

# Vincentian Charities



Newsletter and Chronicle of Activities  
BATON ROUGE DIOCESAN COUNCIL  
SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT de PAUL  
Special Christmas Edition Vol. XX, No. V

*Serving God's Poor in this Community Since 1865*

## Bishop Ott Shelter Collection Drive

Over the last two decades, WGMB Fox 44, WVLA NBC 33, and their family of stations have supported our annual collection drive. Through this effort, we collect items such as soap, shampoo, baby diapers, deodorant and other items essential to our shelter services for men, women and children. Our limited budget does not include the funding necessary to provide all these basic essentials, but thanks to the support of WVLA NBC 33 and WGMB Fox 44 in getting the word out to our community in past years, we have been successful in obtaining these much needed items.

We need your help again this year. A list of needed items can be found on our website at svdpbr.org or call us at 383-7837, ext. 0. You can donate items by dropping them off at **Continued on page 2; see "Shelter Collection Drive"**



Posing for a quick photo are, left to right: Councilwoman Tara Wicker, Mayor-President Kip Holden, James Llorens, Steve Lousteau, Brother Eldon Crifasi, Rabbi Jordan Goldson, District Attorney Hillar Moore, Sheriff Sid Gautreaux, LSU Gymnastics Coach D.D. Breaux, and Tom Olinde, President of Olinde's Furniture.

## And the Winner is...

On the day before Thanksgiving, St. Vincent de Paul celebrated its second annual turkey carving contest. Community leaders that participated included Mayor Kip Holden, Constable Reginald Brown, Sheriff Sid Gautreaux, District Attorney Hillar Moore, LSU Head Gymnastics Coach D.D. Breaux, Rabbi Jordan Goldson, Tom Olinde, Brother Eldon Crifasi, Steve Lousteau, Tara Wicker, and James Llorens. (Note: For those of you that have never carved a turkey, it takes a surprising amount of skill.)

**Continued on page 2; see "And the winner is..."**



## The St. Nicholas Challenge

Every year, Bishop Robert Muench continues our tradition of providing Christmas gifts to the needy and homeless children we serve at our dining room and homeless facilities, as well as those that we make home visits to. This important **Continued on page 2; see "St. Nicholas Challenge"**

**In this issue –** Bringing Families Together  
Red Beans & Rice

## A Golden Opportunity in the Tradition of St. Vincent de Paul

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul is thrilled to announce a new effort entitled, "A Golden Opportunity." This effort encourages people of good will to donate gold, silver, platinum and jewelry to help us in our mission of charity.

Over 350 years ago, St. Vincent de Paul himself, would ask the nobility and wealthy to give their gold, jewelry and precious stones to help him in his service to the poor. Queen Anne of France gave her own crown and jewels to help St. Vincent de Paul in his work with the needy. St. Vincent de Paul was certainly not afraid of fund-raising. Of course, several centuries ago, it was a little different than it is today.

For whatever reason, over the years, the idea of donating broken or unwanted jewelry has been lost. But we want to revive that concept and encourage you to donate items that you no longer wear. Whether they are broken, dated, or just not your style anymore, they have real value and can help us in our service to the poor and homeless.

With the struggling economy and the price of gold at an all-time high, this is a wonderful opportunity for you to get a 100% tax deduction for the full value. If you try to sell your gold, you will only receive a fraction of its true value, but if you donate it to St. Vincent de Paul, you'll get a 100% tax deduction on the value of your donation. What better way to help one of your favorite charities and receive a tax deduction as well. Help us to keep St. Vincent de Paul's vision alive by donating items that will make a real difference in the lives of the needy.

We encourage you, your family and friends to help us launch this project by donating your unwanted jewelry, gold, silver or platinum. The process is easy. It begins with a phone call to St. Vincent de Paul. From there, we'll set up an appointment with a local jeweler for you to bring in your **Continued on page 2; see "A Golden Opportunity"**

## **A Golden Opportunity** Continued from page 1

items, have them valued and begin the process. In addition to helping one of our area's oldest charities, you'll also earn a tax break. We ask you to keep this project in your prayers and to share your blessings with those in need by taking advantage of this golden opportunity.



*Queen Anne of France donates her crown and jewels to St. Vincent de Paul.*

Call us today at (225) 383-7837, extension O.

## **Shelter Collection Drive** Continued from page 1

our main shelter facility located at 1623 Convention St. WVLA NBC 33 and WBMB Fox 44 also put together some exciting events: two collection drives – one on December 1<sup>st</sup> and one on December 15<sup>th</sup> at Perkins Rowe to collect much needed items for our shelters.

We are so thankful to have the support of Channel 33 and 44 in helping us to provide for the most vulnerable citizens in our community. In everything we do, we make an effort to preserve the dignity and self-esteem of the people we serve. That's why this effort is so important. It's almost impossible to find a job if you don't have a way to brush your teeth or wash your clothes, and you certainly can't feel good about yourself when you haven't bathed in a week. These are simple things that most of us take for granted, but for people who have nothing, this is the first step toward a better future.

We thank you in advance for your support and we especially thank WVLA NBC 33 and WGMB Fox 44 for helping us to make this campaign a success.

## **And the Winner is...** Continued from page 1

We knew it was important to be able to rank our participants correctly, so we had our Board Chair Cary Kearny, Bishop Robert Muench, and Sister Carolyn Brady as judges. All the contestants had a blast carving the turkeys, which are so important to our annual Thanksgiving Day meal. We often struggle to find enough volunteers to carve all the turkeys before Thanksgiving, and this event is a way to get our turkeys carved and have some great fun at the same time.

The contest began with a few words from St. Vincent de Paul President & CEO Michael Acaldo. Then the carving and the fun began. D.D. Breaux carved a beautiful turkey and had very high scores. District Attorney Hillar Moore also carved a great turkey. The contestants were judged in a number of categories, which included how much fun the contestant was having. D.A. Hillar Moore pulled out a super-duper, laser-lighted, turkey-carving knife, the likes of which no one had ever seen outside of *Star Wars*. This was his secret weapon, and he used it to "prosecute" his turkey

in a remarkable way. That gave him an edge and put him barely over the top, making him the winner of the 2011 community turkey carving contest. For the second year, D.D. Breaux finished a close second. Sheriff Sid Gautreaux and Steve Lousteau tied for third place.

All the contestants enjoyed themselves and were happy to be a part of this important event. We thank each of these community leaders for being such outstanding examples of volunteerism. They gave the gift that only they could give – the gift of themselves.

## **St. Nicholas Challenge** Continued from page 1



*Bishop Muench, aka St. Nick, gets a hug from a young girl at last year's event.*

outreach to needy children presents a real challenge every year – to get all the gifts we need in time for the Christmas gift distribution. This year's event is scheduled for Saturday, December 17<sup>th</sup>, and we are asking everyone to please consider donating gifts for children, from infants to 12 years old. Anyone with gifts for this effort can drop them off at our office located at our St. Vincent de Paul main campus.

We are excited to announce that another local charity, the Needy of Greater Baton Rouge, has teamed up with St. Vincent de Paul for "The St. Nicholas Challenge." For every gift you donate, they will match it with a gift of equal value. Recognizing that our effort follows the tradition of St. Nicholas himself, who was a bishop in the third century, the Needy of Greater Baton Rouge wants to challenge people to ensure that we have enough gifts for all the children who will be coming to us on December 17<sup>th</sup>.

We have worked with the Needy of Greater Baton Rouge in the past on other projects. Last year, they donated several hundred toys to our effort. Tim Arceneaux, their president, stated, "St. Vincent de Paul is a great charity, and we love working with them because we see firsthand how children's lives are touched. I was especially impacted by being a part of last year's effort. I saw the children getting the toys and I said to myself, 'I've got to try harder next year.' "

This year, the Needy of Greater Baton Rouge will donate even more gifts. Please help us: give a gift, and your gift will be matched. Together, we are bringing joy into the lives of some of the neediest children in our community.

## **We're Moving In!**

This Christmas, St. Vincent de Paul is getting an Essential Needs Distribution Center. We are still trying to pay for it, but we're moving in. The total cost for this project is \$460,000. During this season of giving, caring and sharing, we again thank the Huey & Angelina Wilson Foundation for their generous challenge grant of \$50,000 for this project. We are very close to meeting this challenge, but we still need your help. For every dollar given to this effort, the Wilson Foundation will match it dollar-for-dollar up to the \$50,000 challenge grant total. Please consider helping us with this important effort. For more information, call Michael Acaldo at (225)383-7837, ext. O.

## Bringing Families Together

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul does so

much to help needy and homeless families stay together, and at Christmastime, this is more important than ever. Being in our own homes for Christmas is such a blessing. This is a special time when memories are made and shared, and home is the place we all want to be.



In this picture is a young mother, Kasey, with her children Preston and Liberty. They were homeless for the first time in their lives when they came to St. Vincent de Paul. We were their home for a while, as we are to so many people who have no other place to turn. Every person we help

has a story, and although some of the stories are similar, they are never exactly the same.

Kasey's husband is a hardworking person that lost his job and couldn't find another job in his profession in this area, so he went to Texas in hopes of finding employment quickly. Kasey stayed behind with Preston and Liberty, but because of the economic downturn, her husband's job search took longer than expected, and Kasey and their children were evicted from their home. Without St. Vincent de Paul, they would have been sleeping in their car.

The photo above was taken in happier times, after Kasey and her children had moved into their own room at our Sweet Dreams Shelter. But no photograph can capture the fear in a mother's heart when she receives an eviction notice, or the insecurity of a child who has had to leave everything behind. All the pictures you see in our publications and letters are photos of real people that we've helped. Every picture we put in our materials is of someone that has felt the loving hand of St. Vincent de Paul.

2011 marks an important year in the history of our Bishop Ott Shelter Program. This year, we will celebrate the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our Bishop Ott Men's Shelter on Plank Road, and our Sweet Dreams Shelter for Women & Children will celebrate its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary. These two important community programs provide essential services in our community as we respond to homelessness by providing a hand-up, not a hand-out.

Many emergency shelters throughout the United States give a person a bed for one night, and then the next night, they may be on the street again, never knowing from one day to the next if they will have a bed or not. Our program provides a bed as long as someone is pursuing a worthwhile goal, such as finding employment.

The Bishop Ott Shelter for Men was the first completely free emergency shelter for homeless men in Baton Rouge. Our women and children's facility was also a first for our community, since it allows boys over the age of five to stay with their mothers. These two community firsts have touched thousands of lives. We now help over 1,200 homeless men, women and children annually, providing not only night services, but day services as well.

We will take another important step in our shelter program's growth when we begin construction of a new facility for

homeless men in the coming weeks. We plan to complete the second floor of our dining room building to house our Bishop Ott Men's Shelter, currently located on Convention St. We have received a \$525,000 HUD grant through the city-parish and state to make this project a reality. The facility will be large enough to house 31 homeless men every night, and during times of emergency or disaster, it can be converted to a 62-bed facility. Whether it's freezing outside or hurricane winds are howling through the streets, we will be there for this needy population.

This new facility will not only double our capacity during emergencies; it will also allow the current space at our Convention St. men's shelter to be utilized for another purpose, possibly a shelter for intact families. Currently, if a mother, father and children come to our shelter, we have to separate the father from the women and children. This new concept will enable us to keep families together.

We are pleased to announce that a supporter, who wishes to remain anonymous, has given the Society a \$55,000 gift of seed money for this family shelter. This was an unsolicited gift by a generous St. Vincent de Paul supporter, who saw in our *Vision 150* plans, that we were studying this possibility. We want everyone that would like to fill out a Vision 150 questionnaire to do so by going online at [svdpbr.org](http://svdpbr.org).

This generous gift and the momentum of this program have put us on track for even greater success in serving homeless individuals and families in the future. We are thrilled about our progress over the last two decades and are looking forward to the next two.

NOVEMBER 2011



The St. Aloysius student body outdid themselves! They collected enough red beans and rice to serve approximately 11,700 meals. They collected these items right before Thanksgiving, which was a blessing for those we serve at our dining room. Our cupboards were almost bare, and we were just making it from one day to the next. You can see from the photo above, there was a mountain of beans and rice. The little girl in the center shows her excitement over the amount they collected. In addition, the phenomenal faculty and staff also participated by donating enough money for all the sausage needed for these meals. Our dining room guests that continue to benefit from this fantastic donation wish to thank the students, faculty and staff for their generosity.



# Christ is Here

As I prepare to celebrate my 22<sup>nd</sup> Christmas at St. Vincent de Paul, I am so thankful for the opportunity that this wonderful organization has given me to live my faith. In a world that seems to be taking Christ out of everything, I know how fortunate I am to work for an organization that is based on His message of love and charity.

Jesus began His life on earth in the humblest of surroundings, and although it's impossible for us to know what Mary felt when she learned there was no room in the inn, we see mothers every day that are desperately seeking a safe, warm place for themselves and their children.

We will celebrate our savior's birth on December 25<sup>th</sup>, but I see His disciples in action every day. Whether they are serving meals on our dining room line, bringing a hot meal to one of our shelters, or filling prescriptions at our pharmacy, they are responding to His words in Matthew 25: "For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink. I was a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me. I was ill and you comforted me..."

Here at St. Vincent de Paul, we see so many people who desperately need basic necessities – children without adequate clothing or nourishment, men who have lost their jobs, mothers that have received eviction notices, individuals who need life-sustaining medicines, and others who have been sleeping on the streets or in their cars. During the holidays, we also see parents who are ashamed that they can't afford Christmas presents for their children. In each of them, we see the face of Christ.

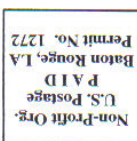
2,000 years ago, Jesus changed the world through the transformation of hearts, and His message of love is just as relevant today as it was then. Christ is at work through us, and too often, we forget that everything we do makes a difference. Every thought, every word, every action changes someone's life. What we may not realize is that our own lives are changed as well.

On behalf of all those we are blessed to serve, thank you for your support. May the Christ child be the center of your celebration, and may God watch over you and your family throughout the coming year.

*-- Michael J. Acaldo, President & CEO, St. Vincent de Paul Charities*

**Christmas Gifts Still Needed** -- If you have responded to our Christmas Appeal, thank you for your generous support. If you have not had a chance to respond and are able to do so, please consider giving the best Christmas gifts the poor and homeless can receive – compassion and hope. A financial gift from you will make a big difference in the lives of the less fortunate. Make your Christmas gift today by mailing to: St. Vincent de Paul, P.O. Box 127, Baton Rouge, LA 70821 or online at [www.svdpbr.org](http://www.svdpbr.org).  
**Thank you and Merry Christmas!**

Address Service Requested



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