

SOCIETY NEWS

THE SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL
DENVER METRO COUNCIL



November 2020



Colorado Gives Day
is an annual
statewide movement
to celebrate and increase
philanthropy in Colorado
through online giving.
Donations are accepted
through
ColoradoGives.org.



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Conference Notes

This is where we hear what different Conferences are doing around the area.

St. Rose of Lima Conference - Bishop Rodriguez celebrated a special Mass at St. Rose of Lima Church on Sunday, September 27, the feast day of St. Vincent de Paul. The Mass was arranged by Robert and Elizabeth Cordova. In his homily, Bishop Rodriguez likened the Society to the hands of Jesus reaching out to the poor. He said that Vincentians listen to the poor and they seek Jesus' wounds in the poor. Bishop Rodriguez encouraged Vincentians to stay focused on our ministry and helping those in need.



Left to right: Rev. Martin Frias-Guardado, Pastor, Our Lady of Grace Parish; Rev. Félix Zermelo-Martin, Pastor, St. Rose of Lima Parish; Bishop Jorge Rodriguez, Auxiliary Bishop of Denver; Elizabeth Cordova, SSVdP and Robert Cordova, President, SSVdP St. Rose of Lima.

St Michael the Archangel Conference - The Vincentian eldercare team at St. Michael the Archangel has continued to keep in contact with nursing center residents despite the pandemic and visiting restrictions. They switched from in-person visits to letters, phone calls, emails and even a few delivered lunches. Vincentian leader, Jeff Johnson, initiated the program and now has linked in the parish youth ministry who write notes. Fellow Vincentian, Jim Guthrie, makes many phone calls which brighten the day for residents. The special effort has given a new meaning to "Mail Call" for dozens of nursing center residents in Aurora.

Light of the World Conference - At our last conference meeting we considered questions which we adapted from the National Assembly spiritual retreat: Service during a pandemic (and life in general) can stir up our fears but joy can overcome fear. How do you "choose joy?" How do we serve in hope when neighbors in need seem hopeless? Where have you found joy in your work as a Vincentian?

The responses tended to focus on past cases that initially posed huge challenges and on the joy that did eventually spring from the persistence, resilience and abiding hope of both the Vincentian and the neighbor in need. Members' stories about the neighbors who eventually became sustainable and regained a sense of dignity in the process have given us the energy to meet the daunting, unprecedented challenges of these pandemic times. The heartache is in the inability to do full home visits, but the phone conversations with neighbors in need tend to be longer and more frequent as we try to establish a meaningful relationship. Members may also try to compensate with a quick chat through a neighbor's glass door as we drop off food or gas cards. — Elaine Murphy, President

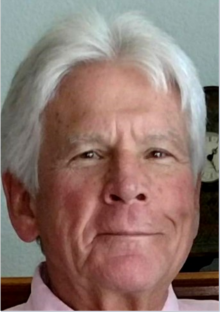


Most Precious Blood Conference - Conference members attended the in-person Mass on St. Vincent's feast day, September 27. When we took this photo, the Spirit wind was visiting in large, cold and speedy proportions.

St Thomas More - We had one neighbor in need (NIN) who one of our members found ready to walk into Planned Parenthood to get an abortion. After talking to our Vincentian, she determined not to get the abortion. She was referred to numerous resources and our member has helped her husband hunt for a job. Our Vincentian keeps in touch with them on an ongoing basis. — Sue Pawlik, President

Endnote: Many Vincentians are frustrated with the fact that we cannot conduct home visits. This editor has heard some question if they are doing God's work. It is slow right now. The story above is a wonderful reminder to all Society members and supporters that sometimes God's work walks right in front of us.

From Our Executive Director



As I write this article I am sitting in our new Denver Metro Office. We are located in the historic Sacred Heart School in lower downtown Denver. A number of years ago it was renovated by the Archdiocese of Denver to become the headquarters (Centro San Juan Diego) of the Hispanic Ministry for the Diocese. It is a beautiful older building and we are blessed to be able to share our ministry with theirs. Please make note of our new address on the outside of this newsletter.

A big thank you goes to all who participated and donated to our first ever “virtual” Friends of the Poor Walk! We were blessed this year with a \$5,000 anonymous matching donation and we were able to meet that match, thanks to our sponsors and donors. (See our website www.svdpdn.org.)

I am pleased to introduce you to our new Administrative Assistant, Luz Croghan. Luz is a Colorado native, born and raised in Denver. She and her family, four beautiful children and a loving husband, are members of St. Gianna Berretta Mola Parish in the Montebello neighborhood. During the interview process I asked Luz why she was interested in the administrative position and she said, “While Denver has so much to offer, we must remember our neighbors in need and that is why I would be so excited to be selected for this position. I would look forward to working beside the Vincentian volunteers and sharing the vision of supporting the impoverished, the lonely, those in crisis and promoting social justice.” Welcome aboard Luz!



One final (important) note: Colorado Gives Day (**12/8/20**) is fast approaching and we rely heavily on this event for our annual funding. Please consider making a generous donation to the Society of St. Vincent de Paul Denver Metro Council through ColoradoGives.org. To donate, go to:

www.coloradogives.org

In the box “Enter Nonprofit Name or Keyword” enter:

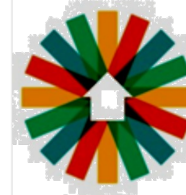
St. Vincent de Paul Society

Thank you for supporting The Society and the neighbors we serve!

Steve Loftis

Metro Council purchases ARC gift cards so

our neighbors can shop at a thrift store. We’ve assisted 116 adults and 138 children with \$12,450. People are able to not only obtain clothing, also standard home items such as linens, dishes, pans and even brand new mattresses for the bed frames they buy.



**ENERGY
OUTREACH
COLORADO**
Together We Power Stability

Since October 1, 2019 Energy Outreach Colorado has paid energy bills for **520 Households with \$235,000**, which is an average of **\$452 per household**.



An anonymous fund helps us assist people who are living stable lives and then a crisis occurs. This fund assisted **11 families** since last October, granting over **\$20,000** which is an average of **\$1,800 per family**.



We have a partnership with Fidelis Credit Union called the **Fresh Start Loan program**. We were able to provide loans this season to two individuals for over \$2,500 that assisted them in paying off high interest Pay-Day loans.

National Assembly



**2020
Virtual
National
Assembly**
September 2-5, 2020

The following are some gems Vincentians recalled from attending/viewing the first ever virtual National Assembly. This Assembly is our annual meeting where Vincentians usually get to meet others doing the same work around the nation, receive resource information and are refreshed with formative presentations.

- “One thing I learned was the Jesus Prayer. I had never heard that one before and it has stuck with me. *Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.* I am working that into my daily prayer routine. Hopefully it is one more small way to help me reach the ultimate goal.” - Chris Strassburger

Sheltering from the Storm by President Ralph Middlecamp

The Society was born in a time of crisis. There were constant wars in France. Houses were demolished, crops stolen and the dead were left everywhere. Most of the sick were hidden in shacks. Those who wanted to help did not know how to reach them. This is a reminder that we can't always bring the material items but we can bring a spark of hope in our communications. God sends us to remind people of His love.

The year before the Society formed was the cholera epidemic of 1832. Frederic said to his mother, “In the midst of these sad spectacles, charity is not wanting.”

He saw few wealthy people who needed assistance because they were able to sequester. He realized the obligation to assist the poor.

Knowing some history helps us realize that though we need to be socially distancing, we can still be spiritually close.



How did this newsletter get its name? The lady who had provided the idea for the title of our newsletter, “Society News,” died in August. She was Bernadette “Bernie” Zawatski. She was a member of the MPB conference before they officially let women join. It was 1965, two years before Vatican II. In 1967 the International Society of St. Vincent de Paul opened up the membership to women. Bernie had been assisted by the

Society as a young, single mom of five and had made God a promise that she would return the favor when she was able. There were two men who were the only members of the MPB Conference at that time. When she asked if she could help, they said yes and promptly made her the Treasurer. Bernie was 93 years old when she passed. In her last conversation with Fr. Patrick Dolan, he asked her if she had any questions. She said, “Yes. I just want to know if I’m going up or down.” Father Pat replied something to the effect that if she didn’t go up, there was no hope for the rest of us. Rest In Peace, Bernie!

Turn your **HEAP**
Into *Help!*

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul has a quick and easy way to turn your unwanted car or boat into cash to help those in need.

Go to svdpUSAcars.com
or call **1-800-322-8284**

Your donation qualifies as a tax deduction.

Society of St. Vincent de Paul

Help us continue to help others. Many charities compete for vehicle donations. We know you have choices. We ask you to consider donating to the Society. Except for 1.25 paid salaries, we are all Vincentian volunteers. We go to the people who need help of any sort. We need *your* help! Thank you.

New Diocesan Council

Denver Metro Council is in the process of helping the Diocese of Colorado Springs establish a new Council. According to the Society's RULE, which is our governing document, Councils are to be established by Diocese or Archdiocese. A few meetings have been held with the existing seven Conferences of Colorado Springs to begin the process of setting up a new diocesan council. Currently they are electing their Council officers. After completing the necessary institution application required by our National Office in St. Louis, they will be their own entity. This new Council is also working on establishing a new Conference at Holy Apostles in Colorado Springs. As the new Council gets started, they are already adding an eighth Conference. Once the Council process has been completed, those seven Conferences will no longer be part of the Denver Metro Council. We will continue to work with them on co-pays and twinning.

The Len Langenderfer Housing Fund allows Conferences to partner with Metro Council when paying rent or mortgages. Council does this to help keep people in their homes. We were able to assist **901 adults and 683 children** avoid homelessness with over **\$120,000**.



From Our Metro Council President

COVID-19 has triggered a major change in the way we go about serving our community. We haven't stopped helping our neighbors-in-need but we have made some major modifications.

Since we cannot make home visits, Vincentians switched to connecting via phone calls and the Internet. We lost the face-to-face contact and the spirituality of the home visit but Vincentians have been creative in supplementing telephone calls with personal notes mailed to neighbors expressing our prayers, encouragement and concern for their well-being. In some cases where documents must be provided, Vincentians arrange for a timed transfer on a front porch and other locations so that social distance rules are followed. Fortunately, the Energy Outreach Colorado program has loosened strict guidelines making it much easier to submit requests without meeting face-to-face to obtain a neighbor's signature.

Vincentians focused on eldercare programs have adjusted to the new environment, too. Nursing center resident visits were prohibited months ago so Vincentians use the U.S. mail and hand delivery of notes to the facility front desk to continue communications. This is particularly important because even family visits are still restricted. A youth group at one parish has become involved in the Vincentian eldercare outreach program by sending notes to residents selected by the facility staff. Residents look forward to this Vincentian link to the outside world.

While we are helping families and individuals cope with the impact of COVID-19 on household income, we are doing some self-reflection on any conscious or unconscious prejudice. The Society of St. Vincent de Paul National Council is hosting a series of sessions on racism in which hundreds of Vincentians participate. We also are developing a program related to recognizing and avoiding all prejudices, whether it concerns gender, language spoken, immigration status or marital situation, to name a few. There is no room in our society for prejudice of any kind whether conscious or unconscious. As a Vincentian, we make no distinction in those served because, in them, Vincentians see the face of Christ.

Along with many of our neighbors-in-need, each of us is affected in one way or the other by the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on our lives and the economy, the harm of racism, protests, violence and anarchy. It is up to us as Vincentians to keep an even keel while serving our communities. The following reading from the second letter of Paul to the Corinthians gives us some guidance and sense of balance. 2 Corinthians 4:8-9 - *"We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed."*

Patrick Hanafée



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“Every Crisis is an Opportunity.”
Bishop Hying, Episcopal Spiritual Adviser
National Council of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul



“Perhaps during this time of Covid, God is asking us to sit still and pray.” - Bishop Hying



“Put your trust in Him and following His example, always act humbly, graciously, and in good faith.” - St. Vincent de Paul



“The charism of the Vincentian spirit is *honoring God with our service.*” - Bishop Hying