

VINCENTIAN NEWS



Society of St Vincent de Paul

Spring 2020 Volume 4 Number 17



Also inside

Christmas celebrations from
around the Region

Retail

Young SVP

All Aboard the Winter/ Spring Edition of Vincentian News

Spiritual Reflections

Fr Perry Gildea C.M

The Life of St Vincent

It might be useful to recall some of the important events in the life of St Vincent which can help us to understand his charity. St Vincent de Paul was born in 1581, the son of a farmer who lived near the town of Dax, close to the Pyrenees. He was the third in a family of four sons and two girls. The children would have spent much of their childhood helping in various ways in the work of their parents.

Vincent was a clever, bright child and the family decided he should be educated in order to gain a more advantageous career. His father sold two oxen to pay for his fees at a Franciscan school in Dax. He was indeed a bright pupil and after a couple of years he was chosen as a private live-in tutor for the family of a local lawyer. This man, M.de Comet, was to be a key patron of the young Vincent. At the age of 15 he suggested to Vincent that he should receive the order of Tonsure which was the official entrance into the clerical state. So, Vincent had decided or agreed to study for the priesthood!

He began his philosophical and theological studies the following year in the University of Saragossa. Then his father died and, rather than be a financial burden on the family, he transferred to university in Toulouse. Here his time as a tutor in the de Comet family came in useful and he set up a small school tutoring the children of some wealthy families near Toulouse. His little school was successful but the combination of tutoring and keeping up with his studies was a heavy burden. It was at this point he decided to go forward for ordination.

Records show he was ordained sub-deacon and then deacon in 1598. A new bishop took over the diocese of Tarbes. He was a man committed to the reforms of the Council of Trent. One such reform was that the minimum age for ordination to the priesthood was 24. It is perhaps a measure of Vincent's anxiety to be ordained and gain a position that he managed to be ordained by an elderly bishop, a friend of a friend, notwithstanding that he was only 19. He then continued his studies in theology at Toulouse, supporting himself by running a small school for children of wealthy families.

He was to spend the next 10 years searching in vain for a parish or position which would afford him enough money to support his widowed mother. He had many adventures and misadventures during these years. Eventually he finds lodgings with a judge in Paris where he is wrongfully accused of serious theft and all he can do is profess his innocence. He lived under suspicion for 6 years until his name was cleared. In 1610 he writes a sad letter to his mother lamenting his total lack of success in finding a suitable position.

In the following year all would begin to change, first he was appointed one of the chaplains of Queen Marguerite de Valois among whose duties was the visiting of the poor and distribution of aid to the poor in the hospital run by the Bene Fratelli brothers. It was this year also when he placed himself under the spiritual direction of Bérulle, a leading spiritual authority in Paris. During this period a very significant event occurred. One of his clerical colleagues was experiencing doubts about the faith so severe they were making him ill and suicidal. In a moment of deep compassion, Vincent asked God to give him the doubts and set the other man free. That is what happened. Vincent suffered this dark night of doubt for over three years. His remedy was to write an act of faith on a piece of paper placed next to his heart which he pressed in his darkest moments. One day he promised God that if he would free him from the terrible burden, he would devote the rest of his life to the service of the poor. From that day on the doubts vanished. Vincent was in the process of discovering his vocation.

Shortly after this, through the influence of Bérulle, he was made parish priest of Clichy, on the fringes of Paris. The church and the parish were in a poor state and he set about with gusto to improve both the fabric, the liturgy and the community. It was to be one of the happiest times of his life and a place where he became aware of the many pastoral and physical needs of the people.

Bérulle was again responsible for the next significant development in the life of the young Vincent when he had him appointed chaplain and tutor to the wealthy and powerful De Gondi family. It was when visiting with them on one of their estates in Folleville, near Amiens, he was asked to attend a dying man who rallied and told his family how, after a life of hypocrisy and sin, he had made a good confession and was at peace with God. Madame de Gondi got to hear of this and insisted that Vincent should preach about the necessity of good confessions. He was so successful he had to ask the Jesuits to come and help with confessions. St Vincent always considered that day the Feast of the Conversion of St Paul as the founding day of his missionary community dedicated to the catechising of the country villagers. St Vincent was well on his way to realising his vocation. His secret was to discover the design of divine providence and follow it closely.

Welcome by Frankie McClure, Regional President



Welcome to the winter/spring edition of the Vincentian News.

As we move through Lent towards Easter, the time of Our Lord's ultimate sacrifice and resurrection, I am minded to think of the sacrifices we as members of SVP make to help others.

We take our lead from Our Lord and I congratulate the members for their unstinting charity work and consideration for others, particularly the needy in our communities.

Christmas 2019 was a fine example of this, as the increased donation of toys, food and financial support was overwhelming.

This generosity came from not only SVP members, but schools, companies, the business sector and individuals, all are gratefully received and celebrated.

The challenge ahead is to maintain and sustain our noble charity work, for problems remain for the less fortunate and I again congratulate and

thank all SVP members and volunteers for showing the compassionate side of our society.

I understand that, in busy times for us all, it can be difficult for members to give up their time, be away from family and loved ones in the hope of making a difference.

But those sacrifices that you make, no matter how small, make all the difference to those who desperately need it, and for that I thank you.

Jesus made the greatest sacrifice of all, he died for his fellow human beings in the hope of helping, and our aim is to continue that mission.

After all, it truly is better to give than to receive and I commend all who serve the Society, for you bring light where there is darkness.

May I take this opportunity to wish you every blessing for the year ahead.

God Bless,
Frankie

Armagh and Craigavon Area Council Celebrating SVP Members Dedication and Commitment

The Armagh and Craigavon Area Council give recognition to the commitment and dedication of four of its long serving Conference members.

Members from the Area Council attended a special Mass where the celebrant was Father Peter Mc Anenly, St Patrick's Parish Administrator. The Mass was held in the SVP Centre, Chapel Lane, Armagh, in order to celebrate a combined 160 years volunteering by four members - Mona Mc Ginn (50 years), Margaret O'Hagan (50 years), Frank Lynch (34 years) and Dessie Moore (26 years).

Mona and Margaret were instrumental in establishing the first women's Conference called St Martin's (Craigavon 1970). Conferences were male based at that time however a few years later St Martin's amalgamated with St Anthony's Conference (Craigavon) where Mona and Margaret remain committed members.

There have been many social and economic changes since which have provided scope for increasing numbers of women to join the Society and become more directly involved with Society work in terms of home visiting and leadership roles.

Frank Lynch joined the Society in 1986 when there was less bureaucracy and more informality. Frank was encouraged by another SVP member to help with a few church door collections and then to come along to a meeting to see how things worked; so, back in the day as the saying goes, a handshake or a wink and a nod worked wonders. Needless to say Frank has remained a valued and stalwart member of St Anthony's Conference and the Area Council.

Similarly, Dessie Moore, 'treasurer' and stalwart member of St Patrick's Conference Armagh, recognised from a young age the

good work that SVP did. Dessie has recounted often that when he was quite young his parents were faced with a particular dilemma in that they were facing an unexpected journey to America which was going to place a financial burden on their family however, in the spirit of goodwill, SVP members arrived at their home with financial assistance which greatly helped remove some of the distress for the family. Dessie now gives his time most willingly in the service of other people in need as a form of pay back for help received by his family so long ago.

It is only fitting that our SVP brothers and sisters be recognised for their selfless commitment and dedication in the service of their neighbour in distress. The Armagh and Craigavon Area Council and the wider SVP membership say Thank You Mona, Margaret, Frank and Dessie.





Here to Help

At one time or another the work that we do can be challenging or difficult and can leave us feeling overwhelmed.

SVP wants to support our members and ensure that they have access to appropriate supports to enable us to continue our work, especially when this impacts on our own health and wellbeing.

Sometimes just talking to friends or family can help but other times it may be better to talk to someone trained to listen who can offer support, guidance and a fresh outlook.

SVP is working with Inspire Workplaces to ensure all of our members have access to an independent source of support.

This service is free to all SVP members and you can contact Inspire Workplaces 24/7 to talk to someone who can offer support and access

face to face or telephone counselling. This service is completely confidential and voluntary.

SVP will not be informed about who is accessing the counselling service and will receive only anonymous utilisation statistics to evaluate the service. However if you are at risk of harm to yourself or to others, or involved in criminal activity, we are bound by law to waive confidentiality.

We are here to help 24/7/365

SVP Member Support Programme



For free, confidential and immediate support call

Northern Ireland 0808 234 5183

175 Years



1844 . 2019

Members' Day 2019

The annual event took place in the Hilton Hotel, Templepatrick, on Saturday 26 October 2019. Attended by approximately 130 members from across the Region, a thoroughly informative and enjoyable day was had by all.

Guest speakers were Kevin Higgins from AdviceNI and Will Haire from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

Kevin is employed by AdviceNI as Head of Policy and Research and has worked in the advice sector in Northern Ireland for over 25 years.

Kevin focused on the potential impact of the social security reforms

that are due to be implemented in 2020. A lively Q&A session followed, with members expressing their concern on the implications for those we support. Kevin encouraged members to refer clients to AdviceNI who specialise in welfare benefits.

Will Haire is the Chair of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, which is based in York. Will explained that The Foundation



Will Haire and Kevin Higgins, speakers at this year's Members' Day.



has, over the last century, sought to understand the roots of poverty and help find the policy solutions. He explained that both charities could work together to make our voices stronger.

Fr Perry Gildea, the Region's Spiritual Advisor, gave a very interesting presentation on the history of the Society. He described how Blessed Frederic Ozanam put his faith in action in the service of those in need. Fr Perry said that his example is as relevant today.

Amy Salmon, Chair of the Regional Youth Committee, informed members that the new Youth Development Officer, Niamh Mulholland, had taken up her position. She explained that Niamh, along with other Youth members, would like to visit every Area to describe the benefits of the Young SVP programme. **"Youth are our future!"**

Workshops also took place with members discussing both current and future challenges facing the Society. This was an opportunity for them to discuss and identify priorities and themes for those seeking support.

At the end of the event a prize draw was carried out for members! The winners were.....

- 1st prize** Johnny McErlean, Holy Family, Belfast
An overnight stay in the Hilton Hotel for two people
- 2nd prize** Fr Joseph Rooney, Sacred Heart, Ballyclare
£25 Marks & Spencer voucher
- 3rd prize** Elish Armstrong, Our Lady Queen of Peace, Belfast
Scented hamper for women
- 4th prize** Mary McBride, St Mary's, Killyclogher
Scented hamper for men
- 5th prize** Brendan Downey, Immaculate Conception, Newcastle
Build-a-Bear
- 6th prize** Amy Salmon, Holy Family, Belfast
Stationery set

Good News Appeal

We would love to share some good news stories of how SVP has helped turn lives around.

We are appealing for uplifting stories from across our Conference areas – have you personally been supported and helped through a difficult time by SVP or perhaps you know someone who might be willing to share their story of the difference SVP has made to their lives either today or in past years?

If so, please get in touch. Every Vincentian gives so much and to hear positive stories about the difference our organisation's support can make would mean a lot to our members and volunteers. Thank you in advance.



Festive Cheer from St Bernadette's Conference

Peggy McCann has reported that St Bernadette's Conference was approached by a gentleman who had come here as a refugee, initially from an African country. At first he required practical support with furniture, having been awarded tenancy of an apartment. Some assistance was given to him at this time.

Although English was not his first language he spoke it very well and subsequently requested help for payment of fees of £160 to enable him to study GCSE English. He successfully completed this and the following year approached us to enable him to undertake a doorman/security course costing £215

which he also completed successfully and is now eligible to get his security license. This costs £210 and he recently requested help to pay for it.

After discussion, it was agreed to provide him with this support also as his level of benefits would preclude him from being able to find such a sum. He has been offered a job as soon as he manages to get his license which will afford him the dignity of coming off benefits and being able to work for a living.

He is excited by this prospect after having endured much on his journey. One is reminded of the old ad-age; "if you give a man a fish you feed him for a day. If you teach him to fish you feed him for life." We are confident that this quiet and dignified gentleman will now be in a position to support himself and be independent, thanks to the support given by SVP.

Regional Donations



Paul Davison, Manager of Tesco in Newcastle, presenting members of SVP Immaculate Conference with a cheque for £500 raised from used book sales and exchanges.



Portrush Conference received a donation of £1,000 donated from Rathmore Golf Club during The Open.

MOUNTAINVIEW CHRISTMAS DINNER

December 2019 brought lots of special fun activities for the children who attend the out of schools club run by SVP at the Mountainview Centre in West Belfast. In the week before Christmas the children enjoyed a special Christmas themed week.

It started with a Christmas themed play day, a special Christmas Dinner day and a party day with a visit from Santa. All the children who attended received a present and selection box from Santa and parents had an opportunity to take photos if they wished, when they came to collect their children at the end of the day.

Feedback from parents and children was very positive and they are already looking forward to next December to have a repeat of the wonderful experience!

They took great memories of 2019 with them into 2020 and are already planning for the Summer Scheme.



Children enjoying the Annual Christmas Dinner at the Out of School Hours Club in West Belfast.



News From Derry

We had a wonderfully uplifting concert hosted by The Priests in December in the Everglades Hotel. They gave a beautifully festive performance to those in attendance.

New Derry Office

Our new Derry Office is open at Ozanam Centre, 4 Elagh Business Park, Buncrana Road, Derry, BT48 8QH. And can be contacted on tel 028 7126 5489 or by email at svp.derry@svpni.co.uk

Cross Community Church Service

Paul Davison, Deirdre Shields, Catherine O'Hagan and Brendan Downey are pictured at an inter-denominational service held in Cushendall Church of Ireland where Eugene Graffin of SVP gave a talk on the work of the local SVP Conference. Monies collected at the service were donated to Conference. Special thanks to Mr Alan Murphy for his invitation to contribute to the service.



Christmas Appeals

As Christmas can be one of the most difficult and worrying times of the year, we have been overwhelmed by the support of this year's Christmas Appeals. We received support from a number of organisations and schools and even from a local lad turned national television presenter!

Ballymoney Conference

Gift donations from Shiel's Court Sheltered Housing Complex, food hampers from Our Lady of Lourdes School and R&F Mechanical Services in Ballymoney.



Willie Fisher from the Ballymoney Conference accepting some gifts donated for the Family Appeal from Shiel's Court Sheltered Housing complex residents and staff. Willie is pictured with Agnes O'Neill, a resident of Shiels Court.



Paddy Reilly from Ballymoney Conference accepting a donation from Andrew Dickson of local company R&F Mechanical Services Ltd which generously donates to SVP and The Salvation Army each year in Ballymoney in support our Family Appeal.



Willie Fisher and Myles Gallagher from Ballymoney SVP accepting a donation of some food hampers from the Junior Conference in Our Lady of Lourdes school Ballymoney.

St Anne's Supports Shoe Box Appeal

Anne Smiley, President of Clough Mills, and Anne Irwin, North Antrim & North East Derry Area President, visited St Anne's Primary School in Corkey to collect a fantastic number of shoeboxes from this little school.



Hamper Collections



St Patrick's Primary School, presenting hampers to members of their local SVP Conference.



St Colman's High School and Sixth Form College, Ballynahinch, presenting hampers to members of local SVP Conference. Included is Principal Mr Morgan and form teachers.

St Malachy's Young SVP Conference Get Into the Christmas Spirit

Members of the Young SVP Conference from St Malachy's College, Belfast, volunteered their time to support our Stuff A Bus Appeal Launch at Shane Retail Park on Wednesday 18 December. After spending the months leading up to Christmas collecting toys and creating dozens of food hampers to donate to their local SVP Conference, St Malachy's students decided they wanted to give of their time as well.

The enthusiastic bunch worked hard collecting donations from the public and organising all the toys on the overflowing bus. They were so inspired by the generosity of everyone involved and the amount of families that would be helped from the appeal, that they headed over to Smyth's Toys to buy even more toys. Even though the weather was not on their side this never dampened their spirits.



Eamonn Holmes Lends His Support

North Belfast man and national television personality Eamonn Holmes met with Regional Manager Pauline Brown and representatives of The Salvation Army to lend his support to this year's Family Appeal.



Regional Office Visit by Lord Mayor

Former Lord Mayor of Belfast, John Finucane MP, visited our Antrim Road Regional Office to see toys being packed by willing volunteers for this year's Family Appeal.



Songs Of Praise Presenter Gets Involved

Claire McCollum, Songs Of Praise Presenter, helped raise awareness of the #StuffABus NI campaign by taking part in the launch of the campaign and recording a video message to help encourage donations.



Christmas Sponsors & Donors

Special thanks to all who so generously donated to our annual Christmas Appeals:-

AllState
Antrim GAA
Belfast City Council
Bunscoil Phobal Feirste
Chartered Accountants NI
Cyber Source
Department for Communities
Department for Economy
Department for Infrastructure
Education Authority
Eirgrid, SONI Ltd
First Derivatives
Gordons Chemists
Hunter House College
Lagan Construction
Morrows Communications
Our Lady's and St Patrick's School, Knock
PSNI
QUB
Rathmore Grammar School
Sainsbury/Argos
St Dominic's High School
St Malachy's Old Boys
Translink
U105
Ulster Property Sales
Vaughans Engineering
Whitemountain

And to all those other businesses, organisations and individuals who dropped off items of food, clothes, toys and gift vouchers and supported in any way.

Volunteer Helpers & Packers from a range of organisations

Business in the Community
Energia
Health and Social Care Board
PowerNI
Public Health Agency
UTV

And to the many individuals who came along to help after they heard our Appeal on radio, we couldn't have packed over 4,000 gift bags without you all.....!</p></div>

Five Star Target for Antrim Gaels

We are grateful to Antrim GAA for their continued support with #SaffronAid. Clubs across the county were set an ambitious five star target by the brainchild of the shoebox appeal, Antrim GAA PRO, Sean Kelly. His aim was for donations to hit a record of 5,000 shoeboxes donated since the initiative began.

Sean Kelly said: "The success of the #SaffronAid shoebox appeal over the last three years has proven how supportive and extremely big-hearted GAA clubs are and we are delighted to continue to do what we can to help those less fortunate than ourselves with SVP. In the last three years we've been overwhelmed by the generosity of our members and supporters and, in this fourth year, I'm hopeful that we can smash the record and hit a record 5,000 overall donations. It can be hard to imagine Christmas as just another day trying to keep warm, eating enough or struggling to do the most basic of things but this can be the case for so many people, who don't have the very basics we take for granted. It is wonderful to see so many Gaels with empathy for those in need."

We are thrilled to report that the target was well and truly reached!



Launching this year's #SaffronAid Christmas Shoebox Appeal with Pauline Brown, Regional Manager, are Sean Kelly, PRO for Antrim GAA; Eamon Mulholland of Quarter Chartered Accountants; Sinead Larkin of Larkin Cassidy Solicitors and Antrim County Chairman, Ciaran McCavana.



Gus McKendry is joined by enthusiastic trolley dashers at Sainsbury's West Belfast.



Antrim GAA make a Dash for Family Appeal

Several clubs from across Antrim participated in the 2019 #SaffronAid Family Appeal Trolley Dash and joined Gus McKendry to dash along the toy aisle in Sainsbury's West Belfast store in a bid fill a trolley with toys that will help ensure that children living in poverty in every community in Northern Ireland wake up to a toy on Christmas morning.

SVP distributed the games and toys collected to the most vulnerable in our society and Antrim GAA PRO, Sean Kelly, said: "We added the trolley dash idea to our fundraising efforts a couple of years ago and we are absolutely delighted at how the support for it has grown with more and more clubs getting involved. Sinead Steele, our Saffron Aid co-ordinator, really took this to another level this year."

Swinging into Christmas

The Swing Brothers released a Christmas album and sang live on U105 during the Stuff A Bus finale to raise awareness of our Family Appeal.



Christmas Family Appeal Kicked Off with Ambitious Target

Our annual Christmas Family Appeal with The Salvation Army officially kicked off with Northern Ireland football manager, Michael O'Neill MBE, and a target of filling a double decker with 20,000 toys. The Family Appeal aimed to provide 100,000 children who live in poverty in Northern Ireland with a present to open this Christmas. The charities were once again joined by Translink and U105 as they continued to support the Family Appeal through the 'Stuff A Bus' initiative.

Toy banks were placed in 18 Translink stations across Northern Ireland and donations could also be left at the Visit Belfast Welcome Centre in Belfast city centre.



Northern Ireland Football Manager, Michael O'Neill MBE, kicked off the Christmas Family Appeal with Paul Kingscott, The Salvation Army, Michael Sands, St Vincent de Paul, Denise Watson of U105 and Translink's Gordon Milligan.



Pauline Brown, Regional Manager, celebrates smashing the toy collection target with Jacqueline Wright of The Salvation Army, Peter McVerry of U105 and Ursula Henderson of Translink.

#StuffABus NI Target Smashed

The #StuffABus target was well and truly smashed with more than 20,000 toys being donated thanks to the generosity of the NI public. On a cold and wet day Translink passengers, staff, local businesses, school children, Education Authority staff and the wider public responded with exceptional kindness, to help stuff the double decker and achieve the aim of ensuring that thousands of children woke up to a present on Christmas morning.



Calendars for Cash

We are grateful to 15 year old Donncha Campbell and his supportive parents for their continued support of SVP. Donncha, a pupil at St Joseph's College, Belfast, has been taking photos for the last 9 years and creating a calendar of the images each year which he sells to friends in aid of SVP. Pauline Brown is pictured accepting a cheque for £300 from Donncha which he raised from the sale of this year's calendars.



Local Artist Donates Original

Belfast artist Aly Harte was so moved by the news of the need for donations this Christmas that she donated an original to raise funds for SVP and The Salvation Army. More than £2,000 was raised and we are grateful to Aly for her considerate gesture to our Family Appeal.



BRINGING JOY TO CHILDREN AT CHRISTMAS FOR 20 YEARS

For the 20th year, our Giving Tree Christmas programme with Belfast Central Mission and the Department for Communities provided parcels of toys and games for children across the whole of Northern Ireland.

Introduced as a small-scale internal initiative in 2000 for the then Department for Social Development, the 'Giving Tree Appeal' now welcomes gifts donated by DfC employees and team members from offices in Enniskillen, Cookstown, Lisnagelvin, Foyle, Ballymena, Omagh throughout the greater Belfast area, and further.



Gary McKenna of SVP launches the Giving Tree Appeal with Joanna McConway of Department for Communities and Lois McCullough of Belfast Central Mission.

Getting On Board with Railway Preservation Society of Ireland

Special thanks to the Society for the donation of 60 tickets on the Special Santa Train from Belfast to Whitehead on Saturday 7 December.

Families from SVP and Salvation Army were treated to a wonderful experience and given a beautiful gift by Santa!

*The Nareeman family
enjoying their Santa Train
experience*



Regional Shops

This has been a phenomenal season for our shops and Anne Crossan, Regional Retail Manager, would like to extend her thanks all the Vincent's staff and volunteers for their dedication over Christmas and throughout the year.

Peaks Campaign

This year's 2019 Peaks Campaign took creativity within our shops to a whole new level. Some of the highlights included a pop up shop at Dairy Farm, which was inside the shopping centre from the start of November until Christmas. It proved extremely popular for driving sales and in advertising the fact that there is a permanent Vincent's at the rear of the shopping centre. In Derry, a dedicated Christmas Room which had previously been used for storage will now be utilised to maximise the offering to customers on an ongoing basis.

The 'No Borders' Gift of Hope display adorned the window of our shop on Antrim Road. John Rodgers, Shop Manager, said: "People can buy a voucher for different parts of Africa to pay for things like mosquito nets, blankets and school fees for a term. The 'no borders' theme shows SVP is prepared to help anywhere." This year's donations focused on Ghana and Botswana.



Dairy Farm.



Antrim Road.



Derry Christmas.

Sustainability First this Christmas

This year's SVP Christmas Window Display competition theme was 'Thinking Green'. Vincent's Portadown won by excelling in showing sustainability and environmental awareness. All Vincent's stores across Northern Ireland were encouraged to participate in the annual Christmas window display competition and Portadown Vincent's window really stood out to the judges who had the final say after a public vote on Facebook, as the majority of the items used to dress the window had been donated to the shop over the past couple of years.



Anne Crossan, Regional Retail Services Manager for SVP, said: "As consumers are being encouraged to consider their buying habits and move away from 'fast fashion', Vincent's in Portadown is providing good quality used and unused products to its local communities with sustainability at the forefront. The annual window display competition gives our staff a fun project to work on in the run up to Christmas but there is a serious message and this year's focus was in underpinning our commitment to the environment.

"I would like to congratulate Vincent's Portadown for the creativity and imagination they've shown in creating their window display. In fact all the shops that participated in the competition created really fantastic showstopping windows. And I would also like to congratulate the shops that came second and third - Derry in second place and Newry in third place."

Award for Vincent's By Newry BID

Following the news that Vincent's on Mill Street Newry scooped Bronze in this year's Christmas Window Display, the staff and volunteers were also awarded Bronze by Newry BID for their festive Christmas Window Display.

Paula Clarke, Vincent's Manager said: "Apparently there were lots of entries for the Newry BID Window Display Competition from retailers across the city and competition was tough. So I am absolutely thrilled that the hard work and efforts of our volunteers has been rewarded. This award is for the volunteers who fulfilled the SVP brief of creating a sustainable window display and they made most of the items on display in the window lovingly by hand. I want to thank them as their hard work has truly paid off."

Newry BID said they were delighted to see the involvement from their members to help showcase Newry in its best light, working in line with their theme of Improving how Newry Looks. The standard of entries was excellent and they congratulated everyone.



Newry BID Manager, Eamonn Connolly, presents the Bronze trophy and hamper to Francis McCourt, Paula Clarke, Catherine Burbanks and Ria Rushe, for their creative Christmas Window Display at SVP, Mill Street, Newry.

Council Award for Vincent's Kilrea

Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council's annual Christmas Window Competition was won by Vincent's Kilrea and helped to spread festive magic through our towns and villages.

Throughout December, a panel of independent judges scored the decorated windows, and they were wowed by artistic efforts which created a warm welcome for shoppers and visitors.

The winners were selected using a number of criteria including overall impression and visual impact, creativity and ideas, and the positive perception it gave to the town centre.

Congratulating everyone who took part, the Mayor of Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council Councillor Sean Bateson said: "In the weeks leading up to Christmas many members of the public have made comments about the beautiful festive shop window displays. I have noticed this during my various engagements across the Borough, and have really admired the creativity and skill involved. The Christmas windows have helped to attract people in to our area and have encouraged people to 'shop local' this Christmas."

The competition applied to 11 towns and villages, and each winning business was presented with a bespoke glass trophy in recognition of their efforts.



Presenting Eileen McShane with the winning Window Display Award is Town and Village Officer Shaun Kennedy.

And finally, while we are still on the subject of Christmas, can we take a moment to appreciate this sweater created by Stefan in Vincent's Portadown. He wore it on Christmas Jumper Day to highlight our Christmas Campaign and with this year's slogan that instead of being the most wonderful time of the year, for some it can be the most worrying.



Your news in Vincentian News!

Do you have an event or a story that you would like to see featured in a future issue of Vincentian News? If so, we'd love to hear from you. Just email the details of your event and a picture if you have one to pauline.brown@svpni.co.uk

Kraft Kollektiv in Kircubbin

A new 'Kraft Korner' has opened in Kircubbin. Craft enthusiasts are welcome to classes which have recently included Patchwork and Book Art. Details of upcoming classes are listed on Facebook.



International Retail Conference comes to Derry

For the first time, the International Retail Conference, Exhibition, Awards and International Retail Meeting will be held in Derry on 17 June. A diverse group of staff and volunteers from across our 230 Vincent's charity shops and Order Fulfilment Centres, along with some colleagues from SVP outside of Ireland will discuss the challenges and opportunities facing charity retail in 2020.

Dave Barringer, CEO of SVP USA, will be joining us to address delegates from across the globe.

Events will be held in the historic Guildhall with thanks to our headline donor All-tex Recyclers.

Guest speaker Wayne Hemingway will share his experience of co-founding one of the most recognised brands, Red or Dead, and tell his story of heading up Hemingway Design.

Shop managers or senior volunteer from every shop and OFC as well as Regional Shops Committees, Shared Services, Regional Administrators and the National Retail Team will be invited to attend.

For further information, contact Anne Crossan, Regional Retail Manager, anne.crossan@svpni.co.uk



ALL STAR DONATION FROM O'NEILLS

SVP Killyclogher and Cookstown shared in funds raised from the recent All Star Awards and All Star Charity Game with O'Neills Sportswear and Teamtalkmag Tyrone. Team Talk Magazine has raised more than £30,000 for local charities since 2012.



Killyclogher Conference President Michael Deehan and Treasurer Marian Crozier accepting their donation from Teamtalk's Kevin Kelly, Michael Winters, Noel McGinn and Declan Devlin.



Receiving their cheque from Damian Harvey of Teamtalk are Denis Loughry, member, and Eamon Harvey, Vincent's Volunteer, Cookstown.

Clare Lodge, Newcastle

Christmas and New Year are seen as exciting times for most people but it can be a lonely and stressful time for others. Clare Lodge opened its doors this year and both staff and guests celebrated the festive occasion together.

Clare Lodge had plenty going on over the celebratory season, fun and laughter was in abundance and guests together enjoyed festive activities such as bingo, sing along karaoke, music entertainment and a visit from Santa.

Clare Lodge is located in a great setting which is beside the sea. Guests wrapped up well and went for a stroll along the promenade. Clare Lodge is within walking distance to local amenities, shops, churches amusements and pubs.

Guests enjoyed the welcoming atmosphere, the delicious homemade food and got into the festive spirit.

Feedback from guests was very positive with comments including:

"home from home feeling, great experience"

"can't wait to come back next year in 2020"

"overall, brilliant, staff were approachable and welcoming"

If you are interested in staying in Clare Lodge, please contact reception on tel 028 4372 2849 or email clare.lodge@svpni.co.uk



Guests enjoying a Clare Lodge Christmas

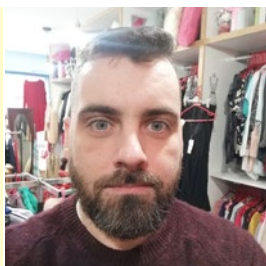


INTRODUCING NEW STAFF



Philip McCourt, Information Support Officer

We would like to welcome Philip McCourt to his new role as Information Support Officer. Philip is responsible for processing requests for assistance from clients on a daily basis. He also provides administrative support to Conference members and we wish him well in his new position.



Gerry Keatings, Manager, Vincent's Ormeau Road, Belfast

Gerry has a 20 year career in retail working with some of the biggest high street brands including Sports Direct, Card Factory and Smyths Toys. He has joined SVP to manage our Vincent's on Ormeau Road and has already become a firm favourite with the regulars. He's on first name terms with members of the local community and is enjoying the overall management and day to day running of the shop. We wish Gerry well in his new role as Manager of Vincent's Ormeau Road.



Alanna Pitts, Manager, Vincent's Magherafelt

A self-confessed avid charity shopper, local woman Alanna says when she saw the position of Manager at Magherafelt Vincent's advertised she thought it was the perfect job for her. With experience in the hospitality industry, Alanna was already a regular of Vincent's Magherafelt and she is now enjoying the new challenge of managing the shop instead of shopping in it. We wish Alanna well in her new role as Manager of Vincent's Magherafelt.

Young SVP Conferences Grow throughout the North

Since the beginning of September schools throughout the North have formed Young SVP Conferences. These groups are working hard within both their schools and communities to try and ease the pressure faced by those most in need, through imaginative and innovative fundraising initiatives and are also working hard for social justice through organising and delivering awareness raising campaigns.

Some groups have also decided to focus on befriending those who might be suffering from the poverty of loneliness, by visiting different groups within their community and offering a hand of friendship.

All of the work done by these groups has been so inspiring and they continue to work hard on the issues that they feel most passionately about (while also having lots of fun!). The Youth Movement across the world is getting larger and louder and thanks to the Young SVP programme the voices of the young people in our communities are being heard.

Groups are also taking part in a variety of workshops delivered by the Youth Development Officer (North), Niamh Mulholland, who visits each school regularly and creates links with these Young SVP Conferences and the local SVP members. These workshops aim to get the young people thinking about the issues that they are hoping to tackle through their work.



Niamh Mulholland.



The programme has gone from strength to strength and we hope that it will continue its success throughout the rest of the academic year.

St Malachy's in Belfast is just one school that is currently taking part in our Young SVP programme which focuses on getting young people involved in Social Action within their communities. The work being done throughout the North this academic term has been remarkable. If you would like to follow the journey of these groups, you can find us on Twitter @Young_SVP.

We would like to thank all the Young SVP Conferences that helped their schools to organise hamper and toy collections and all those other supporter schools that gave so generously.

For more information about the Young SVP programme, please feel free to contact Niamh at Niamh.mulholland@svpni.co.uk

Regional Twinning Update – Ghana and Botswana

From John Monaghan, Regional Twinning Chair

Through twinning, Conferences in our region build friendships and links with our sister SVP Conferences in Ghana and Botswana and offer financial support to vital projects which assist the local community, such as schools and orphanages, and helping to build wells, to mention just a few examples.

Twinning enables our Conferences to respond to the Vincentian call to respond to all those in need regardless of location; to help those on the other side of the world, as well as closer to home.

Alongside Conferences which are already twinned, since last autumn a number of other Conferences in our region have expressed an interest in being twinned and contact has been made with the SVP National Council in both Ghana and Botswana as the first step in establishing potential link-ups.

I would like to take this opportunity to appeal to you to get in touch with me at twinning@svpni.co.uk if your Conference would like to twin with a Conference in Ghana or Botswana,



or if your Conference or area would simply like to speak to me further about twinning and what it entails, or to have me come and speak at one of your meetings.

I am also seeking to re-establish the twinning committee and to this end would be keen to hear from any member who would like to assist in any way, from helping as treasurer to taking minutes or sending emails. It is envisaged that this would not require the same time commitment as being on a Conference or area committee and would be on an ad hoc basis.

The Society simply could not function without the time and talents of all our volunteers, so keep in mind that whatever contribution, however small, you could make would be invaluable.

IN MEMORIAM

Sean McGrath – St MacNissi's, Randalstown



Sean was a member of St Vincent de Paul since 1973 and faithfully attended every meeting until his health

declined. He was very active in the local community in Randalstown in all aspects of parish life. Sean was a man of calm contentment, with his life, the respect of his peers, and the all-abiding love of his family. He will be greatly missed by his family circle and all within SVP, but will not be forgotten.

Tony McAleer – St Theresa's Conference, Sion Mills



In August 2019, St Theresa's Conference Sion Mills was saddened by the passing of one of our former members, Tony McAleer, after a long illness. A native of Donemana, he settled in Sion Mills Parish, on returning from England with Kathleen, his wife.

Tony was a true gentleman and always had a smile on his face, a warm welcome for everyone. He was a wonderful servant to the Conference for over thirty years and only stepped down due to ill health. He received a long service medal which took pride of place in his home. As a member, he worked tirelessly to help those less fortunate than himself throughout our parish. Nothing was ever too much bother for Tony and he gave his time to SVP generously.

He also devoted a lot of his time to our parish, from being a member of the Parish Council, to helping out in the church whenever the need arose

Tony was widowed four years previously when Kathleen passed away. We offer our sincere sympathy to Tony's family, his sons Declan, Liam, Ciaran, Michael, his daughters Ann, Ursula and Catherine, sons and daughters in law, grandchildren, great grandchild and his extended family.

Finance Matters

2019 - Annual Financial Returns

Calling all Treasurers

Many thanks to all those Conferences, Shops and Area Councils who have already returned their 2019 Annual Financial Report Pack.

- Please attach a copy of your bank statement clearly showing the balance at 31st December 2019. We no longer accept certificates of balance from the bank.
- Both Treasurer and President must sign the "Sign-Off" page and the three Agresso print-outs (if applicable).
- Where "Restricted Funds" have been declared, supporting documentation will be required confirming the restriction.
- If the conference has received a bequest or external grant, please provide supporting documentation such as a solicitor's letter or letter of offer. Similarly, please provide receipts for large items purchased such as vehicles or equipment and all copies of lease agreements.

During the national audit, our auditors Deloitte, randomly select a sample of conferences to review. This may consist of on-site visits or requests for supporting documentation detailed above.

If you require any assistance with the completion of your Annual Financial Return, please do not hesitate to contact the Regional Accountant, Colm Crummey on 028 9075 0155 or Ciarán Liggett on 028 9075 0156.

AGRESSO LIVE	
Annual Report 2019	
Conference ID:	
Conference:	
Location:	
Area Council:	
Region:	

FOR CONFERENCE TREASURER USE

Agresso Checklist:

- All transactions for all Bank/ Building Society/ Credit Union/ Post Office/Other accounts have been entered onto Agresso for the year ended 31 December 2018
- All Bank reconciliations have been completed on Agresso up to 31 December 2018 agreeing all bank statements for all bank accounts to Agresso
- Agresso Reports Printed, Dated and Signed by President and Treasurer as follows (ensure these are securely attached to booklet):
 - Returns Report 2018
 - Bank Unreconciled Report (Bank Reconciliation)
 - Intershare Return
 - Reports Printed for All Conference Activities

Audit Requirement Check:

- Audited Accounts Completed and Enclosed (If Applicable)
- Independent Examiner Report Completed and Signed (If Applicable)
- Not Applicable

Check List for Essential Documentation Required to be Included in this Booklet where applicable:

- Copy of bank (or other financial institution) statements at the 31 December 2018
- Copy of bank (or other financial institution) statements at the date accounts are closed
- Restricted Funds
- Supporting Documentation for all Legacies or Bequests received in 2018 where the total is greater than €10,000/£7,500
- Supporting Documentation for all State Grants (Capital in nature or Other) received in 2018 where the total is greater than €25,000/£18,000
- All Documentation for Motor Vehicles or Office Equipment Purchased (Greater than €5,000/£3,750) or Sold/Disposed of in 2018
- Supporting Documentation for Property additions, including those Donated/Bequeathed to the Conference in 2018
- Completed the Internal Control Questionnaire (Section 1-4 Applicable to All Conferences)
- Annual Report Sign-Off Form Completed and Signed

For Consolidation Use Only:

