

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

Fall 2008 Edition

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St. Vincent de Paul Hit Hard by Hurricane

Hurricane Gustav swept through our area with howling winds and rain, leaving behind damaged roofs, uprooted trees, downed power lines and an entire community sitting in the dark. When we should have been in our back yards barbecuing burgers, most of us were inside, hoping our roofs would hold up and wishing we had cut down all the trees in our yards. This was a Labor Day we won't forget.

In the aftermath of a hurricane, our thrift stores play a critical role in disaster relief. After Hurricane Katrina, our stores distributed items to more than 50,000 people who were impacted by that disaster. The difference between Hurricane Katrina and Gustav was that, during Katrina, our area had minimal damage and no extended power outages. After Gustav, none of our thrift stores/distribution centers had power. In addition, our Plank Road thrift store was severely damaged and a third of the roof was pulled off. This is one of our largest stores, which distributes thousands of items to the needy every year.

Pat Davenport, our Stores Program Director, took quick action, contacting our insurance carrier, Catholic Mutual. They sent out Belfor, a restoration company, to get the water cleaned up, a tarp on the roof, and the water out so that we could save the building. They pumped thousands of gallons of water out of that store! Unfortunately we had our entire school uniform inventory there, which we keep on hand to distribute during the school year for needy children. Almost every uniform got wet. We contacted Rock Rockenbaugh with Kean's the Cleaner, and they were able to clean (and save) every uniform – over \$100,000 worth.

We then moved out all the merchandise we could. We did lose some appliances, furniture and donated clothing that got wet, but we saved what we could. Now, we are making repairs to the store itself. That particular store had average sales of \$800 per day, which will be an ongoing loss for at least 50 days – that's at least \$40,000. In addition, all our stores were closed during the power outages with zero sales for those eight days. All our stores combined typically have around \$5,000 in sales each day so that's a loss of approximately \$40,000. When you add up our losses, it's at least \$80,000. We will not be able to recover those losses.
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Denise Spears cooks on our gas stoves by lantern light.



Charles and Kay thrilled to have generators to run the pharmacy.

143 Hurricane Seasons and Counting...

St. Vincent de Paul has served our community through 143 hurricane seasons, and we've never seen anything quite like Gustav. But not even a hurricane can stop St. Vincent de Paul and our volunteers from making a difference. As soon as the hurricane had passed, we began recovery efforts. Even though we were without electricity, we were hard at work. We didn't have electricity for several days, but we had a job to do. Fortunately, our stoves run on natural gas, and we have a good disaster plan that calls for us to have adequate emergency lighting. Our kitchen staff and volunteers were serving meals within 24 hours of the storm.
Continued on page 2; see "143 Hurricane Seasons"



J.H. Martin and David Broussard of the Greater Baton Rouge State Fair Foundation present a check for \$50,000 to Michael Acaldo, Kay Kyes and Charles Sides for our pharmacy expansion. See "Not Even a Hurricane Can Stop Us" on page 3.

In this Special Fall Issue:

- What's Cooking – Taste & See
- Sweet Dreams

What's Cooking - Taste & See

At the beginning of 2008, we announced the upcoming publication of our first cookbook, *Taste & See – Food for the Body and Soul*. Now, almost a year later, and thanks to a lot of hard work by dedicated volunteers (we'll be telling you a lot about them in the coming months), we have a first-class cookbook that will be coming out in December of this year. This hardcover book is a collection of recipes from local cooks, with a special section containing recipes from Chef John Folse. In addition, each chapter begins with a touching short story about one of St. Vincent de Paul's special charitable programs.

Recipes were submitted, tested and tasted by St. Vincent de Paul volunteers with only the best of the best actually making it into the cookbook. There's everything from Kahlua Grapes, a delicious four-ingredient appetizer perfect for the beginner, to dishes for the more experienced cook, like Chef Folse's Creole Cream Cheese Strawberry Shortcake. From Apache Cheese Bread to Zucchini Squares, there's something to please every palate.

The cookbook will be available through St. Vincent de Paul and can be preordered by filling out an order form or by calling (225) 383-7837, extension O. In November, copies can be ordered in advance through the St. Vincent de Paul website, www.svdpr.org. Remember, all proceeds from the sale of *Taste & See* will be used to provide critically needed services – food, clothing, shelter and healthcare – for the poor and homeless in our community. The book will be available in early December and would make a great Christmas gift for you to give to yourself or family members. More about our cookbook in our November newsletter.

-----Please cut out and mail-----

Pre-Order Your Taste & See Cookbook!

As soon as available, please send me a copy of the *Taste & See* cookbook at \$21.95 plus 9% tax – a total of \$23.93, plus shipping and handling of \$3.99. If you are interested in buying large quantities or picking up your book to avoid shipping costs, call us at (225) 383-7837, extension O.

My check for \$_____ is enclosed.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: ____ Zip: _____

Mail your order to St. Vincent de Paul, P.O. Box 127, Baton Rouge, LA 70821-0127 or call us at (225) 383-7837.

Hit Hard by Hurricane Continued from page 1

Fortunately, the loss of approximately \$250,000 at the Plank Road store is covered by Catholic Mutual Insurance, but the loss of sales at that location will not be covered. For the first time in decades, our stores will show a loss for the fiscal year that ended September 30th.

In addition to the loss of sales at our thrift stores, we are still giving away a lot of merchandise, as well as helping people

with basic necessities like food and medicine. Our organization has really suffered a financial blow, and we ask you to spread the word to your friends and families to donate to St. Vincent de Paul. If possible, they should try to use our donation boxes, which will put less strain on our pick-up capabilities. We also need financial support to help us replace the dollars we have lost because of the hurricane. As always, your prayers and support are greatly appreciated.

143 Hurricane Seasons Continued from page 1

For people without power and many without food, hot meals were such a blessing, and our brown bag lunches and suppers were also a special gift to those that received them. We served over 21,000 meals to people in our community that were affected by the hurricane. We distributed over 5,000 bottles of water. We reached the elderly and shut-ins. We provided drinks and meals to individuals that had been standing for hours in emergency food stamp lines. We worked with a number of different groups, and when our supplies began to get low, our Vincentian friends from Mobile, Beaumont and Dallas came in with fresh supplies. Our National Office provided funding to help us through this time. Our St. Vincent de Paul family, both locally and nationally, really came through with flying colors.

The past few weeks have certainly been hectic, but also very rewarding. Like most people, we have our share of storm stories. Our phone system would not function without electricity, but we were able to operate one phone line by plugging a standard phone into our fax line. We learned just how dark a windowless stairwell can be, and we walked through offices and hallways with flashlights bobbing in the dark. We opened windows for the first time in years, and learned that you can still make coffee with a stovetop percolator.

Our shelters made sure our guests were safe during the hurricane and that everyone had the basic necessities even when the power was out. The first week after the storm was the toughest for our St. Vincent de Paul facilities. It was several days before power was restored. Then there was a delay in restoring power to our pharmacy, but we knew that people needed their prescriptions filled, especially those who had lost refrigerated medicines like insulin. Generators were available at several local stores, but they were selling out immediately. Cary Kearny, our Board Vice-Chair, called her brother in Pensacola and he located three generators. She met him halfway, and the next day, our pharmacy was back up and running.

During this time, there has been such a feeling of fellowship and camaraderie. So many individuals and organizations reached out to help others in need. We would like to thank the Capital Area United Way, who quickly gave us a \$10,000 grant to help us with the services we were providing, and the local AARP and national AARP Foundation who also gave a generous \$5,000 grant. And as mentioned above, our National Office, which gave us a grant to help with direct service delivery. We also want to thank all of you out there who made contributions and continue to provide support during this time of need.



Sweet Dreams

When you think about the most vulnerable population in any community, it has to be women and children. That's why we put so much of our resources into this critical community program. That's why we need your help, both through prayer and financially, to continue our success in reaching out to every woman and child we can.

It's almost impossible to imagine what it would be like to live on the street, and the thought of a mother and a child without a home is frightening. For every mother we serve, their first concern is their children, and that is our primary concern as well. We know that the best way we can reach homeless children is through their mothers: to provide a secure place to stay, but also things like life skills education, assistance in identifying affordable housing, childcare, and healthcare programs. You would be shocked at the number of mothers who come to us whose children are not enrolled in the LaCHIPS Program. LaCHIPS provides free healthcare for every child in Louisiana, yet some of the most needy parents aren't aware that such programs exist. In addition to providing shelter, we educate, we provide assistance, life skills education, parenting classes, money management, classes on self-esteem and job counseling. We provide all the tools that are necessary for a woman to move from the streets to self-sufficiency.

For the children, some of the simplest things we do have the greatest impact. We give every child at our shelter a stuffed animal – either Sweetie the Lamb or Strike the Tiger – and these quickly become their prized possessions. These children have lost so much and have so little to call their own. Like Linus with his blanket in the Peanuts comic strip, these stuffed animals are their security blankets, and *Sweetie* and *Strike* are awfully busy, right up until bedtime when they're tucked in alongside their young owners. Thank goodness they're washable!

At our Sweet Dreams Shelter, we do everything we can to minister to the children and help them cope with homelessness. In cooperation with the East Baton Rouge Parish School System, we have teachers from local schools come in to help tutor the children. We know that the only way these children are going to break the cycle of poverty and homelessness is through education. Last year, a young boy who was living at our shelter won the East Baton Rouge Parish fourth and fifth grade spelling bee. What an accomplishment that is for any child, but for a homeless child to stay so focused on his educational goals is amazing. A lot of the credit goes to his mother, who is determined to help her children succeed in life. And thanks to our supporters, we were able to give this family the home they needed in their journey toward self-sufficiency.

Please keep these women and children in your thoughts and prayers. We ask you to cut out and pray the Sweet Dreams prayer, and we also encourage you to be generous as you support this year's Sweet Dreams effort.

Sweet Dreams Prayer

*Lord God, Giver of Life,
Fill us with your Spirit.
Use our hands to shelter the homeless;
Use our hearts to enable sweet dreams;
Use our voices to end homelessness.
May our actions improve life for others
And reflect your abundant love.
Through Christ our Lord, A.M.E.N.*

Not Even a Hurricane Can Stop Us

In case you hadn't noticed, there is a continuing theme in this newsletter: hurricanes. That's been a common theme during the past few weeks. Hurricane Gustav threw a lot of obstacles in our way – literally and figuratively.

Another subject that most of us have been preoccupied with lately is the economy. Both the hurricane and the economy have had a dramatic impact on our area, and on St. Vincent de Paul as well. The community need for disaster assistance is ongoing, and we continue to provide basic necessities, even as we're struggling to get our own facilities repaired.

These two factors have been very challenging for us, but we continue to move forward with services and plans for the future. Our pharmacy project is still on schedule, thanks to the generosity of our supporters and local organizations. We want to again thank the Huey & Angelina Wilson Foundation for recognizing the need for our pharmacy expansion.

When our last newsletter went out, we had just learned that the Greater Baton Rouge State Fair Foundation had approved a grant for this project. Under the leadership of J.H. Martin, David Broussard and the Foundation Board, they recognized a real need, and stepped up to the plate with a \$50,000 gift. We now have \$200,000 of the \$250,000 we need for construction costs. Our goal is to have the remaining dollars before January 1, 2009. We plan to go out for bids this fall and make a decision prior to December. That first shovelful of dirt will be a groundbreaking experience in more ways than one. This expansion will play a critical role in our ability to provide life-sustaining medications to the needy.

Our pharmacy helped so many people right after the hurricane. Many lost their supply of insulin because they had no way to refrigerate it. Others are facing unexpected repair costs or hurricane deductibles they just can't afford. But the need for our pharmacy is ongoing, and this service is literally saving lives.

We want to thank everyone that has contributed to this expansion effort and we ask anyone that hasn't made a contribution to consider doing so. If you would like more information about this effort, please contact Michael Acaldo at 383-7837, extension O. We ask everyone to keep this project in your thoughts and prayers.



Come Swing for a Great Cause

We encourage everyone to support this year's Brian Harris St. Vincent de Paul Charity Golf Tournament on Monday, October 27, at The Island Golf Course in Plaquemine. Last year's tournament was a great success, raising over \$20,000 for the charities of St. Vincent de Paul. We thank Brian Harris, WINK Engineering and Eatel for their Corporate Sponsorship. If you haven't signed up as a supporter of this year's tournament, please do so. Lots of golfers have signed up, but we still need sponsors. Call Lisa Hubble today at (225) 383-7837, ext. O, for more information.

Tournament Sponsorship Commitment Form

Company or Individual Sponsor _____

Address _____

Company Contact Name _____

Phone _____ Fax _____

Sponsorship Levels (Please check all that apply.)

_____	Corporate Sponsorship	\$3000.00
(includes two 4-member teams and top public relations billing)		
_____	Associate Sponsorship	\$1000.00
(includes one 4-member team and public relations)		
_____	Hole Sponsor	\$125.00

In the current economy, events like this Golf Classic are more critical than ever to generate funding for our charitable efforts – programs like Myriam's House, a transitional home for unaccompanied homeless women, and our Uniforms for Kids effort that provides school uniforms to needy children so they can go to school with a smile on their faces. That's what the Brian Harris 12th Annual Charity Golf Tournament is all about – helping the less fortunate in our community.

We want to thank everyone involved with this year's effort. Watch for our newsletter next month for a list of sponsors and people who are making this year's tournament possible.

Address Service Requested

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