The Good Samaritan

A mother and son volunteer together at the Food Pantry

Over the summer, a mother and son served side-by-side at St. Vincent de Paul Louisville's Food Pantry on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m.

Yolanda Shields and her son, Ben Blackford, a senior at St. Xavier High School, have been able to share a special bond with each other by volunteering together.

"I just like being with my mom," Ben said.

"We're a closeknit family—me, him, and his dad," Yolanda added.

Ben has worked at the produce window, handing out fresh vegetables and fruit to folks, triple bagged the grocery bags to make them more durable, and filled bags with food items. He even helped a Spanish-speaking client.

"Whenever we help people, it feels good," Ben said. "I think working with clients at the produce window and seeing how grateful they are, it really

helped me to have a lot more empathy for those in need."

A couple of summers ago, Ben and his mom started serving at the Food Pantry and Open Hand Kitchen so he could get his school service hours. The reason to give back has become much deeper.

"We ended up liking it so much, and it was so easy for us to come here, we kind of got hooked on it," Yolanda said.

This comradery between clients and volunteers has created a place of connection and mutuality

at the Food Pantry and Open Hand Kitchen.

"There are a lot of stigmas that people have to fight coming to places like this," Yolanda added. "The staff is so welcoming to people that routinely come here, everybody knows everybody ... they're so familiar with everybody it makes them feel less of that stigma."

Yolanda knows this firsthand. When she was a student at Sacred Heart Academy, her dad lost his job and they had to go to a food pantry in Portland.

"I understand that life can be unpredictable," she said. "That situation helped me to understand sometimes it's a culmination of bad things that

causes someone to

become homeless. When you're going through that, you feel vulnerable and humiliated. You need people to be kind to you and not judge you, especially when you're coming to get some food."

Yolanda has seen service with compassion and dignity lived out on our Shelby Park campus.

"I just feel like people who are down on their luck need somebody to be nice to them," Yolanda said. "I saw that at St. Vincent de Paul. People who work or volunteer here are so kind to the people that come here. They all know each other. They all ask about each other's lives. It was just really genuine."

As Ben prepares for life after high school, his mom is grateful for what volunteering at SVDP has taught him. It's something you can't get in a classroom.

"It teaches him about people, circumstances, giving, and being kind," Yolanda said. "We're grateful to be a part of it ... It's just very warm here."

Ben is a Xavier scholar and a member of the

National Honor Society. His ACT score was 35 (the highest possible score is 36). He wants to study atmospheric sciences or meteorology and is applying to Stanford University, Harvard University, and other Ivy League schools. He aspires to be a researcher or background forecaster for the National Weather Service.

"There's never really a dull day with the weather because it's always different," Ben said.





St. Vincent de Paul

LOUISVILLE

svdplou.org

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.

Support SVDP

To find out more about our work or make a donation, visit our website.

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oo close to home: One donor shares his story



Mike Devereaux understands this mission all too well.

A monthly donor of St. Vincent de Paul Louisville, Devereaux's son, Jonathan, was homeless.

"This organization is a mission that feels deeply to me," Devereaux said. "I have a son who was homeless for six-and-a-half years who suffered from dual diagnosis, schizophrenia, and substance abuse. We tried to get him housing at St. Vincent de Paul, but he wouldn't go through Coalition for the Homeless."

Devereaux's son turned a condo into a drug operation.

"It became a druggy den, they trashed it, and I had to evict him. We had to let him go homeless until we felt that he could handle a facility," Devereaux added. "He wouldn't go into the shelters, so he was in the elements every night. And you know how bad some of the winters and summers are here. It's been a real struggle."

Devereaux has seen firsthand the devastating effects of homelessness. It's easy to assume the worst when we see someone sleeping on the streets or struggling with substance abuse. It's a lot harder when you hear their story.

"My son went off and made the wrong choices when he was 15 after he lost his best friend to a heart condition. They were very close. He lost three close friends to a drunk driver at 16. Then, he lost his sister—our daughter—at 17. She was a senior at Southern Illinois University. When she was at the hospital, they gave her an overdose of Tylenol and it shut her liver down. From then on, he'd have periods where he did well, and then he'd go off the deep end."

Devereaux's son is currently on the right track.

"We bought a condo for him over off Bashford Manor and so far he's doing well," he said. "He has Social Security Disability, was able to have a debit card, and he was able to eat."

Unfortunately, unhoused individuals are not always ready to receive help, but that doesn't mean we stop trying or give up on those in the thick of it. People like Devereaux's son are a good example.

"I see the challenges that we have in this world, and we have to give back. That's the only way that I feel is the answer to helping out. We're not going to fix everything, but we can certainly make a difference," Devereaux said.

Devereaux is one donor making a difference. He is using the pain he's





Rental Costs \$1,301



The Fiscal Year
2024 Fair Market
Rent (FMR) for a
two-bedroom unit
in the Louisville
Metro greg.

Food Insecurity
1 in 8 households



The number of households who are experiencing food insecurity in the Louisville Metro area. Housing Inflation 12% since 2020



The increase in home prices in the Louisville Metro area and southern Indiana counties from 2020 to 2023. <u>Minimum Wage</u> 96 hours per week



The number of hours you must work making the \$7.25 minimum wage to afford a two-bedroom unit at FMR.

experienced to shape how he invests his time, talents, and treasures.

In 2018, Devereaux volunteered at the Food Pantry. He then joined the Finance, Audit, and Thrift Stores committees because of his background in finance and retail. He oversaw renovations at Waypoint and now at Ozanam Inn Men's Emergency Shelter because of his experience updating older structures. A retired employee of Hunter Fan Company, he donated fans to the Open Hand Kitchen and Waypoint.

"I've been a monthly donor for a while and I don't even miss it. It's part of the monthly budget. You have to look at what you're going to get in return and what you're getting in return is that dollar magnifies itself tremendously. St. Vincent is at a crossroads. There's a tremendous amount of overhead. St. Vincent absolutely needs people to step up ... It's hard to run an operation like this when you're in the hole at the start of every month and depending on the generosity of people. If you have monthly commitments, that hole diminishes."

Join our Good Samaritan Monthly Donor Program

Devereaux is one of many monthly donors who we count on to "keep the lights on." To keep housing Veterans. To keep feeding families. To keep tutoring children. The need does not stop. "Occasionally we get a huge gift from somebody in a bequest, but we never know if and when that will come," Devereaux said. "What we need is that monthly sustainer. That's what keeps the organization strong, viable, and growing."

That's why we ask you to consider being a part of our Good Samaritan Monthly Donor Program. The Parable of the Good Samaritan teaches us that neighborly love transcends racial and social boundaries. Since our founding in 1853, our donors have been Good Samaritans "moved to compassion" (Luke 10:33).

In Luke 10, the Samaritan didn't walk by or pretend like everything was OK. His generosity changed this man's life.

Your generosity can do the same for single men like Britt. Women fleeing domestic violence like Rachel. Senior adults like Bill. Children like Laeya. Veterans like Tim. You are helping them take a step forward in their story.

There are three ways to give monthly: debit, credit, or ACH (Automated Clearing House). You can join today online at www.svdplou.org/good-samaritan-monthly-donor-program/. If you have any questions, or would like more information, reach out to Bex Willenbrink at rwillenbrink@svdplou.org or (502) 301-8695. As our thanks to you, we will send you a free "I am a Good Samaritan" magnet.

UPCOMING EVENTS at ST. VINCENT DE PAUL LOUISVILLE



You're Invited!

Volunteer Meeting

Wednesday, October 9

Santa Shop

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/





21st Annual Clubs & Cocktails is pin high

Our 21st annual ISCO Industries Clubs & Cocktails was full of powerful moments at The Olmsted!

Bill Smith won the Hope Award and reminded us that it's never too late to experience victory in your life. We heard from our CEO & Executive Director Jennifer Clark and SVDP USA National President John Berry, and gave much deserved recognition to Dave Calzi for his continual support of our mission!

Thank you to the nearly 200 guests, 25 foursomes at the golf scramble, and all of our sponsors who made this event possible and for your generosity to those in need! You raised a total of \$177,000 over the course of this two-day event!

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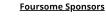














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