

GOOD SAMARITAN

St. Vincent de Paul | Louisville

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After a Year Living on the Streets and in Homeless Shelters, Rickey is Now in Recovery, Employed – and Learning to Read



Rickey, 55, outside SVDP's men's shelter, where he found the support and determination he needed to turn his life around.

Rickey Saunders is a soft-spoken man who has battled alcoholism for years. "Alcohol has always been a bad problem for me," says Rickey, 55. "I was a black-out drinker; I would wake up places and not know where I was. I had a hard time quitting."

An Arkansas native, he was living in Louisville when he became homeless a year ago. He went to Texas and found seasonal work picking oranges. Wandering from Corpus Christi to San Antonio, he slept in the streets or in homeless encampments, shelters and rescue missions.

In Austin, he was given a Greyhound bus ticket to come back to Louisville, eventually landing on the doorstep of St. Vincent de Paul's Ozanam Inn men's homeless shelter last July 2.

He entered SVDP's DR (Dormitory Residency) Program, which guaranteed him a bed every night, and gave him the support of SVDP's case management services.

By the time Rickey left the shelter last August, he was sober, employed, and had a lease on his own apartment through SVDP's supportive housing program.

For Rickey, the structure and support he got at SVDP was life-changing. The divorced grandfather quit drinking, and this month celebrates 19 months of sobriety.

He had tried to stop drinking many times before, he says, but never made it more than a few weeks.

Rickey credits his case manager, David Tarullo, with forging his breakthrough. "We became good friends," he says. Other staff members also encouraged and assisted him.

"They just made me feel at home, and they showed me what steps I needed to take. I didn't get pressured into doing it," Rickey adds. "They basically said I had to want it. But the people at St. Vincent de Paul just seem to go out of their way to help people."

Rickey is actively involved in Alcoholics Anonymous, attending three meetings during the week and three on the weekends. Before he started his current job last winter, he was attending as many as three meetings *per day*. "My goal is to keep learning how to read and stay sober," he says.

One of seven children in a family that moved frequently, Rickey was a poor student in school. A high school drop-out, he started drinking at age 14. As a result, he never learned to read.

"He has relied on memorization to make out words for the majority of his life," says Beth White, Rickey's case manager in SVDP's supportive housing program. "He is learning to read and has even started working on his GED."

"Rickey has a very warm spirit," she adds, "and he is so very thankful for our program and for everyone who is in his life."

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MLK Day of Service Sparks Collaboration Between SVDP and Our Lady of Peace

By Ed Whorowski

Many people in homelessness face an extremely broad range of obstacles to being self-sufficient. While the lack of a job or adequate income to afford an apartment may seem to be the likely reasons for their homelessness, often these inadequacies are not the root cause.

Many of our clients face the additional challenge of an underlying mental illness. Their conditions, if left untreated, greatly limit their ability to address their barriers to self-sufficiency, such as low-paying jobs or lack of education.

With this understanding, it should come as no surprise that St Vincent de Paul shares more with Our Lady of Peace Hospital than just our Catholic pedigrees. We indeed share the people that we serve. When our clients are in crisis we refer them to Our Lady of Peace – and when stabilized, those patients who lack housing are sometimes referred to St. Vincent de Paul.

But there's a more personal connection behind this collaboration. Each of these organizations has a Whorowski on staff: My daughter, Meghan, is an art therapist at Our Lady of Peace.

Often during family gatherings Meghan and I had shared our work stories, and we thought that there should be some way for our two organizations to celebrate our interdependent relationship.

Using the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service as our inspiration, we decided to have a St. Vincent de Paul-led event at Our Lady of Peace. This would allow the staffs of SVDP and OLOP to establish personal relationships and, importantly, understand the scope as well as the limitations of each organization's ability to address the needs of our mutual clients.

The plan was to have SVDP's Open Hand Kitchen chef/manager Norm Brown prepare a special meal for the Children's and Adolescent Units at Our Lady of Peace. For their part, the kids would assemble personal care kits for St. Vincent de Paul to give out to our homeless clients.

On Monday, January 21st, MLK Day, Norm prepared a "made-from-scratch" taco buffet and a do-it-yourself ice cream sundae station. The lunchtime meal was served in the Lourdes Gathering Room at Our Lady of Peace.

Along with Norm and myself, several other members of the SVDP staff assisted in the event, including Director of Programs Cory Bledsoe, Program Managers Robin Wickham and David Tarullo, Case Manager Harrison Swadley, Communications Director Linda Romine, and even an Ozanam Inn men's homeless shelter client, Doug Stonecash.

The SVDP Team and OLOP Team staffed the serving lines, where we had the opportunity to meet, joke with, and share a great meal with about 50 patients under the age of 18. This is a group of youngsters that certainly do not have a lot of joy in their circumstances. Our special kid-friendly meal was truly a treat for them – and their company was an incredible reward for us.

After lunch, the Our Lady of Peace kids and teens were able to assemble more than 100 personal care kits including soap, toothpaste, toothbrushes, and other toiletry items.



And, to our surprise, each of these kits included a personal card or note from the child who put it together. In addition, the youths made more than 40 fleece scarves for St. Vincent de Paul clients.

Bottom line? The kids and the staffs of both St. Vincent de Paul and Our Lady of Peace agree that this was an incredible way to celebrate the MLK Day of Service. I am told that the kids could not stop talking about the great food and ice cream. If the number of second and third helpings served is an indication, I think it is, indeed, true.

I further suspect this will become an annual event. A new tradition!

Whorowski is executive director of St. Vincent de Paul | Louisville.

Young Family Makes Generous Contribution to Our Open Hand Kitchen

Shannon Abang, her husband Eric, and their two sons – Harrison, 7, and Holden, 5, stopped by our Open Hand Kitchen on Valentine's Day to donate 32 bags of frozen chicken quarters to us.

Shannon said she did so after reading about the need for year-round donations at food pantries like ours, in an article that appeared last spring in *The Record* newspaper.

With her boys on winter break they finally got the chance to put her desire to help into action on Feb. 14. Not only did the family deliver the bags of poultry themselves, they stayed to eat lunch with our usual crowd of guests in the Open Hand Kitchen.

Happily, Holden and Harrison (pictured here, from left) loved what was on the menu that day, Shannon later reported. The boys enjoyed the beans and weenies, as well as having glazed doughnuts for dessert.



St. Vincent de Paul is very blessed to have such wonderful, caring donors as the Abang Family. Thank you!

Make Your Donations for Food Go Farther with Feinstein Foundation Challenge

St. Vincent de Paul's Open Hand Kitchen serves lunch and dinner seven days a week, 365 days a year to anyone in need. That's more than 120,000 free meals each year.

Donations of cash and food are crucial to the ongoing operation of this outreach. And there is no better time to donate than in March and April, when your contributions will count toward the annual Feinstein Foundation Hunger Challenge.

For the 16th consecutive year, the Cranston,

R.I.-based Feinstein Foundation is supporting hunger-fighting charitable organizations nationwide, for a total of \$1 million.

For every donation of money or food items (valued at \$1 per item or per pound) the Feinstein Foundation will

contribute money to St. Vincent de Paul to help fight hunger here in Louisville and Southern Indiana.



Feinstein's past annual spring \$1 million challenges to fight hunger have raised more than \$1.5 billion for hunger-fighting charities and religious houses of worship nationwide that help the needy.

The annual challenge has been called one of the most successful ongoing, grassroots efforts to fight hunger.

To make a donation to help St. Vincent de Paul fight hunger in our community, be sure to designate your gift as part of the Feinstein Foundation Challenge.

For questions or to make a donation, please contact Kathi Johnson at 502-301-8695; or e-mail her at kjohnson@svdplou.org.

Calendar

March 31

Easter Sunday Meal

Noon, Open Hand Kitchen

Louisville, KY

March 23-24

SVDP Thrift Store "Truck Weekend"

Holy Family

3926 Poplar Level Road

Louisville, KY 40213

Sat 8am to 6pm

Sun 10am to 4pm

• Please drop off your gently used donations during the hours listed above.

• To donate furniture, please call to schedule a free pickup of these items: (502) 589-7837

Two Case Managers Obtain Certification as Alcohol and Drug Counselors

Two St. Vincent de Paul case managers recently obtained their CADC certification. Pat Schneider and Myra Woodard (from left) who work at SVDP's St. Jude Women's Recovery Center, completed all the requirements to become Certified Alcohol and Drug Counselors.



Debbie Slagle Pike, program manager for St. Jude, obtained her certification in 1986 and now teaches CADC courses. Currently, the classes meet twice a month at St. Jude.

The lengthy certification process requires 300 hours of direct supervision, 270 hours of continuing education hours, and written and oral presentations to the Kentucky Board of Alcohol and Drug Counselors in Frankfort.

Group supervision focuses on 12 core functions of addiction, including screening, client intake, client assessment, treatment planning, counseling, crisis intervention, and referrals. In addition, the candidates must

have 2,000-6,000 hours of hands-on work experience with individuals who have alcohol and/or drug problems.

"The benefit of staff obtaining a CADC is that our residents receive the highest level of professionalism in addiction treatment, which gives them the best opportunity to maintain an alcohol and drug free life," Slagle Pike says. Moreover, social work students from the University of Louisville and Spalding University seek out internships that provide CADC supervision, she says.

Volunteers are Honored, and New Vincentians Inducted

Three outstanding Vincentians were honored in a ceremony Feb. 10 at St. Patrick Church.

"The stories of the daily struggles of those who come to us for help never get easier to hear or less challenging to serve," said Ed Wnorowski, executive director of St. Vincent de Paul. "We are here to say 'thank-you' for all that you have done and will continue to do because of your Vincentian spirit and hearts."

Dick Scherrer, of St. Agnes Conference, received the Top Hat Award, the highest honor presented by St. Vincent de Paul's Conference Affairs Committee. The award goes to the Vincentian who most exemplifies the spirit of St. Vincent de Paul's founder, Frederic Ozanam.

Among his many activities, Scherrer is co-chair of St. Vincent de Paul's annual Santa Shop, and he leads Christmas-basket delivery each holiday season. Last year, 170 families received baskets because of his efforts.

The Ozanam Medallion, annually awarded to an individual who serves as a role model for other Vincentians and who is also an inspiration to the broader faith community, went to **Martha Thomas** from St. Rita Conference.

She has been making home visits for more than 10 years, delivers food baskets at the holidays, and volunteers in the Open Hand Kitchen and at the Santa Shop.

The St. Vincent Award was presented to **Wanda Binder**, of St. Paul Conference, for dedicating her life to offering nonjudgmental and supportive service to people in need.

A volunteer at St. Vincent de Paul since 2000, she makes home visits, delivers food baskets, and addresses incoming calls for assistance at her Conference office – sometimes handling as many as 90 calls each month.

Irv Lambert, of St. Ignatius Conference, was also honored at the Feb. 10 ceremony for 15 years of service on SVDP's board of directors.

Jim Carrico, SVDP's board chairman, Father Jerry Timmel, SVDP's spiritual director, and Wnorowski presided at the induction of 26 new Vincentians with St. Vincent de Paul.

They are:

Holy Spirit: Margie Guetig and Mary Jo Horlander.

Holy Trinity: Loretta Aberli, Beverly Beckman, Art Crotty, Philip Lawver, Susan Means, Kermit Scarlott, Sherril Scheid, and Kathy Stoess.

St. Anthony of Padua: Amy Brown, Lisa Copple, Rebecca Crum, and Carol Tyler.
St. James: Meg Hagbig and Nancy Russo.
St. Lawrence: Jim Fields, Suzanne Fields, and Rosetta Powers.

St. Leonard: Regina Wagner.

St. Patrick: Carol Claire, Eileen Dougherty, and Donna Zutt.

St. Paul: Teresa Pacheco and Maureen Welch.

St. Peter the Apostle: Paul Hatkie and John Jones.