

# VINCENTIAN NEWS



Society of St Vincent de Paul

Winter 2018 Volume 4 Number 14



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Christmas 2017

New Area President –  
Ards & North Down

Retail and regional news

**Regional President,  
Brendan O'Neill with 14  
year old Donncha Campbell -  
read his story inside**

A portrait of Fr Perry Gildea C.M., an older man with white hair and glasses, smiling slightly. The background is a soft-focus landscape with a blue and purple sky over a body of water.

# Spiritual Reflections

Fr Perry Gildea C.M

*“In so far as you did this to one of my brothers (or sisters), you did it to me” (Matt. 25:40)*

All the official documents of the Society carry a charity number. This is in common with many, many other agencies but not all are truly charities. They may be very worthy agencies offering relief or advocacy in the face of injustice, but they are not true charities. Frederic Ozanam remarked rather caustically on the difference between the Society and Philanthropic Societies. “Look at the philanthropic societies ... they have large volumes of resumés. Philanthropy is a vain woman for whom good actions are a piece of jewellery and who loves to look at herself in the mirror. Charity is a tender mother who keeps her eyes fixed on the infant she carries at her breast, who no longer thinks of herself, who forgets her beauty for her love.” (Letters 90, 23.02.1835) St Vincent and Frederic Ozanam saw and loved Christ in the poor.

Perhaps as we begin another year it might be good to reflect on what it means to be a charity. Charity is another word for love, divine love. We know we are loved by God. We know that we can return this love by loving our neighbour. There is a very moving passage in Pope Benedict’s encyclical ‘God is love’. (*Deus Caritas Est*)

*“Seeing with the eyes of Christ, I can give to others much more than their outward necessities; I can give them the look of love which they crave. Here we see the necessary interplay between love of God and love of neighbour. If I have no contact whatsoever with God in my life, then I cannot see in the other anything more than the other, and I am incapable of seeing in him the image of God. Or, if in my life I fail completely to heed others, solely out of a desire to be “devout” and to perform my “religious duties”, then my relationship with God will also grow arid. It becomes merely “proper”, but loveless. Only my readiness to encounter my neighbour and to show him love makes me sensitive to God as well. Only if I serve my neighbour can my eyes be opened to what God does for me and how much he loves me. The saints—consider the example of Blessed Teresa of Calcutta—constantly renewed their capacity for love of neighbour from their encounter with the Eucharistic Lord, and conversely this encounter acquired its realism and depth in their service to others. Love of God and love of neighbour are thus inseparable, they form a single commandment. But both flow from the love of God who has loved us first. No longer is it a question, then, of a “commandment” imposed from without and calling for the impossible, but rather of a freely-bestowed experience of love from within, a love which by its very nature must then be shared with others. Love can be “commanded” because it has first been given. Love grows through love. Love is “divine” because it comes from God and unites us to God.” (1 Cor 15:28). (*God is Love.18, Deus Caritas Est*)*

Charity – love is fundamental to the Church. It is in the Church that we learn about and experience this love, and it is there we are offered the means to grow in this love. We do this through our listening to the Word in the liturgy, through our time spent in prayer and above all in the Eucharist. Again, Pope Benedict has an important reflection for us.

*“For in sacramental communion I become one with the Lord, like all the other communicants... Union with Christ is also union with all those to whom he gives himself. I cannot possess Christ just for myself; I can belong to him only in union with all those who have become, or who will become, his own. Communion draws me out of myself towards him, and thus also towards unity with all Christians. We become “one body”, completely joined in a single existence. Love of God and love of neighbour are now truly united: God incarnate draws us all to himself... Eucharistic communion, includes the reality both of being loved and of loving others in turn. A Eucharist which does not pass over into the concrete practice of love is intrinsically fragmented.” (*Deus Caritas Est 14*)*

To be a Christian is to know we are loved totally by God. To be a member of the Society is to be called to love our neighbour especially the poor with this divine love. Then we truly are a charity.

# Welcome by Brendan O'Neill, Regional President



## Dear Vincentian brothers and sisters

A very happy and holy New Year to all of you and your families.

I wish you peace and joy, the gifts of the child Jesus for 2018 and I pray that the Holy

Family will walk with us through 2018.

As we step into 2018 it is inevitable that we look back into 2017 and remember with pride our achievements in that year.

I believe that it would be a fruitful exercise if each Conference discussed what they did during that period, how they did it and ask if they could do better. That way we can continue to move forward as a Society, doing better each year.

We had a bumper year in 2017 as far as the Family Appeal is concerned, the number of goods donated is unprecedented. This happened because we raised the profile of the Society dramatically through partnering with a huge company like Translink and we also had the influence of U105 radio station which ran repeated ads throughout each day advertising "Stuff a Bus". The "Stuff a Bus" campaign was a major success, to the point where two buses were needed to deal with the volume of donations. Translink hope to exceed this in 2018.

Antrim GAA, through #Saffronaid2, really stepped up to the mark and demonstrated the true spirit of the GAA by donating in excess of 1500 shoe boxes, almost trebling last year's effort. This is a massive tribute to the young people of Antrim GAA who gave up their time to help our appeal.

To everyone involved in the Christmas effort I offer my heartfelt thanks. Together we made such a difference to the lives of people who have less than we do.

Special thanks go to our Regional Office staff. From early October Pauline and her team were preparing for the onslaught that is inevitable each year. They organised and

took part in meetings to ensure that events ran smoothly, took deliveries of toys, picked up donated toys and did the immensely physical work of lugging the donations from the ground floor of the building to the first floor and separating them into age groups for distribution to Conferences. In one week prior to Christmas, such was the level of calls for help that Deborah registered more than 400 calls onto the CRM system.

At a recent meeting in National Office, our National Spiritual Advisor asked: "Are we serious about poverty or are we tinkering around the edges of it?"

Questions such as this are really challenging, so as a result I would like to provide a theme each year of my time as Regional President. 2018 will be "Back to Basics".

Each member can reflect on topics, for example, such as: "Why did I join SVP? Have I lost sight of our ethos and spirituality which were given during our induction training? Do we as a Society embrace the Vincentian Rule, do I read the Rule?"

I hope you will embrace these points and help me focus our attention on more fruitful service of those in need.

I will finish with the second reading from the mass on the Feast of the Holy Family on 31st December 2017 from Col 3:12-21. This struck me as very relevant.

Brothers and sisters, put on, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience, bearing with one another and forgiving one another. If one has a grievance against another, as the Lord has forgiven you, so must you do also.

And over all these put on love, that is the bond of perfection. And let the peace of Christ dwell in you richly, as in all wisdom you teach and admonish one another, singing psalms and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.

And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

God bless.

**Brendan**

## Your news in Vincentian News!

Do you have an event or a story that you would like to see featured in a future issue of Vincentian News? If so, we'd love to hear from you. Just email the details of your event and a picture if you have one to [karen@dcppr.co.uk](mailto:karen@dcppr.co.uk).



# Gordons Chemist – a great supporter

Robert Gordon, head of Gordons Chemists, which has more than 50 outlets in Northern Ireland, recently presented a cheque for £1000 to Anne Crossan, St Vincent de Paul's Retail Services Manager.

In addition, SVP collection boxes were placed in branches throughout Northern Ireland during the months of November and December and all proceeds from this were also added to the amount raised.

Gordons' 52 branches throughout Northern Ireland also acted as collection points for the 2017 Family Appeal.

For more than ten years Gordons has been supporting SVP, having identified St Vincent de Paul as an outstanding vehicle in bringing help to many deprived families in Northern Ireland, especially because of the Society's firsthand knowledge of the sector and the large number of volunteers they have bringing a caring and personal approach to the help given.

It is worth noting the generous contributions made by Gordons to many worthwhile charities in Northern Ireland, amongst them; The SOS Bus, The Light House Trust, Kidney Research, Help the Aged, Tiny Life, Save the Children, Friends of the Cancer Centre, Marie Curie,



*Robert Gordon (right), head of Gordons Chemists, presents a cheque for £1000 to Anne Crossan, St Vincent de Paul's Retail Services Manager. Also pictured is SVP member Paddy Donnelly.*

Leukaemia and Lymphoma Trust. All of which illustrates the strong social conscience that is so embedded in its ethic and an outstanding example to other businesses to give back to the community that supports them.

The distribution and collection of the SVP collection boxes was entirely organised by Geraldine Magill, Chief

Administration Officer of Gordons. We are particularly grateful to her for all her hard work and the very professional manner in which she carried out the entire operation.

In conclusion, we as a Society would like to thank Gordons most sincerely for its very generous help which over the years has amounted to some £30,000.



## Meet Donncha Campbell

**On occasion I experience things that very pleasantly surprise me and teach me about myself and this is exactly what happened when I heard about Donncha Campbell.**

Donncha is 14 years old and is a student at St Joseph's College in Belfast. For a number of years now he has been, through his own initiative, photographing scenes throughout Northern Ireland and using them to make up a calendar which he has been selling and donating the proceeds to SVP.

This year Donncha gave us £350. Amazing! I find it incredible that a boy of this age is putting others first and lives love in a way that I can learn from.

I decided that we should honour this young man for his efforts, so arranged for a certificate to be presented to him at the daily Assembly in St Joseph's and invited Donncha and his mum to our Regional Office to express our gratitude.

We hope to embrace Donncha's initiative next Christmas by selling his calendars in our Vincent's shops.

This young man is a credit to his parents, his school and to himself.

Thank you, Donncha, on behalf of the Northern Region of the Society of St Vincent de Paul.

**Brendan O'Neill**  
Regional President

# Members' Annual Meeting 2017

The Members' Annual Meeting of the Society of St Vincent de Paul took place on Saturday, 30 September 2017 in the Hilton Hotel, Templepatrick. The theme of the meeting was 'Rejuvenation & Reflection' which offered members an opportunity to begin the process of refocusing on our work as Vincentians with a view to improving what support we give to people in need through quality visitation.

The 140 members in attendance enjoyed an interactive and introspective day.

The meeting was opened by the new Regional President, Brendan O'Neill, who set out his priorities for his term of office and highlighted the importance of communicating and consulting with the members. He gave his personal commitment to engage by going out into the Areas to meet our members.

Sr Helen Culhane, a Mercy Sister from Limerick, delivered a talk on self care with a message of "Self care is not self indulgent, self care is self respect". Our members heard about the importance of looking after themselves which is so important, so that they can continue to bring support and help to people in need.

The main presentation was delivered by Rose McGowan, National Vice President, who for many years has had particular input to Twinning. Rose spoke about the wonderful work that is achieved through Twinning and in particular flagged the

projects in Ghana and Botswana, which are twinned with the Northern Region.

Rose was delighted to launch the new SVP Twinning video titled "No Borders" and paid tribute to those members who have tirelessly promoted Twinning in the Society and in particular, praised the work of Peter McVeigh, the Northern Region's Twinning Officer.

Celine Martin, National Membership Manager, promoted the concept of Area Gatherings. An Area Gathering gives Conferences the opportunity to come together to support each other, learn, share good practice and pray together at an area level.

The highlight of the day was a reflective exercise led by Brendan O'Neill and Fr Perry Gildea, with the support of Celine Martin. Members were asked to take time to reflect on why the Society was so important to them and to identify one word, to be written on a stone, that described their hopes for the future of the Society.

This was a very emotional and powerful exercise and Brendan O'Neill has kept the stones in Regional Office and uses them as a tool to remain focused on the things that are so important to our membership and he will continue to use these as a guide as he leads the Society during his term as Regional President.

The day finished with a Mass for the Feast of St Vincent de Paul.



*Regional President, Brendan O'Neill, with speakers at the Members' Annual Meeting.*



*A rewarding day in Templepatrick.*

## Good News Appeal

**We would love to share some good news stories of how SVP has helped turn lives around.**

We are appealing for uplifting stories from across our Conference areas – have you personally been supported and helped through a difficult time by SVP or perhaps you know someone who might be willing to share their story of the difference SVP has made to their lives either today or in past years?

If so, please get in touch. Every Vincentian gives so much and to hear positive stories about the difference our organisation's support can make would mean a lot to our members and volunteers. Thank you in advance.



# JEDWARD LAUNCH FAMILY APPEAL AS TRANSLINK & U105 PLEDGE SUPPORT

‘Planet Jedward’ in the shape of pop duo John and Edward, landed at Regional Office in November to launch our 2017 Family Appeal.

SVP again teamed up with The Salvation Army to bring festive cheer to thousands of local underprivileged children and families and the appeal received a tremendous boost this year with the announcement that Translink was coming on board as a supporter and would be placing collection bins in six of its busiest bus and rail stations. U105 also encouraged its listeners to help ‘Stuff a Bus’ with the aim of collecting at least 10,000 gifts during the appeal which ran from 20 November to 19 December and we’re delighted to report that not only did the ever generous Northern Ireland businesses and public stuff one bus full of gifts but for good measure they went on to stuff another one as well!

Major Paul Kingscott, the Salvation Army’s divisional leader, said: “As a church and charity, we are inspired by the Christmas message to reach out to people in need. The

Family Appeal allows us to help thousands of children and young people in Northern Ireland.

“Our team of volunteers worked around the clock to make sure the generous gifts we received went to families most in need.”

Sean O’Neill, Family Appeal Co-ordinator for St Vincent de Paul, said: “Since we’ve been involved in the Family Appeal we have seen it go from strength to strength and this year with the help of Translink and U105, a record number of gifts were donated all going towards our efforts to make sure every child’s Christmas was special.

“Poverty is a very real issue in our society today, particularly hidden poverty where outwardly, families appear to be coping but behind closed doors the reality is one of food banks, cold houses and approaches to charities such as ourselves and the Salvation Army for help, support and guidance.”

Lynda Shannon, Communications Manager at Translink, said: “We have long admired the great work carried out by the Salvation Army and St Vincent de Paul which is why we were delighted to launch the Stuff A Bus Toy Appeal in partnership with U105 and become involved in the Family Appeal.”



Jedward launch the 2017 Family Appeal.



Pictured with Jedward are from left: Sean O’Neill, SVP; Jacqueline Wright, Salvation Army; Ursula Henderson, Translink and Maurice Jay, U105.



*Pictured with just some of the toys and gifts donated to the 'Stuff a Bus' appeal are from left: Pauline Brown, SVP Regional Manager; Translink driver, Kevin Wallace; Paul Wright of the Salvation Army and U105's Johnny Hero.*



## **Dfc 2017 Giving Tree support**

We were delighted that once again the Department for Communities announced its support for SVP with its 2017 Giving Tree Appeal.

*Pictured at the launch are: Archie Kinney, SVP Regional Vice President; Pauline Brown, SVP Regional Manager; Leo O'Reilly, Permanent Secretary of the Department for Communities; Michael Sands, SVP's North Belfast Area President and Brendan O'Neill, SVP Regional President.*

## **A special word of thanks to our Family Appeal donors**

Thanks to all those individuals and companies who generously donated to our Family Appeal at both a local and regional level.

PSNI Headquarters  
PSNI Tennant Street  
PSNI Antrim Road  
PSNI Shore Road  
Antrim GAA  
Girwood Hub  
Northern Ireland Ambulance Service Knockbracken  
Vaughan Engineering  
Tesco  
First Trust Bank  
M&S  
Gordons Chemists  
Chartered Accountants Ireland  
Ulster Society  
Belfast City Council  
Lagan Construction  
FM Unit Department of Infrastructure  
Puppet Belfast  
Health & Social Care Board  
The Public Health Agency  
Northern Ireland Audit Office  
St Malachy's Old Boys' Association  
Hunter House College  
Whitemountain Quarries  
Allstate NI  
Mills Selig  
Cyber Source  
Work Day  
Academy of Beauty Brunswick Street  
Funds Axis  
Queen's University – Porters' Team  
Saunders Spar Antrim Road  
Cavity Corner  
dcp Strategic Communication Ltd  
Planning Department Belfast City Council  
Royal Victoria Hospital - Critical Care Unit  
Social Security Offices  
Translink  
U105  
Morrow Communications



## 18 years of M&S Giving Tree

November saw the launch of the 18th year of the 'Giving Tree', a cross-community initiative run by Belfast Central Mission (BCM) and the Society of St Vincent de Paul to help local children in need have a happier Christmas.

The 'Giving Tree' gives members of the public an opportunity to donate a toy or gift for a local child with the gifts being divided equally between SVP and BCM before being distributed to families in the weeks leading up to Christmas. Shoppers choose a 'tag' for a boy or girl of a particular age and return the unwrapped gift, along with its tag, to the tree, where volunteers from both charities will be on-hand to answer any questions.

Brendan O'Neill, Regional President of St Vincent de Paul, commented: "We recognise that this is the busiest time of year for the majority of us and yet we are always overwhelmed and humbled by the generosity shown by the Northern Ireland's public who really do go out of their way to donate gifts to the Giving Tree – in fact many now see it as a Christmas tradition. We are so grateful to M&S and the public for their ongoing support of this initiative which we really rely on to meet the needs of local children."

Rev Richard Johnston, BCM Superintendent, added: "As a charity, BCM has been supporting people across Northern Ireland for more than 125 years and will continue to do so, particularly those most vulnerable in society. The support from Marks and Spencer for the Giving Tree has been invaluable and the members of the public have been so generous over the years."

Colin McGreevy, M&S Belfast Store Manager said: "Marks & Spencer is delighted to once again be doing its bit to help promote this very worthwhile project which encompasses the true meaning of Christmas, reaching out to families who are really struggling in difficult times."



*Superman aka Rick Gordon took some time out from saving the world to help four year old Olivia Blair and three year old Ksawier Pal launch the 2017 Giving Tree, a cross-community initiative run by Belfast Central Mission and the Society of St Vincent De Paul and supported by Marks and Spencer to help local children in need have a happier Christmas.*

*Also pictured are Magdalena Zaluska-Pal from Belfast Central Mission, Michael Sands, St Vincent de Paul's North Belfast Area President and Joanne Murray, Marks and Spencer Community Manager.*



Staff from M&S with just some of the donations made to SVP in West Belfast.



## ANTRIM GAA PUT ITS BEST FOOT (AND TROLLEY) FORWARD FOR SVP

GAA clubs in County Antrim once again put their best foot forward for local families in need and collected shoebox donations through their charity initiative #SaffronAid2. St Vincent de Paul then distributed these to the most vulnerable in our society, helping to make sure that as many families as possible woke up to something special on 25 December.

Clubs across the county collected donations through their #SaffronAid2 fundraising campaign which was the brainchild of Antrim GAA PRO, Sean Kelly who encouraged Co Antrim Gaels to back the shoebox appeal. An additional event to this fundraising effort was a trolley dash which took place in Sainsbury's Supermarket at the Kennedy Centre in Belfast. Several trolleys and 'drivers' were involved in the dash, which was organised by Sinead Steele from St Enda's GLC & Sean Kelly and which was sponsored by The Kennedy Centre, Naomh Séamus CLG and Quarter Accountants

Sean Kelly explained: "GAA clubs and supporters are extremely big-hearted and we are delighted to do what we can to help those less fortunate than ourselves. This is the second year we have run this appeal and were once again overwhelmed by the generosity of our members and supporters.



*Making a dash for it! Antrim Gaels and all those involved in the trolley dash for Antrim GAA's charity initiative #SaffronAid2 at Sainsbury's Supermarket in Belfast's Kennedy Centre.*



*Making a dash for it! Antrim Gaels Nuala McQuillan, Conor McCann and Alison Mhic An Lia taking part in the trolley dash for Antrim GAA's charity initiative #SaffronAid2 at Sainsbury's Supermarket in Belfast's Kennedy Centre.*



*Pictured at the launch of #SaffronAid2 are, from left (back): Sinead Steele, SaffronAid co-ordinator; Declan Lynch, Lámh Dhearg; Sean Kelly, Antrim GAA PRO; Chris O'Connell, Loughgiel; Archie Kinney, SVP Regional Vice President; Pauline Brown, SVP Regional Manager and Brendan O'Neill, SVP Regional President. From left (front): Marie Therese Fleming, Rossa; Niamh Donnelly, Ballycastle and senior footballer and hurler Phil Curran, Naomh Éanna GAC.*

We are so grateful to The Kennedy Centre, Naomh Séamus CLG and Quarter Accountants whose sponsorship made the trolley dash possible. Sainsbury's Supermarket was also extremely generous in letting our Gaels loose on their shelves!"

"It can be hard to imagine Christmas as just another day trying to keep warm, eating enough or struggling to do the most basic of things but this can be the case for so many people, who don't have the very basics we take for granted. It is wonderful to see so many Gaels with empathy for those in need.

"Clubs across the county got involved by encouraging their members to donate a shoebox containing a few items for families in need or alternatively a gift for a child, and having their premises available as collection points for SVP."

Brendan O'Neill, Regional President of SVP, added: "I would like to thank the GAA for running the appeal again this year and bringing it to the attention of their players and supporters. Each year thousands of families approach SVP for support at Christmas time alone so this campaign really will make a huge difference to so many people in our communities and with your help, Christmas may become a little bit brighter for some families."



CHRISTMAS 2017



Some of the donations from the PSNI.



Volunteers from the Health and Social Care Board.



Happy volunteers from the Public Health Agency packing toys in Regional Office.



Vaughan Engineering supported us once again.



Donations from Queen's University, Belfast.



Loreto College year 13 SVP Conference helping with the Christmas Toy Appeal.



## CHRISTMAS 2017



*Pupils from St Joseph's Primary School in Ederney presenting Christmas food hampers to G Gallagher, Claude McKervey and Cormac McKervey of Ederney SVP.*



*Infants of St Joseph's Primary School in Ederney donating Christmas food hampers to members of Ederney SVP.*



*Pupils from P1 and P2 classes of St Joseph's Primary School in Ederney presenting Christmas food hampers to Claude McKervey and Cormac McKervey, members of SVP Ederney.*



*Loreto College, Omagh, presented 44 hampers to SVP Conferences in Omagh, Beragh and Killyclogher.*



### **Holy Rosary Conference - Belfast**

As part of the 2017 Family Appeal, pupils at Aquinas Diocesan Grammar School, Belfast, gathered together non-perishable hampers and raised funds to buy Family Appeal presents for children within the Holy Rosary Parish. In total 42 hampers, gifts and toys were gathered for 48 children – an amazing achievement.

Many thanks are due to Mrs McCrossan's fund raising team who organised the appeal and to the staff and parents who gave their generous support.

*From left: SVP volunteers James Surginor, Kevin McVeigh and Joan McAfee, Karen Salmon, Kate Lyons, Fr Colin Grant, Maeve Grant, Kathleen Murphy, SVP Volunteer and Mary Connolly.*



*Pupils from St Michael's Collage Enniskillen, presenting food hampers to SVP members from Ederney, Irvinestown, Newtownbutler and Derrylin Conferences.*



*Gerardine Kielt and Joan Ludlow, President and Vice President of St Patrick's Conference in Magherafelt being presented with Christmas hampers from Sperrin Integrated College in Magherafelt.*



# Jedward launch twin campaign for St Vincent de Paul shops

*Jedward outside the Norglen Gardens Vincent's.*



Irish twins John and Edward Grimes aka 'Jedward' caused a lot of excitement when they visited the St Vincent de Paul Vincent's shop in Norglen Gardens, Belfast, in October to launch our national shops campaign.

Called "Donate with Style, Volunteer with Passion" the campaign, which ran through October, had twin aims; to attract donations to our network of 33 shops throughout Northern Ireland and to recruit volunteers.

Vincent's shops are a hugely important aspect of the service SVP provides to those who seek our assistance. Approximately 130,000 people sought help from us last year. Not only do Vincent's provide goods at affordable prices, they also provide an income source for the Society, which is directed back into the community.

Profit generated by the shops is recycled into local Conferences and contribute to the approximately £3m annually provided in direct assistance by SVP to those in need.



*Jedward are pictured with Archie Kinney, SVP Regional Vice President and Anne Crossan, SVP Regional Retail Services Manager.*

Speaking at the launch of the campaign, Dermot McGilloway, SVP National Retail Development Manager, said: "We urgently need clean saleable clothes that can be distributed throughout our network of shops, men and women's clothing, winter wear and large sizes are particularly welcome."

"We also need clean bed linen, curtains, pairs of shoes, bric-a-brac, pictures, antiques, collectables and small household items. Some shops can also accommodate furniture." he said.

In relation to volunteers, Mr McGilloway said that volunteers are needed for all shops across Northern Ireland.

"Our Vincent's shops in Northern Ireland don't currently open any late nights but this is something we could offer to the local communities we serve if we could recruit more volunteers."

SVP shop volunteers provide a valuable service in customer care, general housekeeping, merchandising, sorting and pricing clothing and other donated items.



*'Donate with Style, Volunteer with Passion'. Pictured with Jedward is Dermot McGilloway, SVP National Retail Development Manager.*





*Jedward getting to know Vincent's volunteers and staff.*

## 33rd Vincent's Shop opens at Dairy Farm Centre

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

Shoppers at the Dairy Farm Centre in West Belfast can now enjoy a wealth of fabulous pre-loved clothes, toys and bric-a-brac, all for bargain prices, at the Centre's new Vincent's store.

Anne Crossan, regional retail services manager for SVP, explains: "We are delighted to have our new store open in the Dairy Farm Centre. Our shop is at the rear of the centre at W3 and we are open Monday to Friday from 9am to 5pm and on Saturdays from 9am to 1pm.

"The amazing items that we have in the shop are all kindly donated by the public and we would like to thank each and every person who passes their pre-loved goods and clothing to us. If you have any unwanted items in your wardrobe or in your home, such as clothing, toys, books, DVDs and general bric-a-brac, we would be delighted if you could drop it into our Dairy Farm shop, where our volunteers will display garments and items for shoppers in the community to purchase."

Anne continues: "We are so very grateful to all of our wonderful volunteers across SVP, who help their communities in so many different ways. I can honestly say that each of our Vincent's is at the heart of its local community and our volunteers play an important part in helping to make this the case.

"Over the coming months, we hope to be able to extend our Dairy Farm shop opening hours on a Saturday but we are reliant on our dedicated volunteers who run our shops. If there is anyone who could spare a few hours to volunteer in Vincent's, please do get in touch! We would love to hear from you – just call into the shop and let us know if you could help out or email me at [anne.crossan@svpni.co.uk](mailto:anne.crossan@svpni.co.uk)."



# Kircubbin transformation



Vincent's in Kircubbin was rejuvenated last year and transformed into a shop with great growth potential for 2018.

New manager, Tracy Scott-Stewart and her team of existing and new volunteers have breathed some TLC into the store and brought it back to life with growth on yearly figures of +69%

New window bed, fixtures, wooden hangers, together with re-zoning of departments and some fantastic donations, have ensured the right stock in the right place.

Mary Rose Woods has just celebrated her 25 years of service as a shop volunteer and was presented with her certificate of service by Regional President, Brendan O'Neill, at one of the store's VIP evenings.

After a successful Christmas with the store's themed SVP colours window, 2018 brings monthly window themes, monthly late night opening for new labelled donated stock and also a fashion show to launch Spring Summer with a bang.

All of this runs alongside our part in serving the community daily with Quality, Value, Service and Smiles.



*Congratulations to Mary Rose Woods, a volunteer with Vincent's in Kircubbin, who is pictured receiving a certificate to mark her 25 years of volunteering service to the Society from Regional President, Brendan O'Neill.*

# Stunning Christmas window displays in Vincent's Omagh

Both shop windows in the recently relocated Vincent's Omagh proved to be the talk of the town. The magnificent displays arranged by Vincent's staff depicted all of the many aspects of the festive season.

An invitation is extended to one and all to visit our new spacious, modern shop and browse the excellent quality of goods on offer from top of the range designer items to quality antiques.

'Don't forget the West. We are simply the best!'







## Stella Maris Strangford Annual Christmas Dinner

The Annual Stella Maris Senior Citizen Christmas Dinner was hosted by the Conference in the Cuan Restaurant, Strangford, on 5 December 2017.

Conference President, Mary Kearney, welcomed all to the function, especially the 100 plus senior citizens, invited guests and Conference members including Northern Regional President, Brendan O'Neill and his wife Margaret; East Down Area President, Gerard McShane and his wife Hetty; Dean Henry Hull, CoI Rector of Down Cathedral; Fr John McManus, PP Kilclief and Strangford; former PP Canon N Conway and Rev Huston and his wife June.



*From left: Brendan O'Neill, Northern Regional President, Dick Cull and Gerard McShane, East Down Area President.*

Proceedings opened with the Principal of St Joseph's, Primary School Strangford, Mrs Fitzsimons and pupils singing carols and popular Christmas tunes.

Brendan O'Neill congratulated the Conference members for their hard work and commitment to the ethos of what the Society is about and thanked them sincerely for the efforts and support they have given to Clare Lodge in Newcastle and hoped they would continue to have individuals, couples and families use the County Down facility in 2018 and beyond. He welcomed and thanked the Conference for taking the initiative in having a two night full board stay for two people as part of its annual Christmas raffle.

Highlight of the evening was Brendan presenting a 25 year Long Service Medal to Dick Cull, one of the founding members of the Conference. Brendan reminded those attending of some of the work Dick has done for SVP during those 25 years including holding the post of Treasurer of the Conference and serving on many Committees. He was Chairman of the previous Clare Lodge Committee and was instrumental in seeing the demolition of the old premises and commencement of the present first class well-being facility. Mr Cull is currently Vice President of East Down Area.

Dick in reply thanked Brendan for his kind words and the Conference for organising the Medal and Certificate. He spoke of the foresight by Fr A Denny, Parish PP at the time for starting the Conference and reminded those present that the current President, Mary, was on the first Committee but left the Conference for a number of years before returning in 2011. Other founding members were in attendance at the Dinner.

After a wonderful meal served up by the Cuan, two raffles were held and everyone attending was given a Phil Coulter CD, kindly donated to the Conference by the man himself.

The night was rounded off with music and a sing song of favourites old and new provided by Mr T Fitzpatrick.

## WhatsApp Messenger



St Canice's Conference Limavady frequently found our mobile phone bill was £20 - £30 per month, despite having an O<sub>2</sub> contract for £14 per month. On investigation we discovered that group text messages to Conference members weren't included in our contract and were being charged at £4.99 each. Members on phone rota frequently send group texts when looking for someone to do an urgent visit etc.

This is when we switched to **WhatsApp Messenger** and downloaded the App onto to our mobile phones. **WhatsApp Messenger** is an instant messaging service, free to download and is totally free to use.

I have to put my hands up and admit that I was the last member of our Conference to download this App and I only did so after I received a text message from a 70 year old member telling me to do so! My initial hesitation was unfounded and on joining I discovered all of our Conference members actively sending messages back and forth, covering everything from arranging visits and street collections, to organising cover for each other for church gate collections etc.

It's simple to download, it's easy to use, it's free of charge and it's saving our Conference a lot of money on phone bills. I'd recommend this App to all Conferences - give it a try and you won't be disappointed!

**Sean O'Neill**  
St Canice's Limavady

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## “Blind Pilgrim” Dan McCauley remembered in Kilkeel

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**The Society of St Vincent de Paul hosted a Rededication ceremony at Massforth cemetery to commemorate the life of a Man of the Road who died in Kilkeel after a short illness early last century.**

Dan McCauley, known as the Blind Pilgrim, was blinded early in life and roamed the roads barefoot, staying in the homes of those who welcomed him to their hearth. He told them stories of his travels and prayed the rosary with them before going to bed.

One of the houses he used to stay in belonged to the Dawson family of Donavan and it was in their family plot at Massforth that Dan was laid to rest.

The story came to life recently during research by members of Newry Maritime Association who discovered that the St Vincent de Paul Society had placed a cross to mark Dan’s grave in 1977, some 40 years ago.

PRO of Newry Maritime Association, James McAreyve, said: “We are very pleased to be involved in this project which is a good example of true community activism. Various groups and personalities have combined their energies and resources to deliver a worthy outcome. Our actions have perpetuated the memory of Dan McCauley, The Blind Man of the Road.”

Seamus Mullan, President of the local Conference of St Vincent de Paul, said: “The charity received a letter in 1977 from Tom Cunningham asking the members to erect a marker on Dan’s grave to ensure that the people of Kilkeel would remember this homeless holy man who spent his summers at Lough Derg, a traditional place of pilgrimage known as St Patrick’s Purgatory. We are grateful to Newry Maritime Association members for rediscovering Dan’s story. It is testimony to the generosity of the people of Kilkeel who continue to help the Society to help those in need.”

Dan was also linked to the Marist Priory in Dundalk and it was the Prior himself who gave permission for Dan to be buried at Massforth.



*From left: Patsy Higgins, Past President of Conference, who placed the cross on Dan’s grave in 1977; John McDaid, local historian, who “found” the story during a research project for Newry Maritime Association; Fr Sean Dillon, PP of parish of Upper Mourne; Seamus Mullan, President of St Colman’s Conference and James McAreyve, PRO of Newry Maritime Association.*



*From left: Patsy Higgins, Conference Past President; Evelyn Shiels, Conference member; Elaine Owens, Conference Vice-President; Seamus Mullan, Conference President and Paddy Cunningham, Past Conference member.*

## Anniversary support for Family Appeal



Paul McCusker, on behalf of Ballymoney St Vincent de Paul, has thanked Triangle Housing Association for its donation of gifts to support the 2017 Annual Family Appeal.

Triangle Housing Association staff and service users at Garryduff House in Ballymoney donated a shoe box for each of the 40 years the organisation has been going.

Registered Manager at the facility, Orlagh McGivern, said: “Triangle Housing is celebrating 40 years and part of those anniversary celebrations is the theme of giving back to the community.

“We as staff and service users wanted to give something back so decided to support the Salvation Army/St Vincent de Paul Family Appeal by taking home one or two shoe boxes and filling them with small gifts and useful items.”

We would like to thank Orlagh and everyone at Triangle Housing Association and Garryduff House for their generosity.



## A celebration for Dermot

St Patrick's Conference Downpatrick recently held an evening of celebration to acknowledge Dermot McNabb's 65 years of membership of the Society of St Vincent de Paul. Mass was celebrated by Fr Ephrem in the chapel of De la Salle House, followed by refreshments.

Dermot first joined the Society when he was a student at Queen's University and continued his membership when he moved to Downpatrick, until recently when he was forced, through ill health, to gradually reduce his activities and take things a little easier.

His many years of service were acknowledged by the East Down Area President, Gerard McShane and the Conference President, Sean Connor, who spoke of Dermot's dedication, his steady influence in the Conference and his good humour. Dermot's motivation was his steadfast faith and his caring nature and his love and compassion towards the needy and marginalised were an inspiration to his fellow Conference members.

After being presented with a long service medal and a scroll and his beloved wife, Rosaleen, with a bouquet of flowers, Dermot spoke of his time in the Conference, recalling some memorable moments and events that had occurred over the years.

He thanked his 'long suffering' wife, Rosaleen, for her understanding and patience and extended thanks to everyone involved in organising this very enjoyable evening.



## Newcastle news

*Pictured are members from the Immaculate Conception Conference in Newcastle who joined Mairead Breen and Kevin Agnew (both front right) to celebrate their commitment and dedication to the Society.*

*Mairead has been a member of the Society for 25 years and Kevin a member for 58 years.*

*Archie Kinney, Regional Vice President (front centre) presented them both with a certificate and medal on behalf of the NIRC.*



## Feast of Saint Vincent de Paul

*Pictured are some of those from North Derry Conferences who attended Mass in Dungiven on the Feast of Saint Vincent de Paul.*





## A big thank you from Clare Lodge

Wishing everyone a happy and peaceful New Year!

Clare Lodge has celebrated another successful year which has been made possible by the great support from our Conferences across Ireland. The feedback from everyone, individuals and groups, has been terrific with everyone staying with us after the summer having a ball.

A partnership with The Health and Well Being Company (a community interest company) has brought another element to improving the well being of guests and they have thoroughly enjoyed taking advantage of in-house therapies at a discounted rate.

The Gateway Club from Cookstown booked the entire lodge for a family break. It was the first family holiday many of their members had had and the feedback from them was excellent:

*"As a group of special needs families our experience has been greatly appreciated by us all. The support and guidance prior to and during our stay was fabulous. Being together in a non-judgemental, friendly, supportive and relaxing environment has most certainly helped everyone's overall well being. We will be back."*

The group has already made a booking for 2018!

We also welcomed a walking group from Scotland which booked on a recommendation from previous SVP guests in Cookstown. Many thanks for this and keep them coming!





*“Fantastic stay - loved it, can't wait to come back.”*

Newcastle Halloween festival was a weekend to remember! Guests of all ages joined in with the festive activities, including mask making and pizza making before watching the celebrations and ending the evening with hot chocolate and nibbles. To finish everyone designed their own memory boxes as a keepsake of their stay in Clare Lodge.

*“Kids and myself had a ball. Brilliant two days, food was great, staff very friendly and patient with kids playing and running around. Activities were also great for kids.”*

The clients and staff from Clare Ward and Innishfree Unit in Knockbracken Health Care Centre had two breaks with us during 2017.

*“Clare Lodge is perfect for these guys.”*

The Happy Go Lucky Club from Belfast enjoyed a relaxing weekend while the Crafty Club, Downpatrick celebrated the festive season with a five course Christmas dinner followed by music and dancing.



## So, what does 2018 bring....

### Tuesday 27th February

#### Open Day 10am - 4pm

Why not drop in and join us for a coffee, chat and find out more about what we can do for you or your organisation.

### Saturday 3rd March

#### Area Presidents' Weekend

A great opportunity to check out the facilities, stay over and even have a relaxing therapy treatment.

Last summer was again an extremely busy time in Clare Lodge. We already have a number of groups interested in the summer months so please book early to avoid disappointment.

## Dates to Remember

Easter: 31<sup>st</sup> March – 2nd April (1<sup>st</sup> April Easter Sunday)

St Patrick's Day celebrations: 16<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> March

Ulster Fleadh (Castlewellan): 27<sup>th</sup>- 29<sup>th</sup> July

Festival of Flights: 11<sup>th</sup> August

Halloween celebrations: 30<sup>th</sup> October – 1<sup>st</sup> November

We hope you will continue to provide the amazing level of support you've already given us and remember if you have any events, trips, training, meetings etc, think of Clare Lodge....it is after all your building.....and don't forget to tell your associates and friends about this wonderful resource right on our doorstep.

## For more information contact:

Clare Lodge Centre, 3 Castle Place, Newcastle, County Down BT33 0AB

Tel: 028 4372 2849 (00 44 if dialling from outside Northern Ireland)

Email: [clare.lodge@svpni.co.uk](mailto:clare.lodge@svpni.co.uk)



Society of St Vincent de Paul

## Introducing Mairead McGouran, Volunteer CRM Trainer

**Introducing Mairead McGouran, a member of St Patrick's and St Brigid's Conference in Ballycastle who will be the new volunteer CRM Trainer in the Northern Region. Mairead will be supported in her role at an Area level by an Area CRM Co-Ordinator.**

### About Mairead

I am originally from the Fall's Road in Belfast. I moved to England in 1981 and joined SVP in 1988. About the same time, I started working as a Business/Systems Analyst in analysing and designing IT Systems and in 1990 joined a training organisation where I became a certified trainer in Analysis and Design for IT.

Four years after this I formed my own company and worked as an analyst/trainer throughout the UK and Republic of Ireland before moving back to Northern Ireland in 1999 and settling in Ballycastle.

At this time I couldn't get permanent work so continued to work as a freelancer, commuting weekly to my contract. Unfortunately at this stage I had to give up SVP as I could not guarantee to be available for visits. In early 2016 I retired from work and rejoined SVP in the St Patrick's and St Brigid's Conference, Ballycastle.

As a direct result of my IT experience, I was given the job of inputting the data into CRM. With help and support from my Conference, Joann in Derry, Maria and Cathy in Belfast and Chris in Dublin, I have managed to get my Conference's records sorted for 2016 and 2017. Adhering to my principle of never volunteering for anything, I have somehow managed to talk my way into becoming the SVP CRM Trainer for Northern Ireland.

In my spare time I joined my local U3A as Business and email Secretary and I help out in the local Concern charity shop one day a week. I play bridge on Wednesday afternoons and walk a friend's dog, both weather permitting.

I am looking forward to working with the SVP Conferences in Northern Ireland in helping to roll out the CRM package. For more information on how your Conference can access CRM training or if you are interested in helping to support the roll out of CRM within your area, we would love to hear from you. Please contact your Area President or your Membership Support Officer.

**Maria Fyfe, Regional Office      028 9075 0151**  
**Joann Barr, Derry Office        028 7137 7311**



## Our new Youth Development Officer



**Hello! My name is Clare Gilmore and I am the newly appointed Youth Development Officer for the Northern Region.**

Having been a local Conference member for the last five years, I am passionate about the great and vital work that we as a Society are involved in, and I am greatly looking forward to meeting all the many young people that are part and parcel of that work through Young SVP.

Having been trained in both theology and youth ministry, I have more than 10 years' experience of working with youth across all of Ireland. This has ranged from school retreat teams, school chaplaincy, faith development projects and diocesan offices. I have also volunteered in my local parish to prepare young people for the sacraments of First Communion and Confirmation, as well as involvement in the Pope John Paul II Awards. To name just a few things!

It would be great if any members who have had contact with schools could get in touch with me, as I am excited about getting to grips with what great things are happening across the Region. You can email me at [clare.gilmore@svpni.co.uk](mailto:clare.gilmore@svpni.co.uk), or call me in the office 028 9075 0152 or on my mobile 07540 304988.

I look forward to chatting with you soon!



# Finance Matters

Sean O'Neill  
Regional Treasurer

## Calling all Treasurers

Many thanks to all those Conferences, Shops and Area Councils who have already returned their 2017 Annual Financial Report pack. For those who have not already done so, please be reminded of the following return deadlines:-

Tier 3s - Either External Income/Expenditure below £30k  
**BEFORE WEDNESDAY 31st JANUARY 2018**

Tier 2s - Either External Income/Expenditure between £30k to £175k  
**BEFORE WEDNESDAY 28th FEBRUARY 2018**

- Please attach a copy of your bank statement clearly showing the balance at 31st December 2017. We no longer accept certificates of balance from the bank.
- Both Treasurer and President must sign the "Sign-Off" page and the three Agresso print-outs (if applicable).
- Where "Restricted Funds" have been declared, supporting documentation will be required confirming the restriction.
- If the conference has received a bequest or external grant, please provide supporting documentation such as solicitor's letter or letter of offer. Similarly, please provide receipts for large items purchased such as vehicles or equipment and all copies of lease agreements.

During the national audit, our auditors Deloitte & Touche, randomly select a sample of conferences to review. This may consist of on-site visits or requests for supporting documentation detailed above.

If you require any assistance with the completion of your Annual Financial Return, please do not hesitate to contact the Regional Accountant, Colm Crummey on 02890-750155 or Ciarán Liggett on 02890-750156.

AGRESSO LIVE Annual Report 2017	
Conference ID:	
Conference:	Location:
Area Council:	Region:

**FOR CONFERENCE TREASURER USE**

Activity:  Full relevant boxes  
 Workation  Shop  Special Works  Area  Region

**Agresso Checklist:**

- All transactions for all Bank/Building Society/Credit Union/Post Office/Other accounts have been entered into Agresso for the year ended 31 December 2016
- All Bank reconciliations have been completed on Agresso up to 31 December 2016 agreeing all bank statements for all bank accounts to Agresso
- Agresso Reports Printed, Dated and Signed by President and Treasurer as follows (ensure these are securely attached to books):
  - Returns Report 2016
  - Bank Unreconciled Report (Bank Reconciliation)
  - Intershare Returns
  - Reports Printed for All Conference Activities

**Audit Requirement Check:** (see Page 3 of this booklet for details)

- Audited Accounts Completed and Enclosed (if Applicable)
- Independent Examiner Report Completed and Signed on Page 4 (if Applicable)
- Not Applicable

**Check List for Essential Documentation Required to be Included in this Booklet where applicable:** (Please see inside cover for details of supporting documentation)

- Bank Statement for ALL Bank Accounts, Credit Union Accounts or Accounts with Other Financial Institutions showing the balance at the year ended 31 December 2016
- Restricted Funds details listed page 7
- Supporting Documentation for all Leases or Bequests received in 2016 greater than €15,000/£7,500
- Supporting Documentation for all State Grants/Capital in full or in part received in 2016, greater than €25,000/£12,500
- All Documentation for Motor Vehicles or Office Equipment Purchased (Greater than €5,000/£2,500) or Sold/Disposed of in 2016
- Supporting Documentation for Property additions, including those Donated/Requested to the Conference in 2016
- Completed the Internal Control Questionnaire (Section 1-4 Applicable to All Conferences)
- Sign Off Form Completed (including Cash Collection Total and Signed (see page 11))

For Consolidation Use Only:

**SVP**  
Society of St Vincent de Paul



## Dates for your diary

Members'  
Annual  
Meeting  
2018

Saturday 22 September 2018



*Gala Ball  
2018*

Our Gala Ball is back this Autumn  
**27 October 2018**  
**Hilton Templepatrick**



**Dunnes Stores  
bag pack**

Dates to be confirmed



# Membership Update

## Anne McLarnon, new Area President for North Down & Ards



**About yourself. - Family/work/experience/what do you like to do in your spare time?**

I'm originally from Belfast but have lived in Bangor for more than 40 years. Married with six children and seven grandchildren, I retired two years ago after a career in nursing, counselling and managing a community counselling service. I have been a volunteer in many organisations throughout my life and enjoy meeting new people and challenges.

In my spare time I love gardening, doing Sudoku and reading.

**How long have you been a member of the Society?**

I joined the Society two and a half years ago.

**What do you enjoy about being a member of the Society?**

Being a member of SVP has given me new interests and challenges and I have made new friends. The people we help are again an inspiration and I have gained numerous insights into the often difficult situations real people find themselves in in our society.

**What inspired you to join the Society?**

SVP was always an organisation that I admired because it dealt directly with those in need and at the 'coal face'. Throughout my career I worked with those in need, the sick, the distressed and traumatised and I learned a lot from people, their resilience in times of great trouble was an inspiration. I have been fortunate to work with and for many wonderful, inspiring people. I wanted to continue working and being with people after my retirement.

**What are the challenges for your Area/Society?**

Bringing cohesion to the area. Supporting the volunteers and meeting often to share and develop good practice and also to have fun at times. Rising out of our comfort zone to find and meet the needs of people who can't ask for help or who don't know help is available.

**What do you enjoy about being Area President or what are you looking forward to in the role?**

Big challenge! I am happy to be challenged and to learn about the work of the different Conferences in the area. It is great to be with likeminded people who care for the vulnerable in our communities. I am looking forward to having an area where people are energised and really value their contribution and are keen to develop our services.

## Membership audit and Access NI checks

Over the coming months our two Membership Support Officers will continue to work with both Area and Conference Presidents on several pieces of work, with a particular focus on a membership audit and Access NI.

A full audit on our membership will be completed to ensure that members are properly registered, trained and that we hold accurate information. This will allow us to continue to support, communicate and engage with all our members ensuring everyone feels valued and included.

The roll out of the Access NI vetting (retrospective and re-vetting) will continue over the coming months. Your Membership Support Officer can provide you with information and support to ensure that all members completed the necessary paperwork.





## Joann Barr celebrates 25 years' service

In September 2017 Joann Barr, one of the Society's Membership Support Officers, celebrated an amazing 25 years' service with the Society and her commitment was celebrated at a National, Regional and Area level.

Reflecting on her time with the Society Joann says:

"I can't believe I have been working for the Society for more than 25 years. A lot has changed over the years – I used to look after the Derry City Area and now I have eight Areas in my care. In the early years I was only in the Derry Area Office but when the new IT systems, Agresso and CRM, were introduced I was asked to help out in other Areas and Regions. It has been a pleasure working with all the members throughout the years."

Members and staff across the Region have been congratulating and thanking Joann for her dedication to supporting the work of the Society and look forward to working with her for many more years to come.

**Congratulations Joann.**



*Rose McGowan thanks Joann for her 25 years of dedicated service to SVP.*

IN MEMORIAM

## Eugene Agnew

The members of Blessed Virgin Conference Ballymena regret the passing of Eugene Agnew, who died on 13 August 2017. Eugene was a long serving member for 50 years and will be sadly missed by his Vincentian bother and sisters.

Eugene was a devoted husband to Clare and a supportive father to his son and daughter in law and grandfather to his grandson who was the apple of his eye.

The family and Conference will miss him greatly. May he rest in peace.



# IN MEMORIAM

## Cormac Wilson

Everyone at the Society was so very sad to hear of the passing of revered volunteer, Cormac Wilson, who has been with SVP for more than 33 years.

Regional Senior Vice President, Cormac, has been a driving force within the Society and a powerful engaging presence; respected wherever he went and by all he met and we are poorer without him.

In 2017 Derry man, Cormac, was recognised for his outstanding service to the charity and was awarded an international St Vincent de Paul medal at a special ceremony led by Father Eddie McGee. The honour was presented by former Regional President, Aidan Crawford, who organised the event to thank Cormac for his on-going support.

Cormac provided wonderful support and guidance to all around him and he helped many people over his years with the charity. A former President of SVP, Cormac, offered invaluable advice and loyalty to the team. He had a passion for our charity and those whom we serve, often volunteering around 50-60 hours a week. During his health battle in his later years, he continued to play an important role at a regional and local level.

Cormac, who hailed from Bishop Street in the City had seven children with his wife Rosaleen, as well as nine grandchildren and he spent more of his lifetime as part of the Society than out of it. Joining SVP back in 1984 when he was in his early thirties, he started as a member of St Columba's (Long Tower) Conference. Recognising the level of need within the City, he decided to devote all his spare time to assisting those who needed help.

He began his journey with SVP by carrying out visits to local families in need right across the community, assessing their situation and doing all he could to support them through difficult times by providing very practical items such as coal, food and clothing, or indeed helping them through family issues or debt. His view was that 'a



problem shared is a problem halved'. In 1993, Cormac was elected as Conference President of St Columba's and he continued his volunteering alongside his role as a successful driving instructor. Due to ill health and following a triple bypass, Cormac then retired from his driving duties in 1999 and instead of sitting back and taking it easy, he decided to volunteer full-time with SVP.

Once he was aware of how hard some other people have it, he couldn't just sit back. He devoted all the time he could to help those facing poverty or social exclusion. He was elected President of the entire Derry City area in 2002 and also joined the Magilligan Prison visitation Conference. In addition, he became a trainer within the Society and also worked very closely with the Salvation Army to help co-ordinate the

joint Family Appeal. This was an important initiative which ensured that no child in Northern Ireland had to go without a gift at Christmas.

In 2007, he was elected Regional President of SVP, meaning he had overarching responsibility for the charity right across Northern Ireland, a post he held for five years. During this time he worked closely with SVP in the south, also becoming a member of the National Board of Ireland and the National Management Committee.

He has been involved in every aspect of the Society over the years and this was made possible for him through the support and inspiration from other members. Cormac recognised that as our work is fully funded by donations, it can only be carried out thanks to the kindness of the people right across Northern Ireland.

Cormac was humbled but very honoured to be recognised with his St Vincent de Paul medal. At the time he commented: "When I heard about the ceremony I was very surprised as there are so many dedicated people involved with St Vincent de Paul and while I have been a member for 33 years, believe it or not, there are so many other volunteers that have been with the charity for much longer than that!"

Our thoughts are with Rosaleen, Cormac's children, grandchildren and the wider family circle at this time.