

The Good Samaritan

Thankful: 26 years later, one client is finally home

At 70 years old, Chico is finally housed.

"Of course I like my apartment. It has everything," Chico said. "I went for 26 years without a home. My home was the shelter."

In 1977, Chico emigrated from Mexico with the clothes on his back and without any identification. After an unfortunate tragedy in 1998, he lost his legs due to frostbite. He found himself at a local hospital in Louisville. Upon release, he was sent to Ozanam Inn Men's Emergency Shelter.

It was quite a different life to say the least, having prosthetic legs and adjusting to a wheelchair. At one point, Chico even contemplated suicide.

"God met me in that bridge. He stopped me, and I was reminded it's a beautiful world no matter if we have our legs or not," Chico added.

Ozanam Inn at St. Vincent de Paul Louisville became Chico's home, and volunteering nearly every day at the Open Hand Kitchen became his second home. You can see him prepping food, wiping down tables, or rearranging chairs to make the Open Hand Kitchen a welcoming environment for those in the community.

"St. Vincent has made me feel safe, especially being off the street," Chico said. "All my clothes are from St. Vincent ... I've got clothes for life."

While gaining American citizenship has been a challenge to say the least, housing is now a reality in Chico's life. In March, he moved into an apartment on our Shelby Park campus. The unit was retrofitted for him. He has a walk-in shower, lower kitchen counters, and the bathroom sink was converted to a standing sink so that his wheelchair could fit underneath.

"It's very nice," he said. "There's nothing better than that."

Chico lives in One Bedroom Apartments, which comes fully furnished with a bedroom, dining room, living room, bathroom, and washer/dryer hookup.

This program has 10 one-bedroom apartments for individuals and/or couples where one resident has a disability. These are permanent supportive housing units in which housing assistance, such as long-term leasing or rental assistance, and supportive services are provided to assist a houseless person with a disability in achieving housing stability.

Could you imagine not having housing for 26 years in a country you didn't grow up in, without knowing anyone, and speaking very little English? Chico came to America as a 23-year-old to get a fresh start in life, only to find hardship. If we weren't here because of your support, where would Chico be today?

It's because of people like Chico that make St. Vincent de Paul a special place. He is one of 48 men from Ozanam Inn who have exited into permanent supportive housing (from Oct. 1, 2023 to Sept. 30, 2024).

"We want to get people from not having housing to having housing," said Jennifer Clark, SVDP's CEO & Executive Director. "It's such an important foundation for people so that they can be productive members of our community. It really makes a big difference for Louisville, including on an economic level. It is better to house people than to arrest them. It is better to house people than have them rely on the ER as some safety net, and it's important for our neighbors."

For those we house, it's about so much more than having a pillow to sleep on and a roof over your head. For Chico personally, he has his own handicap-accessible space. He's still praying for American citizenship, by the way.

Your generosity makes stories like this possible and allows us to house nearly 400 people every night.





St. Vincent
de Paul

LOUISVILLE

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The Good Samaritan

The monthly newsletter of
St. Vincent de Paul Louisville

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Our Mission

We house, feed, and support those in
need with compassion and dignity.

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To find out more about our work or
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St. Vincent de Paul Louisville

From Feeling Alone to Finding Community



or a meal, we tend to forget sometimes what they need most is support. If you feel alone, it can make it difficult to get back on your feet.

When Ray arrived at Ozanam Inn Men's Emergency Shelter at St. Vincent de Paul Louisville, it was the first time in a while that he finally felt seen and supported.

"Even though Sam (Schreier) runs Ozanam

Inn, he talks to you like you're human. So do a couple ladies behind the front desk," he said.

As author Kevin Adler wrote in his book "When We Walk By," "our brains perceive extreme outgroups—including people experiencing homelessness—as nonhuman."

Homelessness is about a lot more than securing housing. It's restoring dignity back into someone's life. This often happens within the context of relationships, where we feel valued and supported.

Finding Exodus Family Ministries

Ray's case manager, John Civardi, was able to connect him with our local partner Exodus Family Ministries, which hosts a weekly Bible Study on Monday nights. There are a few dozen people who attend each week. Shane Schlatter, Executive Director of Exodus Family Ministries, met Ray last year when he "looked really defeated and down." They prayed with

Homelessness can happen to anybody. Just ask Ray.

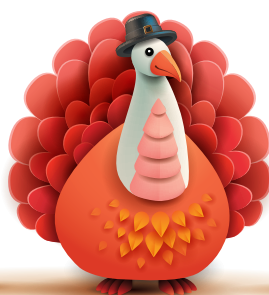
He never thought he'd end up unhoused. Ray grew up as an only child in Columbus, Indiana. He graduated high school and attended Ball State University for two years.

"This is all new to me, being homeless and stuff," Ray said. "I had a good upbringing coming from a middle-class family and now here I am homeless."

After a broken relationship, Ray moved to Louisville. He didn't have any struggles with substance use, but he was alone. His parents passed. He didn't have family to lean on, nor did he know anyone here. He ended up on the streets.

"That was my first time on the streets. It was cold," Ray added. "It's been depressing."

That's the definition of "relational poverty." It means lacking community or the necessary support system. While the focus is often on the unhoused needing to overcome an addiction, get a job, shelter,



Donate a Hand

Every Thanksgiving, we feed roughly 200 people at our Open Hand Thanksgiving Dinner at our Open Hand, 1015-C South Jackson St. If you have any questions, contact janthony@svdplou.org. We accept donations.

UPCOMING EVENTS at ST. VINCENT DE PAUL LOUISVILLE



You're Invited!

Santa Shop

Set-up: Friday, December 13

Event: Sunday, December 15

For event information, please contact
Bex Willenbrink at (502) 301-8695 or
rwillenbrink@svdplou.org.

Our thanks to
Louisville Metro
Government for
their support



SVDP Monthly Podcast

This podcast shares stories of people, partners, and programs in the Louisville community and across the country who care about our mission. You can watch or listen today at www.svdplou.org/podcast/



him and offered the opportunity for him to go to their weekly Bible study group.

"They're pretty much like my family now," Ray said. "It's the highlight of my week. I look forward to it. When I talk to my case manager about it, he can see my eyes light up. I enjoy it because of the comradery. I've never missed a Monday."

Each Monday, Exodus Family Ministries drives to Ozanam Inn to pick up any clients who would like to attend Bible study, which is usually four to six men. They drop them off afterwards. They have also taken clients to appointments as needed.

"We really strive to give people not just resources, but community," Schlatter said. "We really want our faith component to feel like a family and a community. It means a lot that we're doing the right thing when we see that it's adding value to their life."

Ray was housed in August. Exodus Family Ministries surprised him with a TV and microwave for his apartment.

"St. Vincent de Paul has been such a blessing. Ray loves it there. I think it took

away a lot of him being bullied or feeling like he was always having to be on guard. So we've seen him really flourish since he got in there. You can tell his hope is being restored."

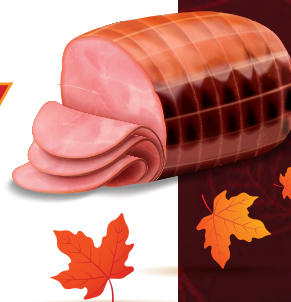
Ray also meets regularly with our on-staff counselor. The Mental Health & Substance Use Program (MHSU) offers clients access to counseling with licensed mental health professionals to get to the root cause of homelessness and overcome past trauma.

"What we try to do—other than our mission to house and feed—we also try to provide support to the people who are our clients," said Matt Weaver, SVDP's Associate Director of Clinical Services. "So not only do they have housing, food, the basic necessities, but also getting to the bottom of their issues that keep them unhoused. And that's where we provide that additional support to help them get there."

When you have support in the form of community, resources, case management, or counseling, it often leads to housing stability and food security. Not to mention just feeling human again.

m or Turkey

250 to 300 people in the community. We are hosting a
d Kitchen. Consider donating turkeys or hams to 1026
stions, contact Julio Anthony at (502) 919-9049 or
nations 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. seven days a week.



28th annual Santa Shop is coming to town

It's the most wonderful time of the year, and the opportunity to give back at our 28th annual Santa Shop is a big reason why! When you donate or volunteer at the Santa Shop, you're making a child's Christmas morning memorable.

The Santa Shop, which is held in the Family Success Center gym, will have a mini mall set up on Sunday, Dec. 15, from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Last year, we helped 292 households by providing 873 children with presents through individual and group donations.

There are two ways to take action this holiday season:

Donate

From now until Thursday, Dec. 12, you can drop off new, unwrapped gifts from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. at our Admin Building, 1015-C S. Preston Street, Louisville, KY 40203. Shop our "Christmas Wish List," which has donation suggestions for boys and girls ages 0 to 17 years old. Our primary needs are clothing items, toys, and stocking stuffers. Visit www.svdplou.org/santashop for a full list of items. We also accept monetary donations.

Volunteer

Volunteers are also needed, whether you would like to serve individually, as a family, or come with a group. You can help on Dec. 13 (set-up) or 15 (event). For the parent shopping day, you can serve in a two-hour shift. We have four options for volunteers:

- **Gift Wrappers**-wrap presents for families after they finish
- **Elves**-manning a station at the mini-mall experience
- **Santa's Helpers**-walk around with a parent/guardian to help them shop for their child(ren)
- **Craft Artists**-for those who bring their child(ren), help them make crafts while a parent/guardian shops

To sign-up to serve, visit www.svdplou.org/santashop. If you have any questions, contact Bex Willenbrink, Development & Volunteer Coordinator, at (502) 301-8695 or rwillenbrink@svdplou.org.



Longtime SVDP Louisville employee retires



Donna Young Cicchiello, Director of Volunteer Services and Conference Affairs for St. Vincent de Paul Louisville, retired after 16 years with the organization. Donna is a beacon of hope, compassion, and has a servant's heart in

the community. She organized so many volunteer events like the Friends of the Poor Walk, Santa Shop, and holiday meals.

To honor Donna's legacy, we are establishing the **Donna Young Cicchiello Volunteer Fund** to ensure that her spirit of service continues to thrive.

"We are thrilled to introduce this new fund celebrating Donna's remarkable contributions and her unwavering commitment to St. Vincent de Paul Louisville and the 27 SVDP parish-based conferences. This fund will play a pivotal role in fostering and enhancing volunteer engagement across our programs," said Pam Evans, SVDP's Sr. Director of Advancement and Community Relations.

We invite you to join in and honor Donna's legacy by contributing to the fund or volunteering at SVDP.

How to Donate

- **Online:** www.svdplou.org/donate-now/ and make it a Tribute Gift under the *Donna Young Cicchiello Fund*
- **Mailing Address:** St. Vincent de Paul Louisville, P.O. Box 17126, Louisville, KY 40217-0126.

Attention: Donna Young Cicchiello Fund

For more information about the fund, how to get involved, or to share your own stories about Donna's impact, please email us at communications@svdplou.org. Thank you for your support of Donna!