Virtual National Assembly to Celebrate 175th Anniversary of the Society in the U.S.

If you have never attended a National Assembly before (whether because of distance, cost, or simply because you are not sure what it’s all about), this is your opportunity! We have found that in times of pandemic, Vincentians have attended more meetings virtually than they did in person during normal times.

The Annual Meeting is truly a worthwhile experience for all who participate. "Attendees" will have the opportunity to partake in many different inspirational and motivational workshops with topics that include spirituality, systemic change projects in operation around the country, fundraising, governance, and more to advance our appreciation of the Vincentian vocation and the work of the Society.

This year marks the 175th anniversary of the founding of the U.S. Society of St. Vincent de Paul. Although we cannot meet in person, we still need to celebrate, so the National Council has moved the annual National Assembly to an online experience September 3-5, 2020.

In addition to the celebration of mass, the assembly will feature speakers that include Bishop Donald Hying, our National Episcopal Advisor, Sr. Kieran Kneaves, D.C., and Tim Williams, our former and new National Director of Formation.

We encourage all Vincentians to take advantage of this opportunity to once again “convene,” grow together spiritually, renew old friendships and form new ones at this special virtual celebration. Click here to register.

Seeking New Box Truck: Can You Help?

The Society’s 16-year-old box truck serves as a lifeline for Northeast Ohio men, women, children and seniors in need.

From picking up food for distribution at our Ozanam and hunger centers, to delivering new beds and mattresses to low-income families so children no longer have to sleep on the hard floor, this truck is a valuable behind-the-scenes resource that enables SVDP to fulfill its mission to people in need.

Last fiscal year alone, our box truck traveled an average of approximately 900 miles per month to deliver the emergency help. It is used each week to pick up and transport between 5,000 to 10,000 pounds of fresh fruit, vegetables and meat, which nourish approximately 400 families monthly. It has even served as a mobile pantry since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, helping us to feed the influx of new families seeking hunger relief during the crisis.

The truck enables our Vincentians to provide furniture from our Conference Supply Center (now in Garfield Heights) to individuals and families across the region. It has also been used to deliver blankets to people in need.

Unfortunately, the truck is increasingly requiring costly maintenance due to its age, frequent usage and high mileage. We are in desperate need of an efficient, reliable replacement as we continue to help others in need. If you or someone you know can help fund or donate a replacement truck, or if you can connect us to someone who may be able to do so, please contact Gary Sole: 216-696-6525, x. 3590 or gsole@svdpcle.org.
Pandemic Fatigue

I am tired.
I am tired of wearing a mask.
I am tired of not being able to go to a restaurant and enjoy a meal with family or friends.
I am tired of social distancing.
I want to hug and shake hands with people.

Everything we do at SVDP is affected by COVID-19: our home visits, the hot meal programs, the Conference Supply Center, and our food pantries.

Oh, and yes, even our meetings. However, with my poor attention span, that may not be a bad thing.

Now I must look at this Covid situation in a different way. I must realize that God is everywhere, sees all and knows all.

I am sure He has a plan for us. God still wants us to care for each other and our friends in need in a more guarded way. I am amazed at how creative the Vincentians are in their new approach to home visits, hot meals as take out, and drive-thru pantries. We are still providing essential services. The folks we serve are so blessed to have people like you who are praying and doing your best to stay safe and still help when you can.

You all keep me inspired and motivated to keep doing my best.

God bless,
Ed Leszynski
Board President

SVDP Receives Emergency COVID-19 Funding

Thanks to the Cleveland Foundation and the Greater Cleveland COVID-19 Rapid Response fund, SVDP will be able to help so many additional people in need during the pandemic. Anelize Nader explains in this foundation video. (Click image above or use the following link)

For more information, contact Gary Sole: 216-696-6525 x. 3590 or gsole@svdpcle.org.
A Message from Our Spiritual Advisor

By Sister Cheryl Keehner, CSA

The Church has entered into “ordinary time.” Parishes have opened their doors and mass is offered again. After staying at home for over three months, familiar routines are beginning to feel “normal.” The virus is still with us so precautions remain in place. People are hungry, needs abound, and cards and phone calls are still important to the sick and the homebound. Our ministry continues.

Green vestments are worn at mass during this season to offer us hope. The Sunday Gospels have been chosen to remind us of the three years Jesus spent in His “active life,” teaching, preaching and healing those He met along the way. Reflecting on Matthew’s Gospel, believers like the disciples are encouraged to become “meek and humble of heart.” We are promised that whenever we give “even a cup of water in his name” we are serving Him.

We see Jesus “feeding a multitude” with loaves and fishes and we find ourselves sowing seeds, giving and receiving forgiveness, living the Beatitudes, and ultimately being invited to enter the Kingdom “prepared for us from the foundation of the world.”

Praying over these readings, alone and with members of your Conference, you are being formed as Vincentians, lay “contemplatives in action” as Vincent imagined, using the daily readings at Mass to direct the ministry, guided of course by the Holy Spirit. United with each other, we followers of Jesus carry to others “radiant love.” (Blessed Frederic Ozanam)

Getting Ahead Facilitator Training October 10 & October 17

Getting Ahead in a Just-Gettin’-By World is a comprehensive program that empowers individuals to build their own personal plans for economic security and create Systemic Change. Through a 16-18 week period, two facilitators help a group of “those we serve” explore the impact of poverty in their own lives and guide them through planned changes. Our National office offers online facilitator training webinars to equip Vincentians with the knowledge and resources to start a Getting Ahead program in their communities. The next training is Saturday, October 10 and October 17 from 11:30 AM - 2:30 PM EDT. To register, contact Tom Mulloy at tmulloy@svdpusa.org.

The steps to prepare for this training:

- Read the book Bridges Out of Poverty and/or Bridges to Sustainable Communities
- Watch a seven-video series on Bridges concepts (you can do it individually or as a group). Here’s how to access it for free: Send an email to systemicchange@svdpuusa.org with the subject line: “Bridges Out of Poverty online video access request.” The body of the email should include Name, Council, and City/Town and State. You will receive a response with instructions to access the videos from Tom Mulloy, National Council Programs on Poverty (contact info above).

Once you read the book and watch the videos, you’ll be eligible to participate in the free Getting Ahead Facilitator webinar training provided by National. This is the ultimate goal, as it applies the Bridges concepts on the book into practical actions to actually help people move out of poverty. There are several Councils/Conferences at a national level that are working on Getting Ahead programs very successfully, and a Communities of Practice group was created to discuss best practices and share experiences.
Annual Reports Season is Almost Upon Us

I used to hear from our Vincentians that it was “so hard” to compile the numbers for the Annual Report. I don’t hear that as much, and I have to tell you that (believe it or not) the annual reports are, for me, the most important and expected documents in the year. Yes, they are important and required because they are part of our form 990, which is key for our tax-exempt status and is filed every year with the IRS. Yet, the annual reports are most important because they help us tell our story; they help us share the impact we have in the community.

How would we have known that collectively we impacted the lives of over 212,000 individuals last fiscal year? And made over 7,000 home visits? Or that we provided almost half a million dollars to keep individuals and families in their homes and out of the streets? This is huge! And I am sure that this data was instrumental in opening the doors for us to be awarded the grant from the Greater Cleveland COVID19 Rapid Response Fund, coordinated by the Cleveland Foundation. It was the first time we actually applied for such a substantial grant, and it is hopefully the start of a fruitful relationship with the Foundation.

So the message is clear: we need data (and not just data for the sake of data). We need numbers to substantiate our story, because we have an amazing ministry which touches so many.

And this ministry needs to continue, as there are so many who need the Love, the Hope and the assistance we provide. Our impact needs to be shared, so that we may garner even more support from the community. It is a continuous project: to share our story, to raise awareness, to garner support – all so that we may continue with our Mission.

So, as you start collecting the numbers to fill out the report, it is my hope that you do so with a new light, assured that this is an integral part of our ministry, to share in the good news so we are able to continue to fulfill our Mission. Thank you!!

Anelize Nader, CEO

A Plea from St. Augustine in Barberton!

Our Vincentians at St. Augustine have been approached by a family with six children who is in desperate need of a car. In case you or someone you know can make a connection for a car in good operating condition, please contact Steve Charlson at sfcharlson@yahoo.com. Thank you in advance for any help you may be able to provide to St. Augustine and this family!

Pandemic (a poem by Lynn Ungar)

What if you thought of it as the Jews consider the Sabbath—the most sacred of times?

Cease from travel.

Cease from buying and selling.

Give up, just for now, on trying to make the world different than it is.

Sing. Pray. Touch only those to whom you commit your life.

Center down.

And when your body has become still, reach out with your heart.

Know that we are connected in ways that are terrifying and beautiful. (You could hardly deny it now.)

Know that our lives are in one another’s hands.

(Surely, that has come clear.)

Do not reach out your hands.

Reach out your heart.

Reach out your words.

Reach out all the tendrils of compassion that move, invisibly, where we cannot touch.

Promise this world your love—for better or for worse, in sickness and in health, so long as we all shall live.

by Lynn Ungar