

THE

WINTER 2019



BULLETIN

MAGAZINE OF THE SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL



Some things shouldn't be a family tradition.



Society of St. Vincent de Paul

ANNUAL APPEAL

Please give locally or at svp.ie

Save someone from a life of poverty.

*“The future depends on what we
do in the present.”*

- Mahatma Gandhi





This magazine is named in honour of the principal founder of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, Frederic Ozanam

THE IRISH SVP OZANAM BULLETIN

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St. Vincent de Paul Ireland

 Saint Vincent de Paul
Ireland

It's hard to believe that another year has nearly come to an end. However, as servants to the most vulnerable in society, we now face into the busiest period of our work. Christmas, a time which should be a celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ, of love, generosity and enjoyment, and as the famous Andy Williams song says "the most wonderful time of the year", can also be the most worrying time of the year for many, as you will see highlighted on the cover of this edition.

How often have we heard, or even muttered to ourselves, "those given help are living beyond their means and spend more than they can afford at Christmas, putting themselves under enormous financial pressure". What is that magic cut-off point beyond which all else becomes an unacceptable waste of money? For many, spending an extra €50 puts them under pressure. Should they not attempt to bring a smile to their children's faces or have a special family meal together like everyone else?

The Society has been helping the most vulnerable for 175 years. That's 63,875 days where SVP volunteers have spoken out for those who have not yet found their voice, showing them that, yes, they do count and are equal, no matter what their background. I am sure if I were to ask all our members if they will continue to help next year, and the year after, and so on, the answer would be a resounding "Yes". As Mahatma

Gandhi once said, "The future depends on what we do in the present." As a cohort of seeming strangers, we came together and formed new friendships, not just within the huge family of the Society of St Vincent de Paul but with those we help; with outstretched hands we embrace our forgotten brothers and sisters into this "world family" of caring, where no one is a stranger.

When a stranger sojourns with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong. You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God (Leviticus 19: 33-34).

But one of the ongoing challenges for SVP is the need for new volunteers: people who we can pass the torch to and share the wisdom and experience gained from being an SVP member. In this edition, you will read how the Society is working to attract new volunteers via online recruitment and training; after all, we are living in a new, digital age. We need to take advantage of every avenue available to us to attract new volunteers, receive donations and to make it easy for people looking for help to contact us. It doesn't have to be all digital though; the right blend is essential. So, through our network of charity shops, the work being carried out by our youth-for-justice team, and the continual face-to-face contact with members and staff, we are trying to get the balance right.

We should also not forget those who are homeless or those who have fled their countries to avoid torture, persecution and, in many cases, death. We are reminded of this in the Most Reverend Denis Nulty's, Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin, inspiring keynote address to those in attendance at the SVP National Council last month.

"How does Céad Míle Fáilte Romhat exactly translate in the Ireland of 2019?... Let's do our bit as a Society to speak for those with no voice, no language, and no coordinates of their own in 2019", he stated.

I am reminded in Matthew 25:35: "I was hungry, and you gave me food; I was thirsty, and you gave me drink; I was a stranger and you welcomed me." This is what we must do, and continue to do, so that we can come to live in a just and equal society.

Wishing you all a joyful Christmas and peaceful New Year

Linda O'Connell

Another year of Service



As another busy Christmas approaches for all SVP volunteers serving those in need, it is timely to reflect on this past year our 175th of service in Ireland.

During this busy year, we met many people behind the depressing poverty statistics -

- 760,000 living below the poverty line.
- Almost 110,000 working poor.
- 28% of the population experiencing energy poverty.
- 61% struggling with education costs, including 1/3 of third level students reporting that they are in severe financial difficulty.
- Over 70,000 households on the social housing list.
- Poverty among lone-parent families has doubled since 2012
- And the most distressing and shameful statistic of them all – over 10,000 without a home including nearly 4,000 children.

We have visited someone in every one of those shameful headlines, we have seen the despair and worry of those trying their best 'to get by' and ensure their family have a safe, secure, warm place to live while day to day struggling to put food on the table.

These are words from someone living in poverty; *"I find life very hard not being able to pay all my bills, always putting some on the long finger. The stress makes me sick I'm always worrying knowing my kids have to go without."*

Unfortunately, we hear these kinds of quotes too often on our visits to people struggling, even though the economy is doing well the situation for those stuck in the poverty trap is getting worse. Even though these families are performing miracles every week by surviving on low incomes often in totally inadequate accommodation, some in society feel that they are to blame because they are poor. It's a strange logic when challenged doesn't hold water. We know that they are no different from anyone in society in terms of ability or talent; they just have not had the same opportunities and supports that many in society have enjoyed. Again, we know this because those we have helped with education support have gone on to reach their potential and gain access to a decent job giving them a life of dignity and inclusion.

Even though the bulk of the help we give is for the basics in life – food, shelter, heat, we are putting more and more focus on education supports because we know this is a way to break the poverty cycle for so many. Our education support must span the life of a student from preschool to third level. If the child is not helped in primary and secondary school, it is unlikely they will make it to third level or enter a trade that will provide great employment opportunities. Many of our members have done amazing work in supporting education in the families we visit; we need to learn from them and use their experiences and knowledge to help more.

This Christmas SVP will again ask the great public to support our work, to support those in need in their communities. The support we receive will mean thousands will be able to celebrate a Christmas with dignity, without worry, and will enable us to help them out of the poverty trap going into the New Year.

As the year comes to a close, I wish to sincerely thank all SVP volunteers who work all year round to help those in need and my thanks also extends to those who support us in every way so that we can carry out our work.

I wish you all a happy and peaceful Christmas and best wishes for 2020.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kieran Stafford'.

Kieran Stafford
National President

Online Recruitment 2019

In 2019, the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul began using online forms for Membership applications.

Why online?

Online application processes make it easy to apply to join the Society, helping us reach more compassionate and enthusiastic volunteers in more spaces.

Together with the existing paper forms, this new method helps us to both reach more potential members and streamlines the recruitment process. People can apply online from anywhere, be it at home on their computer or on their commute on their phones.

Online will guarantee a shorter turnaround time on new applications, and we recommend that where possible people are directed to the online system. However, we understand that this online method is not possible for everyone and the existing paper forms and process will still be available.

What does this mean for your conference and your region?

This pilot will operate nationally, with a dedicated staff member ensuring that all parts of the recruitment process run smoothly, working closely with Garda vetting to ensure quick turnaround, Membership support officers will direct any calls into regional office to the National Volunteer/Member Recruitment Co-ordinator, who will follow up with the query, recruitment and vetting process.

Where Conferences have a practice of meeting all potential new members before they join their Conference, this will be accommodated, and all applicants will be invited to meet with a Conference or area president to talk about volunteering in the SVP. We hope that this pilot gives additional support to Conferences in recruiting new members, rather than replacing Conference's process in taking new Members on board.

What does this mean for your shop?

Again, we hope that this will make the recruitment process shorter, and help shops to get interested applicants recruited, trained and volunteering faster.

We will work with shops, aware that many shops have slightly different approaches to taking on volunteers.

We hope that this pilot helps Conferences reach more potential volunteers and will work with regions, areas and Conferences to make sure it serves the Society's current needs.

For more information please email:
Volunteer@svp.ie / retailvolunteers@svp.ie

Become a Volunteer



Volunteer with our Home Visitation Conferences

Please fill out the form below and someone will be in contact with you shortly. Our volunteers agree that the reason why they volunteer is to meet new people like you, to help people in need and to make a difference to their community. We hope that you will enjoy volunteering with SVP Ireland.

First name

Last name

Mobile

Confirm Mobile

Email

Confirm Email



Brexit Budget fails to offer sufficient protection for low income households

*By Tricia Keilthy,
Head of Social Justice & Policy*

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul (SVP) said that improvements in targeted supports for vulnerable groups in Budget 2020 are very positive but that overall the social welfare measures are insufficient.

SVP also said that the measures to offset the impact of carbon tax on low income households are inadequate and many households will be left struggling with increased energy costs notwithstanding the increases in fuel allowance.

Whilst the targeted measures are welcome *“To mitigate the potential impact of Brexit on the poorest households, the Government needed to be proactive and increase social welfare rates for those most at risk of income inadequacy. The failure to do so means hundreds and thousands of households, who are already struggling, will*

fall even further behind. For the same reasons, we are concerned and disappointed we did not hear any announcement in relation to the proposed increase to the National Minimum Wage” said SVP Head of Social Justice and Policy, Dr. Tricia Keilthy.

SVP National President, Kieran Stafford added “The danger of inadequate social welfare is that it can trap people in poverty, leading to greater social, health and economic costs in the future. That’s why Budget 2020 should have sought to reduce the gap between the lowest social welfare rates and the cost of everyday essentials for people.”

Lone parents & work

The measures to improve supports for one parent families who are working was welcomed by SVP. “Earlier this year we published a report which showed that in-work poverty among lone parents more than doubled between 2012 and 2017. The measures announced today, including the improvements in the income supports and the Working Family Payment are very positive and will help reverse this upward trend in poverty among working lone parents,” said Dr. Keilthy.

Energy Poverty

SVP said greater investment in rural transport and the plan to defer carbon tax increases on home heating oil until May 2020 is welcome, however the measures to protect low income households for the impact of carbon tax increases are still unclear.

“It is really important that Fuel Allowance is increased in 2020 because its value has diminished in recent years due to energy price hikes. However, offsetting carbon tax increases through Fuel Allowance is insufficient because the payment is highly means tested. Low income households in rural areas, working poor households and those living in poorly insulated homes in the private rented sector will be particularly impacted by this decision,” said SVP National president, Kieran Stafford.

Education

SVP are concerned that the capitation grant rate was not restored to 2010 levels for primary and second level education. SVP understands that the total budget for such measures is only €4 million which includes a capitation increase for small schools and a pilot scheme for free schoolbooks. This means that parents will continue to pay voluntary contributions to fund their child’s education. There are no proposals to review the income thresholds for the SUSI grant scheme, which is a missed opportunity for people wanting to access further and higher education.

“Access to education is the key to breaking the cycle of poverty but in our experience, costs are a barrier for far too many children



and young people in this country. We strongly believe that everyone should have access to further and higher education and quality, free primary and secondary education but today’s education measures lack ambition,” said Mr. Stafford.

Housing

Regarding the Budget 2020 housing measures, Mr. Stafford said: “Our experience shows that one of the biggest drivers of poverty among families today is housing costs. Parents want and need a place to call home, which is affordable and secure so that they could create a stable routine and environment for their children.

Many of the households we met while completing our recent report, ‘Housing Assistance Payment: Making the right impact?’ told us that living in the private rented sector does not meet their long term housing need due to issues of unsustainable top-ups, poor quality accommodation and tenure security”.

The Society also said that the failure to increase the limits for Rent Supplement and the Housing Assistance payment is disappointing as the gap between the limits and market rent has increased significantly in recent years making it very difficult for low income households to find accommodation.

SVP also said the lack of investment in the National Affordable Rental Scheme is a missed opportunity for low income households needing to access affordable accommodation.

On the whole, we don’t believe that this budget protects those most vulnerable in the event of a No-Deal Brexit.



2020 BUDGET

Summary Assessment of Budget 2020 Measures

Budget 2020 delivered a number of welcome targeted measures which will assist those living on the lowest incomes. However, freezing primary social welfare rates and the minimum wage means many people will be left struggling next year as the cost of living rises. Poverty rates are predicted to increase as a result. Given the scale of the housing crisis and the number of people contacting SVP for help with education costs, Budget 2020 housing and education measures lacked ambition.

SVP asks that were delivered or partially delivered:

1. Lone parents working part-time can now earn €15 extra per week before their primary payment is reduced and the thresholds for the Working Family Payment were increased by €10.
2. Targeted supports for children in the poorest households; €2 extra per week for qualified children under 12 and a €3 weekly increase for children over 12.
3. Increase in the Living Alone Allowance (€5 per week) and Fuel Allowance (€2 for 28 weeks).
4. Restoration of Jobseekers Allowance for young people who live outside the home and those aged 25 (€203).
5. Additional funding to ensure the poorest families can access childcare subsidies.
6. Pilot for free school books at primary level. This is welcome but just €1 million was made available. It would cost €20 million to make school books free for all primary school students.
7. Partial restoration of the capitation rate for primary and secondary schools from €179 to €183 per child. However the rate was €200 in 2010.
8. Increased investment in rural transport.
9. Increased funding for Residential Tenancy Board.
10. Social welfare increases will take effect from January and not March next year.

SVP asks that were not delivered:

1. No increase in the minimum wage and primary social welfare payments. SVP advocated that social welfare rates and the minimum wage are benchmarked against the cost a Minimum Essential Standard of Living.
2. Brexit social welfare contingency package of €400 million doesn't include an allocation to protect those on the lowest incomes from increases in the cost of food and fuel.
3. Increase in the Fuel Allowance will not be sufficient in protecting people from the carbon tax hike particularly those commuting to low paid work, rural communities and those living in poorly insulated privately rented accommodation.
4. A target of 11,000 new social housing units is set for 2020 but with over 70,000 households on the social housing waiting list and over 10,000 people living in emergency accommodation this target is not ambitious. Additionally, the target for 2019 is not being met; just 38 per cent of projected builds were delivered in the first half of this year.
5. €80 million extra was allocated to create HAP tenancies which means further reliance on the private rented sector to meet housing need. Since 2015, the State has spent €600m on HAP.
6. No provision for a national affordable rental scheme.
7. Housing assistance and rent supplement limits remain the same which means the gap between the limits and market rents will widen next year.
8. Lack of landlord incentives and obligations to improve the standard of accommodation in the private rented sector.
9. SUSI inadequacy ignored.
10. Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance thresholds were not changed and Child Benefit was not extended to teenagers over the age of 18 who are still in school.
11. No improvements in supports for people living in direct provision and no additional funding for frontline Department

IT'S THE MOST WORRYING
TIME OF THE YEAR

Some things shouldn't be a family tradition.



Society of St. Vincent de Paul

**ANNUAL
APPEAL**

USEFUL LINKS

Appeal:	svp.ie/appeal
Giving Tree:	svp.ie/givingtree
Giving Tree Guidelines:	svp.ie/givingtreeguidelines
Food Appeal:	svp.ie/foodappeal
Food Appeal Guidelines:	svp.ie/foodappealguidelines
Virtual Gifts:	svp.ie/virtualgifts
Gift Cards:	svp.ie/cards
Corporate Ecards:	svp.ie/ecards

Please give locally or at svp.ie

9398

STUDENTS REACHED



209

SCHOOLS ENGAGED



298

GROUPS VISITED

911

VISITS

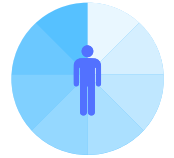


349 social justice w/shops
324 visit to Conference
206 guest speaker talks
32 other



195

YOUNG SVP
GROUPS

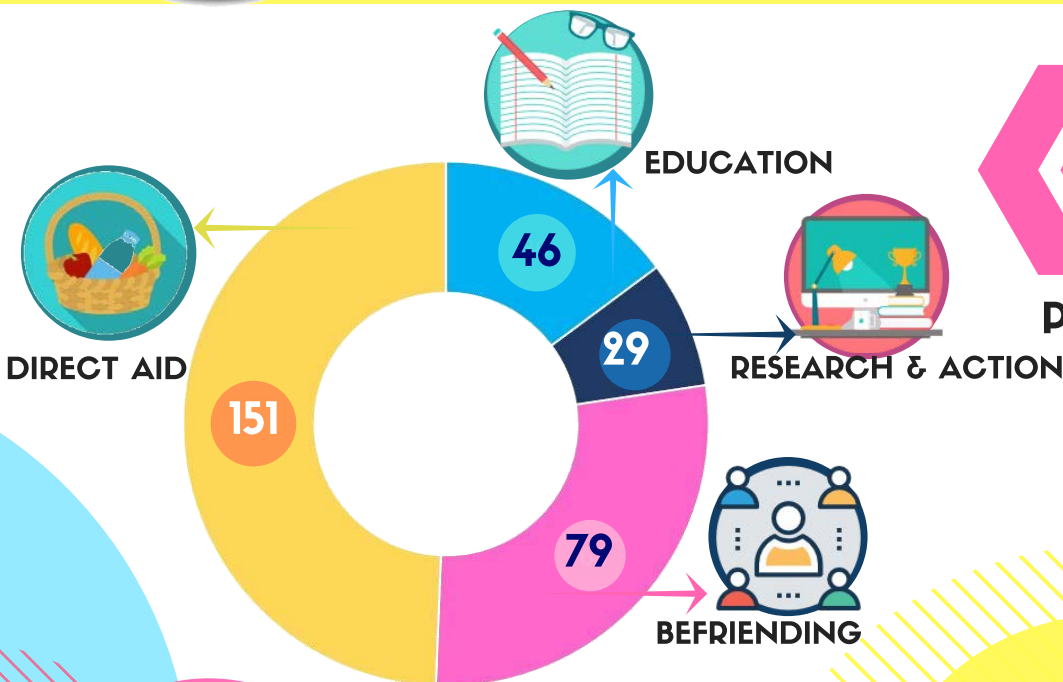


5069

STUDENTS ENGAGED



2018/19 IN NUMBERS



305

PROJECTS COMPLETED

Young SVP 2018/2019



Young SVP is a youth development programme designed for young people attending secondary school / YouthReach and other educational settings; those taking part in youth groups / clubs; and those at 3rd level – be it in college / university. The programme focuses on social action within the ethos and mission of SVP. Young people are offered opportunities to learn about SVP, about social justice and about how to engage in social action in a positive, purposeful and meaningful way. The Young SVP youth development team offers ongoing support to all those engaging in the Young SVP programme – whether part of a Conference, class or Young SVP group. Our Youth Development Officers (YDO) visit groups a number of times through the year to work with them on a number of topics.

In the infographic here you will see our programme statistics for the 2018/19 academic year when the programme was operating across the following regions; East, South East, South West, Mid West, West and North East & Midlands.

- During this time our team of Youth Development Officers (YDOs) delivered a total of 911 school visits across more than 209 different schools, where they informed students about the work of SVP, explored issues of social justice and supported them in designing and delivering activities to address needs in their own communities.

- A total of 9398 young people were reached through our guest speaker visits and over 5000 chose to engage in our developmental schools programme taking part in workshops and designing action projects through the year.
- A total of 311 social action projects were completed by these Young SVP members, in 195 Young SVP Conference / groups this year; helping and supporting many people in local schools and communities.
- The work completed by these students was marked and celebrated across 6 different Regional Youth Days and Exhibitions, with an average of 300 participants attending each of these days. We are thankful to Electric Ireland for their continued support with this programme.

These numbers are an indication of how healthy and vibrant our Young SVP programme has become, but numbers only tell a part of the story. To actually see our young members engaging in their workshops and their actions is inspiring and exciting. I would encourage you (SVP members) to contact me / your regional Youth Development Office to find out more...





On the 2nd October 2019 over 60 students and their teachers from Kildare and Wicklow gathered in Maynooth University for a Young SVP Get Together. The theme was 'Taking the Road Together' inspired by the words of Blessed Frederic Ozanam who said "We took the road together, we will finish it together". The day was an opportunity for students to learn more about Young SVP and to plan how they might like to get involved.

The day began with an opening reflection on the role of young people as creators of change. Becca Gallagher, SVP National Youth Development Coordinator then led everyone in a 'get to know you' activity. The young people heard from Marcella Stakem, Social Justice and Policy Development Officer about why SVP works for Social Justice. Students from Cross and Passion College in Kilcullen and St Mary's College Arklow spoke about why they chose to be part of Young SVP.

The students then spent some time reflecting on the social justice issues they felt strongly about and how they could work together to address these. They chose to look at: hidden poverty, greater awareness of educational options, sustainable fashion, inclusion & diversity and social isolation. We look forward to supporting them to develop these actions.

There was lots of fun had throughout the day with activities, prizes and the ever popular badge making machine!

We ask the students who attended for their feedback on the event. They said that they now had a greater understanding of social justice and inequality and how they could take action.

A big thank you to the students and teachers of: Cross and Passion College, St Mary's College Arklow, West Wicklow Youthreach, Pipers Hill College and Maynooth Post Primary.



**INTERNATIONAL
DAY** for the
**ERADICATION
of POVERTY**
17 OCTOBER



Young SVP joins national campaign for International Day for Eradication of Poverty

Young SVP received funding from the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection to take part in the national campaign around the 17th October, which is the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty. This year's national campaign focused on creating a better future for children, young people and adults, particularly through supporting children's rights. Young SVP took part in the campaign by engaging third-level students nationwide in poverty education and awareness.

Over the week including the 17th October and the following week, Young SVP facilitated a Poverty and the Cost of Living workshop on eight different campuses nationwide, including in Dublin, Maynooth, Cork, Tralee, and Galway. The workshop explores students' perceptions of poverty, develops understanding of how poverty functions in Irish society and around the world, and why some people are more vulnerable to poverty than others. It includes interactive exercises and games to explore students' knowledge and create a dynamic learning environment. Many of the exercises in the workshop are developed from the experiences of SVP visitation volunteers and from our Social Justice research.

The second part of the campaign involves the Survive on Five challenge. Survive on Five is also developed from SVP research, which finds that for someone earning minimum wage, paying average rent, bills and other expenditures, €5 a day is all that remains for food costs. We encouraged students to take the challenge to 'survive' on €5 for all their food and drink each day for five days. The exercise aims to bring to life the challenges of managing the cost of living in a very real and material way.

While many students (and their families) are living on increasingly tight budgets as the costs of third-level education and student accommodation increase, the campaign sought to situate students' experiences in the wider context of poverty in Ireland. Facilitating this workshop with third-level students has been an eye-opening experience, as students are increasingly facing their own financial struggles. While the 17th October has been and gone, the campaign to eradicate poverty continues. We have much work yet to do, but judging by the students we met during this campaign, the young people of Ireland are more than match for it.





Investment in the 'Student' Missing from Budget 2020

*By Marcella Stakem,
Social Policy Development Officer*

Approximately 1 out of every 4 people across the country can be classed as a student. This gives us an idea of the importance education plays for so many people. There was an increase of €360 million to €1.1 billion for education in October's budget. This is a notable investment, however; little attention was directed towards ensuring low income households are supported to access and participate fully in our education system. As a result, SVP members will continue to breach the funding gap needed to participate at all levels.

School Funding

School capitation will increase by 2.5% from September 2020 and €1 million additional funding will be provided for School Books in primary schools, with further details yet to be announced. SVP have advocated that school capitation grants should be restored to 2010 levels in our latest pre-budget submission. This would mean that schools would be less reliant on 'voluntary' contributions and fundraising initiatives from parents. Whilst SVP acknowledges the increase in funding to schools, the reality is 'voluntary' contributions will remain a feature of the primary and post-primary education system. This is a major failure of our Government. SVP members understand the importance of a positive relationship between parents and their child's school. The existence of 'voluntary' contributions means the relationship can be a financial one and not solely on the educational development of their children.

Higher Education and Further Education & Training

An additional €153 million will be made in higher and further education and training in 2020. According to the Department's financial report for Budget 2020, it states 'this significant level of investment will be used to respond to demographic pressures and to underpin a range of initiatives in the higher and further education and training sector, including key enhancements for teaching and learning, as well as providing skills-enhancing opportunities for those individuals, sectors and regions most vulnerable to Brexit or requiring updated skills in the world of work transformed by technology and automation'.

There were no changes to the student contribution, SUSI grant or any increased funding for the Student Assistance Fund in Budget 2020.

Student numbers are at a record high of 235,644 in 2017/2018 in Further and Higher Education institutions. Almost 100,000 SUSI applications are received annually and almost 80,000 grants are awarded, representing a sum of €350 million annually in grant support to students. However, despite the record numbers accessing education, SUSI grant recipients numbers have fallen by 4,022 (5%) in a period of four years. As a result, SUSI'S expenditure was cut by €2 million in 2019 as it is deemed to be a demand led service. SVP have recommended that the income thresholds be reviewed as well as the amounts payable. It is clear that neither reflect the current cost of living for families.

The amount payable under SUSI to recipients has remained the same since 2012. The DIT Campus Living Guide outlines conservative estimates for monthly expenditure, excluding fees, for a student living away from home at €1,314. Grants do not come close to covering costs, even at the highest rate of €658.00 per month. Costs include, accommodation, food, utility bills, college books, materials and transport. It is little wonder that SVP members state they are visiting households who are feeling anxious, stressed and vulnerable because of the costs involved in attending third level education.

The intended purpose of the non-adjacent grant rate is to provide additional support to those students who may need to commute to college. In many rural areas, the frequency and accessibility of public transport has not increased while the cost of transport has. In 2011, under the 24km criterion, 77% of those being paid the maintenance grant were eligible for the non-adjacent grant rate, which is the higher rate that can support them by enabling them to live closer to their college or commute. In 2018, under the 45km criterion, the proportion who are eligible have dropped to 52%. The situation has not changed for these families, the distance they live from college has not changed but the support they are offered has. This has a considerable impact on students and their families.

At every level of the education system the Government must continue to increase funding. However, that funding must be directed towards those students who are struggling to access and participate in education. If we truly believe that education is a lifelong pursuit that creates equality of opportunity and outcomes for all our people, Budget 2020 needed to play a much greater part in that conversation.

Update on work of the National Member Training Development Recruitment (NMTDR) Committee

Since the NMTDR Committee was formed in 2017, the focus of its work has been to improve and further develop recruitment and training of probationary and existing members. The recent transition to online recruitment, while posing some challenges, is proving to be an effective means of inducting new members to the Society. With increased public scrutiny on charities and non-profit organisations, the adoption and use of an online recruitment system by St. Vincent DePaul Ireland ensures key responsibilities such as garda vetting, reference-gathering and assignment to training of new members will be correctly sequenced and completed – essential steps towards protecting probationary members, those we serve and the Society itself.

Blended Learning – Induction Training

At present, the Society is moving towards a blended-learning model for Induction Training. Until recently, new members and probationary members attended face-to-face training in their Region, covering the key modules of History, Poverty, Structure, Safeguarding and Visitation. Full completion required a commitment to several evenings or weekends. Unfortunately, CRM figures indicated a significant percentage of incomplete training by probationary members, resulting in many not achieving full membership. A national Society dependent on volunteer-leadership, such as ours, cannot afford to lose potential volunteers and should do everything to ensure their Vincentian vocation is supported.

With this vocation in mind, our Rule makes special reference to the 'formation of members' and the essential nature of volunteer training (The Rule, Part 1, 3.12). Blended learning, through a combination of online training (delivered through computer, iPad, tablet-devices and smart phone) and face-to-face training (led by Society volunteer-trainers) should improve both the reach and quality of our Induction Training. Since August, History, Poverty, Structure and Safeguarding modules are now delivered via an online training platform called Moodle. Probationary members are assigned a link to this website and then progress through each module at their own pace. A record of their training is automatically generated and stored by the Moodle system. Following successful completion of these online modules, the probationary member is assigned, by their MSO, to a face-to-face Visitation training event conducted by the volunteer training team in their Region or an adjacent Region. The Visitation module has recently been updated and is completed during one three hour session.

The New Visitation module

With History/Poverty/Structure and Safeguarding now online, volunteer Induction trainers are now almost entirely focussed

on the Visitation module. This is crucial, since visitation is the core of our work and its correct conduct essential if we are to meet the needs of those we serve. The new module has now been trialled over five separate training events, with both trainers and new volunteers. Feedback, received from each session, was incorporated throughout.

The new module revises what the probationary member has learned during the online training, particularly regarding the ethos of the Society. It then focusses on how our ethos informs home visits, emphasising our non-judgmental approach, our offer of support and friendship, and development of self-sufficiency in those we serve. It re-emphasises core safeguarding principles through case study discussion. The module has been designed to maximise trainee engagement through discussion, group work and skills-based exercise. It emphasises the need for Active Listening by members during their visits. In an age of distraction, this skill is becoming increasingly rare and its loss jeopardises our ability to truly help others.

As mentioned earlier, the adoption of blended-learning in Induction Training is part of the Society's 'adaptation to a Changing World' (The Rule, Part 1, 1.6) and effort to renew itself. There are however occasions where online modules will not suit all trainees. Special arrangements can be put in place for such volunteers with the assistance of the MSO and Regional Volunteer Training Representative.

Future directions in Member Training and Development
Our Committee view is that all volunteers should be trained for the roles they occupy and developed for future leadership roles should they wish. Several challenges must be overcome to achieve this. Perhaps the greatest is inertia – the view amongst experienced members that training is irrelevant and gets in the way of the Society's real work. The Rule states that 'on-going training is a requirement in the life of each Conference...' (The Rule, Part 1, 3.12, commentary) and we fully recognise that training modules must continue to adapt to member needs and trainers must train to the highest standards.

In 2020 we hope to expand training for existing members through an Advanced Visitation module developed by Julie Ann Ramsell and the SW Region Training Team. Additionally, we hope to significantly increase Area President Training and revise the Conference President module. Additionally, we hope to run a Train-the-Trainer for those with the necessary communication skills to become a volunteer trainer. If you are interested please contact your Regional Volunteer Training Representative or email us at volunteertraining@svp.ie. Finally, thank you for your continued support and patience as we introduce these changes.



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There is a social gradient in ill health and earlier deaths:

Poor people die younger

(First published in *The Irish Times* on June 5, 2019) *By John FitzGerald*

Inequality in life expectancy has received much less attention than income inequality

One of the best indicators of human wellbeing is that we are now living longer. The last official figures, based on the 2011 Census, showed life expectancy at birth for men was about 80, and for women almost 83.

Over the preceding century life expectancy has grown massively by over 26 years.

A child born in 1911 could only expect to reach 54 years on average, although if that child reached their teens this rose to 64. This was because infant mortality and subsequent childhood diseases took a huge toll at that time. In addition, the lives of many women born at that time were shortened through deaths in childbirth.

Prof Brendan Walsh has charted how improvements in child and maternal mortality were the big drivers of improved life expectancy in the first half of the 20th century, while better health in old age is now the most significant factor.

Life expectancy has continued to rise in the first decade of this century, with boys born in 2011 expected to live three years longer than those born in 2002. We still lag a little behind the best-performing EU states, although ahead of most Eastern European countries.

The new life tables based on the 2016 Census, when available, are likely to show there has been a continuing increase. It will be important to fully factor growing life expectancy into our population projections to estimate what we need to provide for our future older population in terms of health, social care and pensions.

Funding old age will be a key challenge for the generation entering the labour market today.

Social determinants

Poor life expectancy today is related to many factors such as deprivation, social class and education level. International and Irish studies show there is a social gradient in ill-health and earlier deaths: poor people die younger.

Social determinants of health include income; access to public services; psychosocial factors like stress and isolation; and behaviour or lifestyle factors like smoking, diet and exercise.

CSO data just published show that life expectancy at birth for those with limited education, those living in Ireland's most deprived communities, and those from an unskilled social class is much lower than for the rest of the population. Professionals

and those with a third-level education live longer.

No one factor, such as education, is the cause of lower life expectancy; rather it is a symptom of a high degree of social deprivation and poorer life chances among those who have left school early.

For example, children with psychological or social problems from a deprived background may drop out of school early. In such cases the low level of educational attainment is a result of other underlying problems. Nonetheless, research elsewhere does suggest that, controlling for other factors, education does have some significant effect on life expectancy.

Today, when the great majority do a Leaving Cert, school drop-out may be associated with other life difficulties such as family breakdown, mental health issues or involvement in drugs. Those concerned may be more vulnerable to risky lifestyles, such as reckless driving or involvement in criminality, which carry a greater likelihood of early death.

So while lack of education may not be a cause of premature death, it may be linked to other high-risk factors.

Primary-level education

A 2012 ESRI paper (FitzGerald, Byrne and Žnuderl) showed that a higher death rate among those with only primary-level education was particularly striking for young men under 35. Young women with limited education also had a lower life expectancy, but the difference was much smaller than in the case of young men.

Most deaths of young men are due to injuries, not to natural causes, with suicides and road deaths the most common. Such deaths are more likely among the socially vulnerable or those with risky lifestyles.

An important factor in these early deaths among men are incidents involving cars. Thankfully since 2006 this has been a key area of Irish behaviour that has seen a transformation. Deaths arising from motor incidents for males aged between 15 and 29 have been halved, and there has also been a reduction in deaths due to suicide. This reduction in deaths will have significantly increased life expectancy for this particular disadvantaged cohort over the last decade.

Inequality in life expectancy has received much less attention than income inequality.

Much of the commentary on our health system focuses on waiting times for hospital treatment. Arguably we should be paying just as much attention to problems of poverty and education drop-out as determinants of health outcomes.

Brexit Budget overshadows Housing Crisis

By Marcella Stakem,
Social Policy Development Office



Budget 2020 saw a continued increase in funding towards the Housing and Homeless crisis. However, it is likely to be insufficient as Government's spending focus was on Brexit preparations. This was a necessary task but should not have been at the expense of the most vulnerable in our society, some of whom are without a home.

Social Housing

A Budget of €2.63 billion was allocated to housing in Budget 2020, a 11% increase in Budget 2019. The Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government, stated in a post budget speech the social housing needs of 27,517 households are to be met in 2020. 11,167 new homes will be added to the stock of social housing through build, acquisition and long-term leasing.

Of the 11,16 new homes, 7,736 will be new builds. These are targets, which have been missed in the past. The latest figures show just 38% of projected 'builds' were delivered in the first half of this year, accounting for 10% of all social housing output in that period.

In 2018, there were approximately 7,500 publicly owned houses built or acquired by local government. To put in context, in 1975, 8,500 council houses were built when the country did not have a housing and homeless crisis.

These are important figures from the point of view of the households SVP members support. The increased budget allocation will not be of benefit to these families if the required houses are not in existence. Secondly, it is a valid question to ask if the targets are indeed accurate. The state built more council housing in 1975 when we did not have an estimated half a million people in distress due to their housing situation.

Affordable Housing

The Minister also stated that Budget 2020 will see increased funding for the Serviced Site Fund. This scheme for subsidised housing will increase to €126 million in 2020, 'making thousands of homes more affordable (at least 6,200 overall affordable homes will be delivered with support from this scheme, with 3,200 homes already approved)'.

Currently, the estimated cost of some 'affordable housing' is €300,000-€320,000. Household income would need to reach between €77,150 and €82,300 per year to service such a mortgage. In addition, a deposit of approximately €30,000 would be needed. SVP members support households who are on low incomes who simply cannot afford to pay those amounts. A complete review of what is deemed to be 'affordable' needs to take place.

Energy Efficiency Standards

1,000 social homes will be improved under the energy efficiency programme in 2020 through funding of €25 million. €20 million, derived from the proceeds of the Carbon Tax, is being provided towards a new programme of deep retrofitting of social housing stock in the midlands. These are welcome initiatives as many SVP members report the poor standards of some local authority properties.

An additional €1.5 million in funding for local authorities to achieve their inspection targets under the strategy for the Rental Sector was announced in Budget 2020. Additional investment to improve the quality of some private rented accommodation is needed alongside this announcement. In our recent report with housing charity Threshold, 'Housing Assistance Payment: Making the Right Impact?', the standard of some private rented accommodation is of real concern to SVP members.

Addressing Homelessness in Budget 2020

Approximately, €166 million will be allocated in Budget 2020 on prevention and the delivery of services for people experiencing homelessness. This is a €20 million increase from last year's budget announcement.

Whilst SVP accepts the acute need for accommodation for families and individuals experiencing homelessness, much greater investment is needed to prevent the trauma of homelessness in the first place. The Government spent €147 million on emergency accommodation in 2018, while spending €9 million on prevention. This is unacceptable.

Private Rented Sector

There was an extra €2 million allocated to the Residential Tenancies Board to allow it to enforce Rent Pressure Zones regulations. However, there were no measures announced to reduce rents for those struggling in the private rented sector.

There is an additional €80 million for the HAP scheme in Budget 2020. With such a shortage in private rented accommodation, particularly accommodation that is within HAP limits,



families and individuals will continue to struggle. For example, a report by the Simon Communities of Ireland show that just 55 out of 1,491 properties surveyed were affordable for those in receipt of standard Government assisted housing payments.

Everyone deserves a home that is safe and secure. Whilst Budget 2020 will assist in achieving that reality for some families, it fails to understand the scale of the crisis and therefore has failed to invest appropriately and sufficiently.



Croí na Gaillimhe a Resource Centre of SVP honoured by a visit to Áras an Uachtaráin for the work they do with Asylum Seekers and Refugees

By Sally O'Halloran one of Croí na Gaillimhe's Fáilte Isteach Volunteers (Conversational English.)

On 19th June President of Ireland, Michael D Higgins hosted a garden party to high-light the work of Irish organisations that welcome and support refugees.

As a volunteer with Croí na Gaillimhe, I was privileged to have been invited to attend together with several people from other organisations in Galway.

So we all dressed up and set off by bus at approx. 9.30 am. We stopped for a coffee in Applegreen where we met lots of other groups who were also heading to the "party".

When we reached the Áras, we had to go through security and produce ID and our invite. Then the bus dropped us off at the front door where we took some photos before entering the house. We walked through the formal rooms where we met and were welcomed by Sabina and then out into the garden.

Many of those attending were dressed in their national costumes, so there was great colour and vibrancy about.

There was lots of outdoor entertainment, and people either sat around chatting or walked the beautiful gardens. There we saw Michael D Higgins mingling about with Brod and Sioda at his heels!

All 400+ guests were asked to move into the marquee where we were wined and dined. Ryan Tubridy was Master of Ceremonies, and he welcomed everybody and introduced Michael D, who took to the stage closely followed by his two loyal friends Brod & Sioda!

In his speech, he mentioned that *"we Irish are a migrant people and we must always recognise both the responsibility and blessing that it is to respond to the needs of migrants, wherever they maybe"*.

He called out every organisation/group that was represented to great applause and got an incredible reception.

Music continued, and Sabina led the dancing!

We then got on our bus and headed back west, having enjoyed an extraordinary day.

Exceptional Volunteers to be honoured at National Awards Ceremony and we have one of our own volunteers from Croí na Gaillimhe shortlisted under the Social Inclusion Category

Volunteer Ireland announced the shortlist for the twelfth annual Volunteer Ireland Awards. Over 1 million people in Ireland volunteer and these awards aim to celebrate the hard work and dedication of volunteers across the country.

Aged 10 to 80 from sixteen counties, this year's shortlist is a showcase of the breadth and depth of volunteering in Ireland. From mental health to sport to homelessness, volunteers have an invaluable impact on communities across Ireland every day. For example:

Marian Merick, Croí na Gaillimhe

Marian has been at the forefront of asylum seeker and refugee support in Galway for 20 years. She first got involved in the late 90's with a small group who painted over racist graffiti in Galway City. From there, she was a founder member of the Galway Refugee Support Group volunteering in all aspects of the service, including board membership. For the past five years Marian has been volunteering with Croí na Gaillimhe a Resource Centre of St Vincent de Paul, based in Mill Street, Galway.

Croí na Gaillimhe is a city centre based resource offering a range of social and educational supports to people. The centre relies on a team of 70 weekly volunteers to deliver its services and as well as offering services to all members of the public. Croí na Gaillimhe works with people affected by poverty isolation and social exclusion, including older people, intergenerational groups, adults with a range of educational needs and socially isolated men, migrants and asylum seekers (adult and children). It offers specific services to people living in the two direct provision centres in Galway. Marian leads one of these teams supporting people with their International Protection Office questionnaires and preparation for asylum seeker interviews and appeals. She volunteers approximately 20 hours per week doing case work and country of origin research. This is intensive work, often requiring long hours of work doing an individual timeline outlining some ones reasons for leaving their country and examining why they can't return. It requires great sensitivity, empathy and trust.

In 2014 she established a specialist team of case workers and interpreters, offering one to one support to people as they prepared for their interview with the Department of Justice. This involves preparing a detailed timeline of the sequence of events which lead to a person leaving their country of origin and



Marian Merick, Croí na Gaillimhe

reasons why they cannot return. Marian spends time with each client, working to ensure that they present as accurate account of their story as possible. She regularly provides legal teams with the critical country of origin material which can change the outcome for the person. We have no doubt that the Marians work has made a major impact on the outcomes for people seeking asylum or subsidiary protection in Galway. But above all Marian is a woman who cares deeply about social justice and doing all she can to prevent injustice. The women and men living in direct provision in Galway are the people that know this most.

The 12th Volunteer Ireland Awards take place on Friday 6th December in the Carlton Hotel, Blanchardstown, Dublin-15. Shortlisted nominees along with their family and friends will be treated to a night of celebration where we'll announce the winners in each category and name Ireland's Volunteer of the Year for 2019.

Keynote Address by Most Reverend Denis Nulty, Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin to SVP National Council 2019



It's my privilege to join you, volunteer leaders of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, Area Presidents and members of the SVP National Management Council. I thank Brendan Hennessy for the very kind invitation and for briefing me on your gathering. I warmly greet your National President Kieran Stafford and National Vice-President for Members, Rose McGowan and indeed all of you who have travelled from across Ireland to attend this National Council in this the 175th year of the SVP in Ireland. I understand your day here in the beautiful Killeslin Hotel is around the theme of *"The art of Communication is the language of Leadership"*. A chance for you to care for the carer - to nourish the hand that feeds, that presses doorbells, that holds the hands of others in hostels, hospitals and homes.

As I prepared the finishing touches to this text last evening Damien rang my doorbell around 6.30pm. Damien stays often in

the SVP Hostel in the former Christian Brothers Residence on the Old Dublin Road, Carlow, up the way from where I live. He is a regular to my door, a good guy who has fallen on hard times. I'm kind of en route to the hostel. Damien came for the usual few euro and a prayer. Fr. Seán called in around an hour later, still a very active priest at 83. He told me about the Thursday night Society of Vincent de Paul meetings he attended for years, while serving in Graiguecullen parish and how the members left that meeting in two's to visit those most in need. Two SVP stories in the matter of one hour on a wet Friday night in Carlow.

There was a lovely line in an interview in the Tablet magazine three weeks ago with the Dominican Timothy Radcliffe. He was speaking about the late Jean Vanier. He said *"you know, talking, preaching, is primarily not about what you say but about who you are. You have to communicate with your whole body. Jean Vanier did this. He radiated joy"*. Vanier understood the language of frailty and I think members of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul are also greatly in tune with this language of frailty. I'll come back to this later.

It's the second day of November – All Soul's Day and All Soul's Month. Last month October was very much the Harvest Thanksgiving month! The harvest is more than what comes into our barns, our sheds, our driers, our silos. It's also what's left for the birds, for the insects, for the wild animals and as that well known Harvest Thanksgiving Leviticus text reminds us *"you must leave them for the poor and the stranger"*. My father always insisted on my brothers not cutting to the very edge of the field when harvesting, something must remain then and now. I think this is the heart, the niggles of the calling an individual hears to become a member of the St. Vincent de Paul Society. So where do you find the poor and who is the stranger, lost at the edges in the Ireland of 2019?

There are many challenges within which the Society operates, very different from the Ireland of 1844 when the Society established its first conference here. I'll just briefly mention three this afternoon:

1. Firstly, the record figures for homelessness must cause concern to people like yourselves. Official figures just released by the Department of Housing last Thursday suggest 10,397 people are living in emergency accommodation. We know those figures are very much a snap shot, a moment in time. How many this evening will couch-surf with friends? Where are those figures counted? How many adults have returned home to live with parents, strangers, blood ties but not much else, tip toeing under the one roof, living with a lack of self-esteem and autonomy? And the most frightening statistic of all, the number of children living without a home, last Thursday's official figure suggested 3,873. It is said that this is the highest number of children ever recorded in emergency accommodation. Of course you know what I'm saying, you people meet these people every week

after your local conference meet, maybe on a wet Tuesday or a windy Thursday. It is not my intention to bamboozle you with figures or statistics but just to contextualise the Ireland we all operate in.

2. Secondly, today's culture of compliance - having codes of conduct to ensure our conferences are safe places for children and vulnerable adults is essential to the Society and it's mission. Keeping controls on the data we keep and knowing why we keep it? And the Charities Governance Code – reminding us of the minimum standards we should meet to effectively manage and control our charity. Good governance involves putting in place systems and processes to ensure that the Society achieves its charitable objectives with integrity and is managed in an effective, efficient, accountable and transparent way. And rightly so, because we are dealing with other people's money. But compliance comes with a cost. What impact is compliance having on our ministry of mercy today as members of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul? What affect is compliance having on maybe an aging and tiring membership within an ethos of volunteerism?
3. Thirdly, as of yesterday RTE News reported there were 5,983 asylum seekers accommodated in Direct Provision Centres, 1,531 in emergency accommodation and 290 children in these centres. Eighteen of the twenty-six counties have centres. There are four centres in Kildare & Leighlin diocese – two in Laois (The Montague, Emo and the Hibernian, Abbeyleix) and two in Kildare (The Eyre Powell in Newbridge and the Hazel in Monasterevin). Figures earlier this week suggest that 520 asylum seekers are accommodated in these four centres. It concerns me and should concern you as a Society that some parts of the country seem to have developed amnesia as to how our ancestors were made welcome in other lands and other times. How does C ad M ile Failte Romhat exactly translate in the Ireland of 2019? Direct Provision was introduced into Ireland in 2000 as a temporary solution then, and here we are nineteen years later. As a system it needs to be completely overhauled and made fit for purpose. People need reassurance that there is nothing to be fearful of and everything to be grateful for. Those coming here have suffered enough trauma already on their journey to us on the edge of Europe than to endure more suffering when they arrive at their appointed destination. Many will want to return to their own people, their own families, their own land; more may stay and seek naturalisation. Let's do our bit as a Society to speak for those with no voice, no language and no coordinates of their own in 2019.

Returning to Jean Vanier who died on May 7th last at ninety years of age. In 1980 he resigned from his position as director of L'Arche community in Northern France to take up a sab-

atical opportunity. After that year he moved to La Forestiere, a L'Arche house for people with severe disabilities. Everything in that new one-storey building was constructed around the needs of those with disabilities. The altar in the chapel was very low, allowing a person stretched on the ground to follow what was happening. A recent edition of the Plough Quarterly magazine gave a powerful description of the La Forestiere Vanier ministered in. No one was excluded, everyone included. Vanier noticed in La Forestiere people took their time, the community seemed to move in slow motion. Plenty of time to bathe Eric, a resident whose body was curled up by disability and despair – slowly unknitting his limbs, letting him feel the warm water; letting him play with the soap, washing him. Plenty of time to feed Lucien so that he might feel the pleasure of tasting, swallowing and smelling the food. While someone gently wiped away the saliva from Henrietta's chin, someone else gently took Loic hand, who had just struck himself violently on the nose. At La Forestiere Vanier had to learn to understand the language of the body, a language of tenderness and frailty.

It's the language of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul as you hold that partner's hand in a sterile Prison Waiting Room. It's the language of the Society as you leave in pairs to knock on doors on wintry nights. On doors where your call will possibly be the only contact with the outside world in that week. It's the language of the Society as you take on leadership roles within your conference, knowing you are doing it not because it's your turn but because it's the right thing to do and you are the right person to do it.

The recently canonised Saint John Henry Newman reminds us *"God has created me to do him some service; he has committed some work to me which he has not committed to another". Your call is to be a member of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. Yours is to recognise the broken, the poor, the suffering and as Pope Francis reminds us "in this call to recognise him in the poor and the suffering, we see revealed the very heart of Christ, his deepest feelings and choices ..."*.

The challenge for all of us is to meet the person, not just their problem. It's using the language of frailty and not being afraid to make that our narrative. We communicate with every fibre of our body; in the Society we bring ourselves, not just our good worthy intentions. If that was all it was, we could easily engage a courier to deliver the weekly envelopes or vouchers. Our visit to that prison, to that hospital, to that hostel, to that flat is as important as what we hand out when we arrive there.

Your collection takes precedence over every other appeal; you stand inside church grounds collecting. The weekend collection is well signposted in bulletins and newsletters. The generosity of what you receive allows you to continue the great, quiet apostolate you and those before you, have been compassionately doing for 175 years in this land. Long may that continue.



Sacred Heart Conference SVP, Castlebar Annual Pilgrimage to Knock Shrine, 2019

Every year, the Sacred Heart Conference SVP in Castlebar bring residents, patients and service users from the Sacred Heart Hospital to Knock Shrine. Numbers vary from year to year but generally the average is between 50 and 60. All must receive medical clearance before they embark on the journey.

The members of the Conference are assisted each year by nurses, nursing aids and staff from the Sacred Heart Hospital and the Day Care Unit. Further assistance is provided by the Irish Wheelchair Association staff and volunteers from St Johns Ambulance organisation. The pilgrimage would not be possible without such wonderful support.

The format of the pilgrimage follows a certain pattern or routine developed by our President Anne Leonard and executed her SVP team and additional volunteers. It runs as follows on a time scale basis.

- 12.45pm: All SVP members and volunteers assemble at the hospital along with all the transport facilities; coach, wheelchair buses, cars etc.
- 1.45pm: All residents, patients and service users are boarded on relevant transport as per requirements.
- 1.50pm: Depart for Knock Shrine

- 2.30pm: Arrive at St Johns Rest and Care Centre at Knock Shrine. Allow for all to disembark and avail of facilities at the Centre (including refreshments if required)
- 2.50 pm: Assemble in Basilica for Mass at 3pm including blessing of the sick etc.
- 4.15 pm: After mass, re-assemble in the Rest and Care Centre for meal – various sandwiches prepared by SVP members, scones, cakes, tarts, buns, biscuits, teas, coffee and afterwards (if desired) mild alcoholic or non-alcoholic drinks, followed by music, singing and dancing and some shopping if time permits.
- 6pm: Return to the Sacred Heart Hospital, Castlebar and assist with the arrangements for all residents, patients and Day Care Unit users to be safely escorted home.

The members of the Sacred Heart Conference feel privileged to be allowed carry out this annual activity. In particular they wish to express sincere thanks to the Director of Nursing and her staff and all the volunteers for their unstinted cooperation and service over so many years.

Also, the members are thankful to their predecessors in the Conference for initiating and organising the pilgrimage day in the past and proving above all that 'our work never springs from ourselves alone'.

Paving a pathway out of poverty



The Society of
St Vincent de Paul
Ireland

ANNUAL REPORT 2018

Read online at svp.ie/annualreport

Society Highlights 2018

What we do

In 2018, SVP recorded 160,377 requests for help. In response to these, we provide practical support to people in need through a wide range of services.

Visitation

Home Visitation is the core activity of the Society in which the majority of our members partake.

Our volunteers spend time talking with those who request our help to ensure we fully understand the issues they are facing which enables us to provide the best support possible.

Our support can be either non-financial or financial in order to alleviate the impact of poverty and social exclusion. In 2018, we provided €32.4 million to individuals and families. (2017: €29.6 million).

Service Provision

In addition to our Visitation work, we provide a wide range of services, some government funded for vulnerable people.

Such services include 7 resource centres, 10 emergency homeless services (300 beds in hostels), social housing (c. 862 Units), 5 holiday homes, prison visitor centres, children/young adult services and day-care centres.

In 2018 we expended €18.9 million (2017: €18.4 million) on such services accounting for 23% of the Society's total expenditure.

Community Charity Shops

The Society has 228 community charity shops. Our Vincent's shops are a very important aspect of service provided by SVP.

Not only do they provide people with new and lightly worn items at affordable prices, they also provide an income source for the Society, which is reinvested directly back into the community.

Members & Volunteers



13,501

Requests for Help



160,377

Social Housing & Hostel Units



1,162

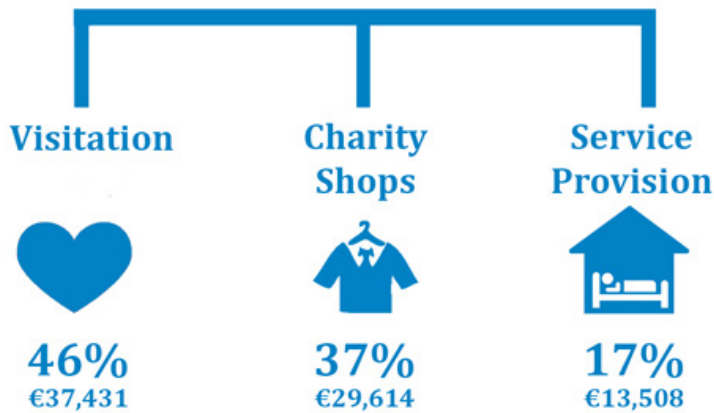
Shop Locations



228

Income 2018

Value € '000



In 2018, total income for the Society was €80.6 million (2017: €82.2 million). We couldn't carry out our vital work without the generosity of our many donors.

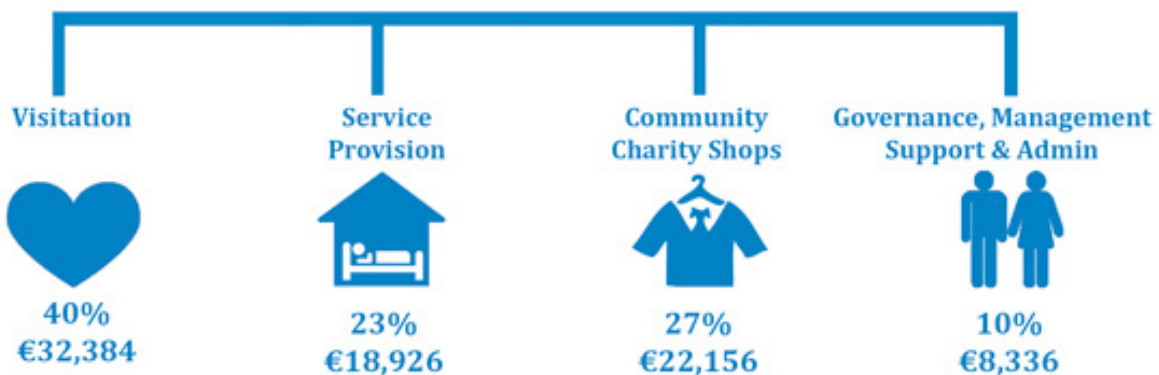
SVP is committed to complying with the standards outlined in the Guidelines for Charitable Organisations on Fundraising from the Public and formally adopted the statement in 2013.

Our Financial Statements for the Society are available at

www.svp.ie/finance

Expenditure 2018

Value € '000



In 2018, Total Expenditure was €81.8 million (2017: €76.5 million). Visitation work includes non-financial support, advisory assistance, befriending and supporting access to social services. In addition assistance to individuals can be direct financial support, foods, fuel and support with utility bills.

Our Services including social housing, homeless services, resource centres, holiday homes etc., accounting for 23% of the Society's total expenditure.

Charity shops account for 27% of the Society's total expenditure with management, support, governance and administration representing 10% of the Society's total expenditure in 2018.

FINANCIAL REPORTS

	Year 2018			Year 2017		
	Income €'000	Expended €'000	Net €'000	Income €'000	Expended €'000	Net €'000
Visitation	37,431	31,082	6,349	39,304	28,371	10,933
<i>Twinning</i>	-	320	-320	-	408	-408
<i>Fundraising</i>	-	982	-982	-	846	-846
SUBTOTAL	37,431	32,384	5,047	39,304	29,625	9,679
Services						
<i>Hostels</i>	5,826	7,035	-1,209	6,022	7,114	-1,092
<i>Social Housing</i>	2,972	3,878	-906	2,778	3,464	-686
<i>Holiday Homes, Resource Centres, etc.</i>	4,710	8,013	-3,303	5,183	7,776	-2,593
SUBTOTAL	13,508	18,926	-5,418	13,983	18,354	-4,371
<i>Charity Shops</i>	29,614	22,156	7,458	28,876	20,137	8,739
<i>Governance, Management, Support & Admin</i>	-	8,336	-8,336	-	8,362	-8,362
TOTAL	80,553	81,802	-1,249	82,163	76,478	5,685

Our Financial Statements for the Society are available at www.svp.ie/finance

Balance Sheet 2018

The Society's Reserves were €155.5 million at December 2018.

This is made up of:

- Restricted & Designated Reserves €28.0m
- Property Valuation Reserves €80.8m
- General Reserves €46.6m

The cash balance is the aggregate of all Conferences, Areas, Regions and National.

The cash balance is held across the Conferences and Councils of the Society (No. 1,200+). The months of November and December are key months for the Society's fund-raising. Cash balance are related to restricted and designated funds, funds held for sinking funds requirements, funds to meet obligations under SLAs (Service Level Agreements) and Conference purposes.

The Society provides a wide range of services for vulnerable people through its property. The properties include social housing, hostels, resources centres, charity shops, day-care centres and holiday homes.

Financial Position	Year 2018 €'000	Year 2017 €'000	Movement €'000
Property, Tangible Assets	108,542	116,318	-7,776
<i>Investment and Other</i>	146	140	6
SUBTOTAL	108,688	116,458	-7,770
Current Assets			
<i>Stock</i>	33	37	-4
<i>Debtors</i>	3,027	3,527	-500
<i>Cash at Bank and in Hand</i>			
- <i>Restricted/Designated</i>	28,026	21,097	6,929
- <i>General</i>	55,808	60,390	-4,582
TOTAL ASSETS	195,582	201,509	-5,927
Liabilities			
<i>Creditors falling due within 1 Year</i>	6,820	6,424	396
<i>Creditors and Deeds of Mortgages</i>	33,344	32,955	389
NET ASSETS	155,418	162,130	-6,712
Funds of the Society			
<i>Restricted</i>	5,263	5,789	-526
<i>Property Valuations</i>	80,817	84,902	-4,085
<i>Designated Funds</i>	22,763	15,308	7,455
<i>General Funds</i>	46,575	56,131	-9,556
TOTAL FUNDS	155,418	162,130	-6,712

THE CHOICE



'Searing honesty'
THE IRISH TIMES

'Just the best sports book of the year'
THE SUNDAY TIMES

PHILLY McMAHON

THE NO. 1 BESTSELLER

Two brothers take different paths in life, one path ends in tragedy

By Jim Walsh

Meeting people who continuously have to make choices is nothing new to SVP members.

Every day they visit people making simple choices; What bill to pay? Can I afford the bus fare? How do I say no to my child who wants to go on a school trip?

In his book *"The Choice"* Dublin GAA All-Ireland winner and All-Star Philly McMahon says that choice is the most powerful thing that anyone of us has in our lives.

McMahon's book is intensely personal and moving. At its core is his relationship with his older brother John. The choices they made took them down different paths in life. Philly to become a highly decorated footballer, successful businessman and dedicated advocate for disadvantaged young people, John lost to drug addiction.

Both came from a good family with hardworking and loving parents doing the best for their children in an environment where drug use was a common feature of life.

While it is a book about sport, it is one that has meaning way beyond the white lines of Croke Park.

Philly McMahon's brother John was seven years his senior. It is evident that they loved each other. On the morning of a major game, Philly tries to visit John's grave near Dublin airport to have a few words, *"I know that you can't hear me John, but just by getting in the car and driving here to think about you, even if it is only for a few minutes it feels like we are spending a little bit of time together again, Brothers."*

"I am who I am because of your choices, John. I saw your mistakes and your pain, and they pushed me the other way."

It is clear that Philly McMahon worshipped his brother and tried to protect him, as John had protected him many times growing up. But that wasn't always the way he felt.

Before he became Philly McMahon, he was Philip Caffrey. All the family had been raised as Caffrey's, his mother's name, but he switched to his father's name, McMahon to put as much distance as possible between himself and John. He writes *"all I wanted was to have a normal family life... it made me so angry at John."*

Philly McMahon grew up in Ballymun and writes with a fondness for the area. For those who do not know Ballymun, it is a suburb on the northside of Dublin city.

It has been described as one of the most disadvantaged areas of the country, and the lack of access to third-level education is a major contributing factor.

Figures from the 2011 census show that only 21% of students from Ballymun went on to third level education with 12% attending vocational or non-degree level courses and only 9% attending degree or postgraduate course.

Ironically last month a report from the Higher Education Authority (HEA) highlighted the gap that continues to exist as students in more affluent areas in the Dublin are progressing to college at a much higher rate than pupils in disadvantaged areas.

The Dublin 6W/Terenure area recorded the highest number of school leavers going on to third level (94 per cent). While those in Dublin 11, which includes Ballymun recorded 43%. When it came to progression for high points courses, the figure in Dublin 11 dropped to 25%.

Sport brought Philly McMahon down a path that took him away from a world that was more than just rudderless boredom and mischief as well as the temptation of being sucked into the world of drugs.

As a result, he is now a business owner and operates multiple gyms and has also launched a health food company. In addition, arising directly from his own experience, he has set up 'Half-TimeTalk, a charitable organisation that aims to engage, educate and empower young people aged 17-25.

In his book, he ponders on why his brother John choose a different path. The truth is, he says, he never had a choice. They were all taken away from him before he realises that his life could be anything that he wanted it to be, full of endless possibilities.

The Choice by Philly McMahon with Niall Kelly was published in hardback by Gill Books in 2017 and won the Irish Book Awards Sports Book of the Year. It is now available in paperback.



A Proud History of SVP in Mitchelstown

One hundred and seventy-five years is by any standard a remarkable length of time for any voluntary organisation to survive. Equally impressive is the fact that many members give thirty, forty, fifty and more years of loyal and unselfish service to our Society. Such is the nature of our work and the fulfilment we get from being in a position to help our neighbour. 175 is a landmark, not to be overlooked, but a time to celebrate the past; make plans for the future and perhaps create a record for the history books and those coming after us. "The oldest organisation in Mitchelstown" was an article penned by a member of our Conference and published in The Avondhu in June 1996. This worldwide charity was founded by Frederick Ozanam, a twenty-year-old French student in Paris, in 1833. The movement spread rapidly and at his death in 1853 at the age of 40, no less than 2,000 Conferences had been established worldwide. The Society was established in Ireland in 1844.

1861 SEES CONFERENCE IN MITCHELSTOWN

Seventeen years later in 1861, a Conference was set up in Mitchelstown. While the records for the first twenty years appear to be now lost, a framed certificate was on display in the sacristy of the old church up to the time of its demolition during the nineteen seventies. The oldest minute book available records a meeting dated July 22, 1881. The members present

were: Thomas Roche, President; Edward O'Brien Vice President; John Sarsfield Casey (The Galtee Boy) Secretary; James Murphy Assistant Secretary; Theodore Lynch, Michael Cahill, John Murphy, Rowland Moriarty, Michael Murphy, Edward Maloney, Rev. Walter O'Brien Spiritual Director. If we were to trawl through the record books, there would be so many other names synonymous with Mitchelstown who gave of their time, their possessions and themselves to this wonderful organisation.

Moving to more recent times and to modernise our Society, the Council of Ireland circulated a questionnaire to each Conference circa 1993. This document asked six fundamental questions. Are there things we are not doing but should be doing? Are there things we could do better? How important is the spiritual dimension of our Society to us? etc. The purpose of the exercise was to develop a new mission statement.

MEMBERS HAVE THEIR SAY

Mitchelstown Conference took this request very seriously and devoted three nights specifically to analyse and parse what each question meant to us. The exercise was a highlight of our membership. Our members got so much fulfilment from it; it aroused enthusiasm as we recognised the many forms poverty could take. More importantly, we identified and realised it was our

mission to address these needs. Furthermore, it became so clear to everybody, if we were serious about meeting the challenges we had now identified, we needed a place where we could operate or should I say a place where people could find us. At each of our meetings, we start with a short prayer: One of our prayers includes that quote we are all so familiar with *“Wherever two or three are gathered in my name – there am I in their midst”* The outcome of these meetings gave us a clear vision of the work to be done.

A PREMISES OF OUR OWN

Immediately we set ourselves the task of finding a property we could develop as a retail and training centre. Having looked over so many walls and under doors, we eventually set our sights on a disused tyre depot formerly known as ‘Moremiles’. Cashing in on the goodwill of so many towards SVP -- engineers, legal people, our local credit Union, Ballyhoura Development and so many more, all of whom were as enthusiastic as ourselves, that old tyre depot got the shock of its life. It became a beautiful cut-stone building and a hive of activity within eighteen months. Our shop and training areas were novel at the time and a marvellous attraction. Volunteers, some of whom are now with us more than twenty years, became interested and were delighted to donate their spare time.



With an *“Open Door”* policy and plenty of space available, so many community-based groups were delighted to use our facilities for their meetings. The numbers attracted to our centre for one reason or another was simply incredible. As one of our members once wrote: *“Open the Doors - The Miracles will happen”*.

HISTORIC MITCHELSTOWN MILESTONES

The history of our centre has many milestones.

- 1996 - The official opening of the centre
- 1997 – A crèche and storage area for clothes were added. Also our first full-time employee Ms Patricia Hanley RIP. Pat gave our Society unstinting commitment both as a member and an employee to the time of her retirement in 2011. May she rest in peace.
- 1999 – Started An Active Retirement Group
- 2000 – Further extension to our premises and started a computer training facility. Thanks to our local credit union for donating the entire suite of computers. Also, our tutor, Siobhán O'Mahony, has to be thanked and congratulated for making this facility such a spectacular success for almost twenty years. It allows everybody to keep their technology skills up to date. Do stay in touch with us, as our courses are designed per what people request. Our telephone no is 025-84733 or email: mitchelstown@svp.ie.
- During the nineties and early two-thousands, our Society housed eleven families under the Government's Capital Assistance Programme.
- The early two thousands also brought the extension of our clothes collections throughout North Cork. This was made possible by the donation of a new Ford Transit van by Cavanagh's of Fermoy. Cork Marts have provided storage for our vehicle and storage containers. We are so much indebted to these businesses and wish them continued success.
- 2006 – A 1,500 square feet extension to our premises came through the courtesy of our very kind neighbours. This extension includes a goods lift. All our clothes are now sorted and stored on the first floor of this building with the entire ground floor dedicated to furniture retailing.
- 2007 - A member accompanied the *“Partnership in Learning Group”* to Uganda. Mitchelstown Conference funded the erection of a Clinic/Community Centre in Mbula in Uganda. This facility affords immense help to the poorest of the poor to the present day. We also won an AIB Better Ireland Award for our contribution to our community. This award came in the form of a certificate and an injection of capital at the right time.
- 2008 - Mitchelstown Conference sent two people from our regional office to Nigeria and funded several smaller projects there. As in Uganda, one has to see the circumstances under which these poor people survive to understand. The *“Dives/Lazerous”* parable comes to mind.

THE OZANAM CENTRE A FOCAL POINT

2008 - In Vincent de Paul circles The Ozanam Centre, Mitchelstown has been a focal point. Many articles have appeared in bulletins and other releases over the years. So impressed were the higher levels of our Society that in 2008 one of our members was approached and requested to take responsibility for shops for the entire Cork city and county. This involved the extension of the Society's shops network throughout County Cork. A small Conference consisting of four members from Mitchelstown, three from Carrigtwohill, two from Cobh and one from Fermoy was formed.

Building on the Mitchelstown experience, within the first six months, 150 clothing banks were sited throughout our defined



area of activity, i.e. Mitchelstown to Castletownbere and Kinsale to Rathmore. Sorting/storage depots were established at Mitchelstown and Little Island. Several vehicles were sourced, and collectors were recruited. Over the ensuing six years, twenty premises were leased, outfitted and opened as charity shops under the brand name "Vincent's". This has helped the funding of our Society enormously not to mention the numbers we reach out to through the medium of these retail units. They will continue to be a tremendous asset to those who use them and our Society for years to come. The entire project employed over fifty people, full-time or part-time. It all started and was driven by a small group of volunteers here in Mitchelstown.

PEOPLE OF VISION AND SUPPORT

The members of Mitchelstown St Vincent de Paul Society have always been people of vision. Without dwelling too much on the commercial side of our activities which are so essential to fund our work, our core business and function is about people, particularly those in need. Let the need be: Food, Fuel, Education, Medical or Financial difficulties, we do our best to evaluate each client's problem and where practical provide advice or help. "No work of Charity is foreign to our Society."

What is so important to us at this time is to ensure the work of our Society is carried on into the future. To this end, we have recently recruited several new members bringing our Conference strength to eighteen. Unfortunately, the recent and untimely passing of Eileen Whelan has left a huge vacuum in our midst. Eileen served as our president for almost ten years and, while she is greatly missed, we still feel her support, friendship and direction. Beannacht Dé uirthi.

Although a number of our members have joined quite recently, already one can sense that burst of enthusiasm and wanting to get dug in. We have also made other changes. We have recently recruited a Shop Manager; Ms Michelle Guilfoyle. Michelle is fully trained and experienced in most aspects of retailing. Already she has built a great rapport with our customers, staff, volunteers and members.

NEW PEOPLE.....NEW IDEAS

New people bring new ideas, and many will have already recognised the revamping of our shop and the difference it has made. This is to be the standard going forward. Our next big venture is the introduction of furniture, and we now have approx. 1,500 square feet ready to house this activity. An opening is scheduled for Thursday, July 4 at approx. 11 am. At present

we are assembling some good quality furniture and hope to have something for everybody when our new store opens. If you have a good piece you are tired of looking at, bear in mind it will be new in somebody else's home, so please give us a call at 087-6093906 between 9 am and 5 pm, preferably in the forenoon. We will be delighted to get it. As part of our 175-year celebrations, we are also holding a once-off special sale of clothes starting Thursday, June 27. Each item will be priced at €1.75, and I also understand Michelle is introducing rewards and loyalty incentives, all of which will be made known on the same day.

WHY NOT VOLUNTEER?

Finally, it is not often we get the opportunity to thank all those who collect at the church entrances each Sunday, we are extremely grateful and trust you will be rewarded where it matters most. We also urge people with time to spare to volunteer at our shop. Profit made by our shop is put into the local St Vincent de Paul funds to provide vital assistance to those in need. Each year we help more than three hundred families, particularly at Christmas time. Our area of activity covers, Mitchelstown, Ballylanders, Glenroe, Galbally, Anglesboro, Kilbenny, Ballyporeen, Ballindangan and occasionally Kilworth and Glanworth. Volunteering for SVP is a life-changing experience creating long-lasting memories and friendships. We would greatly appreciate your help.



SVP news from around the world



MALAYSIA

Ozanam Retirement Village to be built in Malaysia

After having served the needs of the poor for decades in Malaysia, the Society of St Vincent DePaul (SSVP) has embarked on an ambitious project to build a retirement home.

The home, officially called Ozanam Retirement Village will be built on the grounds of the Church of Our Lady of Sacred Heart (OLSH) in Klian Pauh, Taiping, which is the oldest Catholic church in Perak.

The leasing of the land by the Diocese is also significant in that it is the first time that church land has been authorised for the sole purpose of building such a facility.

Construction of the Ozanam Retirement Village is expected to start in January next year and to be completed by June 2021

According to Malaysian National SSVP vice-president Angela Francis, although the Ozanam Retirement Village is to be built on church grounds, SSVP will accept applications from anyone, regardless of race, religion or background.

The site for the Ozanam Retirement Village covers about 1,000 square metres, and the Village is expected to have 118 rooms, with an in-house clinic, dining, and various activity rooms for the residents.

The debt was tied to losses associated with the organisation's chain of thrift stores. The stores were losing money, and fund-raising wasn't where it needed to be.

Sales in the agency's nine thrift stores - located both near areas of high need and near affluent communities to bring in more high-end donations - have now increased, thanks to innovative promotions and managing costs.

The Detroit Society of St. Vincent de Paul is the third largest Society of St. Vincent de Paul council in the country, only behind Atlanta, Ga., and Phoenix.

SCOTLAND

Loneliness among the elderly must be tackled

Jim McKendrick stepped down as national president of the Society of St Vincent de Paul (SSVP) in Scotland recently.

In leaving the post he said the plight of struggling families has grown worse over the last five years as austerity measures continue to bite. He also believes the growing crisis of loneliness among the elderly has to be tackled.

SSVP members in Scotland financially assisted almost 6,000 families in 2018, many of whom needed emergency benefits. They also visited the homes of more than 45,000 people.

OREGON, USA

St. Vincent de Paul to purchase another Mobile Home Park

Earlier this year the Oregon Housing Stability Council unanimously voted to approve \$4.3 million in state funds for St. Vincent de Paul (SVDP) to purchase the Arbor Mobile Home Park and keep rents affordable.

This is the 8th park owned by St. Vincent de Paul in the state of Oregon. Their ownership will bring stable rents and greater opportunities for residents to organize and have a voice in decision-making at the park.

LOUISIANA, USA

SVP Sweet Dreams Centre

St. Vincent de Paul officially opened its Sweet Dreams Center recently, adding to the number of beds and resources the shelter offers to those who are homeless in Baton Rouge.

"We are now the only place in town that can take women with male children over the age 5. We're also the only place in town who can take a father who has become homeless and we're also the only place in the area which can take an intact family," said Cary Kearny, a board member with the Society of St. Vincent de Paul.

The new building will be able to store 36 beds if needed.

The expansion was made possible by a \$1 million grant from East Baton Rouge Parish.

DETROIT USA

Detroit St. Vincent de Paul tackles \$1 million loss

SVP in Detroit is looking to increase revenue as the Society seeks to pay off the remaining \$400,000 of roughly \$1 million in debt it had a year ago, and to expand the services it's offering.

SouthEast Members Day

by Jim Walsh

The South East regional council held a members day on Saturday the 7th September 2019. The gathering of members was held in the Newpark hotel Kilkenny with members travelling from all five counties in the region including Carlow, Kilkenny, Laois, Waterford and Wexford. The day commenced with mass setting time to reflect on the work of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul and the theme *"Ensure sufficient time is spent with those we serve to listen carefully to their needs"* was touched on throughout the day. Mass was celebrated by Fr. Billy Meehan PP, St Marys Parish, Clonmel, co Tipperary. Fr Billy in his homily encouraged the members to keep focusing on the vision of Fredric Ozanam in helping those most in need.

Regional President Ben Doyle gave an opening address and stated the day was centred to supporting members and in particular to the recent launch of the reaching out programme, the reaching out programme is designed to equip members and provide them with the necessary supports and enable them to respond to all requests from people in need and reaching out to those who have not previously sought assistance from the Society.

Throughout the day a number of speakers addressed the members, Martin Hourigan from the Samaritans spoke on how to be effective listeners and conducted a practical exercise to highlight how we as individuals listen to people. The exercise was useful in that as individuals not all listen to detail in the same way. Debbie O Halloran SE Region youth development officer briefed the members on the SVP Young programme and Rev. Alec Purser show cased the Twinning programme in Africa and detailed in how local conferences support those in need through the International Society of Saint Vincent De Paul in the Gambia and Tanzania.

Brian Cody, Irelands longest serving senior hurling manager addressed the membership and linked in his speech how as members following the vision of SVP and aiming for the goal similar to the Kilkenny hurling team setting out to win brings success and that win and success is helping people in need.

In the afternoon Jim Walsh PR briefed the membership in public relations and how best to work with the press either nationally or locally. Michael Higgins National membership support manager spoke about the challenges the Society faces and gave the key priorities of the reaching out programme over the coming year to responding to need, providing member and volunteer support, developing membership and bettering leadership and member support structures.

In his closing address Kieran Stafford National president spoke about in recent times about a family who was in need and was scared to reach out, the story was bitter sweet. A mum wrote to the Society stating a number of bills arrived in the post, including car insurance, car tax, electricity bill including the mortgage was due. In the very same day her son began to walk and the mum was stressed out wondering where she was going to find the money to buy shoes for her son, in reality the mum should have been rejoicing in her sons first steps. Kieran encouraged the membership to continue their walk and to reaching out to those who are in need and most vulnerable in Society.







New Vincent's charity shop opens in Moyross

The Society of St Vincent de Paul (SVP) opened a new Vincent's shop in Moyross on 16 October.

This is the third Vincent's shop in Limerick city. There are three other shops throughout the county.

Vincent's Moyross is situated at Watch House Cross and will serve the local Moyross community and surrounding areas.

Vincent's charity shops are a very important aspect of the service SVP provides.

Not only do they provide people with new and lightly worn items at affordable prices, they also provide an income source for the Society, which is recycled directly back into the community.

There are over 230 SVP shops throughout the country. They are each managed by a small number of professionals, assisted by a large number of volunteers and by community employment trainees.

Anyone interested in volunteering in Vincent's Moyross should call into the shop or email retailvolunteer@svp.ie.

The profits generated from the charity shops are recycled into local Conferences around Ireland to support those in need.

Local SVP Conferences can also provide people with Vincent's Gift Tokens which they can use in any of the shops.

The second-hand clothes and other items donated to Vincent's charity shops make a difference to people in need in their communities.



Attending the opening of Vincent's Moyross were: Liam Barry, Old Cratloe Road, Eimear Purcell, SVP Regional Office and Paul Kirkland, Dalgaish Park.



Attending the opening of Vincent's Moyross were, left to right: Mags Browne, John Bromell, Manager, SVP, Moyross, Alice Kett, Monica Kirwan, Jean McNamara and Kathleen Allen.



Attending the opening of Vincent's Moyross were: Paddy Carroll, SVP Regional Vice President; Pauline Hurton, Westbury and Declan Byrne, Regional Retail Manager, Mid West.



Attending the opening of Vincent's Moyross were: Mags Browne (left) and Alice Kett, Caherdavin Line Dance teachers.



Attending the opening of Vincent's Moyross were, left to right: Declan Byrne, SVP Regional Retail Manager Mid West; James Dineen, Sonia O'Neill and Paddy Carroll, SVP Regional Vice President



Attending the opening of Vincent's Moyross were: left to right; Noelle Fitzgerald, Cosgrave Park; Fr Bernardino Maria, CFR and Cllr. John Costelloe.

VISITATION

*By Caitriona Dunne
St. MacCullin's Conference Lusk*

The cut and thrust of the work of the Society of St. Vincent De Paul is helping those in need. This is done through visitation to homes of clients who get in touch with Head Office and requests are sent out to volunteers in the specific areas of those seeking help.

Visitation is a two-sided occasion. The person or family being visited has pulled out all the stops to finally get the courage to ring Head Office and ask for a volunteer to visit them. This probably took weeks to come to the conclusion that there was no other choice for them. The decision followed sleepless nights after sleepless nights.

Digesting all this before the visit is ultra-important. It focusses the visitors correctly and prepares them to carry out an excellent visit. Volunteers should try to imagine the client and how he or she is feeling at that time. The aim of the volunteers should be to immediately lighten their burden even without giving any help initially.

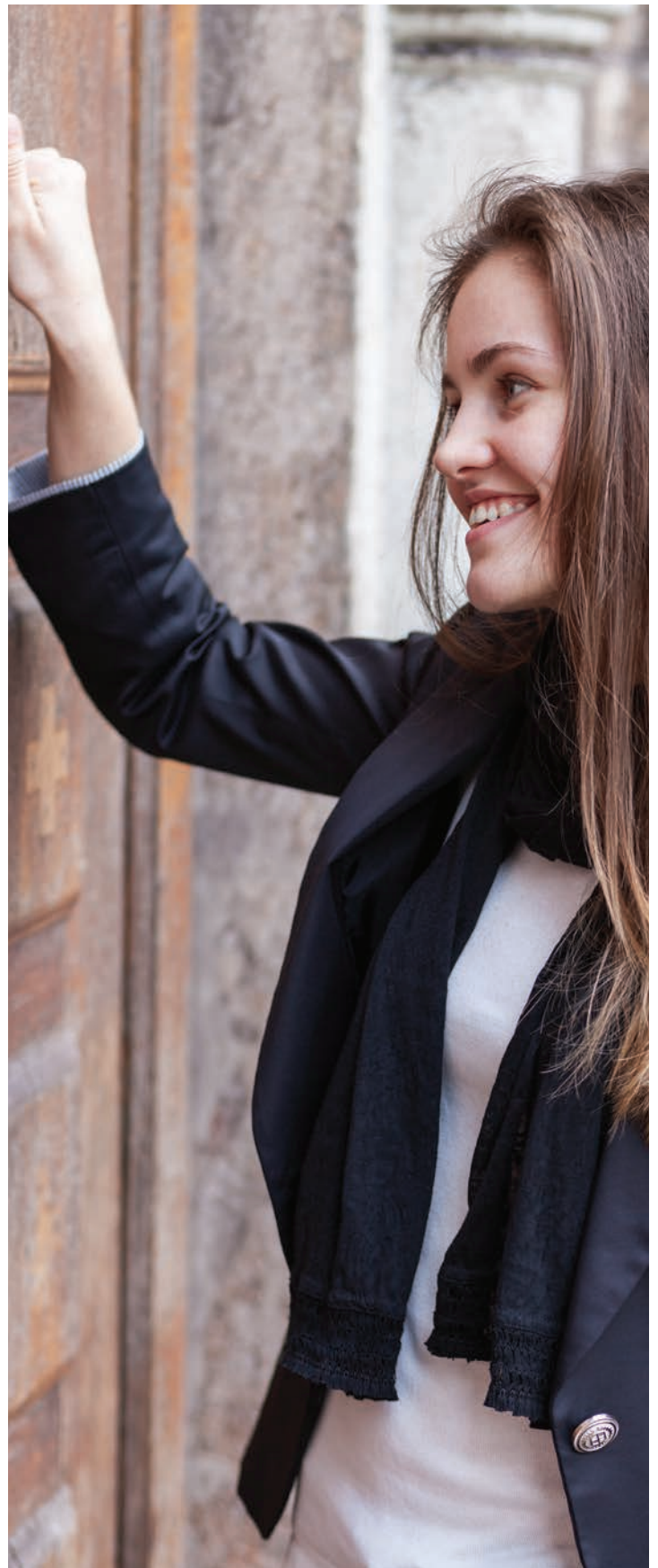
Volunteers should be smiling and friendly and put the client at ease straight away. They should give time to the person or persons to tell their story. They should listen actively and be empathetic to them. When the story has been told, the volunteers should try to help the client to focus on a solution. The client should be referred to the Money Advice and Budgeting Service, better known as MABS.

Decisions should be made on a priority basis. It is vital to fill in the Client Information Form and see how much income is coming in. The outgoings have to be deducted and see how much is left for food if the electricity bill is in arrears, the provider has to be rung and see if they can negotiate a deal and also install a meter. The volunteer could arrange this. The conference from which the volunteers are from might decide to pay whatever the provider is looking for to have the meter installed, This is a good solution for the client, and it means the balance can be cleared by degrees and that there is no bill.

A client can also be helped with vouchers as it frees up the money that can be used for bills or the rent.

A visit from volunteers from the Society of St. Vincent De Paul can be requested for several reasons; namely, bills in arrears, rent in arrears, First Holy Communion, Confirmation, summer outings, like a visit to the zoo or the cinema and back to school expenses and unemployment.

A visit works both ways. The volunteers are so happy to visit and to help a family. A family are full of appreciation to the volunteers and of course to the Society of St. Vincent De Paul.





A REWARDING MORNING FOR ALL!

Carrying out visits to clients can sometimes be a frustrating experience for a number of reasons but two volunteers from the Holy Rosary Conference in the South and East Belfast Area recently had a very positive outcome while completing their calls.

The first visit was to a gentleman who had requested help with furniture. Our Volunteers explained the arrangement that the Conference has with a local charity Furniture shop and the client agreed to visit the shop that morning to see if suitable furniture was available.

Our hard-working volunteers cheerfully completed four more visits, all with happy outcomes with regard to meeting the needs of our clients. As they were on their way to a well-earned coffee break they were surprised to meet their first client, clearly in distress. He explained that he had just been to the charity shop where he had identified suitable furniture. However, the store manager did not appear to be familiar with the arrangement whereby the goods would be paid for by the Conference and our client had to leave the shop empty-handed. Needless to say

our worthy volunteers accompanied the client back to the shop. They discovered that a new store manager has been appointed, as yet unfamiliar with the procedures in place for payment by the Conference for goods on behalf of clients. The procedures were explained, the confusion was easily resolved and the deal was done, much to the delight of the client. Another positive outcome!

But in fact, the morning's activity was not yet complete. As our volunteers were leaving the store they were approached by a young woman who had been browsing in the store. She asked if they were from the St Vincent de Paul - she had clearly overheard some of the conversation with the store manager. When told this was so, she swiftly took a bundle of cash from her pocket and, without any further explanation, offered it as a donation (by coincidence, the exact amount spent on our client's furniture!). Our volunteers were taken back by her spontaneous gesture, but delighted to know that our work is recognised and appreciated. It was indeed a very rewarding morning for all!



Opening of extended Vincent's shop and Ozanam Centre Tullow Street Carlow

by Gerry O'Malley, Carlow Area Council

The first Conference of the Society of St.Vincent de Paul in Carlow was established 168 years ago on the 11th May 1851 and the first President was a local doctor Matthew Esmonde Whyte. The Conference continues to operate today and Margaret O'Neill who was the first female member of the Conference is the current President of the Carlow Area Council.

The Society opened its extended Vincent's shop and Conference rooms on Tullow Street Carlow in July 2019. The shop was officially opened by long serving staff volunteer Mary Dempsey and the conference rooms were opened by National President Kieran Stafford.





Remembering the passing of four long term members

Waterford Area members gathered to celebrate the memory and passing of four long term members. During the past year Declan Clancy St Ursula's Conference, Jim Tracey St Pauls Conference, Joan English St Dominic's and Mary Prendergast St Pauls were long term Visitation members.

Bishop of Waterford & Lismore Alphonsus Cullinan celebrated mass and his theme was centred about giving to others and recognised the ethos of the Society in serving the poor. During the mass Bishop Cullinan remembered the past members during the mass for their service and selfless support to people in need.

National President Kieran Stafford addressed the members and stated it is key for members to continue providing service to people in need. Michael Curran Waterford Area in the run up to completing his final 5 years as Area President thanked all the members for their support during his office and thank all members for their continued support to serving and giving to those who are in need in their communities.



Mass Celebration, St. Conleth's Conference



Fr. O'Byrne who celebrated 60 years since his ordination. He is the spiritual advisor of St Conleth's Conference. Our Regional President John Lupton was also present along with Jacqueline Pilkington, Area President and Jimmy Fleming, St. Conleth's Conference President. Members from nearby Clara Conference also attended, along with the members from St. Conleth's Conference.

Mullingar Society of St. Vincent De Paul flag day

Mullingar had its first Flag Day on Sat 13th Aug last in order to feel the pulse of our community and let our community see we are not just sitting waiting for donations but are willing to work for donations to help us help people they don't even know.

Great day all round, lessons learned and roll on Flag Day 2020.



SVP members Julie Delvin and Mike Gilbo interact with members of our community

Presentation for long term service to 4 Members in Kildare North



The Guardian Angels Conference Sallins held a presentation night to its long serving members on Wednesday the 2nd October 2019 in a local restaurant, Lock 13.

The presentation dinner was attended by the Area President Tom O'Doherty and the Regional President Liam Casey. The four members who received medals for over 25 years' service were Ray O'Connor; Donal Buckley, Peggy Hassett and Marie Weldon.

On the night it was discovered that rather than a medal for 25 years' service, Ray O Connor should have received one for over 50 years. Ray joined St Vincent de Paul close to 60 years ago when he began his service in inner City Dublin in Mountjoy Square.

Peggy Hassett was one of the original members of the Sallins Conference when it was set up 30 years ago. All of the members who received medals are still active in the Guardian Angels Conference and are involved in our visitations every Monday night.



three generations of the O'Callaghan family who volunteered to help out. Breda, Aleesha & Rebecca

Benemerenti Awards for Members of Buttevant Conference

Friday 13th September 2019 was a very special day for our local Conference as Bishop Crean presented Francis O'Connell and Joan O'Connell with Benemerenti Awards for each having given over twenty five years service to working with us. Francis and Joan are two shining lights in our parish community who have given admirable service to collecting and helping within the local Conference of St. Francis of the SVDP. It was important that the achievement be recognised. Our Conference decided some months ago to start the process of application for a Papal Award for each of them and the Conference were delighted when the approval of the Award of the Benemerenti was communicated from the Diocesan Office and that Bishop Crean would be willing to come and present the awards in person.

The Mass of Thanksgiving that night involved the participation of many of the family members and relations from both recipients. Many of the younger generation were present and involved themselves including Joan's grandchildren Emma, Ben and Billy as did Francis' young relatives Anna and Áine. The singing at the Mass was led by Bridie Cronin and her daughter Anne O'Donoghue and the music was led by Susan O'Keefe on the organ and Bridie Cronin on guitar. The music and singing added hugely to the sense of celebration and occasion that it was.



The celebrations continued at Lisgriffin National School where, thanks to the permission of the teaching staff and the Board of Management, a plentiful supply of refreshments were laid out for the very large crowd of supporters who arrived. Hard working members of the local SVDP along with many other helpers were on hand to welcome everyone and to feed the multitude. The local Conference of the SVDP is led by President Marie Therese O'Connor who addressed the gathering. She recognised the involvement of the Conference Members for their co-operation and support in getting everything ready for the evening at the church and at the school; Pat Whelan of Munster Labels for sponsoring the printing of the Mass Booklets; Orla O'Connell for designing the Booklet and for preparing and icing



the fabulous cake that everyone shared during the celebration; John Pat Murphy for the use of his amplification; all the Stewards who looked after the parking arrangements; Sr. Agnes and Theresa for their artwork; Lucey's Mallow and the Buttevant I.C.A for the catering; Nolliag, Lucy, Eimear, Mary and the O'Connell family for all the baking; Denis and Mary Guiney for preparing everything at Lisgriffin Church; the dedicated Altar Servers, Sean, Cillian and Clara.

The local Conference of the SVDP were also delighted to receive the news that there would be a presentation from the National Office of the SVDP of the silver medal and certificate of dedicated service. Mr. Pat Murphy, who is the Regional President, was present at the celebrations to present these to Joan and Francis and gave a speech on behalf of the National Office.

Representing the local Conference of the SVDP, Veronica O'Sullivan presented Joan O'Connell with a bouquet of flowers and Mary Nagle presented Francis O'Connell with a beautifully engraved tablet. Both Francis and Joan spoke to the gathering expressing their sincere appreciation and honour on receiving the Papal Award and their heartfelt thanks to the Conference for organising it. They also paid tribute to the many parishioners who give financial contributions weekly to the collection boxes at the end of Masses.



In Tribute

To Deceased Members of the Society of St.Vincent de Paul

Paul McKeivitt St Fiacc's Conference, Graiguecullen

ST. Fiacc's Conference Graiguecullen and the wider Vincentian family lost a valued member and friend with the sad passing of Paul on 10th September.

Paul was a life-long member having first joined the Cork City Special Works Conference at the age of 18. He continued his membership of the society when he moved to Carlow in the mid sixties.

Throughout the years Paul held many posts within the society serving as Carlow Area Council president and subsequently as Regional President of South Midlands Region. He also served a number of terms as National Vice President and was also a member of the National Council. Paul was a founder member of the Monastery Hostel in Carlow and also a member of the committee involved in drafting the new Rule for Ireland. Paul was also very active in the local parish community. He will be deeply missed by his family, friends and the wider community. We extend our deepest sympathy to his wife Grace, daughter Aoife, sons Aiden and Kieran

May he rest in peace. Ar dheis De go raibh a Anam Dilis

Ann Whealans

The sudden and unexpected death of Ann Whealans, on 31st March last, came as a huge shock and brought enormous grief to her loving family, Julie, Cian, Lucy and Albie, her siblings and her many friends. To her other 'family', St Mary's Conference Sandyford, it also brought disbelief and tremendous sadness. Ann was a Member for over forty years and served as Treasurer for much of this time. She was the ideal treasurer, good with figures, but above all, she had a big heart, the most important attribute for such a position. She loved visiting families and knew personally almost every family who requested our help from time to time. She did a huge amount of work throughout the year and before Christmas, there was no doubt that she worked through many nights to make sure that no family was left off the 'Christmas list'. Ann had a great sense of humour and many interests, but her defining characteristic was her unquestioning love and support of people. As Members of the Conference we were well aware of this but, since her untimely death, a large number of people have come forward to tell of her love and generosity to them. Ann's death may have been 'sudden' in our eyes, but she was surely well prepared by a lifetime of love and giving to others. To quote St. John of the Cross, 'In the evening of life we will be judged on love'. 'Ar dheis De go raibh a h-anam uasal'.



Sr. Angela O' Connor

Angela joined our Conference, (the Conference of the Sacred Heart, Donnybrook, Dublin 4) on Monday 14th January 1985. She was introduced to our Conference by her good friend and neighbour, John Greene, who was also one of our long- time members. She followed in the footsteps of her late husband, Peter, who had been a member of our Conference for a number of years until his death on 30th March 1984. On 4th November 1985, Angela became one of the Conference Vice-Presidents. On Monday 3rd March 1986, she presided over a Conference meeting for the first time and on Monday 19th October 1987, she succeeded John B. Mc Donnell as President of the Conference. She served as Conference President until 29th April 2002. She was probably the longest serving President of the Conference and was our first female President. After Barbara Gilroy succeeded her as President, Angela served as Vice-President for some time afterwards.

Angela died on Sunday 23rd June 2019. At its meeting on Monday 24th June 2019, the Conference paid glowing tributes to Angela's long service to the Conference and her commitment and enthusiasm in helping those who requested our help. She was always prepared to go that extra mile for persons in need and she will be remembered with love and affection by all who knew her. Go dtuga Dia suaimhneas sóraí dá hanam agus go lonraí solas suthain uirthí. (May God grant her soul eternal rest and may perpetual light shine upon her).

Kathleen Conway (1932-2019) St Fiacre Bennettsbridge, Kilkenny

The unexpected death of Kathleen Conway shocked the Bennettsbridge community and has left a great void in the parish. She died on the 23rd May in St Luke's Hospital at the age of 87. Kathleen was born in London in 1932 to Aggie and Robert Griffiths. Aggie was a member of the Wemyss family of Annamult, Bennettsbridge and Robert Griffiths was a Welshman. The family was living in London and during the second World War, Kathleen and her brother Jimmy were among many evacuees removed from their families – they were sent home for safety to their grandparents in Annamult. They never returned to London and lived all their lives in Bennettsbridge.

Kathleen went to school in Bennettsbridge and afterwards attended the Vocational School in Kilkenny. Kathleen was involved in numerous organisations in the parish. She was a director in Bennettsbridge Credit Union and gave unstintingly of her time. She was a friend to many and could be relied on to help in difficult circumstances.

A life-long member of the St Vincent De Paul Society she worked tirelessly to help people in need as a member of the St Fiacre Bennettsbridge conference. Kathleen was an active member of the Society of St Vincent de Paul from 1974 – 2019 and served as conference President.

Kathleen will be sadly missed by her family, neighbours and many friends.



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