

Vincentian Charities

Newsletter and Chronicle of Activities
DIOCESAN COUNCIL--SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT de PAUL
Serving God's Poor in this Community Since 1865

Diocese of Baton Rouge, Louisiana

Summer 2008 Edition

Vol. XVII, No. II



Breaking the Cycle of Poverty One Child at a Time

In 1998, when we first started the Uniforms for Kids campaign, we never imagined that gas prices would have such a dramatic impact on the people we serve or on our organization as a whole. Who would have thought that gas would go from \$1.00 to \$4.00 a gallon in just over a decade?

Escalating gas prices are affecting us all, but the people who can least afford these increases are the ones who are being hit the hardest. Rising gas prices can be financially devastating when you're already struggling to pay for food and rent. To make matters even worse, many low income people drive older cars that are not as fuel efficient as later models.

When budgets have been stretched to the breaking point, items that most of us take for granted suddenly become luxuries. Things like school uniforms drop to the bottom of the priority list, and needy children are forced to attend school without the proper attire. The first day of school becomes something to dread, and the fear of being ridiculed and embarrassed is a child's worst nightmare. Kids don't choose to be born into poverty, but, unfortunately, they often bear the heaviest burden. Can you remember being young and how painful a few thoughtless words could be? One hurtful comment can humiliate a child and leave a scar that lasts a lifetime.

Our goal for the 2008 Uniforms for Kids campaign is to make that first day of school something every child looks forward to. St. Vincent de Paul and our partners – WAFB-Channel 9, Kean's the Cleaner, Chase, and Desselle-Maggard – are again working together to meet the overwhelming community need. Our reward is knowing that our efforts can preserve the dignity and self-esteem of thousands of children who have already faced too many challenges in their short lives.



Continued on page 2; see *"Breaking the Cycle of Poverty"*

St. Vincent de Paul Pharmacy Expansion

Without a doubt, people are alive today because of the life-sustaining medications they received through the St. Vincent de Paul Community Pharmacy. Recognizing the importance of this community program, our leadership has decided that we must expand our pharmacy facility.

In 1995, we established the first St. Vincent de Paul Community Pharmacy in the nation, and our growth over the past 13 years has been remarkable. Originally, we set up operations in the only space we had available at the time, a small area on the first floor of our old Dining Room building. In 2003, we were able to build a new 2,000 sq. ft. pharmacy designed to meet our community's needs at that time. We anticipated that our program would continue to grow, and we positioned the building so that it could be added onto in the future as needed. We thought the size of this building would be adequate until at least 2013 or later, however, there were two events we did not anticipate.

(1) The effects of Hurricane Katrina: The disaster increased the number of people living in poverty who are uninsured in our area, therefore, the need for assistance with medical prescriptions increased. (2) The Medicare Part D Program: Medicare Part D has allowed our pharmacy to focus primarily on patients 64 and younger. Last year, we served a record 8,390 people! Typically, a younger patient needs fewer prescriptions than someone 65 and older, so even though we are dispensing fewer prescriptions to each individual served, we are serving more individuals.

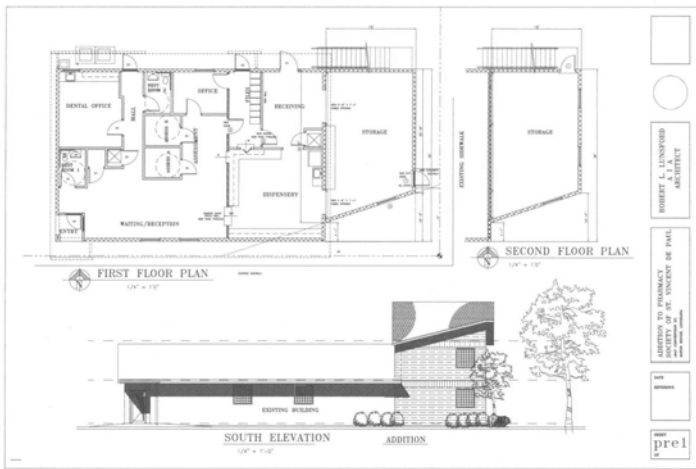
With an increased patient load, our waiting room is more crowded, the dispensing area is too small, storage space has become inadequate, and there is not enough private space for screening applicants. In addition, we continue to assist people over 65 who are enrolled in Medicare Part D since not all drugs are covered by all plans. Some of these patients have reached the "doughnut hole" where their drug

Continued on page 2; see "Pharmacy Expansion"

In this Special Summer Issue:

- That's What Friends are For!
- Tigers are Greattttttttttttt!

Rendering of the expanded future Pharmacy



Pharmacy Expansion Continued from page 1

costs have exceeded a certain level, and they must pay 100% of their drug costs until their spending reaches the catastrophic level.

In addition to these major events, donations of medicines have increased with the continued success of our program, and a second floor is necessary for much needed storage. Unlike retail pharmacies, we rely on donated physicians' samples and nursing home meds. These typically come in large boxes and bulky packaging and must be stored upon arrival until our volunteers can sort them, remove the labels with patient information, check expiration dates, etc.

The prescriptions we fill have a direct impact on the number of heart attacks, strokes and other debilitating illnesses that are prevented because individuals are getting the medicines they need. The St. Vincent de Paul Pharmacy also helps our local healthcare delivery system (hospitals, clinics, etc.) by decreasing the number of emergency room visits because people are now receiving the medications they need. That's why this project is so important.

The expansion will cost approximately \$250,000 and will provide a little over 1,000 sq. ft. of additional space – about 500 sq. ft. upstairs and 500 sq. ft. on the first floor. The current building is 2,000 sq. ft. This expansion project will also allow us to renovate the existing space to provide for more patient privacy. The first-floor expansion will provide more space for a waiting room, more private screening areas, additional storage and sorting areas, and a larger space for our pharmacists to work.

When the need to expand was first recognized, we knew that we would need at least one large contribution to make this project feasible. We are thrilled to report that the Huey & Angelina Wilson Foundation has awarded a \$100,000 grant to make this vision a reality. Then, as this newsletter was being written, we learned that the Greater Baton Rouge State Fair Association had approved our grant application for \$50,000. Wow, what a great start!

Our architect, Bob Lunsford, has drawn up a blueprint of the project, and all we lack now is the remaining funding.

Any St. Vincent de Paul supporter interested in contributing to this project can contact Michael Acaldo at 383-7837, extension O. We ask all of you to keep this project in your thoughts and prayers.

Breaking the Cycle of Poverty

Continued from page 1

As the cost of basic necessities continues to rise, we know that the need for school uniforms will increase as well. We are making every effort to meet the need, and this year's goal is pretty ambitious – 32,000 uniforms (25,000 new and 7,000 gently used). That means that 16,000 needy children in a 12 civil parish area can start the school year with a smile. Our cost per uniform is still only \$10.00 each. Every child will get two uniforms – one to wash and one to wear.

We hope the economy has not created a financial crisis in your life and that you can join us by supporting this year's Uniforms for Kids campaign. We can't do it without you!



"That's What Friends are For" was a tremendous success! Michael Acaldo and Gerry Malone pose with the organizers of the event, Jeani & Charles Moniotte.

Thanks to the sponsorship of Desselle-Maggard and Chase, we recently had a fantastic fund-raising event

That's What Friends are For

– "That's What Friends are For." The event, which was held on Tuesday, June 24, at White Oak Landing, raised over \$25,000 to help our Uniforms for Kids effort.

The hard work and dedication of everyone affiliated with this event was critical to its success. We especially want to thank Jeani Moniotte for her behind-the-scenes leadership role. Her time, talent and organizational skills were invaluable. We also want to express our heartfelt appreciation to Chef Folse and his staff for their dedication and hard work. In addition, we are thankful for everyone who donated items for the silent auction.

And, of course, we are extremely grateful to everyone who purchased tickets and joined us for this evening of good food, fellowship and fun. The title, "That's What Friends are For," says so much about the event and the people involved in its success. Our goal was to help children in need of school uniforms, and isn't that what friends are for – to help one another?



The LSU Softball Team at work in our kitchen – from left to right, Casey Faile, Jessica Mouse, Shannon Stein work hard under the direction of Denise Spears, Dining Room Director.

Tigers are Greatttttttttttt!!!!!!!

Thanks to the leadership of Charles Moniotte, St. Vincent de Paul has developed a wonderful relationship with the LSU Athletic Department. Charles, who is one of our Board members, recently contacted St. Vincent de Paul with a fantastic idea to connect with the Shaquille O’Neal Life Skills Program at the Cox Communication Center for athletes at LSU. Charles set up a meeting with Jade Jenkins and Mike Mallet, both with the Academic Center for Student Athletes. They agreed that St. Vincent de Paul was a very worthy organization and they both got involved.

We had an LSU Day at St. Vincent de Paul, and what a treat that was for our guests! We had LSU athletes on our Dining Room serving line, students painting walls in our pharmacy, re-stripping our parking lots, and baking cookies for guests at the Sweet Dreams Shelter.

We have received so many positive comments about this collaboration. Not only have our guests benefited from this relationship, the athletes themselves have found this to be a very rewarding experience. They consider this an education in life and an opportunity to learn more about our community and the people who live here.

Thanks to Jade and Mike, and all the LSU athletes who took time to give back. They are all champions!

LSU Service Learning

As you know, St. Vincent de Paul is truly a tiger of a charity, and we’re fighting hard to make a difference in our community. Without the support of caring individuals and groups, our work would not be possible. One of the groups that has been a tremendous help to St. Vincent de Paul recently is the Service Learning Department at LSU. This department works with LSU faculty and staff to promote worthwhile service learning projects in our area.

With the cooperation of Jan Shoemaker, Director of the LSU Center for Academic Success, LSU students were involved in a number of hands-on projects that benefited the needy we serve. Dr. Bonnie Belleau’s fashion merchandising students worked with our thrift stores, sharing marketing ideas and suggestions with our staff.

Their ideas will enhance store sales, which benefit the charitable programs of the Society. Dr. Georgianna Tuuri’s students came out and volunteered at our Dining Room, and then wrote essays about their experiences. Cindy Seghers, LSU Academic Coordinator, Residential Life, brought honor students out to tour our main campus and they stayed to assemble meals for our brown bag supper program.

Through service learning and hands-on projects, these students are learning about life and their community. This is something you just can’t get in the classroom.

The Work Continues

St. Vincent de Paul is pleased to announce our collaboration with Catholic Charities and Family Road in the Disaster Housing Assistance Program (DHAP). This program helps people displaced by Hurricane Katrina as they move from FEMA trailer parks into permanent, affordable housing.

In our recent *Beacons of Light* television program featuring Renaissance Village, we introduced our viewers to some of the residents there, and explained what St. Vincent de Paul was doing to make their lives a little easier. Now that the trailer park is closed, our meal service there is no longer needed, but many of the residents, especially the elderly or disabled, really need assistance from DHAP as they try to rebuild their lives.

As individuals and families transition from FEMA trailer parks to permanent housing, DHAP will provide case management services. So many of these people had been residents of New Orleans for years, had never asked anyone for anything and were proud of being self-sufficient. This program is for those who want to take the steps necessary to put the pieces of their lives back together again.

Programs like DHAP put charitable agencies in a position to help, providing resources for direct case management services. In addition, DHAP provides rental assistance for individuals and families as they make the transition from low trailer park rents to much higher apartment rents. The program will continue through February 2009, at which time, we hope to have successfully transitioned all those who recently lived in FEMA trailer parks. Catholic Charities is the lead agency in this program, and by working together, we are making a greater impact than we could alone.

Mark Your Calendars Brian Harris Charitable Classic



We are proud to announce the 12th Annual Golf Tournament benefiting charities of St. Vincent de Paul. The golf classic is scheduled for Monday, October 27th, at the Island Golf Course in Plaquemine. Mark the date on your calendars.

More information will be forthcoming on this important fundraising event for our Myriam’s House and Uniforms for Kids programs.

Ups & Downs

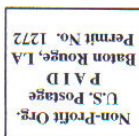
My family and I just got back from a great vacation in San Antonio, Texas, and one of my souvenirs from that trip is an aching disc in my neck. At almost 42, I've learned something my wife seemed to know instinctively. Never get on a roller coaster – especially a Texas-size roller coaster – unless you are very young (*and extremely flexible*). It's hard to say “No” to my ten-year-old twin daughters, but I think I've finally learned my lesson.

You know, life itself is something of a roller coaster. At St. Vincent de Paul, we're not making widgets, where everything flows down an assembly line at a steady pace day after day. We're helping people, and there's no way of knowing in advance what each new day – or year – will bring. This is my 19th year with this wonderful organization, and I've seen many ups and downs in my role as CEO.

Recently, we've had quite a few high points. We had a great year in 2007, serving a record number of meals, providing over 20,000 guest nights of shelter, and dispensing more than \$2 million in prescription medications. But we've noticed that the lines at our Dining Room are getting longer, and calls for assistance are coming in more frequently. Across the board, the demand for our services is increasing, and we keep pulling our belts a little tighter. The rising cost of food, gasoline and utilities is not only affecting the needy we serve, we're feeling it as an organization.

The general public is suffering as prices continue to escalate, and financial contributions have been down over the last few months. Our supporters still share our concerns for the poor and continue to contribute to our special works, but just as our organization is watching every penny, thousands of people are also tightening their belts and cannot afford to be as generous as they would like to be.

Somehow, over the years, things have always worked out, and time after time, I've seen God's hand at work in the most remarkable ways. I am confident that, by the grace of God, and with your support, we will be able to meet every challenge that 2008 brings our way. – *Michael J. Acaldo, President & CEO, St. Vincent de Paul Charities*



Address Service Requested

Society of St. Vincent de Paul
P. O. Box 127
Baton Rouge, LA 70821-0127