



# SOCIETY OF SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL, DENVER METRO COUNCIL

Newsletter, Autumn 2025

## DENVER METRO COUNCIL MEMBERS

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George Maes, Vice President  
Lawton Pybus, Treasurer  
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Mary “Corky” Thompson, Board Member  
Ron Wonkiewicz, Conference Development  
Elizabeth Kendrick, Executive Director



Saint Vincent de Paul

### A LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT, ELAINE MURPHY

*“The knowledge of social wellbeing and reform is to be learned not only from books nor from the public platform, but by climbing the stairs to the poor man’s garret, sitting by his bedside, feeling the same cold that pierces him.”-- Blessed Frederic Ozanam, founder of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul*

In my twenty years as a Vincentian, I have served at various times as a conference member, coordinator of youth service camps, and Conference President, but the attraction to the Society has always been the hands-on nature of the home visit, that personal interface with our neighbors within a familiar environment. Our neighbors in need appreciate the fact that home visits are scheduled at a time convenient for them with no need for them to miss work, find a babysitter, take a bus, or worry about sitting in a busy agency waiting room.

The words of our founder provide the impetus for the home visit. Vincentians may not be visiting many “garrets,” per se, in Denver or Aurora or Broomfield, but we learn so much about the challenges facing our neighbors just by climbing snowy stairs to the second-floor apartment of a widow with physical disabilities or by walking into a crowded two-bedroom apartment housing a large family.

In one of my first home visits years ago, we met a family with four active little boys wearing worn-out shoes with some of those shoes actually held together by duct tape. Their mom had called us for rental assistance, but once we heard her story of a painful separation that yielded no child support and her challenge of making ends meet with her minimum-wage job, we knew we just had to do more. And so, food delivery was arranged, and ARC cards were provided to purchase shoes and jackets for her growing sons.

In another visit, we were greeted by a man who had lost his vision as the result of a complicated medical condition. He introduced us to his wife, who worked night shifts cleaning large office buildings, and to his two young sons, who promptly served us Cokes that had been a freebie at the gas station. “Welcome. You are guests in our home,” the boys said. The boys later sent a card of thanks for rental assistance and Christmas gifts.

Of course, a home visit is not always possible. In COVID times, a visit might mean social distancing in an open-air park. There are some situations where the neighbor feels unsafe in her own home or prefers to meet in a space which is quiet and private. Some neighbors find consolation in meeting at the church, a safe space known for a commitment to caring for those in need. Some Vincentians provide elder care at nursing homes or work with families transitioning from a motel to subsidized housing. No matter the location, the objective is to meet people wherever they are, physically, emotionally, and spiritually, in their life’s journey.

Thanks for all you do to make this mission of charity possible. --Elaine Murphy

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## *2025 Friend of the Poor Walk© Raises \$18,000 to Help Sixty Families*

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On Saturday, September 27, 2025, more than fifty Vincentians and friends gathered for the eighteenth annual Friends of the Poor Walk©. Hosted by the Nativity of Our Lord church, the group joined thousands of other Conferences and Councils across the country to honor the Feast Day of Saint Vincent de Paul while raising awareness of the Society's work to prevent homelessness and serve those struggling and often living in poverty.

The gorgeous Colorado weather provided a sunny and warm backdrop to this year's event. Vincentians came together in the spirit of Christ and then walked the mile and a half trail to the 911 Memorial. There, stories of that day were exchanged, paying homage to the past, and inspiring hope for the future. The memories shared remind us how connected we all are.

This annual fundraising event does more than raise dollars and cents. It also fosters community, inspires the exchange of ideas, and builds relationships centered around the cause of serving others. Old friends get together while new friendships are made at this important annual gathering.

In all, the Friends of the Poor Walk© raised more than \$18,000 in gross proceeds that will help us to support up to sixty families, comprised of hundreds of adults and children in need. We thank all of those who organized, participated in, and contributed to the Walk in any way. Coming together once a year truly makes a difference in our community. We look forward to next year's Walk, scheduled for Saturday, September 26, 2026. Save the date!



## 2025 Top Hat Award

Frederic Ozanam, the founder of the Saint Vincent de Paul Society, often wore a top hat—not unusual for gentlemen in nineteenth century Paris. That signature look later caught the attention of James Patrick, who chose *Apostle in a Top Hat* as the title for his 1960 biography of the Society’s founder.

Today Vincentian councils continue to use the top hat as a tangible symbol of our mission, and an actual top hat is awarded each year to a Vincentian volunteer whose commitment to our neighbors in need is particularly noteworthy.

This year, the Denver Metro Council chose Corky Thompson. This is the testimonial from our nominating committee: “Corky has more than 20 years of service as a Vincentian and has been an inspiration to so many. Her energy, passion, and untiring commitment to our neighbors in need —most recently while dealing with her own health challenges—have touched all of us who have worked with Corky. She has been a great mentor to both new and experienced Vincentians and always goes the extra mile for neighbors in need. We are always heartened by her trademark humor, her spirit of friendship, and tender care. In addition, she has taken a leadership role in Voice for the Poor. Corky is more than deserving of this award for her lifetime of dedicated service to the Society.”



*Corky celebrates with Sally Wolfe and Matt Harris, two colleagues on Voice for the Poor.*



### *Pat and Val Hanafee*

Honoring Pat Hanafee

On October 25, 2025, Denver Metro Council members and conference members gathered to honor Pat Hanafee for his decades of servant leadership, first as the Conference President at Saint Michael’s in Aurora, and for the past six years as our Council President.

We offer here some of the many accolades which Pat received at our celebration:

- helping to form new conferences and rejuvenate established ones.
- mentoring new leaders.
- expanding the range of services we can provide for neighbors.
- providing monthly updates on the changing economic situation for lower income Colorado families.
- regularly communicating about new community resources.
- traveling around the Metro area to check in at deanery meetings.
- promptly answering our questions via email or a phone chat.

One Vincentian wrote of “the quiet sacrifices that often went unseen but never unappreciated. Your legacy will continue to shape our work and our hearts for years to come.” Thank you, Pat.

Thanks to a remarkable servant leader and our hearts for years to come.

Our thanks to a remarkable servant leader

**“No Act of Charity is Foreign to the Society...”**

**Blessed Frederic Ozanam**

**Success Stories from Saint Vincent de Paul**

**DMC Conferences**

**Saint Mary’s Parish Conference:** A woman who is blind had been living in a one-bedroom apartment with a steep driveway right outside her door. During the home visit we discovered that her sewer had backed up into her apartment. Our Vincentian took the initiative to tell the landlord that this must be remediated and that the woman’s security deposit must be returned as soon as she found another place to live. She was fortunate to find a subsidized apartment for much lower rent in a very short time. So, five Vincentians with all of our vehicles decided to help her to move. The stairs, elevators, hallways etc. challenged our Vincentians, but we were able to get her fully settled into her new apartment and made sure she received all of her security deposit back from her previous landlord. Now she is able to live a normal life again in a much safer environment at a lesser cost.

**Light of the World Parish Conference:** A good Samaritan in the community called our conference on behalf of a homeless woman whom he had housed temporarily after finding her living on the streets. She had been homeless and abused, but her faith in God, developed through rehabilitation, motivated her to return to her family and friends in another city. Our conference provided a bus ticket, and she is now home, safe and hopeful for the future.

**Saint Vincent de Paul Church Parish Conference:** Your generous donations to the Saint Vincent de Paul Society recently allowed us to help one a young woman who had been in a domestic violence situation and had just placed a protection order on her partner. She has two small children and a third on the way and was not able to pay her rent. Her counselor attested that she is a good mother and a hard worker and just fell in love with the wrong guy. Our conference was getting short of funds again, so we questioned whether we could help her but decided to do it anyway. Thankfully, we received a very generous donation and knew that God had sent us a message.

**Our Lady of Loreto Parish and Cathedral Parish Conferences:** Our conference has provided long-time support to a single mother who struggled to make ends meet on a minimum-wage job even with subsidized housing. Determined to provide a better life for her daughter, she enrolled in nursing school. She was helped by a generous donor who provided her with a car, and she has subsequently received help in paying her car insurance and other bills. The Vincentian who has worked most closely with her will be attending her graduation from nursing school this coming May.

**Saint Michael the Archangel Parish Conference:** A young mother and her four-year-old son had been either living in her car or in an extended stay hotel when she did have work. She decided to leave Colorado to go to Florida, where she was designated to take possession of her deceased mother's home. We gave her a combination of King Sooper gift cards and a VISA gift card to make the trip. She had earned some hotel points from her time in extended stay hotels that she could use along the trip as well. We called her in Florida, and she was doing well. Her little boy is happy to not have to live in their car anymore!



## Letter from the Executive Director, Elizabeth Kendrick

As Autumn has arrived in Colorado, a time of reflection descends upon us at the Denver Metro Council. The year, thus far, has seen some change, growth, and evolution to adapt to ever changing conditions.

After almost three years of dedicated service, the DMC's Executive Director, Erin Hice, departed in July 2025. Erin did a fantastic job and left the DMC in excellent condition, well organized, and as a well-run operation. We wish Erin all the best in her new endeavors. I started transitioning into my role with Erin in June 2025, and sitting side-by-side, learned the many nuances of running this old, and very well-respected organization. Thus far, we have endeavored for a smooth and seamless transition so that we may continue to support the twenty-seven Conferences with whom we partner every day.

In September, we also saw the change in Council Presidents, after Pat Hanafee completed his six-year term, a role he also managed beautifully. Pat worked at this 100% volunteer position as if it were a full-time job and made many key advancements for the Council. Pat forged new partnerships, stood up new conferences, cultivated meaningful donor relationships, and mentored many Conference Presidents. In addition, Pat played an instrumental role in moving the Council office to its current location in the Christ the King church, located on

Elm Street in Denver. At the end of September 2025, Pat handed over the Presidential reins to long-standing Vincentian, Elaine Murphy. A big thank you to Pat, and warm welcome to Elaine!

Through these changes, the central purpose and mission of the Society, and the Denver Metro Council, remains steadfast – serving the poor, the suffering, and those who are struggling. We frequently hear, “you are the only ones who called back.” Committed to answering the call, Vincentians strive to meet those in need, understand their challenges, and align them with assistance in any manner possible. That call to action becomes more prominent each day, as demand increases year after year. A tough job market, combined with instability of public programs, and rising rents make the basic necessities more challenging than ever. With the examples of those who came before us, Blessed Frederic Ozanam, Executive Director Erin Hice, and Council President Pat Hanafee, these leaders have laid the path before us to continue the great works that helped 27,000 individuals with \$2.6M in aid last year. It is a tall charge to live up to this legacy, a mission I embrace wholeheartedly.

I am honored to fill this role, and I look forward to the future as we expand to help more and more individuals each day. God bless, and kind regards,  
Elizabeth Kendrick

**HELP THE DENVER METRO COUNCIL  
OF THE SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL  
PROVIDE FOR THOSE IN NEED**

*Charity is the cement which binds Communities to God  
and persons to one another. – St. Vincent de Paul*



Help us feed, clothe, and shelter the poor with a donation on  
**Colorado Gives Day, December 9th**  
[coloradogives.org/organization/SVDP-co](https://coloradogives.org/organization/SVDP-co)



The list of services of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul in the United States is endless. No work of charity is foreign to the Society.

**Prefer to send a check? No problem:**  
Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, Denver Metro Council  
830 Elm Street, Denver, CO 80220

**Join us in supporting  
SVdP on the 2025  
Colorado Gives Day,  
Tuesday,  
December 9, 2025:**



**Contact Us:**

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