

GOOD SAMARITAN

St. Vincent de Paul | Louisville

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FATHER KNOWS BEST

Single Father of 12-Year-Old Twins Says St. Vincent de Paul Is a Blessing

A single dad raising 12-year-old twins, Craig wants the best for his kids. Known as a strict but loving father, Craig talks about his hope that daughter Jasmine and son Jeffery will have the drive and the skills they need to pursue their dreams.



Life has had its ups and downs for the close-knit family of three. Before being referred to SVDP's supportive housing program, they were staying in a local homeless shelter.

"I'd never been in a homeless shelter, and my kids didn't like it there," Craig recalls. "But it was a blessing, because at least we were together. I explained to them every day, 'Look, this is what we've got to do for now.'"

Many factors contributed to their situation. Craig and the twins' mother had separated, and Craig had moved to another city to find work when the children were young. The kids stayed behind with their mother until her drug use and chaotic lifestyle prompted

Craig to take action. "She wasn't taking care of them, so my mom was taking food to them, feeding the kids, and going by there in the mornings to get them dressed for school. Jeffery was really being mistreated."

Craig fought for and eventually won custody of the twins.

They were doing well, and Craig had a good job as a maintenance supervisor. But when he was hospitalized with pneumonia, doctors discovered other serious health issues, including COPD and diabetes. Unable to continue meeting the physical demands of his job, he was let go. Falling several months behind in rent, he then lost his home.

It has been a hard road back, but the family is now stabilized and doing well as residents of St. Vincent de Paul's supportive housing program for formerly homeless families.

"Living here is such a blessing," Craig says. "I feel secure. And the kids love it."

His son's behavioral problems have improved significantly. Four of the boy's therapists have told Craig they've seen his son undergo a complete turnaround since moving here. Jeffery works to keep his grades up, and he plays football at middle school.

Daughter Jasmine is a cheerleader. Craig financed the expenses required for the extra-curricular activity by working service hours at the school's concession stand. He

jokes that he spends most all of his time at the school, in parent-teacher conferences, and at the kids' activities and appointments.

As for personal pursuits, Craig has started riding a bicycle for exercise, and he hopes to be able to join the YMCA to improve his health, he says.

As the head of his household, he is thoughtful with the family's grocery money, planning meals that are budget-friendly. "My kids don't like it, but sometimes I make beans and cornbread," he says. "You know why? Because it stretches," he says, laughing.

"I thank God for my mother. She gave me sense, and she taught me things like how to save my money and how to stretch things."

He strives to instill that same common-sense and discipline in his kids. For instance, if their grades slip, he takes away privileges. He also makes them stick to a routine. "My kids get up at 5:30 or 6:00 am to get ready for school. They wash their face, brush their teeth... I make them keep their rooms clean, and I make them do chores."

"Craig is a perfect example of a parent's commitment to his children," says Leah Campbell, Craig's SVDP case manager. "His kids are doing awesome."

"I'm happy. I'm blessed," the single dad explains. "That's why I am so hard on my kids. I want them to go to college, get a decent job, and make a good life for themselves."

"I tell them, 'You all don't see it now, but one day you'll thank me.'"

On the Ground

By Nancy Naughton

This time of year is always busy on the St. Vincent de Paul campus, especially with our children's summer program, which is now in its fourth year, and the recent construction of our new playground.



This year, thanks to the generosity of a team of Yum! Brands volunteers, the campus will receive a large community vegetable garden tended to by these great volunteers as well as SVDP campus residents.

Creating a normalized environment for our residents is critical in helping them overcome the stress and pain of being homeless. The garden has numerous and obvious benefits, including:

- Providing fresh fruits and vegetables for our residents through an on-campus farmers' market
- Serving home-grown produce to our guests at the Open Hand Kitchen
- Promoting physical activity and skill-building for the adults and children living on our campus
- Beautifying the SVDP campus and our Smoketown/Shelby Park neighborhood

Perhaps the most important result is improving the well-being of our residents through the strengthening of social connections.

Providing an opportunity for participation and joint ownership of an

endeavor is something new for many of the people we serve.

Having a seat at the table to decide what to plant or what to build and being treated as an important, valuable contributor has a profound effect on someone with little self-esteem.

During our recent playground-building project, weekly conference calls were held with our sponsors, the KaBoom! Foundation and the Dr Pepper Snapple Group. Parents, SVDP staff and teams from our sponsors all participated in the calls to finalize the design of the playground and prepare for the build day.

Participation from our residents grew each week as word spread that the calls were fun, and that residents felt like they were part of the team, that everyone wanted to hear their opinions and ideas, and that their input mattered.

We are looking forward to our new garden and the possibilities it will open for the people we serve.

Providing this safe and nurturing home for men, women and children who have experienced the trauma of severe poverty and homelessness is possible because of your steadfast support.

Thank you!

Nancy Naughton is associate executive director of St. Vincent de Paul | Louisville. Contact her at nnaughton@svdplou.org.

Kentucky Colonels Grant Funds New Thrift Store Box Truck

Thanks to a generous grant from the Honorable Order of Kentucky Colonels, St. Vincent de Paul recently purchased a 2006 15-foot Ford box truck to add to our small fleet of Thrift Store vehicles.

These trucks are vitally important to our store operations, as our drivers pick up donations from throughout the metro area.



TRUCK WEEKENDS

Our Thrift Store trucks will be at the following churches this month. Please drop off your gently used household items, home decor, and clothing.

June 1-2

St. Patrick

1000 North Beckley Station Road
Louisville, KY 40245
(502) 244-6083
Contact church for hours

June 8-9

St. Rita

8709 Preston Highway
Louisville, KY 40219
Saturday: 10am to 6pm
Sunday: 9am to 1pm

Yum! Team Digs in to Expand SVDP's Summer Garden

Earlier this spring, Chris Freeman, an art director at Yum! Brands (pictured, far right), contacted SVDP about bringing a team of co-workers to our campus for a hunger-focused service project they would help create and carry out. The end result was that the team decided to expand and improve upon SVDP's existing summer garden. Below, Chris explains how this all came about:

We wanted to choose a project for our Hunger to Hope Volunteer Challenge that truly promises to make a difference within the community.

By meeting with the staff at St. Vincent de Paul and brainstorming on several ideas, our team saw the garden as a perfect opportunity to get the entire community involved and to supplement food choices for the Open Hand Kitchen.



Back row, L to R: Aaron Higginbotham, Charlotte Boyd, Melissa Schooley, Chris Freeman. Front row, L to R: John Lee, Mandy Grego, Megan Whittington, Sarah Willoughby, Bryan Volz (kneeling)

What is Yum!'s commitment for this project?

Our commitment is to go full on in developing and sustaining a successful garden in 2013 with the help of donations and as many volunteer hours as it takes.

With 12 members on the team, in addition to some of the team members' families, we plan to have someone available to help maintain it along with SVDP.

Why did you choose SVDP?

Our team has been volunteering for the Open Hand kitchen since 2008, and we were searching for more ways to make a big impact at SVDP. I was given a short tour of the community in 2008 and was very moved.

Ever since, SVDP has been the first place that I personally think of when helping such an organization.

The Hunger to Hope Volunteer Challenge has given us the perfect opportunity to bring in a bigger team that will truly make a difference for the residents and the community.

What do you hope to achieve with this project?

Our main goal for this project is to raise awareness around the issue of hunger within our community. We want to develop a successful garden in which the residents and clients of SVDP can benefit.

Our hope is to make a huge

impact on their lives by providing food and the realization that they can be self-sufficient and have self-worth...to see what they can accomplish and do it together.

We are all so excited about getting the plants in the ground and watching the impact this will have! And, if our project wins this challenge, a substantial amount of money would go to SVDP!

Have you done other projects like this?

This is the first team project for Yum! Creative Services. Yum! as a whole supports volunteerism with nonprofit organizations, such as Dare to Care, Kids Café and the Muhammad Ali Peace Garden.

Calendar

Contact Donna Young
502-301-8688
dyoung@svdplou.org

June 19
Council of Louisville
St. James
307 W. Dixie Ave.
Elizabethtown, KY
5pm dinner, followed by meeting

June 29
Mid-East Regional Meeting
Our Lady of Fatima Retreat
House
5353 E. 56th St.
Indianapolis, IN

Oct. 19
Vincentian Retreat
Nazareth Retreat Center
Nazareth, KY
Father Louis Arceneaux:
"Building Vincentian Spirituality"

Sept. 11-15
SVDP National Meeting
Madison, WI

To Dye For:

T-Shirt Project Teaches Kids How to Raise Money for a Good Cause

When kids living in SVDP's family apartments learned that they would be getting a new playground that they could help design, they were excited.

But when they were faced with the challenge of raising money for a small portion of the overall cost of the playground, they got creative.

St. Gabriel's Youth Group, led by Patrick Lynch, purchased plain white T-shirts and the paints and materials for tie-dyeing them. In a Saturday-morning session last month, St. Gabriel volunteers, SVDP kids and parents, and SVDP case managers had a messy but fun time tie-



ing the shirts of all sizes. A few weeks later, the kids set up an impromptu retail store inside the SVDP administration building. Neatly arranged on hangers in the conference room were the shirts, which

they sold to SVDP staff, board members and residents for \$5 each.

With help from adults, the adolescents in the group assisted customers in choosing their shirts, while others tallied up total purchases, collected customers' cash, and wrote out receipts for every transaction.

The project raised more than \$300, along with heightened awareness about basic business principles. The kids who participated got to experience how free enterprise works, and they felt a sense of accomplishment by knowing they had helped pay for their dream playground.

WISH LISTS

Our programs report the following needs:

Roberts Hall

Needs tomato cages for their garden.
Kay Redfern: 502-636-3549

Ozanam Inn

The men's overnight shelter needs twin-sized sheets.
David Tarullo: 502-272-2135

Simon Hall

Is requesting tickets to local attractions for monthly field trips.
Renee Yates: 502-301-8686

To make a cash donation to St. Vincent de Paul, please contact **Nancy Naughton**:
502-301-8682; nnaughton@svdplou.org.



SAVE THE DATES!

September 8-9, 2013

St. Vincent de Paul's
10th Annual Golf
Scramble & Charity
Auction Event

Big Spring
Country Club

Porcini

More details to come