

The Good Samaritan

First “Backpack League” Summer Camp was a smiling success



There was no shortage of smiles at St. Vincent de Paul Louisville’s Family Success Center (FSC) this summer.

“It was important to give them a safe, structured environment, especially during the summer,” said Kendra Hayes, the new FSC Program Manager. “We had about a couple dozen students who had never stepped foot on our campus, so it was nice to see a lot of new faces.”

In partnership with JCPS and Evolve502, the FSC hosted its first “Backpack League” summer camp Monday through Friday from June 21 to July 14 for roughly 25 incoming 1st-8th graders.

“I’ve had a pleasant experience,” said Iman Jackson, an English teacher at Seneca High School who taught middle

school students. “It’s pretty amazing the way SVDP incorporated the community with its summer programming.”

“They had a great variety of enrichments,” added Darin Gray, a game design/computer science teacher at Valley High School.

The “enrichments” students enjoyed were a videographer showing them how to shoot a commercial, Bricks 4 Kidz creating robotics, art/theatre with Faith Works Studios, and music from Kids-view Louisville.

“I liked robotics, art, and gym,” said Claudine, a middle schooler. “My favorite thing was coming with my sister ... but I also made new friends.”

Kela Pierre, a psychology student at the University of Louisville, is a tutor

with Evolve502. She helped with the elementary-aged students.

“I enjoyed engaging the kids and building a small relationship with them. They’re sweet and can be intense at times,” Pierre said. “I think our kids respected each other and learned that it’s OK to be different from someone.”

Ricky was one of those elementary students.

“I liked the enrichments that came here and also the ‘thinkLaw’s.’ That’s a book that has work every day. It has questions in it and you raise your hand to answer,” Ricky said.

The FSC also held its own summer camp from July 17 to Aug. 4 for incoming 1st-8th graders.



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St. Vincent de Paul Louisville

The gift of brotherly love to those in need



Dominican Brothers Clement and Gerard served at St. Vincent de Paul Louisville's inner-city campus from May 23 to July 27.

They weren't hard to miss.

Dominican Brothers always wear a habit, which comes from the Latin "habitus" and means clothing. The habit is symbolic for one's full commitment to God. It has been a tradition for two Dominican Brothers to visit SVDP each summer.

"I was amazed at the variety of ministries provided by St. Vincent de Paul Louisville," Bro. Clement said. "I first thought St. Vincent de Paul was a thrift store and not much beyond that ... It's been a great experience just being present with the people, hearing their stories, and them listening to us."

On Tuesdays and Thursdays, Brothers Clement and Gerard volunteered in the Food Pantry, Open Hand Kitchen, Ozanam Inn Men's Homeless Shelter, Tranquil House Apartments, and the Family Success Center's summer programming.

At Tranquil House, they enjoyed connecting with the residents and competing in UNO and cornhole.

"Jeffrey (a longtime resident) won every single round. At first, I thought we would need to make it a little easy on them, but then eventually, we realized when we're trying they're wiping the floor with us," Bro. Gerard said.

The Brothers are located in Washington, D.C., in their second of seven years

until they're officially ordained as Dominican priests. Their lives are marked by poverty, chastity, and obedience to God.

They don't have phones—except for a community phone when they're driving—or even personal belongings.

"All of my personal belongings came in a duffel bag," Bro. Gerard said.

The Brothers both came to faith their senior year of high school, though they grew up on opposite ends of the east coast. They shared their stories with us.

Brother Gerard



Brother Gerard's path to poverty came through wealth.

An Italian raised in Long Island, New York, his parents are business owners and non-practicing Catholics. Bro. Gerard was expected to go into the family business, but his life changed after his high school

"I was amazed at the variety of ministries"

selected him to visit Israel along with five other Catholics and six Jewish students.

"There were a couple of things that brought me to a point where I needed to make up my mind about Catholicism," Bro. Gerard said. "One of them was the Jewish kids on the trip asking me about Catholicism and I knew nothing about it. Two, I saw the Orthodox Jews in Israel, where religion had formed every part of their life. I think I realized that's what religion means."

Bro. Gerard returned home and studied different religions, finding a lot of reasons to believe Catholicism is the true religion. He wanted to "give himself in the most radical and generous way possible to God."

Bro. Gerard graduated with a double major in Business Management and Philosophy at Boston College. He learned "life isn't about accumulating more and more stuff."

"Since I was in a wealthy family, working with the poor was something I never knew how to do," Bro. Gerard added. "In college, there was this great ministry, St. Joseph's project. We gave clothes and food to the homeless. After four years of volunteering, I had friends on the streets."

Brother Clement

Brother Clement grew up in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, where "the family was around the water quite a bit." They had a marine business.

His father was a Jew and his mother Protestant, though they didn't practice beyond the traditional religious holidays. At the age of 7, his father committed suicide and his mother was in and out of the hospital with kidney disease.

"One way my mother would talk about it was you could either get bitter or better," Bro. Clement said.

He attended a Catholic high school because his mom wanted him to go to a religious school and that was the closest to their house.

"John Paul II lost a parent as well, and I found this deep connection with him. I



think God was giving me another father to look up to," Bro. Clement added. "Over the next four years, God was softening any of those rough and hard edges that were growing from the hardships I went through."

As a high school senior, Bro. Clement became Catholic on Jan. 28, the same day his father died eleven years earlier.

He attended Massachusetts Maritime Academy and graduated with a degree in Marine Transportation. He knows celestial navigation, meaning he uses the stars to determine where he is at sea.

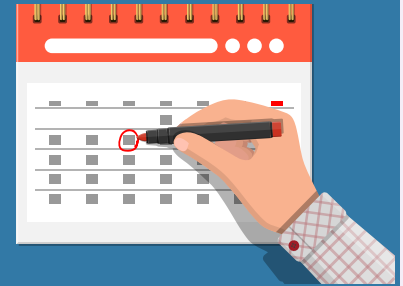
"We would be on the ships with over 200 people, but there were moments you could find yourself alone at night looking up at the stars glowing brightly that you don't see at land," he said. "It was a deep questioning for myself, 'What did God want for me?'"

Bro. Clement returned home to work in the family business "while he tried to figure things out," but shortly thereafter felt called to go into the Dominican priesthood.



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Makenzie Smith at (502) 272-2134 or
msmith@svdprou.org.

Our thanks to Louisville Metro
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Q success STORIES x

This is why we do what we do! We love hearing from those we serve and from our volunteers. Our Open Hand Kitchen staff was given the kindest handwritten letter from someone who regularly receives a meal from us, and an email from a volunteer expressing gratitude for their campus experience. We wanted to share these notes with you!

This letter is from someone we serve.

St. Vincent de Paul,

Wow. I have to say thank you for all that you do. Places like this are a blessing. Thank you for serving meals daily. There are a lot of people struggling.

You have no idea how much you all are appreciated. From the staff and volunteers, thank you. Thank you for opening your doors for us to sleep when it's cold outside.

May God be the center of this place and you all are a great example of Jesus. May people depend on you. Keep serving.

Sincerely,

Courtney W.

This email is from someone who volunteered.

Hello Hymella,

My name is Yolanda Shields. My son, Ben, and I just left your beautifully run Open Hand Kitchen. I wanted to thank you again for allowing us to help out, and most importantly for being patient with us while you taught us the ropes.

I can't say enough about how much it opens my eyes to the need for people like you and the hard work you, Kevin, and your crew put into feeding people who have no one to show them that unselfish love.

I wanted to email you myself because I was so impressed by what you're doing; it makes me realize I need to do more myself.

Thank you,

Yolanda S.

WHAS Crusade for Children donates a \$15,000 grant to FSC

We would like to highlight WHAS Crusade for Children for their continuing partnership. They donated \$15,000 to fund one of St. Vincent de Paul Louisville's Youth Development Specialist positions at the Family Success Center.

Cha'vaz Woods, a student athlete at Kankakee Community College in Illinois, came on board as the Youth Development Specialist during SVDP's summer programming.

"It's really been a good experience," Woods said. "The kids have been good. They might have their spurts during the day, but I'm excited to get to know the kids and help them grow."

This grant is for the fiscal year 2023-24, and the seventh consecutive year Crusade for Children gave to SVDP.



10th Annual Give for Good Louisville on Sept. 14

The countdown has begun for the 10th Annual Give for Good Louisville! The Community Foundation of Louisville has set the day for Thursday, Sept. 14. Since its founding, Give for Good Louisville has helped raise \$50.6 million for local organizations across Kentucky and Southern Indiana. At St. Vincent de Paul Louisville, you have personally given more than \$150,000 since we started participating. For just 24 hours once a year, that is incredible!

This year, we are focusing on fundraising for feeding those in need, which will go towards our Open Hand Kitchen and Food Pantry. Our goal is \$60,000. Your donations must be made on Sept. 14, not before or after, so that it counts towards the Give for Good day total.

Interested in being a matching sponsor? Help us double the impact of every donation made. Please reach out to Makenzie Smith at msmith@svdplou.org or (502) 272-2134 for more information or if you have any questions.

