland, Young SVP in the East was represented by students from Holy Child Killiney, Belvedere College and Dominican College Griffith Avenue. Students from Holy Child Killiney performed a rap they had written about the history and work of SVP.

Holy Child Killiney Young SVP Rap



"Fighting for Justice was his aim
Frederic Ozanam was his name
In Paris he saw the poor
He wanted to help more
Jesus was his inspiration
The follow the Gospel his inclination
Founded in 1833
Vincent, Frederic and Rosalie
The power of three for SVP.
Came to Ireland in 1844
During the Great Famine
Here to help the poor:
Through charitable deeds
SVP meets their needs,
Befriending and visitation
Frederic is our inspiration
Projects to improve the lives of others
Working together as sisters and brothers
Promoting Self-Sufficiency
So people can live efficiently
Funded by donation
With God's appreciation
Holy Child community
Standing strong in unity
One and a half million members worldwide
Working together to heal the divide.
Abiding by our Holy Child creed
We strive to help those in need.
Actions not Words!"

Thank You

We hope you have enjoyed reading about all the exciting work of Young SVP in the East Region during the 2018/2019 academic year. A big thank you to all the members and staff of SVP for supporting the programme. We look forward to seeing Young SVP continue to flourish, reach more young people and help them learn about the work of SVP and social justice.





Education, Disadvantage, Poverty: SVP Highlighting the Links

*by Marcella Stakem,
Social Policy Development Officer*

SVP has long been of the view that education is the ultimate enabler out of poverty. The large attendance at the SVP Education Gathering held in SVP National Office is testament to that.

The lack of resources in our education system, and the root causes of educational disadvantage were highlighted on the day, because as we know, it does not begin in education policy alone. Poverty has been consistently linked with poor educational achievement and prospects. It restricts and limits educational participation.

School Costs

Members who support families with back to school costs report 'voluntary' contributions can be significant ranging from €50 up to €200 per academic year. All in attendance agreed that this issue needs to be addressed by the Department of Education and Skills. In SVP's Pre Budget Submission, 'Investing in a Just Society', we advocate that the capitation grant levels be restored to 2010 levels in Budget 2020.

Each year parents spend on average between €75 and €125 per child for primary school children and between €250 and €350 for secondary school children. In some cases, the costs can be substantially higher. SVP social justice have advocated that all children and young people attending non-fee paying schools should have access to free school books.

The use of digital devices in schools have increased in recent years. SVP members are aware of some schools who require a child to buy their own device at a cost of approximately €700.00. The Department of Education and Skills published the Digital Strategy for Schools in 2017, however, there is no consideration in the plan for the fact that digital school books are liable to 23% VAT in comparison to VAT exemption on printed school books.

One parent family, 4 children. Child starting first year: I-pad €700 and registration fee €250. Voluntary fees for two other children at €180.00 each. (SVP Member)

These costs contribute to financial stress and worry in low income households and can cause a negative and stressed attitude towards education.

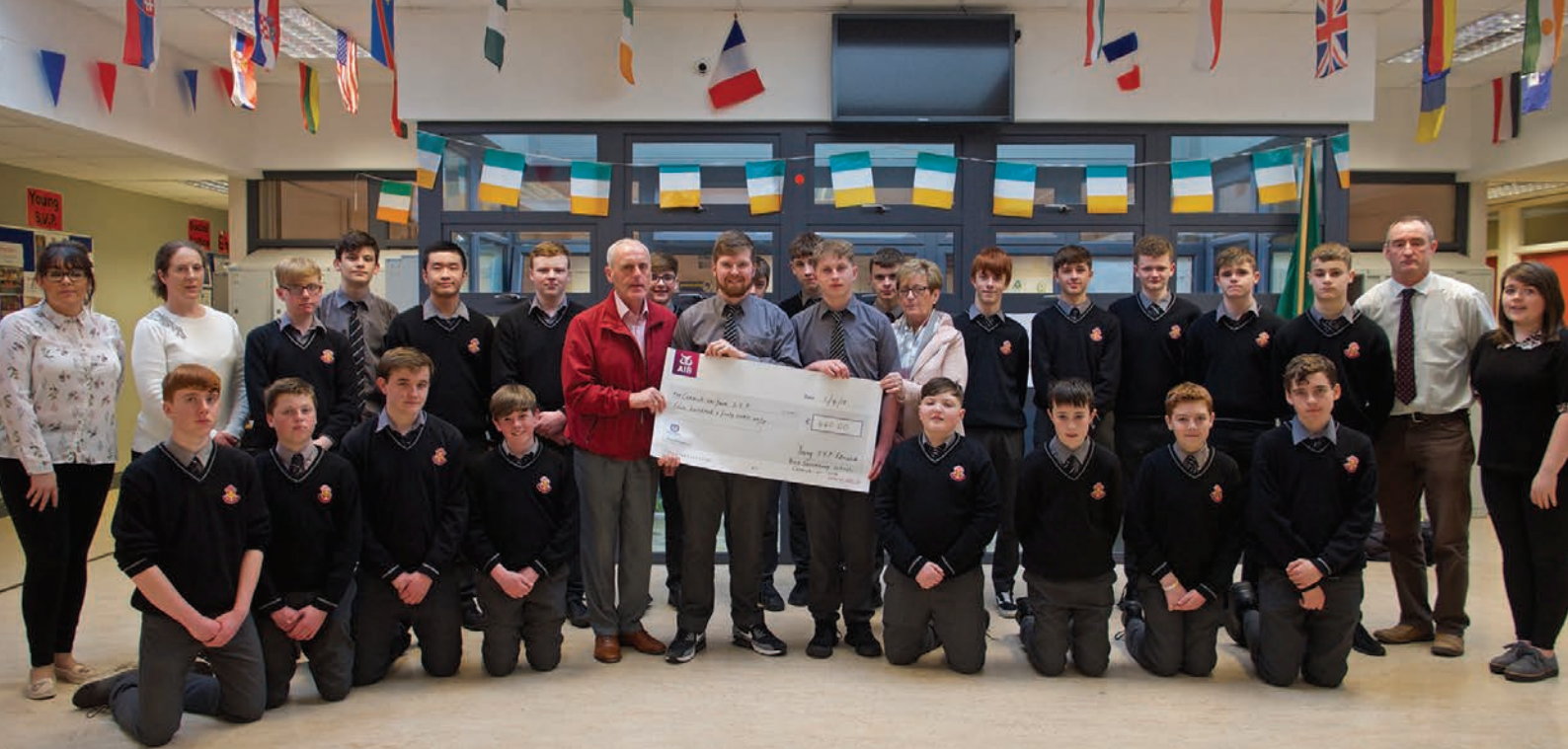
Third Level & Further Education

The rise in accommodation costs and the cuts and changes to the student grant have made third level more unattainable for low-income groups. Where someone lives can determine the extent and quality of access and supports available to students. The current qualifying criteria for the non-adjacent grant rates was changed in Budget 2011 from 24km to 45km. This puts many students at a disadvantage financially, especially those from outside major urban areas. Accessibility and affordability need to be to the forefront of policy making if we are to ensure our education system is serving the needs of vulnerable and marginalised groups.

Lifelong Learning

Education and the holding of educational qualifications is now the currency for employment and it is the lack of such qualifications that are major contributors to poverty and social exclusion. Aontas (2013) has found that success in Further Education and Training courses for people who are considered 'distant' from the labour market, such as those who are long term unemployed, requires initial positive learning experiences which often stem from low pressure non-accredited courses, allowing the acquisition of soft skills and building confidence. Members regularly report that accessing these types of courses are a barrier for the people that would really benefit from attending.

The Education Gathering highlighted some of the shortcomings in our education system. It also gave an opportunity for SVP members to discuss where improvements could be made to ensure the system is accessible, fair and a path out of poverty. SVP will continue to advocate on these issues to ensure those that wish to avail of our education system are supported to do so.



Young St. Vincent de Paul and Social Justice Committee members at the Edmund Rice Secondary School in Carrick-on-Suir presented a cheque for €440 to President of St. Nicholas Conference of St. Vincent De Paul, Michael Lonergan and Treasurer Marian Grace on Monday 1st April. Also pictured are Teachers Leona Mulcahy and Linda Barry, (Young St. Vincent de Paul Committee), Principal Mick Walsh and Tracey Murray, Social Justice Committee.

Edmund Rice Secondary School Presents Cheque to St. Nicholas Conference

A cheque for €440 was presented to St. Nicolas Conference of St. Vincent de Paul members, Michael Lonergan, President and Marian Grace, Treasurer on 1st April by the Young St. Vincent de Paul group of students at the Edmund Rice Secondary School in Carrick-on-Suir.

The funds raised by Young St. Vincent de Paul group (2nd to 6th year students), were sourced through sponsorship of a 'Readathon' held in February organised by the 2nd years students and €350 was collected. Books were also sold at the school on World Book Day 7th March raising an extra €90.

The St. Vincent de Paul team at the school, affiliated to Mid-Western Region, liaise with Ivanna Kolic, Youth Development Officer based in Limerick and recently enjoyed a visit to Ennis to link up with other Young St. Vincent de Paul members from St. Flannan's College.

They also attend the Day Care Centre at St. Brigid's Hospital in Carrick on Tuesdays to help out with activities for the older

people. President Michael Lonergan thanked the group for their kind donation and for all the work they carry out to support St. Nicholas Conference of St. Vincent de Paul. He spoke of the outstanding contribution the school had made towards the Christmas Food Appeal, which helped in the make up of 75 hampers distributed to families locally. All funds raised he said was spent locally and put back into the community. Michael also thanked and acknowledged school Principal Mick Walsh and the teachers Ms Tracy Murray, Social Justice Committee, Ms Linda Barry and Ms. Leona Mulcahy Young St. Vincent de Paul Committee.

Principal Mick Walsh also thanked and praised the groups, "Well done and bring that spirit with you when you leave," he said. The Young St. Vincent de Paul group and the Social Justice Committee group in Edmund Rice Secondary School work closely together helping the community through many initiatives and fundraising activities and promote fairness and justice for all in a respectful environment.

“Investing in a just society”

- Pre Budget Submission 2020

by Caroline Fahey, Head of Social Justice & Policy

In June the Society of St Vincent de Paul launched its Pre Budget Submission 2020, with the theme of “Investing in a just society”. SVP is emphasizing the need to make the fight against poverty a priority in Budget 2020, highlighting the need to invest in public services and income supports over tax cuts to move us in the right direction. 25,000 children were lifted out of consistent poverty between 2016 and 2017, largely due to improvements in income supports and falling unemployment, demonstrating that with the right policy decisions, progress can be made.

However, more needs to be done. In 2018, SVP received more than 160,000 requests for assistance and spent around €500,000 every week helping individuals and families with the cost of food, fuel, housing and education. We still have more than 760,000 people living below the poverty line, and over 71,000 households waiting for social housing. SVP members report an emerging issue of in-work poverty, with many of those we assist being unable to make ends meet in spite of having a job, mainly because of low pay and high housing, energy and education costs.

Based on the experiences of our members and the people we assist, our Pre Budget Submission outlines the following 5 key objectives and a number of policy recommendations for Budget 2020, which, if implemented, would make a difference in the lives of people who are struggling across Ireland:

Income adequacy: Benchmark the National Minimum Wage and social welfare payments against the cost of a Minimum Essential Standard of Living.

Education: Primary and secondary education should be provided free at the point of access to all children and young people

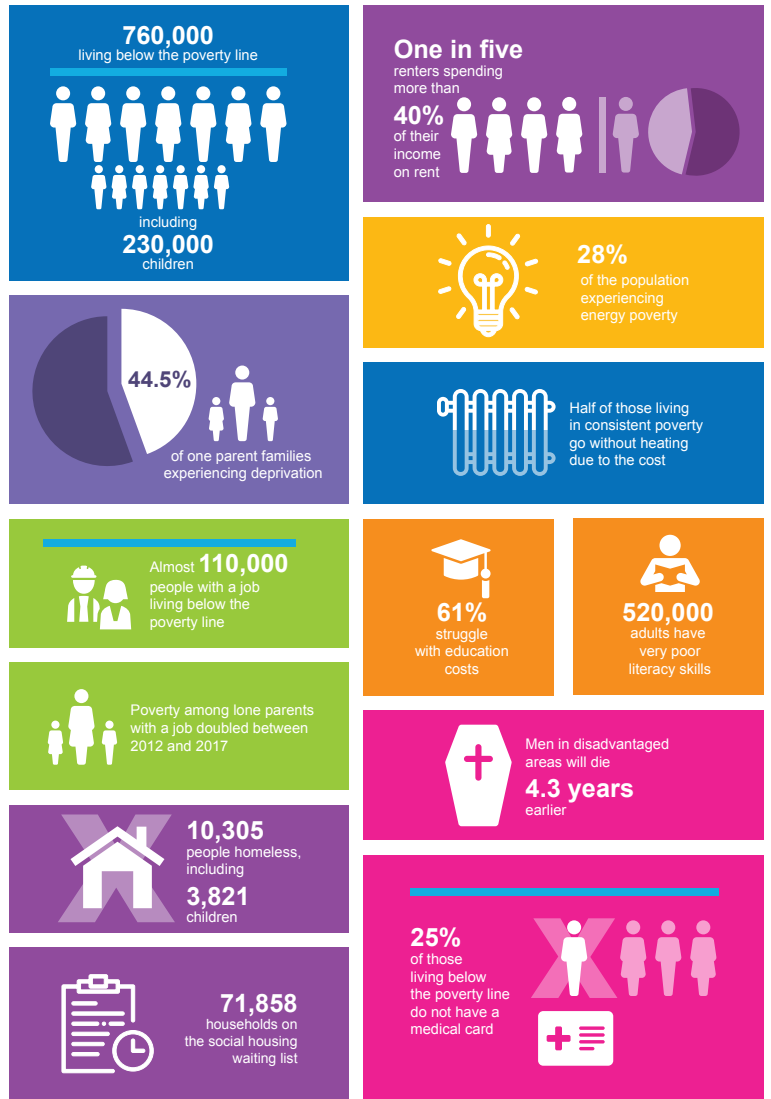
Energy poverty and climate justice: Meet our climate commitments by setting an ambitious target to eliminate energy poverty by 2030.

Housing: Pursue a housing-led approach to the housing and homelessness crisis by increasing the delivery of social housing along with affordable and secure rental accommodation

Health: Adequately resource Sláintecare, working towards a universal, high quality and accessible health system.

We all rely on publicly funded services and supports like schools, hospitals, transport, roads and our social welfare system at different times in our lives. Budget 2020 is an opportunity to strengthen these supports to make sure that everybody can live a life with dignity, free from poverty.

WHY WE WORK FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE



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OZANAM PILGRIMAGE FLEES LOURDES ON THE EVE OF WORLD WAR II

An excerpt from the book “The Village of Bernadette” by Colm Keane & Una O’Hagan, to be published in late September

The story of the Ozanam Pilgrimage of 1939 is recalled in a new book written by authors Colm Keane and Una O’Hagan. An Irish pilgrimage to Lourdes, organised by the St. Vincent de Paul Society, was lucky to escape from France before hostilities commenced at the outbreak of World War II.

An eight-month-old girl was among 66 Irish invalids, including seven stretcher cases, who made a hasty escape from Lourdes in late August 1939. The pilgrimage they were part of – organised by the St. Vincent de Paul Society – faced being trapped in France as the country prepared for imminent war. With the army being mobilised, and trains about to be commandeered, it was feared that the 400-strong party might be pinned down in the country. Advice was issued to get out of Lourdes – indeed, get out of the country – and do so fast. It was obvious to the Irish pilgrims that the atmosphere around them was darkening, and darkening quickly. Private overseas telephone communications were suspended, while strict rules were introduced requiring telegrams to be in plain language and not in code or cipher. The press was about to be censored. Exporting maps from the country was banned, especially those used by the army or identifying the position of factories, mines or train lines. France’s first and second division soccer matches were cancelled for the weekend. Trouble was certainly afoot, and it was time to get out.

The pilgrims, who had left Dublin on Monday, 21 August, departed Lourdes on Sunday, 27 August, just as wartime contingency plans were being put in place. As they sped through the French countryside, the rail network and borders around them were closing down. The Italians had just shut their frontier with France. Plans were in place to seal off the French border with Germany. The pilgrims were like animals being caught in a net, their escape options gradually narrowing, and their hopes of making it home diminishing with the passage of each mile. As their train hurried through the French landscape, the 400 Ozanam pilgrims were cared for by 22 priests, two doctors and a group of nurses. They sang the Ave Maria and Salve Regina as they scurried along. The priests held an hour of prayer in each train compartment, to compensate for the Holy Hour which the pilgrims were missing at Lourdes. Back home, Radio Éireann broadcast an emergency announcement asking relatives to make their way to Dun Laoghaire, to meet the boat. Everything was heading towards a safe arrival, but there was still some distance to go.

The pilgrims reached Calais after a tense 22-hour non-stop train journey. There was mayhem at the port, with businessmen and holidaymakers rushing for home. Long queues had formed for the cross-channel steamers, with passengers waiting several hours before being allowed on board. Boats were densely packed, and a large number of travellers had to stand during the crossing. The Golden Arrow train service, via Calais, was crowded to capacity. Even air services were completely booked up, with wealthy travellers who asked for special planes being told that owing to the European situation no machines were available.

Having eventually crossed from Calais to Dover, the pilgrims were brought by special train to Holyhead, and then ferried home. When they arrived, they ‘looked well, if tired,’ one reporter noted. It was by the skin of their teeth that they had made their escape. Within 72 hours of their return, German aircraft bombarded Poland. Forty-eight hours later, Britain and France declared war on Germany. The next scheduled Irish pilgrimage – organised by the Catholic Young Men’s Society – was cancelled, ‘owing to the present international situation,’ their executive committee explained.

Pilgrimages to Lourdes dried up following the outbreak of war in September 1939. Although located in what was initially unoccupied France, international pilgrimages ceased completely. It also proved impossible for pilgrims to travel from the German occupied regions in the north and west. Later in the war, when the Germans also occupied the south, including Lourdes, the number of internal French pilgrimages picked up somewhat, although there were still no visits from overseas.

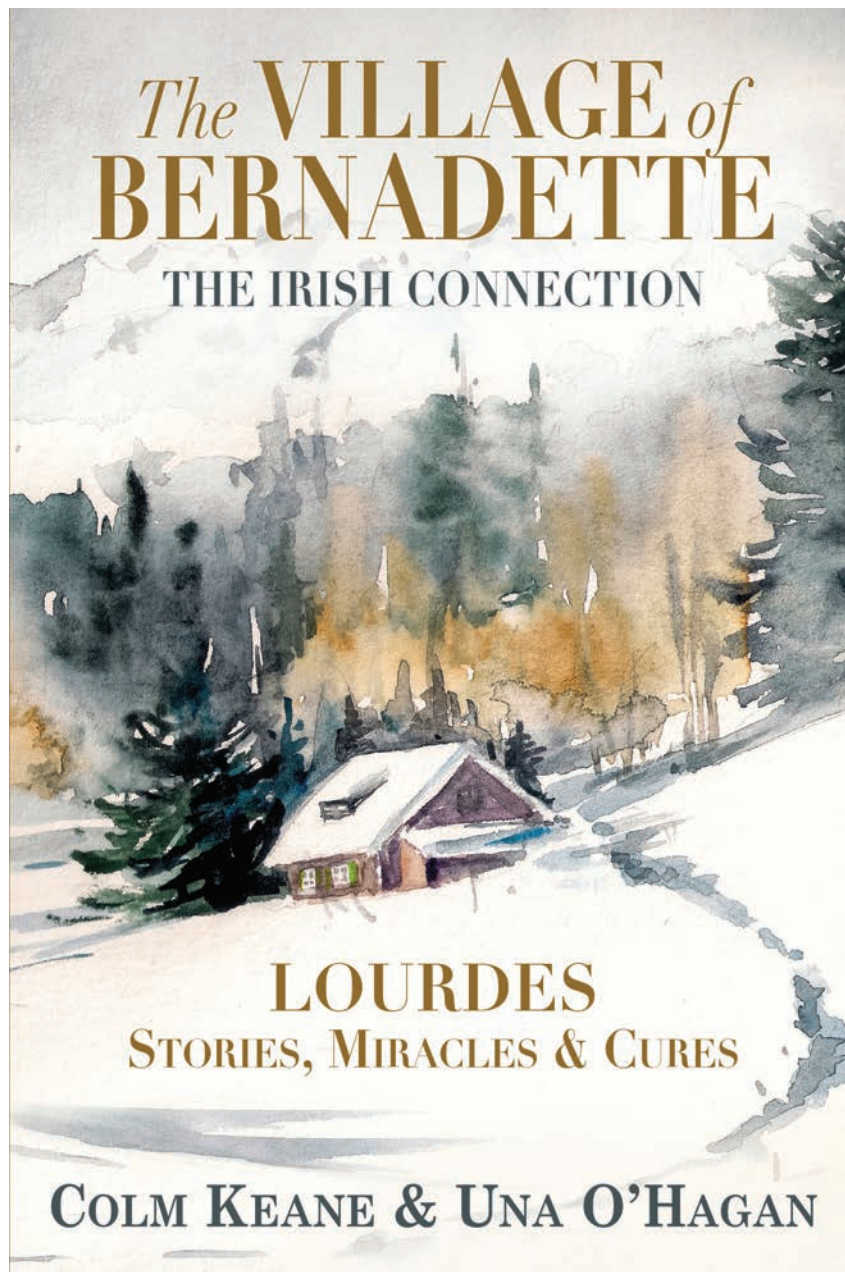
It wasn’t until 1947 that Irish pilgrimages to Lourdes once again took place. Even at that stage, conditions were grim. Compared to the 25 special trains which were at the disposal of pilgrims in pre-war days, only one or two trains were now available. Night-long queues for seats formed at railway stations, and overcrowding was commonplace. The authorities requested that only invalids ‘who can travel sitting up’ should make the journey. *‘Thousands of pilgrims have come by foot, bicycles, carts or in packed trains,’* a special correspondent with The Irish Press wrote from France. *‘In addition to those able to find accommodation in hotels and boarding houses, thousands more are being accommodated in large dormitories in hospitals, convents*

and wooden huts. Two hundred tons of flour, 50 tons of macaroni, thousands of tins of sardines and condensed milk have been sent to Lourdes to help feed the pilgrims, all of whom have been asked to bring extra food.'

Prospective travellers were worried. One letter writer to The Irish Press asked if she should bring condensed milk, and wondered how long it would last in a screw-topped jar. Bring it, she was informed, but bring it in a tin, employ a tin-opener while there, and use it as required. Be aware, she was told, that 'hotels expect you to provide one tin per person, as there is no milk to be got there. Also, if one likes the odd cup of tea that one can

get made in a café, it would be advisable to give the proprietor a tin to be used as desired.'

The good news was that the first post-war Irish pilgrimage was organised by the Catholic Young Men's Society – the very same group whose 1939 trip was cancelled at the last moment due to the outbreak of war. Because of travel complications, the tour was restricted to 'invalids only'. A small group of 116 people travelled. It was a great success. In Lourdes, they joined 150,000 people from all parts of the world, and were the only country to display a national flag. Eight years after the hasty retreat from Lourdes by the Ozanam Pilgrimage of 1939, Ireland's connection to the shrine was back on track.





Reaching Out in the Mid West

The Society's priority currently in the Mid-West is a twofold "Reaching Out" Programme -- 1) to those who for one reason or the other, have not been reached throughout all parts of the Region and including members of the Traveller Community and people in direct provision and 2) to those already being assisted and visited but where we have failed to assess the underlying need/cause of poverty and where there is a need to draw up a plan to bring a person to self-sufficiency.

In order to achieve these fundamental objectives of "Reaching Out" within the Region, the Regional Council has prioritised the following approach:

1. Outreach Conferences
2. Membership – Recruitment
3. Membership -- Development
4. Assessment of Need

Traditionally members of the Traveller Community in Limerick City were not visited but came to the Regional office on a bi-monthly basis and were given €30. Likewise, those in Direct Provision were not visited. St. Ita's Outreach Conference is now well established in Limerick City- with ongoing support and visitation now being provided to Direct Provision Centres and 4 out of 9 Halting Sites in the Limerick City Area. It is hoped that in time Area Councils will act as Outreach Councils for their own Areas or establish separate Area Outreach Conferences to support clients who may present with more challenging needs, or who cannot for some reason be supported by the local Conference.

As we progress in the Region with our Reaching Out Programme and in particular having set up a successful Regional based Outreach Conference it is becoming more and more apparent that each Area Council needs to embrace the Regional priorities of the Reaching Out Programme, to assist Conferences in the review of cases for ongoing assistance, to carry out itself an Outreach remit or to create an Outreach Conference with an Area remit.

Following a Regional Membership Recruitment Drive which involved advertising in the local papers, we have processed 36 new member applications since the beginning of the year. We are strongly focused on word of mouth recruitment from current members, as these seem to be more likely to complete the recruitment process and participate fully in Conference membership.

The Regional Council has agreed to establish an "1844 Conference" which will be a younger member support Conference to nurture, support and develop those who we rely on to take responsibility for the next generation of the Society in the Region.

The Region is very conscious of the need for ongoing member development which should take place at Conference level or through the bringing together of a few Conferences. Area Member Gatherings are recognised as being very beneficial in this regard, particularly as they can address issues as raised by Conferences at Area Council meetings.

To adequately assess needs and to put a plan in place to facilitate self-sufficiency, Conferences must be properly constituted and directed by a leadership of service. The Region is currently working to ensure that no Conference Presidents are over term and has gone from a situation where 38% of our Conferences had Presidents over term to one where less than 13% are now outside of the Society's Rule.

To ensure adequate Governance within Conferences the Mid-West Region is proactively supporting Conferences with less than 5 members to recruit additional members or to join with another Conference where appropriate. By regularising and bringing Conferences within the Rule, the Society, as a whole is protected, and we are better equipped to carry out our core work.

The Regional Council has asked that Conferences in visiting those in need use the Vincentian Partnership Minimum Income Standard Calculator (www.misc.ie) as an assessment tool, taking the time to determine the core fundamental cause of poverty and that members will then assist in working out a plan to bring a person(s) from dependency to self-sufficiency. This was introduced to members at the Regional Members Day and has since been discussed at Regional and Area Council meetings. We hope that this will become part of Conference practice. Feedback from members has been positive.



CONFERENCE OF ST. MARIE NAAS, CO. KILDARE

The Conference of St. Marie is a Home Visitation Conference with some very interesting origins. It was founded in 2008 following the receipt of a substantial bequest by the late Marie Carroll of Roseville Naas.

Marie was a native of Mountrath, Co. Laois and was a nurse attached to Naas General Hospital. She is remembered by those who knew her as a caring and humble person who thought so much of others, who were suffering and perhaps dying. Her gentle and reassuring manner brought calm and peace to others. In life, she nursed the sick and consoled the weary and dying.

Marie passed away on 11th October 2005. In her will, she left instructions that the nett proceeds from the sale of her home were to be shared equally between Cancer Research and the Saint Vincent De Paul Society in Naas and that the sum donated to SVP be explicitly spent on the elderly residents of Naas who were most in need of help.

In 2008 a new Conference was set up in Naas and named in Marie's honour. The Conference currently has eight active members – five female and three male members. It meets every month. At each meeting, a photograph of Marie Carroll is placed on the table between two lighted candles.

The main work of the Conference involves visiting older people in their homes regularly, as well as visiting nursing homes in

the Naas area. Financial assistance is provided where a need is identified. This mostly relates to the payment of arrears on electricity and gas bills and also the provision of food vouchers. During the winter months, fuel deliveries are provided.

Over the past 10 years, two organisations have benefitted from the late Marie Carroll's kind generosity. Some financial assistance was provided to the Naas Men's Shed when it was being set up, and a donation was also given to the Naas na Ríogh Housing Association at McAuley Place, Sallins Road in Naas. This organisation has a total of 53 apartments for elderly Naas residents located in the former Mercy Convent. In both cases, a lovely plaque to the memory of the late Marie Carroll was erected on the premises.

Financial assistance was also given for many other projects, i.e. emergency upgrading of homes such as walk-in showers, wheelchair assessable, installation of stair-lifts, the provision of household furniture – washing machines and electric cookers. External security lighting and home monitored phone alarms were also installed. Assistance was provided towards the cost of hearing aids, spectacles, the cost of medical consultant fees, the cost of emergency nursing home care.

During her life, Marie Carroll helped many people cope with difficult situations. Now in death, she is still helping.

MAY MARIE CARROLL REST IN PEACE



**SERVING
IN HOPE**

1844 . 2019

**The Convention Centre, Dublin
Saturday 13th April 2019**



A MARVELOUS DAY OF CELEBRATION

SVP members undertake a great deal of work in helping people in need.

And they do it quietly, without fuss or the need for acclamation.

It was, therefore, a welcome surprise when in a video message shown at the 175th anniversary event in Dublin's Convention Centre on 13 April An Taoiseach Leo Varadkar said a public thank you to SVP members on behalf of the Government and the people of Ireland.

He said *"Decade after decade the Society has helped countless families and individuals in their time of need. You continue to do so today for some of our most vulnerable citizens. Your compassion for those who seek your help is exemplary as is the low-key and dignified way that you do it."*

These sentiments were also expressed by President Michael D Higgins, who made the keynote speech of the day. He acknowledged the 'tremendous work the Society does, week-in week-out in supporting people, communities and disadvantaged groups all over Ireland. *"This is indeed an exceptional network of solidarity, compassion and care providing support for those in need,"* he said.

"Volunteering in such a way is one of the greatest gifts a human being can give to society, and it is a gift that the Society of St. Vincent de Paul has given to people in Ireland since it was first established." said the President.

Later in the day, Minister Regina Doherty spoke about how SVP is woven into the fabric of this country's history. She told the 1,000+ members present, *"Your reputation for helping and caring for those in need resonates widely and deeply in Irish society. Everyone knows what St Vincent de Paul does and represents. Also, in a time where many once respected pillars of society are now criticized or under scrutiny, St Vincent de Paul remains respected*

and valued for their work. That is down to all of you and the great work that you do."

At a special mass following the Conference Archbishop Diarmuid Martin spoke about the spirit of the Society. *"Saint Vincent de Paul is in no way a sort of exaltation or glorification of poverty, but a recognition that poverty is an imposed impossibility for people to realise their God-given talents fully,"* he said.

"Those of you who in your various conferences visit families in their own homes know that the dream of those families is not just to receive the support and the gifts you bring them. Their dream is to be like you and me; to be relieved of indignity, to be able to live their lives and their talents and proudly to see their children have dreams and realise those dreams. The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul is not one that just brings much-needed support; it is not a talk shop about society. Above all, it brings hope to people, helps people to realise that hope".

Hope was very much the theme of the day beginning with the Conference title; *Serving in Hope- Past Present and Future 1844-2019.*

From the moment people arrived at the Convention Centre just after 9 am there was an air of expectation about the day. For the following hour, there was a hum of welcoming voices as the escalators brought a constant follow of people up to the exhibition area and then to the main auditorium.

The exhibition centre held a lot of attraction for members with stands and staff available to provide information on many aspects of the Society's work, including membership support, IT, fund-raising and social justice.

By 10.45am when President Michael D Higgins arrived at the building to be greeted by National President Kieran Stafford and Vice President Rose McGowan, the auditorium was already full.



While making his way to the auditorium the President stopped at the exhibition centre to meet current members of St Michan's Conference, the first SVP Conference established in Ireland. The President was shown historical documents which track the work of the Conference through the years.

During the time the President made his way from the entrance of the building to the main auditorium the joint MCs Liam Molumby, and Miriam Keegan were making their introductions, and Fr Paschal Scallan C.M. SVP National Spiritual Advisor said the opening prayers.

We look forward to being stimulated by your words again today.



Following the playing of the Presidential salute by members of the No.1 Army Band Kieran Stafford formally introduced President Higgins.

During his welcome, Kieran Stafford said, "We have been honoured to welcome you to a number of our events during your time as President of Ireland.

One which stands out in my mind is the launch of the second phase of your Ethics initiative during your first term in office.

On that day 22 September 2014 you said that "All of us Irish people should be grateful for the quiet, sustained weekly work of the Saint Vincent de Paul Society's volunteers. But we must also be challenged by their actions, rooted as they are in the conviction that the struggles of the marginalised are the struggles of society in general."

We were hugely encouraged by those remarks.

In that same speech, you spoke of harnessing and supporting the profusion of positive initiatives that exist in Irish society.

Your ability to stimulate discussion by pointing out the areas which are deficient in Irish society, particularly in terms of social justice, while also highlighting the positive and generosity of Irish people is always welcome.

We look forward to being stimulated by your words again today.

Despite technological advances, human contact is more important than ever.

One of the issues addressed by President Higgins in his speech was the evolution of the digital world. He said "There is no denying the practical contribution of the digital world, particularly for those are increasingly time-poor and who may struggle to balance work and family commitments within a day that is never quite long enough. That is its positive contribution, but it also brings challenges. Despite all of the technological advances, human contact is something that defines us, be it through conversations, face to face interactions, simply taking the time to have a chat. When a person is at their lowest, and maybe in despair, this human contact is more important than ever."

Following his speech, a presentation was made to the President by Dennis McWatt, an SVP member for over 60 years.





Charleville members; Uwe Lahser, Kate Lahser, Catherine Bowes-Holly and Eamon Holly



Tuam members; left to right; Kay Dowling, Mary Lawlor, Brian Flannery, Frank O'Neill, Vera O'Malley and Maureen Mitchell



Mullingar members, left to right: Michael Donohoe, Bridget Doherty, Seamus Mimmagh and Richard Sheridan.



Nenagh members; left to right; Marie Fox, Kay Martin and Fiona



Members from Offaly who attended; left to right; Sr Joseph Fallon, Ferbane; Patricia Ivers, Allen parish and Sr Benedict Behan, Ferbane



Pictured here are some of the Cork members who attended; left to right; Mary Creedon, Macroom, Suki Ngqinambi, Blackpool and Phil Brady, Mallow



...desk, Geraldine Mullin, Sean Lawless, Annette O'Neill,



St Catherine's Conference, Wexford; left to right; Maeve McNulty, Lillian Clowery and Mary Murray



...a Hogan.



Members of St. Sylvester's Conference, Malahide, Dublin who attended; left to right; Sean Nugent, Bernadette Martin, Patsy McGuirk (president), Breeda Corrigan and Kathleen Morgan



...ft to right; Pádraig O Tuama Ballingearry, Kathleen Macroom.



Pictured from Castlepollard are left to right: Amanda Fivey, John Ginnell, Jimmy McIntyre, Michael Rynne and Sandra Fagan.

Past, Present and Future

During the rest of the morning, there were three fascinating presentations which highlighted the past, present and future of SVP. Larry Tuomey, International Treasurer General, provided a summary of SVP in Ireland since 1844. Or as MC Liam Mulumby described it '175 years in 20 minutes'

This was followed by an overview of young SVP by Becca Gallagher, National Youth Development Co-ordinator and Aine Stafford, Chair National Youth Committee. They were joined on stage by pupils from the Young SVP Conference from Holy Child Killiney who sang the SVP Rap. Becca and Aine also introduced an engaging video of Young SVP members describing their involvement with SVP.

Wrapping up before lunch was Dr Gerry Jeffers who spoke about the SVP Action for Social Justice and Education through the years.

An important historical background in understand how the Society came to be where it is today



Larry Tuomey's excellent summary of the development of SVP over the years was in his words 'a brief glimpse'. But it provides an important historical background to understand how the Society came to be where it is today.

He described how the first Conference, St Michan's, was formed in Great Charles Street West in Dublin and those involved. St Michan's was quickly followed by four other Conference in the city. Over the following years Conferences were set up around the country, Cork and Waterford in 1846, Clonmel, Limerick and Kilrush in 1847, Kilkenny and Enniskillen in 1848, Galway in 1849 and Drogheda, Belfast and Newry in 1850.

Members at the time, mainly men, had to be of 'good social standing'.

It was over a hundred years later in 1962 that the first women's Conferences were formed in Galway and Ballina and 2007 before the first female National President, Mairead Bushnell from Cork, was elected.

Larry concluded with a description of the one common thread that linked the work of SVP through the changing social and economic climate over 175 years. He said that this thread was that members in all parts of the island confronted with the reality of poverty of time and place, seeking to respond as best they could week in week out through direct personal service in a spirit of love and hope in the tradition of our founders. He said *"This heritage has led to the Society of today confronting contemporary needs with a good reputation and the support of a charitable public. Both hard-earned and should never be taken for granted."*

Bringing charity and justice together



Gerry Jeffers's presentation also provides an excellent reference point for the involvement of SVP in social justice advocacy and education and how the Society increased its focus on charity and justice together.

He referenced a resolution agreed at a meeting of the Society's Council of Ireland in January 1970 which said *"That the Society of St Vincent de Paul will – always in a strictly impartial and non-political way – actively, constantly and, where necessary publicly, play its part in striving for justice for the less privileged members of the community"*.

Concerning education, he drew attention to an SVP Publication called 'Priorities in Education' published in 1998 which lists a range of needs in education at all levels.

Young SVP



At various times during the day, speakers referred to the need for young people to be involved in the Society. In between the presentations from Larry Tuomey and Gerry Jeffers, Becca Gallagher and Aine Stafford outlined the programmes and involvement of Young SVP in secondary and third-level education. These include a Youth Development programme, a Schools/youth programme and a Colleges programme. These programmes engage young people in social activities in their communities; promote self-sufficiency; offer support and friendship and work for social justice.

During 2017/18 close to 10,000 students were engaged in Young SVP, 213 schools were visited, and 265 workshops on social justice were held.

Moving from the concept of welfare payments to social protection



The first speaker up after lunch was Regina Doherty TD, Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection. She spoke about the services provided by her department and the improvements in the delivery of those services.

She also said that she strongly believes we should move beyond a narrow concept of 'welfare' payments- perceived as simply payments for being out of work- towards an idea of 'social protection' where we focus on making as many interventions we can across the board to provide a breathing space for those in need.

When you are stuck in the mud, your level of opportunity determines its depth



The Minister was followed by Dr Katriona O'Sullivan who spoke passionately about her life, about social justice and the supports, including support from SVP, which helped her achieve her full potential.

Entitled 'Stuck in the Mud' her presentation described the path her life took from being a homeless, young mother, parenting on her own to an advocate for equality and equity. She is now a lecturer and programme coordinator of the 'Turn to Teaching' project at Maynooth University. In 2004 Katriona graduated from the foundation course for mature students in the Trinity Access Programmes. Then in 2008, she graduated with a first-class honours in Psychology from Trinity where she also completed her PhD in 2012.

Katriona immediately engaged the audience by warning them that she was likely to cry and swear as she is an emotional person. She had everyone wave and say 'Serving in Hope' which she filmed on her smartphone for uploading to her Instagram page.

During her speech, she referred to people who had helped her along the way when she needed support. Among those were two SVP members, whom she referred to as 'The Vinnies' — having made the phone call to the 'Vinnies' she had a visit from what she described as an older man and woman who were polite and calm. Having heard her story, they simply asked "what do you need?".

She was 23 at the time and living in a flat in Dublin's north inner city with her young son. For three to four years, they visited her

on and off, paid for her childcare and helped at Christmas. *"I always felt that I was in the presence of people who heard me and did not judge me"*. She said that they were the only people she could talk to about how she was getting on in college as none of her friends or family had experienced college life, so didn't know what she was talking about.

Katrina said that SVP had helped transform her life and allowed her to leave poverty. She explained the title of her presentation by equating life to a puddle of mud with the level of opportunity a young person has in life predicting the depth of the mud.

Her passionate and impactful presentation drew a standing applause.

Ego is a dangerous thing.



Kilkenny GAA Coach Brian Cody made an equally passionate presentation on the spirit of volunteering and teamwork. He spoke of the need for leadership and striving for doing what is best, whether in a voluntary capacity or as part of a team.

He emphasized the need for spirit, respect and striving for excellence of groups, putting no limits on what can be done.

In terms of qualities within a group, he had one that needs to be banished 'ego'. It is a dangerous thing he said. It corrupts and shows selfishness.

For him, leadership, shown in different ways by different people; positivity and acceptance of change are the qualities that matter.

What is important, he said was what we do to make a real difference.



The final speaker of the day was National President Kieran Stafford. In a speech that also drew sustained applause, he said 'It is to our credit that we are a member-led organisation, thanks to the commitment of members in leadership roles and the support of our excellent staff.

"This will only continue if we have members willing to serve as Conference Presidents, Area Presidents, and Regional Presidents.

"In the current regulatory and legislative environment, we operate in, it is becoming increasingly more difficult to attract members into leadership roles. The reality is that we will only continue to be member led if members take up these roles. Succession planning has never been more important.

"The only thing that will threaten the future of the Society is failing to attract new members and failure to keep them. If we want the Society to have a future, we must welcome new members and mentor them. We must never let our Conferences be closed shops.

"We are very fortunate to have the resources, organisation and facilities at our disposal to be able to make a real difference in so many lives, so in the words of Pope Francis "let us love not with words but with deeds".

Celebration of the Eucharist

During a short break, the stage setting was converted for a Celebration of the Eucharist with Archbishop Diarmuid Martin as Chief Celebrant. Sacred Music was performed by the Meath Diocesan Choir Director, Jim Walsh

Concluding his homily at the Mass Archbishop Martin said *"Homelessness and poverty are truly an indignity and affront to the dignity of men and men women and children who live in poverty. They are also an affront to the dignity of the society in which we live.*

"Today we give thanks to those men and women who over one hundred and seventy-five years have been sensitive to the marginalised and who – hail rain or snow – called to homes marked by poverty and who brought support and affection. The greatness of the story of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul is the witness of those men and women who never showing any trace of condescension became real friends with the poor and were recognised as such by the poor.

"The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul over these years has witnessed to and continues to witness every day to the God of love revealed in Jesus Christ. "

It was one of many uplifting messages that those present in the Dublin Convention Centre took away from a truly memorable day.

SVP Charity Shops pick up a major award at the Charity Retail Association Conference

Vincent's charity shops recently picked up 'The Community and Social Impact Award' at the Charity Retail Conference in University of Nottingham in England, whilst the Vincent's charity shop in Kircubbin, County Down was shortlisted for 'Charity Shop of the Year'.

CEO of the Charity Retail Association, Mr Robin Osterley said "Once again in Nottingham, staff, volunteers, and suppliers in the charity retail sector came together for our 2019 Charity Retail Awards. I was personally delighted to see that the Society of St Vincent de Paul took home our Community and Social Impact Award. We had an incredibly strong list of nominations in this category and they should be extremely proud winners"

National Retail Development Manager, Dermot McGilloway said "As we know, Vincent's charity shops in Ireland are not primarily fund raisers but have instead been established to serve the very specific needs of our local communities. These shops serve as a platform to promote the Vincentian values of support and friendship and social justice whilst promoting self- sufficiency.

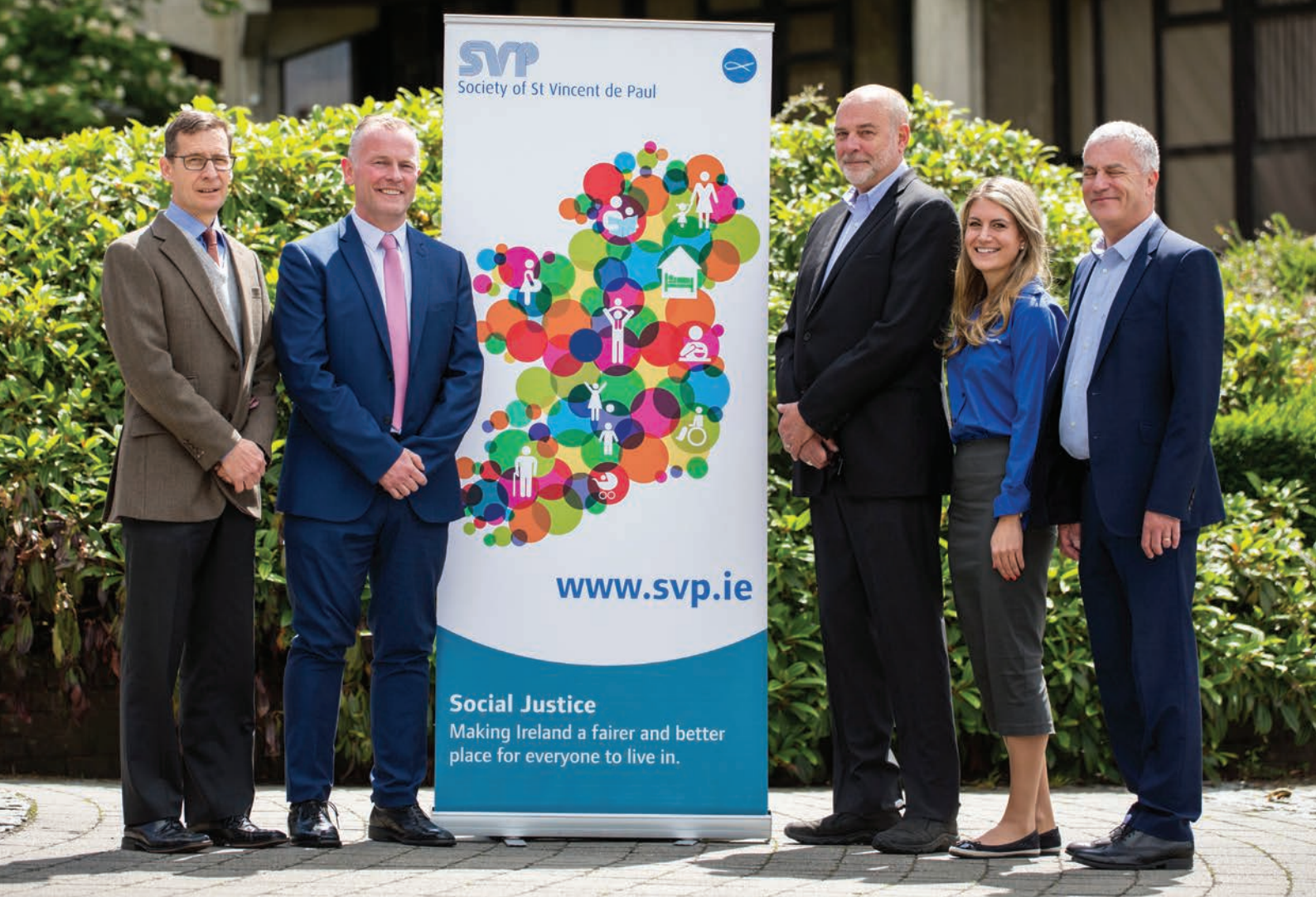
Our shops are often located in areas of social deprivation and rural isolation. This idea runs contrary to best commercial practise, but we have a moral obligation to ensure that all members of society can access SVP products and services". Mr McGilloway added "Our shops routinely provide free Emergency Assistance (clothing & bedding) for all homeless visitors and free clothing & household items through our Home Visitation Conference Referral scheme. We have also launched a "Hand of Friendship" leaflet in 11



Pictured Left to Right: Mike Nicol – 1st Waste – Award Sponsor, Ann Webb – Chair of Charity Retail Association, Tracey Scott – Stewart – Shop Manager, Kircubbin, Steve Milburn – Area Manager St Vincent's Charity Shops, England & Wales, Dermot McGilloway – National Retail Development Manager, Lily Marshal – National Retail Co-ordinator, Paul Sinha – Host

languages to reach out to new communities. We also run Customer Appreciation events throughout the year where we provide hospitality and entertainment to our regular customers, out of hours and in store, to ensure that our customers stay connected with us and with the local community. It is a great honour to have received the 'Community and social impact' award but it is a fitting tribute to over 3,000 members, volunteers and staff who work tirelessly in our 230 shops across Ireland to care for their local communities."





Vincent's National Retail Conference, Exhibition & Award 2019

On June 10th, 2019, all roads led to University of Limerick for Vincent's 4th National Retail Conference!

Over 240 delegates from across the Irish SVP retail network were joined by colleagues from SVP England & Wales and SVP Spain to peruse the supplier's exhibition and listen to world class speakers on their retail experiences in the US, UK and Ireland.

The keynote speaker was Paco Underhill, a leading retail psychologist and founding president of Envirosell, the New York – based behavioural research and consultancy firm. Mr Underhill is the renowned author of "Why we buy, The science of shopping" and "The Call of the Mall". Following Conference on 10th June, Mr Underhill held 3 in-store clinics for staff and volunteers in the new Vincent's shop in Moyross and in Vincent's in Thomas Street Limerick.

Other speakers included the National President of SVP, Mr Kieran Stafford, Chief Executive of the Charity Retail Association, Robin Osterley, the Stores Director for Brown Thomas and Arnott's, Mr Mark Limby, National Retail Development Manager, Dermot McGilloway, and National Retail Co-ordinator, Lily Marshal.

At the Supplier exhibition, delegates were invited to get a stamp from each exhibitor stand and were then entered a prize draw for some Aldi shopping vouchers, kindly sponsored by Aldi.

Exhibitors included:

- Alltex Recyclers – Headline sponsor
- EMS & Associates – Secondary Sponsor
- Retail Integration Ireland – Secondary Sponsor
- Bank of Ireland Payment Acceptance – Exhibitor
- Equipashop – Exhibitor

- New Links Training Solutions – Exhibitor
- Printrun – Exhibitor
- World of Books – Exhibitor
- Sheeran Insurance Brokers – Exhibitor
- Vincentian Family – Exhibitor
- Daughters of Charity - Exhibitor
- SVP Twinning – Exhibitor

During the plenary session, all speakers touched on the conference theme of 'the experience economy' and how SVP charity shops might adapt to this changing environment. National Retail Co-ordinator, Lily Marshel re-iterated that, in this highly competitive market, where charity shop products are largely indistinguishable from each other, that Vincent's charity shops need to differentiate themselves from the competition based on the 'in-store experience'. The charity retail customer in 2019 wants as much value from the shopping experience as from the product that is ultimately bought and will judge the experience on 'how the experience made me feel' as much as 'what the product does or costs'.

In a later session, National Retail Development Manager, Dermot McGilloway, discussed the importance of sustainable shopping and the support of SVP for 'the circular economy'. The Vincent's management team has designed a set of T-shirts displaying environment messages on co2 emissions, water waste and landfill, each for display within each shop. The T shirts will be hung randomly around the shops this autumn as part of a new campaign and will hopefully be picked up by customers whilst searching for a bargain.

Messages include:

"A cotton t-shirt takes 6 months to decompose in landfill, a polyester t-shirt can take up to 200 years!" (Source the Fashion Revolution).



Dermot McGilloway added that the T shirts are a novel way of raising general awareness of the impact of fast fashion on the environment. It is estimated that the global fashion industry is now producing up to 100bn new garments a year, while only 1pc of clothing is fully recycled. Hundreds of millions of

garments end up in landfill each year. Dermot added "We are very aware of the environmental and social issues that arise from the fashion industry, which is simply responding to consumer demand for 'throw away' and affordable garments but at SVP we keep 97 % of donated garments out of landfill and are committed to the concept of 'Reduce, Reuse and Recycle'.

Another issue addressed at Conference by Mr McGilloway was the support for SVP in Africa through the twinning programme. Under the name 'Gift of Hope', Vincent's customers across Ireland will be able to buy malaria nets, water purification tablets or even pay school fees on behalf of SVP in Africa. Again, T-shirts will be displayed in-store in support of this new campaign.

Following the plenary sessions at Conference, delegates were invited to attend the National Retail Awards and celebrated success in the following categories:

- Window Dressing Competition
- Volunteer of the Year
- Business Development Award
- Team Excellence Award
- Social Media Award

The awards were presented by National Retail Development Manager Dermot McGilloway and the Regional Shop Managers.

The event was hosted by National Retail Co-ordinator, Lily Marshel, and was made possible by the generous sponsorship of Headline Sponsor, Alltex Recyclers, Secondary sponsors, EMS & Associates and Retail Integration Ireland and the support of all the exhibitors. Organisers would also like to thank Aldi for sponsorship of goody bags and a prize for the passport draw.



SOME OF THE WINNERS



Window Competition - National Winner
Vincent's Laurence Centre, Drogheda
Lisa McCardle, Drogheda Laurence's Centre
receives the award from Dermot McGilloway
(left) and Peter Johnson, Shops Area Manager
for North East & Midlands



Volunteer of the Year - National Winner
Honor O' Connor, Vincent's Friary Lane,
Tralee with Dermot McGilloway and South
West Shops Area Manager Ursula Bosman.
Honor has been a member of SVP for 51
years. She is President of St. Anne's conference
in Friary Lane. She joined the Conference
in 1968 and was involved in setting up the
Friary Lane shop over 35 years ago. The main
purpose of the shop at the time was to clothe
children and adults who would often arrive
to the doors barefoot looking for help. Honor
continues to volunteer every Tuesday and
Thursday.



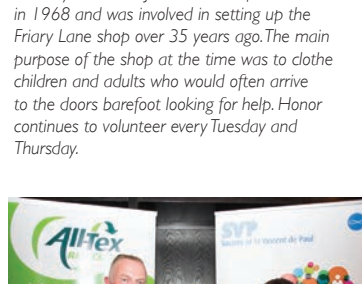
Social Media Award- National Winner
Vincent's Mallow. Niamh Walsh receives the
award from Dermot McGilloway and South
West Shops Area Manager Ursula Bosman



Window Competition: - North West Region
Vincent's Ballyshannon, Co. Donegal. Donna
McGee receives the award from Dermot
McGilloway.



Volunteer of the Year. - North West Region
Margarita Callaghan Small, Vincent's
Sligo. Margarita, pictured here receiving the
award from Dermot McGilloway, has been a
volunteer for three year and has been involved
in all aspects of the work at the shop from
sorting or labelling clothes, helping with window
displays and assisting customers. She is
described by her colleagues as a great team
worker.



Business Development. - North West Region
Vincent's Sligo Julieann Gillespie and Ali
Ahmadi with Dermot McGilloway.



Window Display. - North Region
Vincent's Kircubbin, Co. Down. Tracey Scott
Stuart (centre) with Anne Crossan, North Shops
Area Manager Anne Crossan, and Dermot
McGilloway



Volunteer of the Year - North Region
Margaret Sweeney, Vincent's
Derry with Anne Crossan, North Shops Area
Manager and Dermot McGilloway



Business Development. - North Region
Vincent's Killybegher, Co Tyrone. Tommy
Moohan and Shauna Burns
(centre) with Anne Crossan, North Shops Area
Manager and Dermot McGilloway



Team of the Year.- North Region
Vincent's Dairy Farm, Dunmurray, Belfast. John
Rogers, Sarah Clarke, Mary Spence, Elaine
Taggart with Dermot McGilloway and Anne
Crossan, North Shops Area Manager



Volunteer of the Year. - North East Region
Pauline Lynch, Vincent's Cavan. Eimear
Hannigan receives the award on behalf
of Pauline Lynch with Dermot McGilloway
and Peter Johnson North East & Midlands
Shops Area Manager. Pauline Lynch has been
a volunteer at Vincent's Cavan for over six
years. Her colleagues say that every customer
who walks through the shop doors knows her
and loves her. They say that she is front and
centre at every customer appreciation nights
and the team would be lost without her. "If
you want to know how lovable and amazing
she is you just have to meet her." they say.



Team of the Year. - North East Region
Vincent's Carrickmacross. Helena McMahon,
receives the award from Dermot McGilloway
and Peter Johnson, North East & Midlands
Shops Area Manager



Window Display - East Region
Vincent's Swords Hong McGuire, Vincent's
Swords (centre) with Dermot McGilloway
(left) and East Region Shops staff Lynn
Byrne, Annette McGraham and Colm Kenny



Volunteer of the Year. - East Region
Ann Walker, Vincent's Firehouse, Dublin
Ann Walker (2nd left) with Dermot McGilloway



(left) and East Region shops staff Annette
McGraham, Lynn Byrne and Colm Kenny, has
been volunteering in Vincent's Firehouse for
over five years. The nomination from the shop
said, "Ann is a right hand of the manager. She
helps, supports, encourages in many different
ways. She is honest, hardworking, positive
person with a wonderful sense of humour. We
are very proud to have her on the team."



Business Development. - East Region
Vincent's Tallaght, Dublin Ali Tabrizy, (centre)
receives the award from Dermot McGilloway
and Lynn Byrne East Region Shops Area
Manager (left) and East region Shops staff
shops staff Annette McGraham and Colm
Kenny



Window Display - South East Region
Vincent's Tramore, Co Waterford Sue Kiely, receives the award from Dermot McGilloway and Noel Cassidy, South East Shops Area Manager



Volunteer of the Year - South East Region
Bridget Bram, Vincent's Gorey, Co Wexford Bridget is pictured receiving her award from Dermot McGilloway and Noel Cassidy, South East Shops Area Manager. She has been a member of SVP for 33 years in that time she was responsible for;

- Opening the Vincent's shop in Gorey in 1990, which she ran for 10 years.
- Became Conference President 2001 a position which she held, by agreement, for 8 years.
- During 2002 and 2004 she developed the highly successful sheltered housing project in Gorey.
- 2013 opened a second Vincent's furniture shop which she is still involved with today.



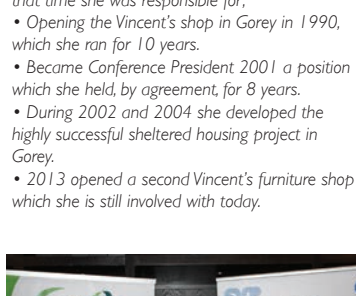
Business Development - South East Region
Vincent's Portarlatingo, Co. Laois Angela Dunne receives the award from Dermot McGilloway, and Noel Cassidy, South East Shops Area Manager



Team of the Year - South East Region
Vincent's Enniscorthy, Co. Wexford. Orla Harrington receives the award from Dermot McGilloway and Noel Cassidy, South East Shops Area Manager.



Window Display - South West Region
Vincent's Carrigtwohill, Co. Cork John Long receives the award from Dermot McGilloway, and Ursula Bosman, South West Shops Area Manager.



Team of the Year - South West Region
Vincent's Friary Lane, Tralee, Co Kerry. Jamie Blake, James Kelly, Maeve Leahy, Eileen Holden, Catherine Magnier with Dermot McGilloway (left) and Ursula Bosman, South West Shops Area Manager (right)



Window Display - Mid West Region
Vincent's Carrick-on-Suir, Co. Tipperary. Michelle Crowe and Breda Kirby (centre) receive the award from Dermot McGilloway (left) and Declan Byrne, Mid-West Shops, Area Manager.



Business Development - Mid West Region
Vincent's Banagher, Co Offaly. Yvonne Cochrane receives the award from Dermot McGilloway (Left) and Declan Byrne, Mid-West Shops, Area Manager.



Business Development - South West Region
Vincent's Holyhill, Cork. Phil Cowley receive the award from Dermot McGilloway and Ursula Bosman, South West Shops Area Manager.



Team of the Year - Mid West Region
Vincent's Roxboro, Limerick. Roxboro staff celebrate with Dermot McGilloway (left) and Declan Byrne, Mid-West Shops, Area Manager (right)



Window Display - West Region
Vincent's Ballina, Co. Mayo. Dermot McGilloway (left) with Anne Keane (collecting on behalf of Elaine Ruane), SVP Ballina and Padraig McDonagh, West Area Shops Manager.



Business Development - West Region
Vincent's Tuam, Co. Galway. Jenny Fox-Lennon receives the award from Dermot McGilloway, (left) and Padraig McDonagh, West Shops Area Manager.)



Volunteer of the Year - Mid West Region
Marie Spencer, Vincent's Roscrea, Co. Tipperary. with Dermot McGilloway (Left) and Declan Byrne, Mid-West Shops, Area Manager. Marie Spencer has been a volunteer with Vincent's Roscrea since the shop opened in November 2014. Her nomination said that she embraces the true ethos and values of the Society in all she does with respect and dignity. The kindness and understanding she demonstrates on a daily basis is heart-warming where she continually lifts the spirits of people young and old, from all walks of life who call in. "She has helped create a very welcoming inclusive, positive atmosphere in the shop and in Coffee Dock. Everybody is important in Marie's book."



Volunteer of the Year - West Region
Vincent's Sean Lawless, Vincent's Tuam, Co. Galway. Dermot McGilloway (left) with Sean Lawless, Mary Lawless, Jenny Fox-Lennon and Padraig McDonagh, West Shops Area Manager. The Vincent's Tuam volunteer of the Year Sean Lawless has been volunteering in both the shop and the local Conference for 5 years. He is also currently President of the local Conference.



Team of the Year - West Region
Vincent's Clifden, Galway. Ray O'Connor receives the award from Dermot McGilloway, (left) and Padraig McDonagh, West Shops Area Manager.



The Housing Assistance Payment (HAP): making the right impact?

*by Marcella Stakem,
Social Policy Development Officer*

The Society of Saint Vincent De Paul (SVP) and Threshold, launched a joint report on the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) entitled; 'The Housing Assistance Payment (HAP): making the right impact?' on Tuesday 9th July 2019.

The Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) is a form of social housing support, whereby the local authority pays rent to a private landlord on behalf of those households assessed as having a social housing need. The tenant pays a differential rent to the local authority.

HAP has increased in size and at pace since 2014, when it was first piloted. In 2014, 500 HAP tenancies were created and by the end of 2018 there were 47,917 HAP tenancies.

SVP members who contributed to the report, stated that paying a 'top-up' (in addition to the differential payment the tenant pays to the local authority), has become an increasingly common feature of the HAP scheme. Almost half (48%) of participants surveyed by Threshold were paying a 'top-up' to their landlord. This is not surprising as HAP tenants are reliant on the private rented sector, a sector in which there has been an unprecedented increase in demand for housing and significant rent increases by landlords in recent years. As a result, the majority of respondents struggled to pay utility bills (electricity and heat), buy groceries and cover childcare and school costs.

'Mary is a Lone Parent in receipt of social welfare, which is her only source of income. She has two teenage children, one of whom has special needs. She is paying €50 per week out of her limited income and that is on top of her differential rent contribution for an old terraced house that has no heating as the gas boiler does not work and the landlord has refused to fix it'. (SVP Member)

SVP members who visit people in their homes have reported that some private rented accommodation is in a very poor state of repair which affects their physical as well as their mental health. Research carried out by the Vincentian Partnership for Social Justice (VPSJ) found that the cost of the minimum energy needs in an efficient dwelling can be half that of an inefficient dwelling. In addition, it is estimated that around 55% of private rented dwellings have BERs of between D and G.

Our report recommends that a strategy to introduce minimum energy efficiency standards in the private rented sector is needed which will ensure that all accommodation meet an energy rating of at least C or higher by 2030. Also, adequate resourcing must be ringfenced to ensure all local authorities can conduct inspections and pursue breaches of minimum standards to improve the standards of the country's rental stock.

'Vera lives in a two-bedroom terraced house with one child. There is no heat, damp throughout the house and no hot water in the kitchen. The kitchen consists of an alleyway out to a backyard with no place to sit. The rent is €660 per month with the tenant paying a 'top-up' every month. The council did an inspection, and the landlord inserted a heater in the kitchen but then put up the rent as a result. The tenant was told by the council- "be thankful that the landlord put in the heater". (SVP member)

Findings from the Threshold survey and interviews with SVP member show that HAP is providing an important short-term housing support and preventing further people experiencing homelessness. However, it contains a number of design flaws which need to be reformed if this support is to meet the needs of low income households in the private rented sector. SVP and Threshold are advocating for a complete review of HAP and its interaction with the private rented sector, given the changing landscape of housing and renting in Ireland. Those recommendations aim to make HAP a workable housing solution until such a time as there is sufficient social housing provision.



Critical Report on Direct provision

In 20 years' time, you and I may be reading an article like this in the SVP Bulletin

by Michael Kenny, North East and Midlands Region

Date of Publication June 17th 2039

The report "Left in Limbo" published by the Commission on Direct Provision, established by the Government in Feb 2038, has reported to the Minister of Justice and Law Reform. Government ministers, TDs, commentators and community and voluntary sector advocacy groups have responded in unison and with disbelief on the Commissions' findings. Spokespersons had hit the airways and social media criticising a system that operated in Ireland from 1999 to 2025 when it was discontinued due to international human rights criticism

The seven-member Commission, chaired by a retired high court judge, presents a wealth of data in the report. For example, the report says in 2020 there were more than 4,400 people, including 1,700 children, living in 34 accommodation centres spread across the Irish State. The centres, which included former hostels, disused hotels and an out of date mobile home park, were run by private contractors who received over

€72 million in State funding in that year and pro-rata inflation adjusted tendered amounts in remaining years.

While the state-run Reception and Integration Agency was responsible for ensuring direct provision centres provided the basic needs of all residents that agency was severely criticised in the report. The report notes that the United Nations and international human rights groups heavily criticised the direct provision system on an ongoing basis. Indeed, the former Supreme Court judge Catherine McGuinness predicted in 2019 that a future government would end up publicly apologising for damage done by the direct provision system. That may come to pass with the publishing of "Left in Limbo".

The question is, why was this de-humanising system allowed to continue for so long? Jim Cusack, a journalist in the Irish Independent newspaper, as far back as in June 2014, reported

that direct provision was “inhuman and degrading”. Cusack asserted that the system was illegal under both the Irish Constitution and the European Convention on Human Rights, and all other international human rights conventions that Ireland has subscribed to. Yet it continued.

The Irish Government's Special Rapporteur on Child Protection, Dr Geoffrey Shannon called it “institutionalised poverty”. Yet nothing changed. The report notes that while there was much debate over the years as people became more aware of the centres, there was no action to free often traumatised people from this modern form of incarceration – prison by another name.

In response to critics of the report who said it was sensational and “over the top” the report chairperson responded noting that the facts speak for themselves.

The executive report summary states that “... human understanding is evidence enough that putting families in forced provision where nationalities, cultures, age groups and genders were forced to live in very close proximity was life damaging”. The report particularly criticises state agencies and charitable bodies that did not stand up for children, vulnerable adults, traumatised migrants and people left in “Limbo” for up to 8 years, petrified that they would be returned to the country from which they had fled. While critics said that these were only economic refugees the report produces data showing that people came to Ireland for many reasons but that many were fleeing violence, conflict, cultural inhumanity such as female genital mutilation, and other valid flight reasons. The report also presents data on the range of capacities and skills that migrants had. These capacities and skills were dis-allowed and became outdated during direct provision adding to their repression. The report notes that research is needed to quantify the anecdotal evidence of the valuable contribution those who came through the direct provision system have made in Ireland. However, the report also calls for urgent research to quantify the emotional, mental and indeed physical scars left on vulnerable refugees and their families by being forced to stay in direct provision.



When a critic of the report said on social media “If things were so bad why did direct provision residents not speak up” the Commission chairperson said on RTE radio that the voices of asylum seekers were rarely heard and never responded to. The chairperson pointed to a section on the report noting that those in direct provision were fearful that their speaking out would damage their request for refugee status in Ireland. The chairperson further said their personal stories provide a rare insight into the impact of the system on forgotten people left in limbo.

The report also notes that some private agents made significant profits on the back of direct provision residents. The journal.ie in March 22nd 2019 reported that six firms received payments in excess of €5 million in 2018, including two receiving payments over €7 million (<https://www.thejournal.ie/direct-provision-centre-e72-million-4556693-Mar2019/>).

The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul joined in the condemnation of the direct provision system described in the report saying it was not compatible with the Vincentian ethos and lamented that more action was not taken in the interests of the most vulnerable during that time.

Do we really want this after all the scandals?

There are
no borders
when
SVP help
is requested.

How Climate Change is impacting our Twinned Vincentians

*Tom White,
Twinning Office, West Region*

Malawi, a country in South East Africa has been devastated by flooding and droughts over the past five years. 15 of the 28 Districts in the Country have been extremely effected with the Southern Districts along the Shire River suffering the greatest loss and damage. Hundreds of people have been drowned and washed away, livestock and crops have been lost, houses and property have been severely damaged and infrastructure washed away. Outbreaks of Malaria, tuberculosis and other waterborne diseases have been reported from all flooded districts.

Earlier the year Cyclone Idia hit the Country causing more damage particularly in the Southern Districts. Cyclone Kenneth followed close behind but had less devastating effects.

The situation prompted the President of Malawi, Peter Mutharika to seek International Aid for his Country. Some 92,000 households have received assistance but distribution of the Aid is severely restricted by the poor state of roads and Bridges. Distributing Aid to the Southern Districts is almost

impossible without air support as the areas including the villages are under water. There has been no coordinated plan for distribution until recently when the Chikwawa District Disaster Management was established. Mr Chiku Milinyo a representative of the District is confident that this organisation will coordinate the distribution of Aid .

The Society of St Vincent De Paul have through their network of Conferences been distributing Aid to the displaced peoples. The Society has received funding from CIAD Paris, National Twinning Committee Dublin and West Region SVP Twinning. The Conferences main problems are delivering Aid to the outlying villages and hamlets.

The rebuilding of houses for the displaced persons will be a major challenge for the Country going forward. Already the Society is engaging with Local District Authorities in identifying suitable building land for house construction. Establishing ownership and title to such land will be very difficult.



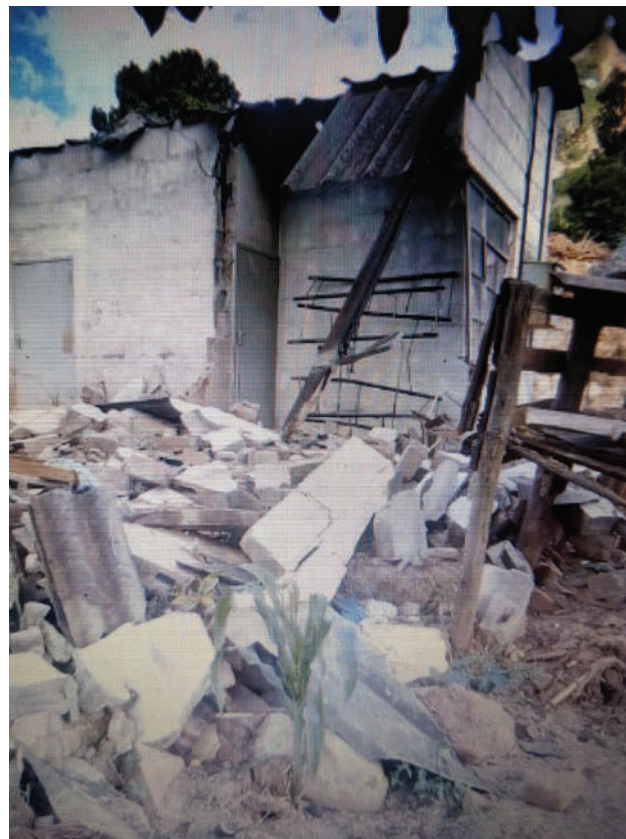


*Michael Kenny Twinning Officer,
North East and Midlands Region*

In mid-March (2019) Cyclone Idai slammed into the Chimanimani Mountains that form the border between Zimbabwe and Mozambique. Torrential rain and sustained winds of up to 190km per hour flattened the low-lying area between Beira in Mozambique and southern Zimbabwean. The rains set off landslides in the Zimbabwe highlands that have altered the landscape (See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PQP_P12_PZM from Sky News). 80% of Beira, a town like Drogheda, was flattened.

Officials in Zimbabwe estimate that more than 2,250 houses were washed away or damaged, leaving more than 4,000 people displaced. Entire sections of settlements have completely disappeared, and areas where houses had stood are not there anymore. The bodies of the house occupants were washed away into Mozambique by the floodwaters.

While our news has been preoccupied with the economy, Brexit and US/Trump issues SVP Zimbabwe has had to



deal with survival issues. SVP Zimbabwe president Tendai Kusembedzera, a secondary school teacher in Mutare Southern Zimbabwe has kept as up to date. Tendai tells us that 8 SVP Conferences are located in the Southern Zimbabwe area affected by the floods. Vencentian members have been doing their best to help local people left destitute and traumatised.

Here are 2 pictures Tendai sent showing Cyclone Idai effects. Photograph 1 is a picture of what is left of a teacher's house at Ngandu secondary school. The rest of the school was washed away. Photograph 2 is a picture of Stephen Mulhanga sitting outside his house. Stephen is a farmer from Kwirire area and he lost 4 hectares (10 acres) of land to the cyclone and the floods. Tendai told me of a boarding school where two students were washed away in the night as they slept. The school dormitories, the dining room and kitchen were destroyed.

This is the worst cyclone in living memory to hit this area but was followed in April by a second cyclone that was not as powerful but was more dramatic. All of this should give us concern for global warming.

Our Groundbreaking Initiatives Have Made Such A Difference

by Loretta Needham



Smart devices for beginners with Peter our volunteer computer tutor

Croí na Gaillimhe is now 10 years in existence and celebrated 'The Story of us' over the years. The anniversary event brought many distinguished guests from our inspiring participants, to local Councillors, Senator, TDs and Minister of State together to appreciate the significant milestone and to hear of the wonderful work of Croí na Gaillimhe.

When reflecting on the early days of Croí na Gaillimhe, the work that has been done over the years with older people - delivering clubs and classes, keeping them engaged and connected to their community. The valuable work with asylum seekers - through the asylum support clinic, Fáilte Isteach (our conversational English programme), homework club, basketball,

choir and other initiatives was groundbreaking and hopefully will influence how things are done in the future.

We commend and thank our volunteers who have given their time, energy and expertise over the years. As the politicians say a lot has been achieved over the last decade, but there still is a lot to do. We hope that people who are in a position of influence in the Society of St Vincent de Paul will support Croí na Gaillimhe and ensure the steady progress made over the last 10 years continues to be built on. It is essential that this worthwhile project would continue to be a vital service in the heart of Galway.

The invited guests heard from the experiences of participants who have been helped over the years, and they gave an account of what being part of Coí na Gaillimhe meant to them.



A group of English Language for beginners students with our volunteer tutors Sally and Maura



Pádraig Conneely (FG Councillor) Loretta Needham (Manager Croí na Gaillimhe)
Frank Fahy FG Councillor Catherine Connolly TD Independent



Social club for older people enjoying a musical afternoon

Dining and thriving in the Heart of Galway: Croí na Gaillimhe's Lunch and Social Club

How can I capture in a few words what the lunch and social club mean to people, without leaving out too much of what makes it unique? It is hard to pin it down, as it is a club that has many dimensions: a meeting space, a dining space, a place to share 'news and views', a place to feel welcome and relaxed in equal measure.

The club started 10 years ago and was one of the first initiatives of Croí na Gaillimhe. As is the way, with a busy, dynamic centre, Croí na Gaillimhe is in constant movement and has evolved over the years to incorporate other services which respond to the needs of the people of the city and county.

However, back in 2009 the Saint Vincent de Paul Steering Committee (St James Conference) recognising that socially there was little on offer in the heart of Galway for older people to keep them connected, engaged, and stimulated, they made this fantastic city centre renovated mill available for use as a social and educational space for them. Not only was it the first initiative of Croí na Gaillimhe, it was also the first on site lunch club in Galway City. Many more have since emulated this model and we are glad to have blazed the trail in that regard. We partnered with COPE catering, who provide us with hot, nutritious lunches, which have always been of the highest standards over the years. Members have an opportunity to taste quality every week.

The club meets every Wednesday for lunch at 1pm, followed by the social club at 2pm. What could one expect should you happen to drop by? Well, a happy hum of conversation from those who like to catch up on the weekly news, or trade robust views of sports achievements (or otherwise) of favourite teams.

Lots of conversation, but there is room for all at the table, those who prefer to dine quietly do so, never feeling pressure to talk if they don't wish, all are welcome. Time spent at our lunch club reveals an environment rich in the simple pleasure of dining together in an unhurried fashion -as the old Italian proverb goes "at the table no-one grows old" Lunch is served by staff and volunteers who ensure that members come away from their meal feeling it was an 'experience' and not just a meal.

The social club at 2pm is also a lively place that offers a multitude of activities from ever popular and never to be replaced bingo to floor games, and art projects. We welcome guest speakers on many topics from community safety to mindfulness. We honour events that celebrate age such as 'Positive Ageing Week' and Bealtaine.

Over the years we have had many interesting and memorable afternoons from poetry workshops, local history, origami, musical afternoons and even a drumming workshop! Whatever the theme, it's an opportunity to explore a new interest or renew an old one. The lunch and social club takes place on the ground floor of our centre in the aptly named Social club room, with its unique views of the river and abundant nature, it is unrivalled in the City. This is just a snapshot of our lunch and social club for older people, we also have other services for those aged 55 and over including classes in art, creative writing, computers, knitting as well as a thriving Intergenerational project. We welcome you to come and join us.

Enquiries can be made to Loyola King, Activities Coordinator at (091) 895203, email: lkingsvp@gmail

Don Mahony Education Award

About 30 years ago the Northside Partnership was established to provide programmes and services to support individuals, local organisations, groups and communities in the D17 area.

Don Mahony, former SVP National President (June 1981 - June 1987) was visiting and volunteering in this area. He was a huge advocate of education and took every opportunity to highlight and speak about it at Area Conferences and with members and businesses. After a kind of offer of a large sum of money from a philanthropist who wanted the money to be used for education, Don immediately suggested the Northside Partnership. A team was established with particular interest in education which included a number of teachers from the area and Don was also asked to join as a member of SVP. This money was straightaway put to good use to help children and adults with the costs of education. One school at the time contacted Kay Hogan, SVP Area President about running meditation classes for children and wondered if SVP could help. Kay and Don asked if they could sit in on one of these classes and straight away saw the huge benefits. In no time at all parents were also invited in and this created a wonderful peaceful atmosphere for all.

When Don passed unexpectedly in late 2018 while on holidays it was a huge shock and loss to everyone who knew him. SVP's Kay Hogan was contacted by Grainne Duffy to say that all from Northside Partnership wanted to do something in memory of Don as a mark of appreciation for everything he had done over the years to help people. They held a special day which was attended by Don's wife Una, Kay and numerous teachers who had the pleasure of meeting Don over the years as well as some of the original board members of Northside Partnership. Many

spoke of Don with great admiration and remembered him as "a true gentleman with a great sense of humor, never judging and always listening to others".

As a special mark of respect Northside Partnership have established the Don Mahony Commemoration Medal and certificate which will be awarded to students from some of the schools in the D17 area for best attendance.

And we are sure if Don was here today we would hear him speak to all SVP members about his passion for education and the need to support people from the earliest stages all the way up, as education is a whole life experience. "It is our duty to serve" he would say.

He died as he lived, a great friend to everyone.



D 17 School Completion Programme Local Management Board
Back Row- Neil Dunphy, Derry Amphlett, Mick Kennedy, Iggy Keane, Grainne Duffy, Breda Murray, Noel Kelly.

Front Row: Rosemary Gaffney, Kay Hogan, Una Mahoney, Mick Finn

Should your debts have a health warning?

The effects of problem debt on a person's wellbeing and mental health can be severe and can prevent them coming forward for help but there is a solution to every debt problem and this is where the Insolvency Service of Ireland (ISI) can help.

The ISI is the independent government body set up to help people with all levels of problem debt.

Often people do not realise that they have a serious debt problems; they are too busy coping with the problem and trying to make ends meet.

You could have serious debt problems if:

- You are not able to pay your bills in full when they are due;
- You are paying a little off each bill trying to keep creditors (the people you owe money to) at bay;
- You are reluctant to set up direct debits to pay bills in case your money cannot stretch to meet them;
- You are receiving calls and letters from creditors about missed payments and threats of repossession;
- You have made personal sacrifices to pay your debts.

All of the debt solutions overseen by the ISI are designed to get a person back on track financially, keeping them in their home where possible. At the end of the process, the person will be solvent again and can start planning their future.

The ISI has put in place a network of qualified professionals around the country – called PIPs (Personal Insolvency Practitioners) and AIs (Approved Intermediaries) – to provide you with debt advice and to work with your creditors on your behalf to work out a solution.

If you are in arrears on your home mortgage, you could also be eligible for a free PIP consultation under a new state-funded scheme, Abhaile.

When you are worrying about debt problems, it can be tempting to ignore bills and letters from creditors and hope that the issue will go away. But the sooner you take action, the sooner you will be free of your debt and can move on with your life.

For more information visit www.backontrack.ie phone the ISI information line on 076 106 4200 or freetext GETHELP to 50015 for a callback.





Ozanam House Centenary Celebration

In excess of eighty Members from around the Mid West Region attended Mass at St. Joseph's Church, O'Connell Street, Limerick on the evening of May 15, 2019 to mark the centenary of the transfer of Ozanam House to the Society in 1919 and to mark the 175th anniversary of the foundation of the Society in Ireland in 1844.

Special guests on the evening were our National President, Kieran Stafford and our National Secretary, Andy Heffernan.

Dr Tom Corbett, Regional Spiritual Advisor celebrated Mass which was followed by a brief outline of the history of Ozanam House delivered by Michelle Putti, Regional Co-ordinator with an accompanying brochure which was produced to mark the occasion. John Lupton, Regional President addressed the gathering and made a presentation to Kieran Stafford who in turn addressed the gathering. Liturgical music on the evening was provided by Eimear Purcell, MSO who also organised for the CBS Pipe Band to lead the Members from the Church back to Ozanam House for what was a very enjoyable social gathering of Members from around the Region.

SVP Limerick Aldi Collection



The SVP in Limerick are extremely grateful to all those who supported and volunteered at their recent Aldi Collection in Limerick.

SVP Mid West Hosts JP McManus Pro Am Pre Qualifier Competition

The Mid West Region is participating in the JP McManus Pro Am in 2020 having benefited significantly from the JP McManus Benevolent Fund over many years. In order to enter a team for the grand qualifier next May, there is a requirement that a JP McManus Pro Am Pre-qualifier competition is run which must generate €12,500 net. This amount (€12,500) enables SVP Mid West's entry into the 2020 competition and in effect serves as admission as a beneficiary of the charitable proceeds over the next number of years.

SVP Mid West hosted their JP McManus Pre-Qualifier Competition at Shannon Golf Club on Friday May 31st last. The Club proved to be an excellent venue for the event both in terms of the condition of the course and the dining and other facilities. On the basis of raising €12,500 from the event including sponsorship, one team of three players will advance to the Grand Qualifier in Adare Manor next May. Those going forward are Noel Hartnett, a Member of the Society from Rathkeale. The other two Members of the advancing team are Oliver Doherty, President of Shannon Golf Club and Gary O'Reilly from Castletroy.

Individual winners on the day were John Buckley, Charleville, first prize, John Dowling, Carrick on Suir, second prize and Noel Harnett, Rathkeale, third prize. The Region acknowledges the hard work of the Committee in planning and ensuring the success of this event, in particular the work of Pat McCarthy in getting sponsorship, acting as liaison with Shannon Golf Club, etc. Members of the Committee were Pat McCarthy, Ennis, Bill Nash, Clonmel, Bernard Collins, Limerick City, Eddie Heffernan, Limerick City, Eamon Ryan, East Limerick, John Lupton, Regional President, Roisin Morris, staff and Michelle Putti, Regional Co-ordinator.



Pictured at the presentation of prizes at the Society of St Vincent de Paul Pre-Qualifier Golf Classic at Shannon Golf Club are left to right: Roisin Morris, SVP; John Lupton, SVP Regional President, Michelle Putti, SVP Regional Co-ordinator, Oliver Doherty, President Shannon Golf Club, Jean Murphy Wright, Shannon Golf Club Lady Captain and Pat McCarthy, SVP.

Honoured by the Saint Patrick's Cathedral Community Grants scheme



As part of the Saint Patrick's Cathedral Community Grants scheme, the St Bernard's Conference of the St Vincent Paul was fortunate to receive a grant of €1,000 which will be used to support families in the area with their educational needs.

Each year Saint Patrick's Cathedral, the National Cathedral of the Church of Ireland, distributes the money raised through offertories, collections and candle offerings to charities and community groups working to respond to various needs within the community.

Pictured acknowledging the grant are the Reverend Canon Charles Mullen of Saint Patrick's Cathedral and Piaras Kelly, President of the St Bernard's Conference.

St John's Coleraine Annual Senior Citizens Bus Trip to Lisburn



On 27 June in glorious sunshine 45 senior Citizens from parish had a very enjoyable day trip to Lisburn. It was a great opportunity for people to socialise and the day ended by enjoyable meal in Lodge Hotel Coleraine.

Impact of SVP Support in Prisoners

Peter McVeigh, President - St Joseph's Prison Conference
Letter from John (not his real name)

"I have been in custody for the past several months in HMP Maghaberry. During this time I have had the luxury of meeting some of the volunteers from St Vincent De Paul. They walk around the wings each week, and their presence is always welcome. Despite meeting so many men, they never fail to remember our names, or our personal stories.

To them we are not prisoners, but simply men. They never judge us for our crimes. They are always there to help us weather to stay in touch with family, or help with clothing, and they provide an invaluable presence in our prison lives.

On a personal note, I first met the volunteers shortly after I came to prison for the first time, and as such they have become integrated in my journey. They have shown me kindness, sympathy and understanding during a very difficult time in my life, and this has meant a great deal to me, and I will always have gratitude for the humanity they have shown me."

Vincent's Portadown Celebrate 20th Birthday



Vincent's - Portadown celebrated their 20th Anniversary last week in style by holding an all-day 50% off sale. Jean and Molly have been volunteering since the start and were only too delighted to greet many of the visiting customers.

We would also like to acknowledge Kathleen and Bernie who are also volunteers with 20 years' service but who unfortunately were not available for photos. All the staff and volunteers would like to say a huge thank you to all the public who have supported them over the last two decades.

Extending the hand of friendship with humanitarian work



Last Christmas the students of Loreto College in Mullingar donated food and money to Mullingar SVP for the Christmas Appeal, as they have done in previous years.

Noel O Callaghan, Conference President was invited back to give them a talk about the work of the Society in Mullingar; as well as talk about his 43 years' service with the Defence Forces. He explained "how our Defence Forces, who are the physical manifestation of Ireland's overseas foreign policy, extends its hand of friendship with humanitarian work, and how the two were linked on overseas mission in Kosovo".

"The future for our SVP in Mullingar and our Defence Forces is secure if even a few of such like-minded young people join either or both organisations, whose ethos and values are about people helping people" says Noel.

Day two of Volunteer Training



Our volunteers were very eager to participate in volunteer training which took place in Ozanam House Mullingar in May.

"No work is great if it is not organised" - Frederic Ozanam 1834.



Mullingar

Following on from a recent brief by Mary Walsh from MABs Mullingar, Debbie Daly, Manager of 1428 Active Retirement Club spoke to the local Conference about the activities of their club for their members. She explained the process and steps involved in applying for FOB Alarm Systems. The Conference were then able to use this information and share it with some of the people they visit.

Collection at Eurospar

Mullingar SVP had a door collection in March at Eurospar/ Marshall's Green Road in Mullingar in order to connect with the community, feel the pulse, raise some funds and create awareness of the work of our Society as we head into the 175th Year of people helping people.

Have you ever thought of helping or volunteering - Ring 089 226 8269.



SVP member Mike Gilboy with Cathal Huges - Manager of Eurospar.

A Special Birthday for a very special Volunteer



John Liddy (Vice President), Anne Costello (Treasurer), Anna McGing (celebrant), Mai Kyne, Seamus McManus and Ivan Allison (President).

On Tuesday 6th November 2018 a very special birthday celebration took place in Park House Galway.

Anna McGing who has been a volunteer of the Sacred Heart Conference in Westside Galway for 42 years celebrated her 90th. birthday. Anna is still very active in the Conference and we wish her well in the coming years.



John Liddy (Vice President) Mai Kyne, Anne Costello (Treasurer), Seamus McManus, Ivan Allison (President) and Anna McGing (celebrant).

In Tribute

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

Eileen McCabe

Thursday 4th April was indeed a very sad day in the lives of all those who knew Eileen McCabe as they learned of her sudden passing after a short illness. Eileen was laid to rest after Requiem Mass in Our Lady Queen of Peace Church and the large number of mourners was testimony to the respect in which she was held.

Just as Eileen's passing was sudden, so was her arrival into this world weighing in at 2lbs, months before expected, to the shock of the Midwife and the newly qualified Dr Gibson. She was the youngest in the family. Her mother had carried fifteen babies before Eileen, eight not surviving and died suddenly when Eileen was only 15, leaving her to carry the purse strings.

She carried out her domestic duties very well while coping with her studies and after qualifying as a Social Worker spent over 30 years in this profession until a diagnosis of breast cancer forced her to retire prematurely.

Eileen battled her illness with great stoicism and as her health improved, she began to look for a way to continue helping the most vulnerable and deprived. This led her to volunteer with the Society of St Vincent De Paul in 2007 recognising the level of need in her beloved West Belfast. Eileen worked tirelessly supporting those in need through her visitation with families, practical help and advice. Her previously acquired skills in Social Services transferred well and were most valuable in this work. She also trained and initiated new SVP members and latterly was volunteer manager in Vincent's Thrift Shop in Turf Lodge.

Like her entrance into this world, Eileen left us all too prematurely. She will be sadly missed by those she helped, those she worked alongside as well as her friends, but most of all by her loving family. And it is to Eileen's brothers and sisters and large family circle that we extend our deepest sympathy.

Donal Guilfoyle

It is with great sadness we mourn the death of our friend and volunteer Donal Guilfoyle who passed away suddenly in June. Donal started up St Vincent's Book Shop in Mulcahy House in Clonmel which has grown from strength to strength all due to his dedication.

Donal had a great love of books himself and he had a great wealth of knowledge. He loved music his records were always playing in the shop. He will be missed by his many customers and colleagues in Mulcahy House.

We send our condolences to his wife Valerie, three sons and his grandchildren.

REST IN PEACE DONAL

James 'Jimmy' Crook

The Parish Church of St William Trimdon was filled to overflowing to honour the life of James 'Jimmy' Crook who passed away on Thursday 6th June. Jimmy was a lifelong servant of the Catholic church filling every position from cleaner to Eucharistic Minister. He was a SVP member since 1964 and served as President and Secretary of the St William's Conference for many years.

He was particularly recognised for his visiting of sick, lonely and housebound Parishioners. Jimmy will be sadly missed by his wife Pat, his daughters, son in law and grandchildren, as well as the wider community of Trimdon. Jimmy's requiem Mass and Internment took place at Trimdon on Wednesday 19th June.

May he rest in peace.



Mary Mullins, St Peter & Pauls Conference, Cork

A few days before Christmas 2018 the Conference of St Peter and Paul's and the wider Vincentian family in Cork lost a wonderful lifelong member with the passing of Mary Mullins after a brief illness. Mary was a wonderful Conference member for over 40 years and in that time of serving the poor in the Middle Parish of Cork, Mary had an encyclopaedic knowledge and memory of the many families and individuals she helped over that period of time.

She also served as treasurer for many years and her diligence to detail and book keeping skills was legendary. It was a privilege and humbling experience to sit with Mary when visiting a family because she gave them her undivided attention, listened attentively to their problems and concerns and acted immediately to alleviate their suffering as best as she could. To say Mary went the extra mile would be an understatement to the efforts that she made to help others. Mary also helped in the Regional office for many years in a voluntary capacity and staff and other volunteers gained so much knowledge from her.

The sense of sadness in her passing was and still is felt by so many who were lucky enough to have known Mary and this extends not just to her immediate family but to her many friends, past colleagues from her banking career; her golfing buddies, SVP volunteers and lastly the many families and individuals she supported throughout her 40 years of volunteering.

You have earned your rest Mary

Jimmy Stenson

St Mary's Conference, Carrick on Shannon are saddened by the passing of our longest serving and faithful member Jimmy Stenson. Jimmy joined SVP in 1954 and served in many capacities for 65 years. He held the position of President six times.

Jimmy was a very compassionate man and had a great understanding of humanity and the wants of people in the community. He always had a friendly smile and gave tirelessly of his time to SVP. He was very approachable and anyone who called to his door for help always left with their burden lightened and a happier heart.

For many years St Mary's Conference had no official office or Headquarters. Its meetings were held in the Church Sacristy or the Confessional Box and later they moved to the Bush Hotel. Jimmy, being the far-seeing man that he was, saw the opportunity of setting up a base when he purchased the house that is now the Ozanam House Charity Shop. Next Jimmy broke with tradition and invited women to join the Society and they opened the shop in 1992 which has provided a steady income ever since.

In 2013 Jimmy was selected to represent the Conferences of Leitrim at Knock Shrine to accept a statue of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal.

Jimmy replicated all that is good in man. His heart was in the right place. He will be sadly missed by all the people whose lives he touched over the years.

We offer our sincere sympathy to his devoted wife Maura, his son Gerard, his daughters Helen, Kathleen and Patricia, his sons in law, his daughter in law, his grandchildren and his extended family. We thank you for sharing Jimmy with us and supporting him in all the work he did for the SVP.

Ní bheidh do leithéid arís ann.



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