



**SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL
BILLINGS DISTRICT COUNCIL
2610 MONTANA AVENUE, BILLINGS, MT 59101
DOWNTOWN STORE: 406-252-1855
GRAND AVENUE OUTLET: 406-248-9125
CHARITY OFFICE: 406-248-1411**

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www.svdpmf.org

The Vincentian Word

New Director Selected

Welcoming Reception Jan. 31st

Agnes Samples MPH, CHES, Assistant Professor in the Department of Health and Human Performance at Montana State University Billings since 2004, has been selected as the new Executive Director for St. Vincent de Paul. Agnes is a member of St. Pius X Parish. She will begin on Jan. 17th, and work with Harry through January 31st, when he will be retiring. In case you get confused, Agnes is the one with the full head of hair and the Southern Accent.

Agnes and her husband Henry moved to Billings in 2004 from Johnson City Tennessee where she taught at East Tennessee State University. There is a welcoming reception for Agnes on Jan. 31st from 3 – 5 p.m. at the Charity Office.

Special Thanks From Felicia

- ◇ Thanks to everyone who helped sort toys and helped the families pick out toys in the toy room this year. We appreciate everyone's help.
- ◇ Thanks to everyone who helped distribute food at the food bank, and to those who helped deliver boxes to our shut-ins.
- ◇ Thanks to everyone who helped adopt families for the Empty Stocking program.
- ◇ Thank you to the anonymous gentlemen who donates whatever he we need for the Christmas party for the homeless. He comes in a couple of days before the party and asks me what we still need, and he purchases it. He refuses to give his name so I can't thank him properly. So God bless you kind Sir, for everything you do.
- ◇ Thanks to everyone who donated all the toys to give away to our families, including the Billings Catholic Schools, the St Bernard's Catholic Church, other churches and Toys for Tots.

Did you know...

- * In November our Charity Office received \$10,848 in cash donations, and distributed \$23,972 in assistance.
- * With the increase in requests, now more than ever we need your good slightly used items, **especially couches, beds, dressers, other furniture and household goods**. Items can be dropped off at either store location. If you need them picked up, call Nick at 252-1855.

Remodeling Update

To date we have received \$55,600 in contributions for the remodeling and expansion of the Charity Office, with another \$10,000 on the way. We need another \$24,000 to qualify for a grant of \$138,000 to complete the project. We hope to begin the remodeling this winter with completion this spring. If you wish to contribute, please write "remodel" on your check.

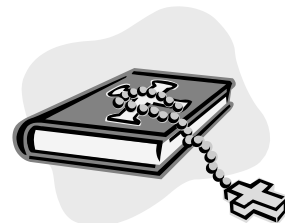
Volunteer of the Month

Reid Hagen is January's Volunteer of the Month. Reid has been volunteering for about four months and he works at the front desk on Monday and Friday mornings. He is friendly to everyone who comes in the door, and tries to help everyone the best he can. He takes in an interest in the people and talks to them about all kinds of things. He is very helpful and I am very appreciative of his kindness that he shows to the people we serve. Thanks Reid for all the wonderful things you do.

SVDP Training January 22

Have you ever wondered what happens on a home visit to a family in need? Is God calling you to work with the poor? What really goes on in the Charity Office? Who was this St. Vincent de Paul? What is a SVDP Conference? These are some of the questions that will be addressed when you join us on January 22nd at the St. Thomas Parish Center behind St. Thomas Church at 2055 Woody Drive. You will also have the opportunity to meet our new Director. Join us for a Continental Breakfast between 8:30-9:00 a.m.. Orientation sessions will begin at 9 a.m. with lunch served around noon, and we will be finished by 2:00 p.m..

If you plan on attending, or have any questions, call Harry or Randy at 252-1855 to register. There is no charge for the day.



SVdP Board of Directors

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From the Directors Desk...

God's timing is always right on, but I wish He would sometimes send out advance notices. They might have saved some of my hair.

As I mentioned in our last newsletter, the Christmas Party for those we serve was on Dec. 18th. From the first year, we have tried to have gifts available to distribute, especially for those living on the street. The ladies from the

Beta Sigma Phi Sorority who put on the party provide some of the socks, gloves and hats, and other donations come in from many of you and from the community. We were expecting about 200 people this year, so many additional gifts were necessary.

The ladies were scheduled to come in at 1:00 PM on Dec. 17th to wrap gifts,

but we still lacked many items that we needed if everyone was to receive a gift. I had informed the ladies of the shortage and asked them to wrap up everything that we had when they came in. At Saturday's party, we would simply give out what was available until we ran out of gifts.

Then, at about 12:30 PM on the 17th, I received a message from the Thrift Store that a delivery truck was here with several boxes of clothing from the Zumiez Foundation. These included 12 cases of blankets, 3 cases of men's hooded sweat shirts, 2 cases of gloves and 4 cases of socks! Totally amazed, I asked the staff to bring these items over right away. As the ladies were arriving through one door ready to start wrapping, the cases of clothing were coming through the opposite door! Still in awe, we all realized who really had things under control, and it wasn't us. The Miracle on Montana Avenue was happening again! At the party the next day, all who came left with a package of warm clothing and when the party was over, the gift box was still not empty!

The following week was spent giving out food boxes and toys. Again this Christmas, the Billings Food Bank provided the food. We assisted 612 families with food boxes through our Charity Office. In addition, 896 children received their Christmas gifts through St. Vincent de Paul thanks to St. Bernard Parish, St. Francis Primary and Intermediate Schools, Toys for Tots, and many of you. We even have gifts remaining that will be available to parents needing birthday gifts for their children during the year.

A huge THANK YOU goes out to each of you who helped distribute food and gifts. Thanks also to each of you who sent financial support. With your help, we have been able to rebuild some of the reserve funds for the Charity Office that we have had to draw from over the past few months. As Christmas reminds us, Christ is still alive in Billings!

In Christ's Peace,

Harold Merchant
Director, SVDP Billings

Charity Office Update...

About 2 years ago, a gentleman named Kenneth came into the charity office seeking assistance and someone to listen to his story. Little did I know at the time that this would turn out to be a very long story, with a happy ending. He was in his mid 40s, worked his entire life, supported himself and never needed help with anything. Right now he felt very lost and angry, and had a bunch of questions.

He was facing long term disability with no money for any of his bills. He found himself asking for help. He had been injured on the job, his doctor said he couldn't work and workman's comp said he could. This was the first of many long battles for Kenneth. While he battled with workman's comp, his savings was quickly dwindling to nothing, to keep his bills paid. He managed to do this for about six months, when he finally realized he couldn't do it anymore. That is when he came in to see me. He realized he couldn't afford to buy food anymore, let alone keep up with his bills.

By the time he had come in here, his first battle with workman's comp had ended, and a new one had begun. Workman's comp now agreed that he couldn't work, but now they were saying that he got hurt off the job. Kenneth was desperate at this point, he told me all of his problems, and he showed me all of his paperwork from workman's comp and his landlord. He had receipts for all the bills he had paid for the last six months. He showed me his bank statements showing his now

empty balance. It had turned into a big mess.

I started writing down all the places he could go to sign up for assistance, and it was very overwhelming to him. But he took my advice and went and signed up at every place on the list. In the meantime I helped him with food, to ease the burden.

After several months of being denied by workman's comp, Kenneth decided that he would need a new strategy. He couldn't work, so he decided he would apply for Social Security benefits, which opened up an entire slew of different doors. But by this time he had lost his apartment and was staying at the mission and in motels.

Kenneth only came in when he absolutely needed to, and when he did he always updated me on his progress, and his frustrations. I felt so bad for him, he had paid his dues and now he was being pushed aside.

After he had applied for Social Security he had qualified for the General Assistance Program at HRDC. It is a program that would pay for rent while you waited for Social Security until you're denied or accepted. And now all he had to do was find a place to live. The only thing that HRDC wouldn't pay for was the first month's rent. So SVDP helped him with that. He got back on his feet. Over the last couple of years he would come in when he was struggling, and would share his progress with me. He had lost apartments, belongings, and hope.

After Kenneth got a place to live of his own, he didn't really come in much anymore. He came in for food boxes once in a while, but the trips became fewer and fewer. And then one day right before Christmas he came in once more, to get a food box. He also had good news. He had gone to his third hearing for Social Security, and although they hadn't made an official decision about it, they were

pretty confident that he would get it.

I am always amazed at the resiliency of our friends when it looks like they have been beaten down. The hand up we give to them, many times, makes all the difference in the world to keep going and to overcome whatever obstacles are in the way.

Felicia

We're Sorry!

Due to a combination of computer and operator errors the list of memorials and honorariums which were to be included in this issue have disappeared.

All thank you cards and letters were sent out; it was just the list which were to be included in the newsletter that disappeared.

If you would like to have us include your memorial notice in the February 2011 newsletter please contact Randy at 252-1855 or randyh@svdpmt.org and they will be included. Thank you for your understanding.