



Des Moines Council Society of St. Vincent de Paul

VINCENTIAN VOICE

"Friend" our stores on FACEBOOK

Second Quarter 2015

www.svdpdsm.org www.svdpusa.org

[Newsletter can be viewed on-line in color on our Council website]

Dear Friends and Fellow Vincentians,

So much to talk about, so little time (and space!)

Due to circumstances that you'll learn below, I am composing this newsletter myself (Eric usually does!), so it may not look or read as professionally as you are accustomed. I am just going to tell you a story with some photos and my commentary.

As I write this (March 12) we are having some wonderful Spring-like weather. I hope you are enjoying it! But, it being Iowa, who knows what it will be like when you get this! I hope it holds out! (Good weather improves sales at our stores!)

We are truly blessed to have so many great folks on staff here, as well as wonderful volunteers at the stores and our conference Vincentians that donate their time and talents to make a positive difference in others' lives – some of whom I'll be highlighting in this newsletter. Thank you to all of you for the work you do, and the care, consideration and Christian kindness and values you show to those we serve.

There has been a lot going on since our last newsletter: Thanksgiving and Christmas food baskets, Operation Santa Claus, Ozanam Orientation, a cancelled Quarterly Breakfast (nasty winter storm!), empowerment facilitator training, Golf Committee meetings ... AND a lot of changes and other exciting things going on with us right now.

AND in the midst of all this, as you may know by now, since the last newsletter, some of our folks have retired, resigned, and moved on to other pursuits, and we've acquired some new folks!

RITA VERA, who I think of as our "public face" at our donation door, has retired after 34 years as an employee of our Sixth Avenue thrift store! (Did I say "34" years? Yes I did!) I think she has the record in our Council's history as the longest standing employee. (I didn't really do any research on that

so if anyone wants to contest that I would certainly like to hear from you!) She received a lot of royal treatment while sitting on the "Queen's Throne" that our folks adorned for her on her special last day, January 30, 2015!

Her send-off included a cake, lots of good food and drinks, gifts, a service award and a multitude of co-



workers and friends to wish her well in her new phase of life. Rita, a big THANK YOU! for your many years of dedicated service to our organization and the good folks we serve. We'll miss you! She promised not to be a stranger!

Then there's **ERIC WOOLSON**, our Des Moines Council Executive Director, who tendered his resignation, effective February 28, 2015! I guess we can now refer to him as our "Ex-Ex!", since he and his wife Debora will still be around, doing good works as Sacred Heart Conference Vincentians! Eric is reverting back to his old bad habits! :) With the smell of fresh Iowa politics in the air, Eric has agreed to join Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker's team as he considers a run at the presidency. The Des Moines Register published an article regarding his appointment and it can be viewed on-line at <http://www.desmoinesregister.com/story/news/elections/presidential/caucus/2015/02/24/scott-walker-hires-iowa-political-operative-eric-woolson/23928303/>.

We were fortunate to have had Eric spend the last two years with us as our Executive Director. What

you may not know about Eric, due to his “hands on” involvement in so many aspects of the operation, is that he was employed only on a part-time basis! (...AND that he is a very accomplished snake hunter and catnapper! He will share stories if you ask!)

Eric has served us well in this capacity, having overseen the expansion of our operations to include the opening of a second thrift store, expansion of employee benefits to include health insurance coverage, updating our retail systems with integrated electronic cash registers, expansion and enhancement of our food pantry operations, refocus of our education center, not to mention the many day-to-day operational duties and responsibilities inherent in the management of personnel, property, the budget and general business operations. As Council President I have enjoyed a very open, responsive and collaborative working relationship with Eric and will miss his resourcefulness, counsel, leadership and positive approach. He has demonstrated by example the Society’s definition of “servant leadership” with his active involvement in providing services to the Des Moines Council and conferences, as well as to our personnel, store customers and the friends in need we serve, usually with the same smile on his face as demonstrated in this photo!



day, with cake, food, drinks and well wishes.

Thank you Eric. We look forward to continuing our friendship and service together as Vincentians. You will be hard to replace as Executive Director, but the world continues to turn and as I write this the Executive Committee is actively seeking to fill the vacancy by early May. FYI, qualification requirements and the application process are available for viewing on our Council website at www.svdpsdm.org.

God bless you all!

Yours in friendship and service,

Jim Wachuta
Council President

He was honored at our February 19 full board meeting, as well as by our Council staff and volunteers on his last



MEET OUR NEW TOM VARILEK EDUCATION CENTER DIRECTOR

We are very pleased to announce the newest member of our Council operations team, joining us on January 1, 2015. Please join me in welcoming ANDREW GROSS.



My name is Andrew Gross and I am honored to be the director of the Tom Varilek Education Center at SVdP. I think of my job as more of a vocation than a career. I spent my first 22 years in Catholic education; nine years as a teacher, five as the Director of Religious Education at St. Theresa Parish, and eight years as principal of Holy Family School here in Des Moines. I spent the last 19 years in the public setting: as a superintendent, drug prevention coordinator, teacher, career advisor, and most recently as a literacy specialist at Des Moines Area Community College working with the underemployed and unemployed here in this area. So I was really excited to come “full circle” and consider this position.

My focus is threefold: First, to direct and grow the services offered at the center. Second, to explore all opportunities for the underemployed and unemployed in this area and build partnerships with agencies where possible – a network of charity. This will allow us to refer folks to their programs and have them refer folks to our programs. Third, to develop a process that will enable clients who receive emergency financial assistance from us to move toward self-sufficiency; be it furthering their education, gaining employment, or moving into a career. This follows our mission of “relieving need and addressing its causes.”

I look forward to meeting members of the conferences within the district and receive input and feedback on the work here at the center. Please feel free to contact me at agross@svdpdsm.org or [\(515\) 282-8327](tel:(515)282-8327) extension 17.

REFLECTIONS – From the Desk of Fr. John Bertogli, Council Spiritual Director

The threefold mission of Lent, prayer, fasting and almsgiving, which engage us these 40 days, should lead us to a virtuous life all year long. They are used not only as a means to deepen personal growth, but for a greater awareness and service for

others, especially those in need. Christ's mandate allows us to see the face of Jesus in the marginal, frightened, desperate and discouraged of our communities. The St. Vincent de Paul Society and its local metro conferences are the arms, feet and heart of the Lord bringing life renewed hope to those who struggle to experience the basic needs of daily life. Such experiences lead us to the paschal mystery, entering into our dying and rising with the Lord. This is symbolized ritually in the events of Holy Week and Easter.

Palm Sunday ushers in the most sacred week of the Church year. Parish activities are not scheduled so that everyone can be part of these sacred days ("Triduum") that lead to Easter. Holy Thursday commemorates the Last Supper in which Jesus gives His Body and Blood in the Eucharist, which leads to service as the washing of the feet suggests. The stripping of the sanctuary reminds us that just as Jesus would be "emptied" on Good Friday, so are we!

Good Friday is a day of fast and abstinence. This service is starkly simple to commemorate the Lord's death. Mass is never celebrated this day to remind Catholics that the Church's "highest form of public prayer" is absent to honor the sacrifice of Christ's death. Holy Saturday is a time of grief, but waiting with hope, as we keep vigil in darkness and exalt the Resurrection of the Lord. This liturgy is the most important of the year, for it welcomes new members into the community. God's divine love transforms everything, even sin and death in the resurrection we celebrate on Easter Sunday.

The message of Easter Sunday is one of radical hope. The power of the Lord's resurrection is a rich grace that allows us to live our lives with vision that can transform us as we are living it! It is the empty tomb that says to us, "Go tell the others, and they will see me." (Mt 28:10)

A blessed Lent, Holy Week and Easter to all!
Fr. John O. Bertogli, Metro SVDP Chaplain

Bridges Out of Poverty/Getting Ahead Program
Jim Wachuta, All Saints Conference, and Karen Formaro, Christ the King Conference, attended this two-day SVdP training at Rockford, IL January 23-24, 2015. You'll be hearing more about this exciting new empowerment program that we hope to introduce in the near future in our community. More information can be found on-line at <http://www.svdpsusa.org/systemicchange/Bridges/Bridge-Out-of-Poverty>.

"SHOUT-OUT" CORNER

Thanksgiving and Christmas Food Baskets –

Thank you to our Social Services Director Chasity DeMaranville and the many store folks and volunteers who helped prepare and distribute bulk food to conferences used to fill food baskets that fed 391 families and 1788 individuals during our past Thanksgiving holiday season and 267 families and 1157 individuals at Christmas.

Operation Santa Claus – Thank you St. Theresa Vincentians Paula Kohls and family, Denny Koenigsfeld, John Magennis, and the "too-many-to-name-all-of-them" volunteers who



helped with our Operation Santa Claus program this year. The group helped 1634 children with toys this year.



Holy Trinity Conference – Thank you and apologies to Matt Dore and the Holy Trinity Conference for all the planning and food preparation for what would have been a great SVdP Quarterly Breakfast Meeting on February 1st, but for the nasty winter storm that resulted in its cancellation. I'm sure the food found a good home!

All Participating Conferences – In the past few months there have been two families with special needs beyond the capability of the budget limitations of the Council or a single conference to adequately help. Thanks to all the conferences that "twinned" in solidarity with the Council and sister conferences to make a significant difference to two families in need.

Fr. John Bertogli and Dowling HS Students – Thank you to Fr. John for his continuing support of our Council as Spiritual Director as well as his efforts in forming a Dowling High School SVdP Youth Conference, which meets monthly.

Ankeny Centennial HS Girl's Track Team – Thank you Coach Andrew Kruzich, who also teaches history, government and sociology, and his track team who picked St. Vincent de Paul as their charity of choice for the remainder of this school year to donate their treasures, as well as their time and talents as volunteers. We look forward to working with you helping us serve others in need in our community.

Volunteer Opportunities

Volunteers, including Dowling Catholic or other high school students in need of service hours, are always welcome and needed. Council needs include office volunteers, store volunteers at 1426 Sixth Avenue and 109 SW 63rd Street, assistance in operating our food pantry on the first and third Tuesday evenings of the month, assistance in our social services department, mentors for students and evening childcare assistance for HiSET students' children (onsite at our Sixth Avenue location during evening class hours) in our education center, and other technical assistance based on skill sets. For additional details or to volunteer, please contact Office Manager Mary Beck (office) at 282-8328, Jessica Daab (store) at 282-8328, Ext 11.

Donations Always Needed

SVdP picks up donations Monday through Friday based on a zip code route. The Des Moines Council is requesting furniture specifically at this time, but all donations are welcomed. For details or to schedule a pick-up, please call us at 282-8328.

SVdP Has a *National Vehicle Donation Program*

Tax deductible donation. 1. Fill out an on-line form on our national website (www.svdpusa.org) or call 800-322-8284, available 24hrs/day, 7 days/wk. It takes just a few minutes. 2. We'll have the vehicle picked up within 24 hours. 3. We'll fill out all the tax forms and send to you.

Contact Us

We welcome your suggestions to improve our services. Feel free to contact us:

President Jim Wachuta:

president@svdpdsm.org

Executive Director (Vacant):

_____ or 282-8328 ext. 12

Office Manager Mary Beck:

secretary@svdpdsm.org or 282-8328

Retail Operations Director Jessica Daab:

retaildirector@svdpdsm.org or 282-8328, ext. 11

Social Services Director Chasity DeMaranville:

socialservices@svdpdsm.org or 282-8328, ext. 14

Education Center Director Andrew Gross:

ajgross@svdpdsm.org or 282-8328, ext. 17

Dates to Remember

April 5, 2015 Sun	EASTER
April 7 & 21, 2015 Tue	Evening Food Pantry 5:00PM - 7:30PM
April 9-11, 2015 Thu-Sat	SVdP Mid-Year Mtg St. Louis, MO
April 18-26, 2015 Sat-Sun	Annual Phyllis Davis Linen Drive
April 16, 2015 Thu, 5:30PM	Exec Committee Mtg [No Full Board Mtg]
April 19, 2015 Sun - 8AM mass	Quarterly Breakfast Mtg Sacred Heart Cath Ch 1627 Grand Ave West Des Moines, IA
May 5 & 19, 2015 Tue	Evening Food Pantry 5:00PM - 7:30PM
May 11, 2015 Mon, all day	Annual SVdP Charity Golf Outing Fundraiser, Willow Creek Golf Course, West Des Moines, IA
May 21, 2015 Thu	Full Board Meeting 5:30PM
June 2 & 16, 2015 Tue	Evening Food Pantry 5:00PM – 7:30PM
June 18, 2015 Thu	Full Board Meeting 5:30PM
July 12, 2015 Sun – 8AM mass	Quarterly Breakfast Mtg St. Joseph's Cath Ch 3300 Easton Blvd Des Moines, IA