



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
- Homes with Hope
- 47 Parish Conferences

#### Simply Give

For the 3rd straight year, Meijer has included SVDP in its successful "Simply Give" program. In November and December, customers at Meijer's Westport Road location may purchase \$10 Meijer Food Pantry Donation Cards at special displays throughout the store. The \$10 amount reflects a typical bag of groceries at Meijer. The donation cards purchased by Meijer customers will then be converted into Meijer Gift Cards and given to SVDP to help stock our food pantry shelves. Thanks for supporting this effort, which will make a big difference to hungry families in our community!

# GOOD SAMARITAN

NOVEMBER 2010

## Thankful Family Finds Hope

*Poverty rates in the U.S. are at their highest level in half a century, and nationwide the number of homeless families has risen drastically—from 131,000 in 2007 to 170,000 in 2007. For them, and for the thousands of parents and children who are living on the brink of homelessness, Thanksgiving and the holiday season are especially trying. This month, meet a hard-working family behind the statistics.*



Chris and Karen Garner have spent years battling the kinds of bitter hardships faced by millions of working-class people living below the poverty line. Despite their strong work ethic, dedication to family and a core belief that they should be able to "make it on their own," the harsh economy and a series of setbacks have chipped away at their optimistic resolve.

Karen, 40, has worked in retail most of her adult life. Although Chris, 37, has held jobs as a laborer and warehouse worker, he has a troubled past. At age 3, his mother was beaten, raped and murdered the week before Christmas. With no family to care for him, the little boy went to live with his mother's boyfriend. And for the next 10 years, Chris and his younger stepsisters were victims of the man's rage, cruelty and violent physical abuse.

Chris is just now coming to terms with the tragic childhood that led to many years of self-destructive behavior. Now at peace, Chris explains, "I have forgiven him. But I still have dreams about my mom."

*(Story continues on next page.)*

### Families, continued from page 1

It's the daily little things that can threaten to derail an already precarious situation. As Karen worked her way up from being a cashier to an assistant manager at a dollar store, her car broke down. With no money for repairs, she carpoled, took a bus or walked for miles along a busy highway to get to her job.

At one point, she tried working closer to home at a nearby gas station. But the overnight shift felt too dangerous for her, as a woman alone—especially in their crime-ridden neighborhood.

Chris stayed at home with their son, vigilant to shield him from the drug-dealing going on around them, and to soothe him when gunfire woke them up in the middle of the night.

"It was awful," Karen says, "but it was the only place we could afford."

A closer look at the family's financial situation sheds light on what many families like the Garners are up against: With about \$1,300 in monthly income and \$76 per month in food stamps, just keeping the utilities on, the bills paid and food on the table is a constant juggling act.

Lack of healthcare is another obstacle. Chris has severe asthma. Unable to afford health insurance, for years he went without the expensive medications needed to manage his condition. Near death many times, Chris has been rushed to the hospital and spent months in intensive care. With hundreds of thousands of dollars in medical bills, the Garners eventually had to file for bankruptcy.

Even after making that last-resort legal move, the Garners still could not get ahead. Still without healthcare, Chris's emergency hospitalizations continued. Once again, the couple is faced with astronomical medical bills they are trying to pay off, a little at a time.

It seems to Karen that even attempts at doing all the right things come with a heavy price. Last summer, she earned a college degree in medical assisting. But so far, she hasn't found a better-paying job as a dental hygienist. And the payments on her \$13,000 in student loans come due next month.

"I am so stressed out all the time," Karen says. "We try so hard, but we can't ever seem to get ahead. We don't want to be rich. We just want to have a safe place to live and to be able to eat and to pay our bills. We just want to be normal."

When they became homeless, they faced a desperate option: "We were at the point where we were ready to give up," Chris says.

Because there is a lack of homeless shelters where families can remain together, the Garners were almost forced to split up, with Chris going to a men's shelter and Karen and their son going to another shelter for women and children.

Fortunately, they were referred to St. Vincent de Paul, which was there to provide much-needed relief.

Now in their second year as clients in our Homes with Hope program for homeless families, the Garners receive financial assistance and intensive case management designed to help them get back on their feet and build a strong foundation for a stable future.

It has made all the difference.

The Garners are now in a better apartment. They are working with their case manager on budgeting and a repayment plan for their medical bills.

And years after filing his claim, Chris was recently awarded a few hundred dollars a month in disability income. "It gives us a little bit of a breather," says Karen, who feels her financial burden is a bit lighter.

"We truly didn't know caring people like this still existed," Chris says. "And then we found St. Vincent de Paul. I'm happy, and it tickles me. I can't believe we're still here."



## Donations for St. Vincent de Paul's Annual Santa Shop Needed by Dec. 7

Each Christmas, St. Vincent de Paul strives to provide simple gifts to the people we serve.

We need your help to offer presents to the 150 men and women who live in our six shelter programs here on campus. In addition, each year we present a one-day Santa Shop, where parents in need can "shop" for free gifts for their children, including teenagers.

Our Wish List can be found on our website ([www.svdplou.org](http://www.svdplou.org)) and on the back page of this newsletter. Unwrapped gifts may be brought to SVDP, 1015-C S. Preston St., Louisville, KY, 40203, from 9am to 4pm weekdays. **Deadline for all donations is December 7.**

For more details on how you can get involved this holiday season, please contact Donna Young at [dyoung@svdplou.org](mailto:dyoung@svdplou.org); (502) 301-8688. To make a cash donation to St. Vincent de Paul, please contact Nancy Naughton at (502) 301-8682; [nnaughton@svdplou.org](mailto:nnaughton@svdplou.org).



## Teens Engage SVDP Clients of All Ages

*Food and Fellowship Were Hallmarks of Picnic Hosted by St. Gabriel's Youth Group*

High school students in the youth group at St. Gabriel Catholic Church banded together over the Labor Day weekend to stage a fun-filled cookout on the grounds outside DePaul Apartments.

Beautiful weather, freshly grilled burgers and a bountiful buffet of homemade potluck dishes served by parents



and church members made for a memorable celebration. Face painting, bingo and cornhole were also hits with the young and young-at-heart.

But there was something more important at work, too, at this picnic.

With compassion and maturity beyond their years, the teens engaged in fellowship with the men, women and children — most of them homeless or working poor — who have found hope at St. Vincent de Paul. These one-on-one connections are very meaningful to our clients.

Thanks to everyone who had a hand in making this a happy day.

## Record Number of Retailers and Donors Support 2010 Auction Event

St. Vincent de Paul's 7th Annual Charity Golf Scramble and Auction Event was a huge success, making nearly \$100,000—a record breaker for this event.

Nearly 100 retailers and businesses throughout the Louisville area were extremely generous with the quality gifts and merchandise they donated for our Charity Auction.

A range of items, from jewelry and cigars to spa services and sports memorabilia, brought top dollar at this, our only fundraiser of the year.

The next day, 27 teams teed off at the Big Spring Country Club Golf Course. At the close of the Golf Scramble, Phil Lynch's name was drawn as recipient of the \$5,000 raffle prize.

All net proceeds from this event will help fund our many programs and services for the poor.

To all who contributed, Thank You!

A list of our generous auction donors is on our website: [www.svdplou.org](http://www.svdplou.org).



*John Huckestein (left), an SVDP board member, chats with guests at the Charity Auction Event at Porcini. The record-breaking fundraiser made nearly \$100,000.*



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1015-C S. Preston St.  
Louisville, KY 40203  
502.584.2480

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## 2010 SANTA SHOP WISH LIST

New clothing items for boys and girls of all ages.

New clothing (especially larger sizes) for teen boys and girls.

Men's jeans, socks, underwear, sweatshirts, and pants.

Toys for infants, toddlers, and children of all ages.

Sports equipment such as baseball bats, gloves, basketballs, footballs, etc.

Music and entertainment gifts, including CDs and DVDs.

Stocking stuffers for men, women, and children.

Nonperishable food and canned goods - in bulk sizes - for our Open Hand Kitchen.

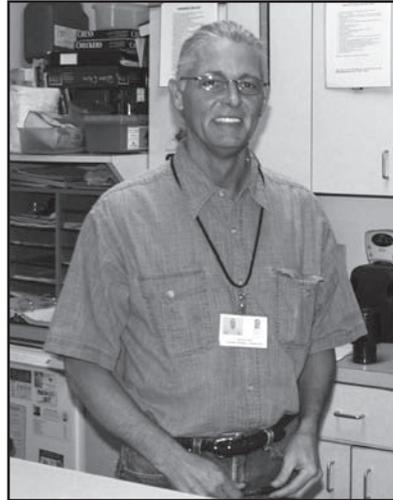
Gift cards for food and gas.

Cash donations to SVDP.

## GOOD SAMARITAN

### C.O. Orten Named Director of Programs

Charles ("C.O.") Orten, 51, has been named Director of Programs for St. Vincent de Paul.



Orten has worked at SVDP for eight years, most recently as program manager for Ozanam Inn men's homeless shelter.

"I am delighted that C.O. accepted this promotion," said Ed Wnorowski, SVDP's executive director. "C.O. is extremely well qualified, and he brings a unique perspective to this crucial role."

Orten, who holds a master's degree in social work from University of Louisville's Kent School and a bachelor's degree in social work from Spalding University, was once homeless due to drug and alcohol abuse.

A native of Dawson Springs, KY, (where his mother, Katherine Orten, still lives),

he earned an associate's degree at Madisonville Community College.

"My personal experience in overcoming homelessness and substance abuse led me to a profession where I could inspire others who have the willingness and desire to change," Orten said.

"I refused to be a victim, but rather a survivor, of the path I chose. As Director of Programs, I can guide SVDP programs to convey a similar message, which is hope."

Orten now oversees our homeless shelter and supportive housing programs that offer housing assistance as well as ongoing case management services designed to help clients return to independence and self-sufficiency.

Cory Bledsoe, 25, was named to replace Orten as program manager for Ozanam Inn men's shelter.



A native of Kingsport, TN, he joined the SVDP staff two years ago as a program aide at Ozanam.

"Cory possesses the compassion and drive needed to provide Ozanam Inn guests and residents not only with an excellent quality of services, but also with the encouragement needed to help people overcome their current situations," Orten said.

A University of West Georgia graduate, Bledsoe is currently pursuing a master of divinity degree at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville.

### Our New Cookbooks Will Be Ready for the Holidays

Arriving just in time for those food-filled holiday gatherings, our long-awaited St. Vincent de Paul cookbook, *Gifts from the Heart*, is finally a reality.

Packed with more than 200 pages of cherished recipes and tried-and-true favorites, the book sells for \$15. With Publishers Printing generously donating the printing of these books, all net proceeds from this project will help support our programs and services for the homeless and people in need. Order your copies today! (502) 301-8695.

