



# The Vincentian Word

## The Voice of the Poor

For the past few years members of the Billings District Council have been working hard to get a working Voice of the Poor Committee off the ground and running. With the addition of Tom Landry of the St. Pius X Conference as committee chair we may have the final piece of the puzzle.

Many ask, "what is the Voice of the Poor Committee?" The long answer is,

*In the spirit of Christian love and justice, the Voice of the Poor Committee upholds Catholic values by researching, validating, documenting, advocating, and promulgating issues related to the condition of the poor and disenfranchised for the purpose of helping Vincentians to live their faith by acting knowledgeably and credibly as a unified body speaking with one voice for the purpose of building up the Kingdom of God.*

Since we as a Society and Christians see the face of Jesus in all those we meet the short answer could very well be,

*'For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me.' 'Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.'*

Matthew 25:35-36, 40

As the VOP we want to inform our elected representatives and our community how decisions affect the people we care for, our friends, the poor. We want to hold our elected representatives accountable for the decisions that they make that affect the poor. The majority of our friends who come to visit looking for assistance are usually more concerned with how to pay the rent and get food on the table than whether they should attend a city council meeting or writing to their representative about the food stamp program or other program which affects them.

At the last meeting of the VOP we came up with a short list of items we wish to work on.

**Increase our presence in jail and prison ministry**

**Reforming Payday/Title loans**

**More/better outreach to the Poor**

**Teaching tenants their rights and responsibilities**

**Streamlining the process of getting Identification**

We are blessed to have two state legislators agree to help with the VOP and we are hopeful everyone who has an interest in helping our friends will be willing to support the committee. How you decide to help our friends is up to you and your conscience but we

## Volunteer of the Month

Terry Pyles is the volunteer of the month for April. Terry has been volunteering for over two years. He always has a smile and offers to help wherever and whenever needed. He helps the drivers unload the donations, helps Thurman sort and he even helps unload the food truck at the charity office. He always goes out of his way to help. Thank you Terry for all that you do. You're truly appreciated and a blessing to have as a volunteer.

**Blessed Frederic Ozanam**  
**Pray for Us.**

hope you will find a way to help.

Feel free to peruse the national Voice of the Poor website at [www.voiceofthepoor.org](http://www.voiceofthepoor.org) to find out more about the Committee and if you want to be able to help us from the comfort of your computer desk don't forget to sign up for Capwiz updates at [www.capwiz.com/svdpusa](http://www.capwiz.com/svdpusa)

Capwiz is a legislative update website which gives you the opportunity to send letters to our U.S. Senators and Representative on national issues of importance to the Society and our friends.

If you have ideas as to what the VOP should pursue or if you want to help please feel free to contact either Tom Landry at [acnerds@bresnan.net](mailto:acnerds@bresnan.net) or Randy Heinz at [randyh@svdpmt.org](mailto:randyh@svdpmt.org) or 252-1855 and let us know what you think.

### Did you know...

We have an opening for a part-time sales person at the Grand Avenue Store. Call Harry (252-1855) if you are interested.

Those in need who come to our Charity Office are given **vouchers for items** in our Thrift Store at **no charge** to them.

When you shop at either of our Thrift Stores your purchase enables us to help the poor.

The price of bags continues to climb sharply. We can use any **plastic bags** that you have around the house.

In March the Charity Office received \$7,782 in cash donations and in addition to food, distributed \$17,648 in assistance.

We are continually in need of **your good used items**. Call Nick at 252-1855 if you need items picked up.

Remember our Charity Office when you tithe your tax refunds.

## From the Directors Desk...

On March 28<sup>th</sup> Felicia, Jeanette, Randy and I joined staff and volunteers from most of the other agencies in Billings at the Library. It was the second annual "Project Homeless Connect," an event which connects the homeless with services available to help them. In addition to breakfast, lunch, and clothing items, individuals received bus tokens, vouchers for haircuts, counseling on health issues, etc. Many of the faces of the homeless who came were familiar to our staff. Many are regulars for coffee and breakfast rolls or other services we offer through our Charity Office. Including the people at the agency tables, those serving food, and the many volunteers assisting the homeless through the maze of tables, there must have been over 200 people working with the homeless that day. Coordinating this event is a massive project.

The question that entered my mind was: Is this one day of service to the homeless worth all the effort that goes into the event, especially since most of these services are available to the homeless every day? As I reflected on the question it appeared to me that the event

was perhaps more valuable to the community than it was to the homeless. Few in the Billings Community have personal contact with the homeless. We see them on the street corner. We read about them in the newspaper or view them on TV. We generalize and make judgments. But it is only when we spend some time interacting with them that we personalize homelessness. That is why "person-to-person contact with those in need" is such a key part of the St. Vincent de Paul Society. They are not our "clients." They are our brothers and sisters, our neighbors, our friends.

Those who seemed most moved by "Project Homeless Connect" were not the homeless themselves, but the volunteers who have not had previous contact with the homeless. They began to realize that most of the chronically homeless are not abusing the system. Many of them were not blessed with a supportive family. Many are mentally ill. Several are victims of drug or alcohol abuse, their own or their parent's. Perhaps it was their choice to abuse chemicals

which resulted in a mind damaged beyond repair. We can judge. We can blame. But this will not change the reality. One of our neighbors needs help to survive in today's world and they have come to us for that help.

This situation sometimes creates difficult dilemmas for us at the Charity Office. We have one severely mentally ill man who spends most of his day in our waiting area or in our chapel. He lives by the river and smells like a campfire. He appears harmless, but has many behaviors that are upsetting to others. If we ask him to leave, he has no place to go. He is already banned from the HUB. The police know him on a first name basis, but do not know what to do with him. He has broken no laws. Since he is not a threat to himself or others, the Crisis Center doesn't know what to do with him. Yet his behavior sometimes creates fear in others, especially for the children who often come to the Charity Office with their mothers. So our dilemma continues. We have allowed him to stay as long as he is

respectful of others. Yet his idea of respect often differs from ours. And sometimes he refuses to leave when he is disturbing others. Handling situations like this is the most difficult yet the most important part of working at St. Vincent de Paul. That is why your prayers of support are so important to us. If Felicia is ever canonized it will be because of her great patience with such individuals.

I believe these are the ones Christ spoke of when he said: "The poor you will always have with you." We may never be able to better their situations, but we will continue to treat them with respect and love them as a brother or sister.

If you feel called to work person-to-person with our friends in need, call Randy or me at 252-1855. We would love to have you join us in this work of Christ.

In Christ's Peace,

Harold Merchant  
Director SVDP Billings



## The Gift That Can Keep Giving

When you receive your refund or incentive check from the government and decide to buy yourself some furniture or an appliance, you can benefit two causes. You will benefit the economy by purchasing the new product for yourself and can also benefit the poor by your gift to SVDP of the GOOD USED FURNITURE AND APPLIANCES YOU ARE REPLACING. If you have extra tables, chairs, beds, desks, dressers etc. that you are not using, drop them off at one of our stores during store hours, or call Nick at 252-1855 and he will schedule a pick up by our drivers.

## All Conference Meeting

Our next meeting of all Conference Members will be on Tuesday, April 22<sup>nd</sup> at the Charity Office. We have had good attendance and great sharing at the last two meetings. The meetings are on the 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday and begin at 7:00 PM. They are kept to one hour.



## Memorials and Honorariums...

### In Memory of...

**Lewis Albus**

**By:** Dolly Albus

**Jeanne Austin**

**By:** Rosemary Hyams

**LeRoy Comstock**

**By:** Bud & Helen Rose

**Larry Duncan**

**By:** Bud & Helen Rose

**Pat Ellinghouse**

**By:** Bud & Helen Rose

**Ann Gerharz**

**By:** Bill & Jeannette Mavity

Heidi Gainan

Mabel McCullough

Alice Connolly

Emily Roscoe

Magdalene Winslow

Patrick Nau

Reid & Kathy Hagen

Lucy Barnard

**John Gewanski**

**By:** Elmer & Genevieve Itzen

**Jackie Hurich**

**By:** Dorman Hurick

**Virginia Jeanotte**

**By:** Ev Straight

Ethel Aichele

**Minni Johnson**

**By:** Michael Wolff & Diann Mueller

**Peg Kamerazel**

**By:** F. P. & Rose Duchesneau

**Jerry Keating**

**By:** Jerry & Lore Taylor

**Leo Kimmet**

**By:** Ev Straight

**Justine Naglich**

**By:** Barbara Ramsey

**Perkins Ouellette**

**By:** Pat & Mary Kay Byorth

Reid & Kathie Hagen

**Mini Johnson**

**By:** Diann Mueller & Michael Wolff

**Julia Ritz**

**By:** Janice Coffman

Corrine Wilkins

David Ritz

Lelah Ritz

**Jim Murphy**

**By:** Bern & Steve Kuhlmann

**Ted Ritz**

**By:** Lelah Ritz

**Gary Rose**

**By:** Bud & Helen Rose

**Arthur Schaaf**

**By:** Marion Schaaf

**Wayne Scharosch**

**By:** Barbara Mann

Amanda White

Tom & Aurlie Samsel

Mike & Judi Hickey

Jan & Jim Johansen

Chris & Joan McDonald

Knights of Columbus Council  
8345

Bern & Steve Kuhlmann

**Bill Shaffer**

**By:** Bern & Steve Kuhlmann

**Howard Stark**

**By:** Diann Mueller & Michael Wolff

**Edith Twomey**

**By:** Susan Farghali

Mary Jane Cape

**Cletus J. Walsh**

**By:** Helen Walsh

Kathleen & Bill LaMeres

**Jim Weber**

**By:** Diann Mueller & Michael Wolff

**Mary Wells**

**By:** Judy Harris

Mary Kay DiValentino



### In Honor of...

**Marg Colman**

**Sharon Hanser**

**BJ Sletta**

**AnnaMarie Wallace**

**By:** Ev Straight

### Society of St. Vincent de Paul Board of Directors

|                   |                 |
|-------------------|-----------------|
| PRESIDENT         | Bruce Ellis     |
| VICE-PRESIDENT    | Kathy Rude      |
| SECRETARY         | Mary Jo Michels |
| TREASURER         | Ron Hundtofte   |
| PROGRAM COORD.    | Donna Pavlish   |
| SPIRITUAL ADVISOR | Bill Belinski   |
| OTHER MEMBERS     |                 |
|                   | Jeanne Bender   |
|                   | Marge Ficek     |
|                   | Lynn McGarvin   |

### Society of St. Vincent de Paul Staff

|                 |                  |
|-----------------|------------------|
| EX. DIR.        | Harold Merchant  |
| CHARITY OFFICE  | Felicia Lehman   |
| PAYEE OFFICE    | Jeanette Skinner |
| STORE MANAGER   | Debbie Butler    |
| VOLUNTEER COORD | Iris Anderson    |
| ADMIN. PRO.     | Randy Heinz      |



The poverty of our century is unlike that of any other. It is not, as poverty was before, the result of natural scarcity, but of a set of priorities imposed upon the rest of the world by the rich.

Consequently, the modern poor are not pitied...but written off as trash. The twentieth century consumer economy has produced the first culture for which a beggar is a reminder of nothing. ~ John Berger

## Gifting Made Easier

Using automatic bill pay at your local bank or credit union is one way to remove one of those monthly tasks from your checklist. This is a convenient way to send your monthly donation to the Society without having to write a check and save yourself the cost of a stamp. At most banks there are no extra fees for either you or the Society and it saves you the bother of trying to remember to write the check.

Ask someone at your local bank about it. They will be more than happy to explain how automatic bill pay works and enjoy the convenience!

SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL  
BILLINGS DISTRICT COUNCIL

2610 Montana Ave  
Billings, MT 59101  
Return Service Requested

Downtown: 406-252-1855  
Grand : 406-248-9125  
Charity Office: 406-248-1411

Non-Profit Org.  
U.S. POSTAGE PAID  
Billings, MT 59101  
Permit No. 45

We're on the web  
[www.svdpmnt.org](http://www.svdpmnt.org)



## Long Range Planning

SVDP is in the process of establishing four committees to look at the needs of the poor in our area and how best SVDP can continue to serve them. The first task of these committees is to develop a plan, rather than do projects. We would love to have you assist us by joining one of the committees. They are:

The **Training and Development** committee which will focus on a plan for orientation and ongoing training of SVDP Board and Society members, volunteers, store staff etc.

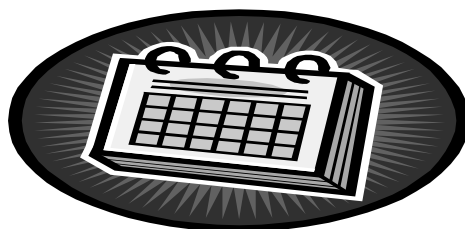
The **Planning** committee will focus on the best use of our strengths and our resources, seek ways to better collaborate with others locally, and recommend the best structure for our Conferences.

The **Publicity and Recruitment** committee will focus on ways to better com-

municate the SVDP message to the community, better promote our Charity Office and Stores, and suggest ways to attract new members and volunteers.

The **Finance and Fund Raising** committee will focus on ways to increase financial donations to the Charity Office, donated goods to the stores and create the structure for a fund raising committee.

If you have expertise in any of these areas, or would like more details on any of the committees, or would like to participate on a committee, call Harry or Randy at 252-1855.



## Prayer of the Vincentian Family

Lord Jesus, you who willed to become poor,  
give us eyes and a heart directed toward the poor;  
help us recognize you in them --  
in their thirst, their hunger, their loneliness, and their misfortune.

Enkindle within our Vincentian Family

unity, simplicity, humility,  
and the fire of love  
that burned in St. Vincent de Paul

Strengthen us, so that faithful to the practice of these virtues,  
we may contemplate you and serve you in the person of the poor,  
and may one day be united with you and them in your Kingdom.

Amen.