



SOCIETY of  
ST. VINCENT  
de PAUL  
LOUISVILLE

## OUR PROGRAMS

- Open Hand Kitchen
- Ozanam Inn
- DePaul Apartments
- Simon Hall
- Roberts Hall
- Tranquil House
- St. Jude Women's Recovery Center
- Follow Up Program
- 48 Parish Conferences

## Inside this issue:

- On the Ground 2
- DePaul Kids Get Free Shoes 3
- SVDP Gets LEAP Grant from the Community Foundation 3
- Donations Help Clients 4

# GOOD SAMARITAN

FEBRUARY 2010

## Faith in God, a Positive Attitude, and a Love of Teaching Help Felicia Look to the Future

**F**elicia Davis, 39, has had a hard life, but she prefers to look on the bright side.

Formerly homeless, she has lived at St. Vincent de Paul's Roberts Hall, a permanent supportive housing program for women, including those with physical or mental disabilities, for about two years.



Originally from New York City, she moved to Kentucky a few years ago. But like so many people in this tough economy, she struggled to find a job that paid enough to make ends meet.

"I had some savings and stuff, but that kind of ran low. One thing led to another," she says. Felicia was evicted from her apartment and ended up in a homeless shelter.

Despite temp jobs as a secretary and doing other administrative work, she struggled to get back on her feet financially. "I was carrying my bags from the (shelter) to work and then back," she says. "They don't let you leave your stuff there."

Over the years, she's also found herself living on the streets. How did she survive? Felicia takes a deep breath and looks upward. "The grace of God, that's all I can tell you," she says.

"I heard stories of women being assaulted. I've walked through dark neighborhoods. There were times I was hungry and cold and had all kinds of bedbugs and stuff like that. It's a humbling experience."

The grace of God was, indeed, with her at the Cathedral of the Assumption one day, when

someone encouraged her to call St. Vincent de Paul. She has been a client ever since. It's a place she considers a home.

"Now that I'm at Roberts Hall, it's great. It was such a relief to put my bags down and unpack."

Another blessing is that Roberts Hall is next door to a community center that offers computer courses. Felicia started attending and helping her classmates. Brad Castleberry, director of the MUSCL (Ministries United South Central Louisville) Senior Wellness Center at Schnitzelburg, was impressed with her computer expertise and easy camaraderie in tutoring others, such as seniors intimidated by technology. So he offered to let her teach.

As a volunteer, she leads two classes three days a week. This year she will teach computer classes at St. Vincent de Paul, too. One goal is to help clients create and post their resumes online so they can find jobs.

"It's about helping people. That's how I fell in love with wanting to teach," she says.

Clearly, the grace and stability she has found as a result of her move to Roberts Hall has empowered Felicia.

"When you've been homeless, when you've been on the street ... it's nice to have a place to lay your head down and not have people belittling you," she says.

This year, she is hoping to begin tutoring adult education classes through Jefferson County Public Schools, and then apply to college.

But her dreams don't stop there. "I want to take up business education," she adds confidently. "Eventually, I want to pick up corporate law."

## On the Ground

By Ed Wnorowski

**A**s many of you know, I came to St. Vincent de Paul with a background rooted in the business community, not social service.

Lacking this background in social service, I felt compelled to learn and understand the issues, causes and dynamics of homelessness.

Homelessness, without a doubt, is something that most of us cannot fully grasp in terms of our personal lives.

This month I'd like to share with you some of what I have learned from having asked a simple question: Why are people homeless?

The answer is complex. Contributing factors include unemployment, under-employment, and lack of affordable housing.

These three issues are related, though each is distinct. Surprisingly, many of the people who come to St. Vincent de Paul for help already have employment.

The level of pay and hours of work available simply will not cover the costs of the most basic needs, let alone address the cost of an apartment.



Kitiam in SVDP's Ozanam Inn overnight shelter



Think of this in terms of the lowest skilled and lowest paid workers in our community – janitors, restaurant workers, retail clerks, stockers, and manual laborers.

Currently, the minimum hourly wage is \$7.25. Even with a 40-hour week, that is only a little more than \$1,100 a month – and these positions most often do not include benefits.

The median cost of a one-bedroom apartment in the Louisville area is \$480.

Now, add taxes, utilities, food, clothing, health care, and transportation costs, and it becomes painfully clear the numbers simply do not work. If a family is dependent on this level of income, it further validates these factors as major contributors to why people are homeless.

There are additional contributing factors to homelessness. Domestic violence is another main cause of homelessness among women. Women without employment skills or financial resources are presented with two bad choices – battering or homelessness.

Though not a surprise, a lack of affordable health care is a factor as well.

A serious illness or disability that results in the loss of employment, followed by the loss of employer-sponsored health care and a depletion of savings, can lead to eviction and homelessness.

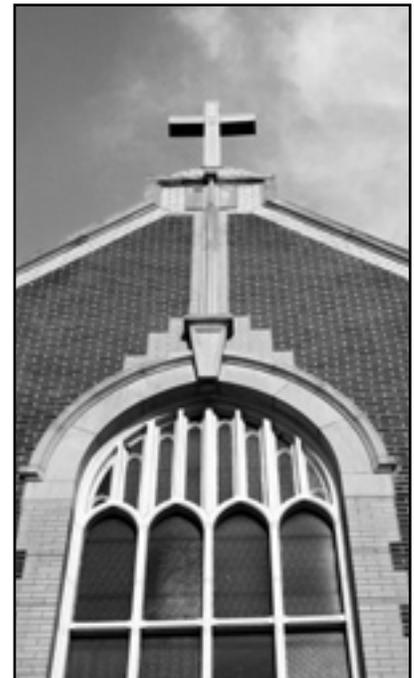
Mental illness and substance abuse are additional contributing factors to homelessness.

A lack of mental health resources and substance abuse treatment leave this population as victims of their disease and with no place to live.

It's not a pretty picture. I've learned a lot about the causes of homelessness over the past year, but it will take all of us working together to address the growing problem, especially in these difficult economic times.

I encourage you to get involved in helping us find solutions.

*Wnorowski is executive director of St. Vincent de Paul, Louisville.*



Steeple above SVDP's Open Hand Kitchen

## Two Grants Benefit Homeless Children Living on Our Campus

### *Kids Get New Shoes*

Last December, children who live in our DePaul Family Apartments were treated to new shoes at the Payless store in downtown Louisville.

The fun field trip was made possible through the Payless Shoes 4 Kids program, a grassroots effort to deliver \$1.2 million of free shoes to children of families in need this holiday season.



St. Vincent de Paul was awarded 50 \$15 gift certificates, allowing each of the homeless children who live with their mothers in St. Vincent de Paul's family apartments to choose their own pair of new shoes or boots, such as those one of our young residents is proudly showing (above).

*At right: Accepting a 2009 LEAP Grant from The Community Foundation of Louisville is Beth Borgemenke (center), along with SVDP staff Laura Albovias, director of programs; Robin Wickham, case manager for DePaul Apartments; (Borgemenke); Ed Wnorowski, executive director; and Nancy Naughton, director of development.*

### *LEAP Award Will Help Fund K-5 Enrichment Program*

In November, The Community Foundation of Louisville (CFL) awarded the first grants from its new Louisville Excellence in Action Program (LEAP) to recognize outstanding programs in Louisville Metro that have a proven track record of success but need additional funding to leap forward with improved or expanded services.

St. Vincent de Paul was one of 12 grant recipients. We were awarded \$8,400 to help fund a summer education program for 25 homeless children at our DePaul Apartments family residential shelter. The 2009 LEAP Grants, totaling \$250,000, recognized 12 outstanding educational support programs for 950 at-risk children in grades K-5 that occur during "out of school time," either before school, after school, summertime and/or weekends.

Early childhood education specialist Beth Borgemenke (below) will lead the 2010 program that she began planning last summer when she volunteered to pilot a summer enrichment experience for DePaul children. The CFL's endorsement of this effort reflects the importance of the program and its effectiveness in helping our young clients emotionally and academically.

The matching grant will cover a portion of the program costs. As in previous years, generous donors have made cash contributions totaling about \$2,500 per summer. We will be seeking support in that amount again this year to complete the program's funding.

Among the specific projects planned for summer 2010 is a garden that will be planted, maintained and harvested by our children. Supplies are needed, including sketch pads, colored pencils, washable markers, crayons, poster board, flip-charts or Post-It® paper, disposable plates and cups for lunches, tie-dye kits, new T-shirts to tie-dye for children's work shirts, clipboards, and gardening supplies including hand tools such as weed-pullers, trowels and watering cans. If you would like to help, please contact Nancy Naughton at (502) 301-8682; [nnaughton@svdplou.org](mailto:nnaughton@svdplou.org).





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## FEBRUARY EVENTS:

### Vincentian Awards and New Member Induction

1pm, Sunday, Feb. 7

Blessed Teresa of Calcutta

903 Fairdale Rd., Fairdale, KY 40118

## FOR MORE INFO:

For the latest news and updates about what's going on at St. Vincent de Paul, don't forget to bookmark our website:

[www.svdplou.org](http://www.svdplou.org).

## GOOD SAMARITAN

### Employees Band Together to Help the Less Fortunate



The staff of **Measured Progress**, a national, standardized testing company with a large Louisville office, adopted St. Vincent de Paul as a charitable outreach project over the recent holidays. Workers collected canned goods and nonperishable foods for St. Vincent de Paul's Open Hand Kitchen. In addition, they raised cash donations, which, along with a contribution from the New Hampshire-based company's headquarters, totaled \$750. Chris Hood (third from left) spearheaded the effort for the second year. Also pictured above are some of the staff's members, including (left to right) Suzan Sanders, Naomi Terrill, Hood, AJ Ferreira, George Lemes, Dana Moore, Jennifer Smith, Chuck Hill, Anne Boldrick, Ted Yopp, Lindsey Inlow, and James Anderson.

Thank you for your spirited generosity! Your contributions will help us provide food and shelter to people who are in desperate need!

## Current 'Wish List' Needs

*Our shelters and programs have an ongoing need for donated items, including the following:*

**DIAPERS (ALL SIZES, INCLUDING 'PULL-UPS' FOR CHILDREN)**

**LIP BALM**

**HAND AND BODY LOTION (UNSCENTED)**

**DEODORANT**

**TOOTHBRUSHES AND TOOTHPASTE**

**SHAVING CREAM**

**DISPOSABLE RAZORS**

**FEMININE HYGIENE PRODUCTS**