

The Good Samaritan

Bill Smith heals from childhood trauma and secures housing



In December, Bill Smith won the 2023 Michael T. White Recover Boldly New Leaf Award for his recovery journey.

There's always more to the story.

As a survivor of child sex abuse, Bill Smith's dreams died at a young age.

"Those of us who have come out of homelessness have a responsibility to say to the housed folks that we are people first and foremost," Smith said. "Some of us have mental issues, some of us are down on our luck, some of us have addiction issues, some of us have all the above, but at the end of the day, we're people just like you are. And believe it or not, we have dreams and desires just like you do."

Smith was sent into the foster care system at six months old—his mother was schizophrenic and his father an alcoholic—and was adopted at the age of 5.

The happy feelings that come with adoption didn't last long. A family member who was also a church worker abused him from 7- to 9-years-old.

"My adoptive parents had no idea," added Smith, now 64 years old. "He told

me to be quiet, and I was for 21 years. I kept quiet because of the shame that goes along with that. As a kid, I knew things that a kid shouldn't know. Back then, it was hush-hush, and you didn't say anything about it."

Amidst the aftermath, Smith dealt with a lot of anger. It led to academic challenges and school fights. He enrolled in college for two years, but dropped out and moved back home to Bowling Green.

On the promise of a job, Smith moved to Lexington in 1984. It fell through and he became homeless on and off for the next four decades. At times, he received

permanent supportive housing, but would lose it shortly thereafter. Smith dealt with PTSD, depression, and was an alcoholic. He tried to find work when he could, but it's not easy working and carrying around that kind of trauma.

"I lost count of how many homeless shelters I stayed in," he said.

Smith lived in several states before moving to Louisville last April because of health complications. He secured a bed at St. Vincent de Paul Louisville's Ozanam Inn Men's Emergency Shelter and stayed there for more than half a year.

"It was the first shelter I stayed at that didn't have a curfew," Smith said. "St. Vincent de Paul tries to meet everyone where they're at ... if you keep your nose clean and do what you're supposed to do at Ozanam Inn, you can succeed."

During his stay, Smith ate at the Open Hand Kitchen, received case management

services, and attended one-on-one counseling in our Mental Health and Substance Use Program (MHSU).

"In using all the available services offered, and with an abundance of self-motivation and follow-up on his end, Bill has changed his life," said Matt Weaver, SVDP's Associate Director of Clinical Services."

On Jan. 28, Smith moved into a one-bedroom apartment. It's the little things.

"Just being able to walk in your pajamas and not having to get dressed if you don't want to, making yourself a pot of coffee, fixing yourself something to eat when you want to, and you can go to bed when you want to," Smith said.

He also attends group meetings at Stay Clean, which is a clinical treatment and recovery community for people suffering from substance use disorder and codependency. He has been sober for nearly three years.

"In over 45 years of working with organizations and individuals recovering from substance use and abuse, I have seen very few success stories like Bill's," said Gene Gilcrest, CEO at Stay Clean."

In December, Smith won the 2023 Michael T. White Recover Boldly New Leaf Award, which recognizes a client who is in early recovery and recently turned over a new leaf.

"I was speechless," Smith added. "I was in awe. I couldn't believe it."

Smith, who sings in his church's choir, is also in his first semester at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, studying to be in ministry. He's taking nine credit hours.

"I think I'm in a different place. I'm sober. I think that has a lot to do with it," he said.



St. Vincent
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The Good Samaritan

The monthly newsletter of
St. Vincent de Paul Louisville

Send correspondence to PO Box 17126,
Louisville, KY 40217-0126

Visit us at 1015-C South Preston Street,
Louisville, KY 40203-2733

Dave Calzi
CEO/Executive Director

Pam Evans
Director of Development
pevans@svdplou.org

Donna Young Cicchiello
Director of Conference Affairs
& Volunteer Services

Tony Nochim
Communications & Public Relations
Coordinator

Send comments and change
of address notifications to
tnochim@svdplou.org

Our Mission

We house, feed, and support those in
need with compassion and dignity.

Support SVDP

To find out more about our work or
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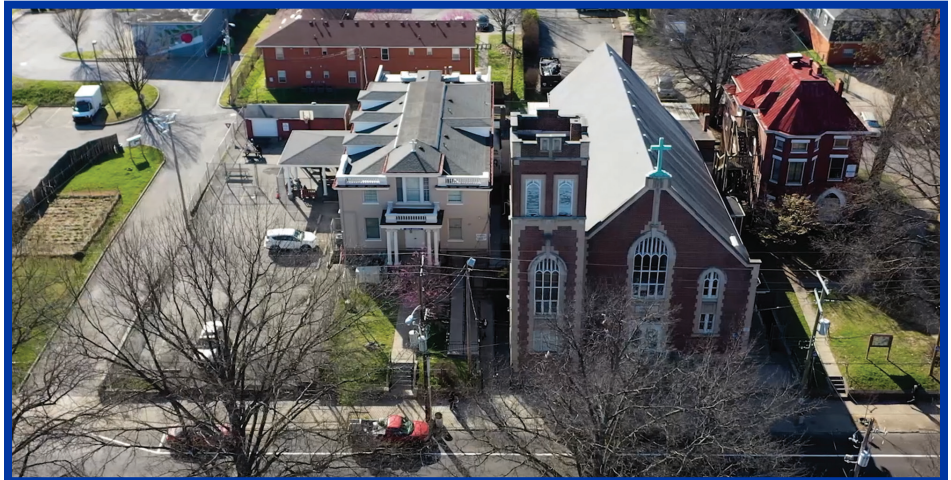


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St. Vincent de Paul Louisville

OZANAM INN MEN'S EMERGENCY SHELTER CELEBRATES 40 YEARS



When Ben was released from prison after one year, he had nowhere to go.

His apartment and belongings were gone, and he had no one to lean on. He stayed at local shelters, but had to leave in the early morning hours.

"I had to go from one part of town to the other just to get some help. I was homeless. I had no vehicle. It was unbearable. I couldn't do it," Ben said.

Last July, Ben arrived at Ozanam Inn Men's Emergency Shelter before moving into an efficiency apartment in January.

"Ozanam Inn being 24/7 was helpful to me because I didn't have to leave. I could take care of my business right there at St. Vincent de Paul," Ben added. "They had all the case management, counselors, and partner organizations come onto campus. They had everything for you. Housing. Food every day. Laundry. Everything you needed to get yourself together."

For the last 40 years, Ozanam Inn has been—in Ben's words—a place where you can get yourself together. It's a place of second, third, and fourth chances. In fact, we don't count.

"I appreciate this place so much," added Paul, a former client at Ozanam Inn who secured housing (see photo on top left of next page). "It gave me a place of structure, especially since I was an alcoholic. I was in jail for 15 months. I had a lot of time to think, so I wanted to get my life right. This place helped me do it."

It's a place where we help men reflect on the past so they move towards a brighter future, renew their strength, and begin dreaming again.

"As guys in here, we come from a long way. All of us have different problems and issues," said Sam, a client at Ozanam Inn. "I greatly appreciate my time here because it's not permanent stability, it's just temporary for me to get better."

"I was homeless for a while and sleeping in parks, but by the grace of God I found St. Vincent de Paul. There's a lot of love here," added Earl Ray, a client at Ozanam Inn (see photo on top right of next page). "I gave up hope and then I found hope."

Al Terry has worked third shift as an Ozanam Inn Program Aide for 16 years.

"Ozanam Inn has always been a place to help people. I've always liked working here because it gives you the opportunity to speak to people and let them see for themselves that they're worth something. A lot of people don't think they're worth nothing. And that's wrong."

From a school to a shelter

Since April 1984, Ozanam Inn has been a sanctuary from the extreme heat and harsh winters for many Louisville natives and out-of-towners alike.

Ozanam Inn was named after Frederic Ozanam, the founder of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul conferences. In 1982, the

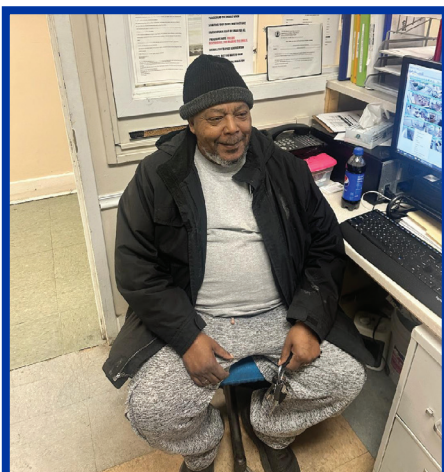


Archdiocese of Louisville donated the St. Paul School building, St. Paul Catholic Church, and the rectory—all of which are adjacent buildings—to us. Ozanam Inn opened after being remodeled in the former St. Paul School building.

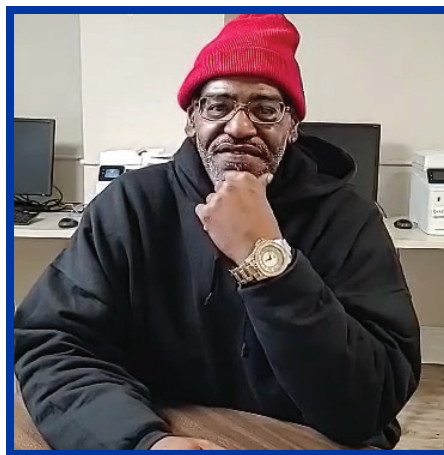
At the time, we were housing 25 people at a shelter on First Street, but they were moved to Ozanam Inn after the remodel was complete. It opened roughly six months after the Open Hand Kitchen, which provides easy access for residents to receive three meals a day.

Today, Ozanam Inn is 24/7 with no daily check-out required and serves 50 individuals per night including 10 private rooms. This provides 18,250 bed-nights per year. We also provide 20 beds for Veterans in private rooms through our Veterans Transitional Housing Program.

“As a previous Louisville Metro Councilwoman, I worked directly with the Shelby Park community, including St. Vincent de Paul Louisville, and witnessed



Al Terry has worked third shift as an Ozanam Inn Program Aide since 2008.



the incredible work of this organization to provide emergency and transitional shelter, affordable housing, and critical wrap-around services,” said Deputy Mayor Barbara Sexton Smith.

In the last 10 years (March 2014 to March 2024), we have served 2,715 men and 444 exited to permanent housing.

“Ozanam Inn is one of Louisville’s leading providers of evidence-based and trauma-informed shelter services,” said Carey Addison, Healthcare for the Homeless Supervisor for Family Health Centers of Louisville-Phoenix. “I’m very grateful for this partnership in moving our city’s unhoused population toward safe and stable housing.”

‘A special place’

The ripple effect of Ozanam Inn has been felt by clients, staff, and partner organizations across the community.

“I enjoy interacting with our clients and trying to give them hope because I’ve been homeless before and you can feel hopeless,” said Lead Program Aide LaShara Birdsong. “Some of them have addictions, and I had one. Some of them have kids, and so do I. I tell them it’s hard to change, but it’s possible.”

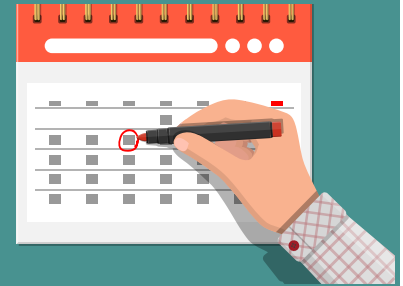
Cory Bledsoe, former SVDP staff member and Executive Director of Re:Center Ministries, said Ozanam Inn holds “a special place in his heart.”

“I could share story after story of how it has been a steadfast resource for the community and ... touches so many people in so many ways,” Bledsoe said.

Ozanam Inn has a lounge area with TV viewing, case management offices, a com-

Save the Date

UPCOMING EVENTS AT
ST. VINCENT DE PAUL LOUISVILLE



Come Join Us!

Roses & Rosé

Sunday, April 28

Clubs & Cocktails

Dinner: Sunday, September 22

Scramble: Tuesday, September 24

For event information, please contact
Makenzie Greenwell at (502) 272-2134 or
mgreenwell@svdplou.org.

Our thanks to
Louisville Metro
Government for
their support



puter room, showers, laundry facilities, a workout room, and a social pavilion.

Major renovations underway

Ozanam Inn will undergo major renovations later this month. Renovations include a more welcoming and efficient entry experience, accessibility upgrades with a three-story elevator, updated infrastructure, new lighting, reworked communal spaces, and additional changes.

“This renovation goes beyond providing basic services,” said Christopher Manzo, AIA, founder and principal of design firm SNDBX. “It strives to create a space that fosters dignity, stability, and ultimately, the opportunity for individuals to rebuild their lives.”



Ways to get involved



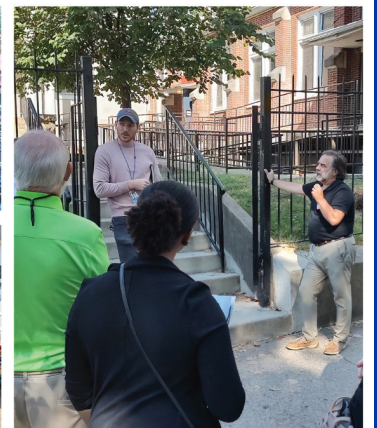
“ I've had the honor of witnessing Roses and Rosé blossom from a small gathering into the heartwarming event it is today. Our shared mission to support those in need fills each moment with joy and meaning. It's about coming together, having fun, and making a difference.”
 —Tonda Helton, longtime attendee and SVDP board member ”



THURSDAY, APRIL 18

TOUR DE CHANGE

RSVP TODAY!



Legacy Giving



“ Our current focus is on sustained giving by encouraging others to include SVDP in their long-term giving plan ... that would allow SVDP to further its mission. ”

—Larry Blandford, a SVDP board member

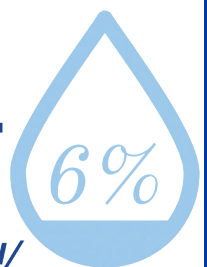
Consider joining the 1853 Society by leaving SVDP in your will and/or estate plans.

www.svdplou.org/planned-giving/

RAINY DAY FUND UPDATE

“ As my Dad would say with more colorful language ‘things happen’ that are unplanned. My modest donation was to ease some of the upkeep challenges faced at St. Vincent de Paul. ”
 —Tom Storck

\$9,330 to \$150,000 goal



www.svdplou.org/rainy-day-fund/