

# The Good Samaritan

## The General: Paul Carmony still serving 24 years later



Paul Carmony simply serves others.

He's not at all in it for the awards or accolades (though he won the president's Volunteer Service Award in 2007 and WLKY's 43rd annual Bell Awards in 2020).

"It's a matter of helping out people who need help. I just care. That's all," Carmony said. "I don't serve for any specific reasons. I just do it because it needs to be done."

Carmony is a man of few words, but he's faithful in his work.

Since 1999, Carmony has driven about a half hour to St. Vincent de Paul Louisville several times a week to sort and size donated clothing and shoes at the Clothes Closet for clients in need. He volunteers 15 to 20 hours a week. He's on campus even longer in the weeks leading up to the Santa Shop to make sure all of the toys are well-organized.

At 86-years-old, Carmony doesn't let age stop him from serving.

"When I wake up in the morning, before I move, I say, 'OK. When I move, what's going to hurt?'" Carmony said.

Nor the weather.

"If it's raining, I bring my umbrella," Carmony added.

Donna Young, Director of Conference Affairs and Volunteer Services, said, "'The General,' aka Paul Carmony, is a man that lives his values by helping others. Paul, like the U.S. Postal System, can be found in rain, sleet, snow, or 100 degrees in his garage."

Carmony was born and raised in the mountains of eastern Kentucky, where his dad was an underground coal miner.

"If anyone needed any kind of help in that coal mining town, people always stepped up to help them out," Carmony said. "So I guess that background has stayed with me."

Carmony, who has three children and three grandchildren, retired from Humana in 1998. He wanted to make the second half of his life count and decided to spend his time volunteering rather than vacationing.

In fact, Carmony traveled all over the world to fish. He had been there and done that.

"I know several people who are retired and simply vacation all over the place," Carmony said. "I didn't want to stay around the house and do nothing. I just simply do not want to waste the time God has given me."

In 1999, a family friend invited Carmony to volunteer on campus.

When Carmony began, the donated clothes were just thrown on a table for clients to take and the garage "was just a garage."

"Paul saw potential there. That garage wasn't what it is today. He has done wonders with it," said Tom and Ann Bizzell, Vincentians of the St. Edward Conference.

Carmony had shelves put in the garage to hang clothes and restructured the Clothes Closet.

"I put tags on all the clothes for the size so that when people come into the Clothes Closet they don't have to try to look to see what the size is," Carmony said.

Though it seems simple to sort and size clothes and shoes, Carmony's service has been significant to SVDP's mission to support those in need with compassion and dignity.

The garage was named "Paul's Garage" in his honor.

### A PRESIDENTIAL VISIT

## Bush honors a local volunteer



By Arza Barnett, The Courier-Journal  
President Bush and Paul Carmony shared a laugh after Bush presented a Volunteer Service Award to Carmony on the tarmac at Louisville International Airport yesterday. Carmony helps out at St. Vincent de Paul's Clothes Closet.



ST. VINCENT  
de PAUL

LOUISVILLE

## The Good Samaritan

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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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# Thankful for Easter

The story of Easter is one of complete sacrifice. Jesus voluntarily gave up His body on the cross and resurrected three days later. Now in its 170th year anniversary, St. Vincent de Paul Louisville has been able to house, feed, and support those in need with compassion and dignity because of the thousands of people who have sacrificed their time and donated goods and money to see this mission move forward since its founding in 1853. As we celebrate the Easter season, let us reflect on the rich history of SVDP and be reminded of its roots.

This mission began long ago because of the compassion of one man. In 1833, 19-year-old college student Frederic Ozanam and his friends from Paris, France, saw the suffering their countrymen faced—hunger, poverty, and death—and it took a toll on them. They set up a Conference of Charity named after the patron St. Vincent de Paul. De Paul was a priest in France two centuries prior who organized Conferences of Charity, which were groups of volunteers who served people in need. Even as a boy, de Paul would hand out corn to the poor on his way home from working at the mill.

This mission of charity has spanned continents and centuries. Before there were computers, cell phones, or social media platforms, word of mouth traveled fast about the work that they were doing. Nearly 20 years later, Bishop Martin John Spalding of the Louisville Diocese traveled to Paris and then returned to found the first conference at the Cathedral of the Assumption in 1853. Each conference is made up of Vincentians who volunteer on the frontlines. An article in *The Courier Journal* in May 1868 said, "The development of the Society, from the little nucleus at Paris, has gone on at such a rapid rate that it is extended now all over the Christian world." Today, there are 28 SVDP Conferences consisting of 1,192 Vincentians.

As you can see in *The Courier-Journal* newspaper clipping from Dec. 2, 1859, individuals and organizations in Louisville have trusted SVDP to help those in need since its inception and that legacy lives on to this day.

Though so many have benefited over the last 170 years, we truly believe we're just getting started. The work continues and what we do to help those in need has never been more important. Will you continue to stand in the gap with us and help us make Ozanam's dream a reality?

**Messrs. W. & D. S. Piatt of this city have presented to the St. Vincent de Paul Society a box of shoes to be distributed to the poor the approaching winter.**

*The Louisville Daily Courier, Dec. 2, 1859*

**We are requested to state that the profits arising from Mr. McLeod's lecture this evening will be placed at the disposal of the St. Vincent de Paul Society to be distributed among the suffering poor.**

*The Louisville Daily Courier, Jan. 17, 1856*



*The Courier-Journal, Nov. 24, 1989*

*The Courier-Journal,*  
July 16, 2003

## Looking Back St. Vincent de Paul Society celebrates 150 years of caring

By SHERYL EDELEN  
edenel@courier-journal.com  
The Courier-Journal

A new job, apartment and lease on a clean and sober lifestyle have Marsha Johnson feeling blessed these days. Less than three years ago, the Old Louisville resident was strung out on crack cocaine. She was homeless, jobless and in serious denial about what was happening to her.

She credits two sources with turning her life around — God and the St. Vincent de Paul Society.

"It was a matter of God doing for me what I couldn't do for myself," said Johnson, 53.

A court referred her last year to St. Vincent de Paul's St. Jude Women's Recovery Center, a halfway house for recovering female addicts at 431 E. St. Catherine St. "Everyone there is so warm and supportive. They're there for you when you need them. I don't know where I would be without St. Jude and the society."

Johnson's success story is part of St. Vincent de Paul's rich legacy of helping the area's poor, homeless and addicted

through services in Southern Indiana and in Kentucky's Bullitt, Jefferson, Henry, Oldham and Shelby counties.

The Catholic agency is celebrating its 150th anniversary this year.

On July 31, it will hold a homecoming picnic for present and former staff members and clients. The event will be held at its campus, at Preston and Kentucky streets. To reserve a place at the picnic, call 584-2480, Ext. 245, by Friday.

The Preston Street campus houses the majority of the society's outreach efforts, including homeless shelters for men, women, families and the mentally ill; a soup kitchen; an education and training center; and administrative offices. It also helps coordinate referrals of many of the Louisville operation's most complex hardship cases. Less structured programs are located in 31 Catholic churches, or conferences.

"We're not just feeding,

shoeing and housing those in need. We're showing them the way to regain their self-esteem," said LeAnn Woods, an agency spokeswoman. "We offer full service."

Elise Passifiume, director of support services, added, "We provide a hub here of trained professionals who are certified for their work. That allows us to work on the more serious issues

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## SVDP shifts housing strategy

After over three decades of operating a single-room occupancy program (SRO) for women at Roberts Hall, St. Vincent de Paul Louisville will end the program in March 2024, to redirect community resources to other affordable housing options.

Due to the unique challenges of operating SRO permanent housing projects, SVDP is shifting away from these programs. The SRO model has individual rooms with shared kitchens and bathrooms, which make it similar to college dorms. Shifting from this model will let us better use our resources to rally around our mission of housing, feeding, and supporting those in need with compassion and dignity.

Jennifer Clark, SVDP's Chief Operating Officer, said she's grateful for this program's partnership with the Archdiocese of Louisville, specifically the parish of St. Elizabeth of Hungary and Louisville Metro Housing Authority (LMHA). "We are appreciative of the partnerships we've had over the years. We have helped thousands of women find stability and self-sufficiency through housing assistance and effective case management," Clark said.

Roberts Hall residents have been notified of this transition, and SVDP staff members are working diligently to provide each and every client with the support that they need by gathering housing options and resources to assist them with a positive exit destination. LMHA will make Housing Choice Vouchers available for current residents to find new housing options.

Roberts Hall is an off campus program at 1032 E. Burnett Ave.

### Roberts Hall History

Before the three-story brick building was converted to house homeless women, it was the former St. Elizabeth Convent. The building was vacant for six years after the archdiocese moved the last of four sisters at St. Elizabeth to another location in 1984. After the parish council voted in favor of SVDP's project proposal and SVDP was awarded a \$660,000 federal grant, the building was renovated and Roberts Hall officially opened in November 1990. It was named after Gerald "Jerry" Roberts, a former SVDP president for 21 years who planted deep roots in the Louisville community.

## Board Member Donna Russell has lived experience



St. Vincent de Paul Louisville's newest Board Member Donna Russell has lived experience.

Russell was a single mother raising her two children, who were in high school at the time. She had her own housing challenges because of the pay cuts she took after her bank's department phased out. In order to avoid eviction, Russell was able to get an apartment at the Beecher Terrace Housing Projects through Louis-

ville Metro Housing Authority. After six months, LMHA approached her to move to scattered site housing, where she and her two children lived for the next nine years.

In 2006, Russell worked in the Jefferson County Child Support Division and saw clients who didn't receive the resources that they needed.

She decided to return to school to become a social worker and graduated from the University of Louisville's Kent School of Social Work with a Bachelor of Social Work in 2012 and a Master of Science in Social Work two years later. In 2015, she purchased her own home through the LMHA Family Self-Sufficiency Program.

"I didn't have anyone to really help guide me," Russell said. "I used a lot of the resources at the school that were very

## Save the Date

UPCOMING EVENTS AT  
ST. VINCENT DE PAUL LOUISVILLE



*Come Join Us!*

### Tour de Change

April 18th, noon

### Roses & Rosé

April 29th

### Clubs & Cocktails

August 6th and 7th

For event information, to be a sponsor, or make a donation, please contact Makenzie Smith at (502) 272-2134 or [msmith@svdplou.org](mailto:msmith@svdplou.org).

Our thanks to Louisville Metro Government for their support



helpful at the time ... I just kept moving forward. I can tell you it was not easy."

Russell works as a Clinical Therapist at the Volunteers of America Freedom House, which is a long-term women's recovery center for new mothers.

### Russell a guest on SVDP's Podcast

Russell is the latest guest on SVDP's monthly podcast, "With Arms Wide Open." Her episode will be released on April 15. To listen to Russell's conversation with CEO Dave Calzi—or any of the previous podcast episodes—visit [www.svdplou.org/podcast/](http://www.svdplou.org/podcast/). This podcast shares stories of people and programs in the Louisville community.

## Success Story – Ernesto, a Cuban immigrant, gets housed

Ernesto, an immigrant of Cuba who was a friendly face at St. Vincent de Paul Louisville's Open Hand Kitchen, was someone who was able to secure his own apartment earlier this year. Ernesto's move to the States hasn't been easy, due to a language barrier and lack of the proper paperwork. He and his brother shared an apartment and both worked to be able to make rent. When his brother unexpectedly became sick and passed away, Ernesto couldn't pay the bills by himself. He lost the apartment and became homeless. He was on the waiting list for Section 8 housing, and came to Ozanam Inn Men's Emergency Shelter last June. It was a team effort to get Ernesto housing, with three organizations teaming up—SVDP's Case Manager Latoya Webb-Elliott, who worked directly with Ernesto, the Coalition for the Homeless, which completed his common assessment, and St. John Center, which had the Housing Voucher for his apartment. Webb-Elliott said, "Collaborating with local organizations who also care about the homeless makes it better because they have their resources and we have ours. Three heads are better than one."

## Thanks to Our Foundations, Corporations and Other Support

From January 2022 to December 2022, we received funding from the entities listed below. We would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to them for making it easier to house, feed, and support those in need with compassion and dignity.

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