

# Young SVP Newsletter

Northern Region

Spring 2016



St Vincent de Paul



## SHOE BOX APPEAL

ST JOSEPH'S BOY HIGH SCHOOL SVP CONFERENCE WOULD APPRECIATE THAT YOU BRING IN THE FOODS THAT YOUR FORM TEACHER HAS GIVEN YOU **THIS IS AN IMPORTANT CAUSE AS THIS WILL GO TO A VERY DESERVING FAMILY IN NEED**

### IMPORTANT FACTS TO CONSIDER

BRING IN NON PERISHIBLE FOODS HERE ARE SOME SUGGESTION: BOXES /PACKETS BISCUITS, SWEETS, CHOCOLATES, TINNED GOODS EG FRUITS, VEG, BOTTLES OF COKE/SILOER

REMEMBER NO FRESH FOODS AS THIS WILL SPOIL AND GO OFF BEFORE WE CAN GET TO THE EDERLY & FAMILIES IN NEED

ST JOSEPH'S SVP GROUP  
20 ARMAGH ROAD  
NEWRY BT35 6DH  
TEL: 028 30262595  
FAX: 028 30264420



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# EDITORIAL



*Gemma Brolly*

**Northern Region Youth President**

Welcome to our latest newsletter where you can catch up on what's been going on in the Northern Region of SVP!

The work and aid never stops, as I'm sure you can see! Words cannot express what your time and effort means to us and the difference this makes to the lives of those many people, experiencing hardship in so many forms.

The World Youth Day takes place in July this year in Krakow, Poland, running on the theme of the Beatitudes, in particular: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God (MT 5:8)." The work carried out by Young SVP surely assists in the journey of our hearts to purity.

We also remember deep within our hearts that this is the "Year of Mercy", something Bishop McKeown spoke about in great detail at the Catholic Schools Week Mass which I had the pleasure of attending.

We are so overwhelmed at times, with the pressures of modern life, achieving high grades (teachers and students alike), maintaining high standards, moving in the 'right' social circles, that our attention can become temporarily diverted...we may not have time to attend that rally, to help raise awareness of our community's hardships; the date of the latest fundraiser may clash with a party or a get-together or it may not look very 'cool' to stop and speak to that quiet, shy person who always appears to be by themselves.

Our acts of mercy on the road to purity of heart can be as simple and plentiful as we decide to make them...

In this year of mercy, let us all try to take that little bit more time not only to reflect on what acts of mercy we can carry out but to act with mercy when we can.

Again, thank you from the bottom of our hearts for all your wonderful assistance, we look forward to continuing in our work together to assist those in need.

Best wishes,  
**Gemma**





## Agents of change, bearers of hope

At a recent social justice forum conducted at the Australian Catholic University, a young student posed the question, "What sort of society do we want to live in?" This is a question that goes to the heart of what social justice is all about. While it infers many aspects of present day society are flawed, it also says that we can make a change. With faith, compassion, knowledge and understanding, we can determine what kind of society we want to live in.

Justice has never been about having all of the answers. It is about asking the right questions. This is the impulse that motivated Frederic Ozanam, the principle founder of the Society of St Vincent de Paul. In 1830s Paris, at a time of intense political upheaval, nineteen year-old Frederic was not concerned with questions of politics and power, his quest was social in nature.

Like many young people, Frederic refused to accept that poverty and suffering was a part of life. He was not discouraged by the scale of the inequality he witnessed nor was deterred by the cynicism of many elders who were convinced that change was impossible. Instead, Frederic drew inspiration from his colleagues and mentors and added "work to talk."

This passion for change and the belief that a better future is possible remains a central part of the Society of St Vincent de Paul's mission. As agents of change and bearers of hope, young people keep the Society young and remain a critical part of the Society of St Vincent de Paul's pursuit of social justice.

### **Prayer for the Young**

*May the God of Justice make us see what is right and needs to be done.*

*May justice always guide our relations with other people.*

*May Christ's holding us dear be what motivates us. Amen.*



# Christmas Time with SVP



St Malachy's HS, Castlewellan

The sixth form students and Pope John Paul II volunteers from St Malachy's High School, Castlewellan organised food hampers for the annual St Vincent de Paul appeal which help families in need during the festive period in the Castlewellan, Kilcoo and Leitrim area. Representing St Vincent de Paul was Jim Morgan of Castlewellan .

A total of 92 hampers were received. Mr Conor Fegan also organised a school raffle and donated £160 worth of food vouchers for the Fresh Food Centre, Castlewellan. The Principal and staff wish to extend their thanks to the students, staff, friends and family of St Malachy's who were so generous with their donations.



St Patrick's HS, Keady

Well done to all of our form classes in St. Patrick's High School for their response to the annual St. Vincent de Paul Christmas Food Hamper Appeal. Staff and students have generously donated hampers full of festive food and gifts.

This year the Year 13 Young SVP group coordinated and distributed the hampers throughout the local community. Thank you once again for your support at this time of year.



The Annual SVP Christmas Appeal took place within Dominican College on Thursday 3rd December. This is a key event within the school calendar and everyone looks forward to seeing the Christmas gifts and hampers being placed under the tree and the sound of Christmas music (courtesy of Brenda) in the Atrium!

There was a fantastic response to our appeal with many classes producing several food hampers. The hampers and gifts were then collected by SVP members (St Bernard's and Holy Family) and by the Barnardo's Leaving Care Project Team.

Mrs Niblock stated, "We would like to thank all our staff, pupils and their parents for their generosity to our SVP Appeal. All the gifts and hampers were delivered to local families and individuals and helped to make their Christmas a brighter one."



Dominican College, Fortwilliam





 St Ciaran's College, Ballygawley

A huge congratulations to St Ciaran's College, Ballygawley as they have just joined the Young SVP Programme this school year, by setting up a junior and a senior SVP Conference in school.

This year, they successfully organised a bake sale for SVP and the Simon Community to highlight homelessness in Northern Ireland. They also completed a very successful Christmas Food Hamper Appeal this year too!

A fantastic group of young people, with more exciting projects up their sleeve! Watch this space....



The Annual Christmas Appeal with St Dominic's Grammar School this year was very successful as pupils and staff donated toys and food hampers to Turf Lodge in West Belfast! Well done girls!

Another fantastic effort from Loreto SVP Conference Omagh with their Teenage Stall at the local Bazaar where they raised £600 for SVP! A BIG thank you to the girls and Mrs Sheilds!!!

 St Dominic's Grammar, Belfast



 Loreto Grammr, Omagh



 Assumption Grammar, Ballynahinch

Well done to Assumption Grammar School in Ballynahinch who donated Food Hampers and toys to the local SVP Conferences in Ballynahinch and Drumaness, Co. Down.

Pictured are pupils from Year 11 & 12 and Conference President, Peter Cunningham from St Patrick's SVP Conference, Ballynahinch. Another huge thank you to Mr Wilson and the staff of the school also.







Firstly, please welcome St Joseph's High School, Newry to the Youth Programme!

The boys started up their SVP School Conference in October 2015 and they have hit the ground running since. Their Youth Conference Coordinators, Martin McGreevy and Sharon Byrne are very pleased with the boys' willingness to help and enthusiasm!



Members of the Young St. Vincent de Paul conference presented 75 Christmas Hampers to St Bridget's SVP to help local families over the Christmas holidays. The school would like to pass on their thanks to the school community for supporting this appeal and to the parents of our pupils for their continued positive support.



St Joseph's HS, Newry



Another fantastic effort by St Mary's HS, Limavady with their Annual Christmas Food Hamper Appeal. The staff and pupils of the school collected and donated over 50 hampers to the local SVP Conference in Limavady, St Canice's.

Also, a welcoming note to new Youth Conference Coordinator in the school, Allison Mullen, who took over from Stephen Keown earlier this year.

We would also like to wish Stephen good luck with his new post of Vice-Principal of St Mary's College, Derry and also thank you for all your work over the years with the Youth!

St Mary's HS, Limavady

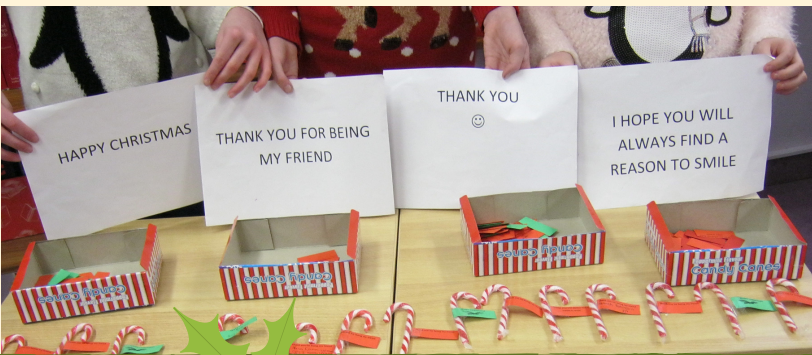


A great effort by St Mary's High School, Newry this year. I would also like to welcome the girls and Mrs Kearney to the Young SVP family!

St Mary's had a few different projects at Christmas this year such as the Giving Tree, the Food Hamper Appeal and their Candy Canes, sending on a message of friendship throughout the school.

They raised a total of £70 for their local SVP, sold their Candy Canes through the holy season of Advent and created over 45 hampers for the local SVP also

Thank you for all your hard work and well done!



St Mary's HS, Newry





# Annual Youth Day 2016

by Siena Morelli, Year 13  
Dominican College, Portstewart

*The Annual Youth Day for the Northern Region took place in the Crumlin Road Gaol, Belfast on 10th February. This year the day was attended by 15 schools from all across the region showcasing their projects from this year, exploring issues relating to social justice and most importantly, meeting pupils from other schools*

A total of fifteen other schools attended the event to celebrate the young people who give up their time to help those struggling in their community. We were told that SVP Youth is 'caring for those in our midst irrespective of case, colour or creed.' The day began by setting up our display to illustrate all the work Dominican College has participated in for St. Vincent De Paul. This included images and write-ups of events such as the annual beach walk, the Christmas hampers, the Toy Appeal and the Clothing Bank to help those less fortunate.

The conference then commenced with a reflection from our school Chaplain, Fr. Raymond McCullough. He spoke about us as young people being able to plant mustard seeds that enable us to grow in the Kingdom of God. He related this to the motto of a local primary school in our community, St. Colum's reading 'From little acorns to mighty oaks'.

The next speaker was the Living Youth Director of Young SVP, Pauline Dowd. She spoke in a motivational way, beginning on an interesting point, comparing us all to oranges, asking us 'what squeezes you?' making us reflect on all of the aspects of our life that get the best and worst out of us. She reinforced this by saying 'you're in control of what's inside of you!' Pauline then mentioned famous Christians such as C.S Lewis and Mother Teresa, reminding us all that we are made in the image and likeness of God. She also encouraged us as Young SVP pupils to be merciful and follow in the ways of people such as Pope Francis and to 'never underestimate our small acts of mercy.' Pauline finished with an important and relevant verse from Hebrews 3:13, 'Everyday as long as this today lasts, keep encouraging each other'.

A member of the Regional Youth Council of St. Vincent De Paul, Roisin Shields, from Coalisland in County Tyrone was next to speak. She became involved in SVP through her interests in social justice and human rights as a whole. Coming from a small working class community growing up, she saw how poverty affected people and wanted to help. She knew the best way was to start close to home. Roisin firmly believes that us, as the youth in our society can make and are currently making a difference. She stated a fascinating point that the wealthiest 1% of the world own more than 50% of the world's wealth. This was shocking to her and believes that this needs to change. Roisin thanked us for our work in St. Vincent De Paul by being active social innovators and ambassadors for our local communities.

The conference was followed by a number of activities focussing on the central ethos of SVP and we were lucky enough to meet lots of important people who work with the charity and fellow young SVP pupils from other schools. We also got to take pictures of each other in the stocks of the old prison which was a lot of fun.

I joined St. Vincent De Paul in school because I was looking to become more involved in my community by taking part in a positive social action in my local area. I feel it is very important to help others and become more aware of social justice and thought it would be best to start from home. This belief was enhanced in the trip to the SVP Annual Youth Day. I am very privileged to have been given the role President of SVP in Dominican and I am excited to take on board more activities and programmes in the future.







St Patrick's College, Maghera



St Mary's HS, Limavady



St Malachy's, Belfast



St Genevieve's HS, Belfast



Our Lady & St Patrick's, Knock



St Joseph's HS, Newry



Loreto Grammar, Omagh



Our Lady of Lourdes, Ballymoney



Dominican College, Fortwilliam



St Ciaran's, Ballygawley



St Louise's College, Belfast



St Mary's CBGS, Belfast



Dominican College, Portstewart



Pauline & Brendan Dowd



St Columbanus, Bangor



For more pictures, check out our Facebook Page - Young SVP - Northern Region



# AWARE AT SCHOOL...



AN ARTICLE BY COLLEEN MILLIGAN

Hello! My name is Colleen Milligan and I am the Schools & Corporate Fundraising Officer for AWARE.

AWARE is a Northern Ireland based charity working exclusively for those with depression and bipolar disorder. It was formed in 1996 and we are therefore excited to be celebrating 20 years in NI in 2016. AWARE was set up to support the increasing number of people across Northern Ireland affected by the illness of depression including sufferers and their families, friends and carers. Since 1996 we have developed many services in response to the needs within communities across NI. This includes 24 support groups that run throughout towns and cities in Northern Ireland which are facilitated by volunteers and an information helpline which is open Monday- Friday from 9am-1pm.

AWARE also has a full suite of mental health and wellbeing programmes which we deliver throughout schools, universities, businesses and communities in the north of the country.

These programmes are of the highest clinical standard and our 'Mood Matters' programme which we deliver into post-primary schools has become a very important part of many schools pastoral care.

is really important that our services and programme continue to be delivered so that is why it is vital that we get funding and support from businesses, the community and schools to help maintain the important work we do.

## **'AWARE' at School!**

We want everyone to get involved in fundraising for AWARE at your school – teachers, parents and students – so that everyone can help raise much needed funds to help us support those affected by depression and bipolar disorder and improve awareness of young people's mental health and emotional wellbeing.

There are lots of initiatives your school can get involved in throughout the school year to support AWARE including hosting your own 'Mood Walk', get involved in our 'Brighten up Blue Monday' Campaign or organise your own creative activities to engage your students in supporting AWARE.

To get your business or school involved in supporting AWARE please contact our Schools & Corporate Fundraising Officer, Colleen on 028 90357820 or [colleen@aware-ni.org](mailto:colleen@aware-ni.org)





## Social Justice Spotlight on... Mental Health



*Erin Anderson & Clodagh McGurk*  
*Our Lady of Lourdes HS, Ballymoney*

On Friday 4 September the fourth and fifth year students of Our Lady of Lourdes Ballymoney were fortunate enough to have a guest speaker from Aware talk to us about our mental health and how we can keep it strong and healthy. Aware is a Charity that aims to help sufferers and inform people about the effects of neglecting your mental health.

Colleen from Aware spoke to us at length about the many mental health issues are faced everyday by people of all ages, she taught us how to recognise the symptoms of depression, anxiety and similar issues, but most importantly, Colleen, made us realise that no matter what we are going through with our mental health we are never alone and that we must speak up!

We, the senior members of our conference, realised that mental illness is a taboo subject in today's society, which is ridiculous, as 1 in 4 people suffer from a mental illness of some sort. We recognised that this needed to change and the stigma surrounding mental health problems had to be reduced. We needed to let our student body know that they are not the only people who sometimes feel anxious. We wanted them to know that mental illness can affect young people too, and unsurprisingly, it most commonly takes hold in the lead up to and during the exam period. It was necessary for our fellow students to know that just because mental illness cannot be seen, unlike a physical health problem, it doesn't mean it isn't important. It was vital for our pupils to know that you can overcome mental illness and regain control of your life if you simply speak up and make your problem known to someone who can help, for example a parent, teacher or doctor. Mental health problems affect everyone at least once in their lifetime and it is a topic close to our hearts as worriers and over worked students ourselves, we were passionate about making a change within our school community.

After gaining our new found knowledge on this subject we decided we needed to put it into action. The senior members of our conference used our gifts and talents to inform our student body about mental health in young people. We settled on the idea of creating and performing a role play to show the reality of mental health issues in young people in a whole-school assembly, making Aware, and the work they do, known to our fellow pupils. Our hard-hitting piece paid off, as our junior SVP members followed in our footsteps and took it upon themselves to raise money for the amazing work of Aware. The junior members organised a very successful fundraiser, Yellow Day, where each member of the school community wore an item of yellow (Aware's signature colour) and paid £2 to support the charity. We raised £500 for the charity to show our appreciation for the work they do and help them with their work.

**We hope we have made a difference!**



# The Human Touch



*By Lauren O'Hare, Year 13  
Sacred Heart Grammar School, Newry*

I am human in my heart of hearts, and that humanity is something that binds all people together. Despite people's differences there is something common to all of us. This year, I have found that commonality in the Junior St. Vincent de Paul Society in my school.

This current academic year, in my school, the Sacred Heart Grammar, Newry, we have tried to help people in whatever way we can. We linked up with 'Team Hope' and working with the Year 8 pupils in school, we collected over sixty generous shoe boxes which were sent to poorer children in Eastern Europe in time for Christmas. We also organised a whole school Christmas Hamper Appeal and these were distributed by our local St. Vincent de Paul Conference to families in our local area. Currently we are organising a fun event in school, in conjunction with the school Eco Committee, to raise awareness of the interconnectedness between ecological issues and poverty. The proceeds from this event will go to our local St. Vincent de Paul Conference.

After becoming a member of the Sacred Heart Young SVP Conference, I began to mix with people in my year group, that I hadn't had much opportunity to before, whilst bonding over a common goal. I found a real sense of community and excitement was always present at all our meetings -something I don't think I expected. At each meeting this year, I have found that people don't hold back in their ideas, suggesting ways to improve what we are trying to do. Our Young SVP Conference evoked in me that need to help, and this key value is at the Society's core. As a young person I really appreciate what SVP offers.

As Samuel Beckett wrote; "You're on earth, there's no cure for that." So we all have to make the most of it for ourselves and for others. Helping others is one way to achieve this, no matter how many or how few people, it still makes a difference, and that's what counts. The Society helps to make local and global lives better. Perhaps making people's lives better, or helping to, is the cure for humanity.





# Camp Vincent 2015

Finally June arrives... it's the end of exams... start of summer... and the awesome SVP Youth Camp!

A wild weekend of thrills began on Friday 26th June. However, unlike conventional summer camp, we were immediately immersed in all-things SVP from our very first foray in Todd's Leap. Present was a pastiche of justice ambassadors and our aim was not only to have fun, but to share fundraising ideas, meet like-minded people and expand our understanding of SVP's enthusiastic work. On our first evening, the SVP Youth Officer, the fab Claire Morgan, lead a lively discussion on the unmistakable requirement for the organisation's work in our communities, after an engaging mix of lively team building and indoor games. It was clear that this was no ordinary summer camp.



At SVP, we are always encouraged to move mountains but a 70 ft. climbing wall isn't typically in the conference itinerary! Indeed, that was one of many intrepid pursuits that day; a 200ft high flying zip line, hill rallying and many more differing and wild activities waited to wow us. Seeing pupils unceremoniously shoot at teachers in a game of paintball was definitely something I won't forget! First though, an unexpected game of pool was played during which a sudden debate arose on the best fundraising ideas; it was spots versus stripes, teenage stalls versus coffee mornings. Of course, it was all in good sport (even if some of us couldn't pot the ball).

Interspersed with the wild pursuits were spirited SVP themed activities, whereby I gained a profound new perspective on the organisation's supportive effect in my community and throughout Ireland. Poverty doesn't only exist on a local and global monetary scale, it also manifests in loneliness and isolation from society. Therefore, through a range of fervent discussion and SVP themed games, we all gained a fresh insight into the different forms of poverty and how the organization combats these.



Without doubt, being surrounded by such a melange of like-minded and enthusiastic people, some of whom remain firm friends, has inspired me to continue being passionate about promoting equality and justice within our world, both through SVP, social media and in everyday life

Elizabeth McSorley  
SVP Youth Ambassador  
Loreto Grammar School, Omagh









# CONFERENCE CORNER



St Ciaran's College  
Coláiste Naomh Ciarán



*By Alanna Donnelly, Year 13*

At the beginning of Year 13, I had no comprehension of the existence of Young SVP Conferences in schools across Ireland; I did not believe that I would be involved in having such an impact in my school through working with the younger pupils; and I certainly would not have believed that our school would have raised over £500 for homelessness along with many other ventures. All this accomplished through our Young SVP Conference started only in November of last year!

Back in October, one Wednesday morning to my dismay I had to depart from my AS class in order to attend a talk for our year group. Like most people I thought that this was just another free period, however during that talk, where Claire illustrated the work and prosperity achieved through small groups of young people with a common initiative, it struck me then that our school HAD to take part in this! After a day or two, and a few persuasive words from my religion teacher I decided to write an email to Claire, about setting up a conference in our school and since then our school conference has never looked back.

Our experience so far with Young SVP has been so rewarding! The shock, joy and relief after our bake sale total was accumulated was immeasurable! The time spent educating our school's students on depression, along with ourselves, was really worthwhile and beneficial to our school community. The feedback we received from Year 8's on how we could improve the school for them really helped us to appreciate their needs, enabling us to make the school and better and more prosperous school for everyone, including future pupils! Indeed our Young SVP group have even made an outreach to the wider community visiting and befriending local nursing homes! Also even in other aspects of school life the knowledge we received through our Young SVP Conference has a startling impact. For example, one of our members, Meabh, is taking part in the Knights of St. Coloumbanus Public Speaking Competition where you have to answer an unprepared question. Meabh was able to answer her group's question flawlessly by linking it to the words of Roisin Shields— one of the SVP Youth Area Reps, who spoke at the SVP Youth Day Conference which 14 of our members had the privilege to attend.

Rosin's words of "we need you now" helped inspire Meabh through the Competition and of course, Meabh's group won the Ulster final! For every month we have accomplished new endeavours, and we are now working on a charity night for SVP and St Ciaran's Peregrini Outreach Project, in aid of global poverty. We then also hope to tackle a social injustice and make links with our local primary schools before the years out (as well as passing our exams!).

To conclude, I am so proud to be the President of our school's Young SVP Conference and I am even more proud of our 24 member senior group and 16 member junior group and the work they do, it really does make this worthwhile and enjoyable! The enthusiasm possessed by the members of our group is unbelievable! Everyone is full of ideas but most importantly we all just want to help. Our schools, our communities, our society! I would definitely recommend other schools to establish Young SVP Conferences, not only do you get a pretty badge and a day out to the Young SVP Youth Day, you also help so many people! People that would not receive this help otherwise! It's shocking the impact that such a small group of people can have! It's hard to imagine the impact if more schools could take part! The Young SVP Conference was the highlight of my sixth year at school and I can't wait for next year when we come back to complete more ventures, raise more awareness and help even more people, hopefully towards a step in changing their lives!



# The Importance of Youth

*By Brendan O'Neill  
Regional Vice-President*

Within the Northern Region, the Youth have been around the Society helping in their local communities and schools for many years. We, as Vincentians, are always very appreciative for their help whether they help with mass collections, annual appeals, clothes drives and general fundraising.

However, as Vincentians we have to look to the future and in order to do so, we turn to our Youth and realise how important of a role they already play and also, what their role could be. Therefore, we need to ask the question, ‘When is a young Vincentian less of a young Vincentian?’ And the answer is, when mainstream Vincentians choose not to engage with them.

As a ‘senior Vincentian’ (in terms of age), I believe that we do not engage sufficiently with our youth within the Society and furthermore, I have heard all of the clichés, for example, “our youth are our future etc, etc” but do we really value them and fully understand the extent of the current Youth Development Programme? If we ask ourselves the following questions, we will be aware of much we appreciate our young Vincentians:

- Do we pray for our youth?
- What do we offer them in terms of support?
- Do we do any more than involve them once a year in Festival masses, perhaps to do readings/offertory processions?
  - Do they attend Conference masses?
  - Do we attend youth events? At the recent Regional youth day there were in excess of 200 young people. Seven members attended the day.
  - Are our young people represented at Area Council level?
  - What do we expect from them?
  - What can they expect from us?
  - Are we aware that our young people are doing fantastic things such as getting involved in issues such as child poverty, mental health awareness, human rights and homework clubs?

Young Vincentians each have their individual talents which make them unique and also help them contribute in their own way, just like we all do on a daily basis with our Conference work. In other words, we all have our roles to play. Consequently, we can also help to support them in their work, guide them and impart our knowledge.

As a final thought, young members of the Society of St Vincent de Paul are not in a separate organisation, we are one SVP, but it is up to each and every Vincentian brother and sister to ensure that our Young members do not feel separated and isolated.





# Young SVP

## Ambassadors leading the way...

As a part of the Electric Ireland's social media campaign for the Young SVP Programme, they featured 17 Young SVP Volunteers under the age of 17 across Ireland. When originally approached about this, I was very excited as I go around the North and meet such fantastic young people every day, which incidentally made it very difficult to choose just five young people who demonstrated such amazing commitment from the beginning of the programme. So I'd like you to meet them...



### Joshua Moore, Our Lady & St Patrick's, Knock

I first joined SVP in Year 9 because I was looking for some extracurricular activity which would involve helping others and SVP had a very good reputation within the school.

I have been involved in a range of projects. These include weekly attendance at our conference meetings and weekly visitation to Towell House, a residential home, which I have been committed to for 6 years. I have also been involved with fundraising eg. cake sales, Christmas Hamper Appeals, bag packs, SVP/ Salvation Army Family Appeal – sorting and bagging toys at Christmas. I have also attended the Annual Youth Conference.

My current role within the conference is as an active member and President. I was delighted when I was elected and able to lead a vibrant society which gains such a wide support within my school.

I have learned a lot about myself during the last 6 years. I have learnt how privileged I am and the importance of helping and respecting others. SVP has also given me confidence to believe I can be a part of something bigger in society and make a difference in the life of people, some of whom I may never meet.

*Joshua's Teacher, Mrs Killen writes: "Joshua is a most committed and enthusiastic member of our school SVP conference. Kind and generous by nature, he shows sensitivity and a genuine concern for others. Having a very courteous and friendly disposition, he is very welcoming in his approach and can easily engage with both the young and old. Since joining 6 years ago, he has taken very active roles in a wide range of activities, from fund raising to visitation work, is always most willing to give of his time and is very cooperative and dependable. He is also very appreciative of the opportunities that have been made available to him. Now, elected President of the school conference, he is an excellent role model for his peers."*



## Elizabeth McSorely, Loreto Grammar Omagh

The brilliant opportunity to join the Loreto SVP Conference arose as part of the Year 13 Outreach Programme in school. The reputation that the charitable organisation has within school is second-to-none, because throughout my younger school career, it was always heavily involved within the school community, whether the students were fundraising, hosting fashion shows or establishing the SVP Club with younger students (in the non-stressful Yr9!) Hence, when the chance to join the conference emerged, I jumped at the chance and most definitely have never looked back!

After being immersed in practical and campaigning activities to benefit the local community since I joined, it became quickly evident that the presence of SVP and their work is of utmost importance to all involved. It wasn't necessarily

the monetary or coupon aid received by individuals in need, instead in many cases, it was the aura of human companionship or the provision of a new skill which enabled them to benefit from the SVP Conference. The acute issue of local poverty cannot be simply defined by the lack of silver dollar, but in many cases, there is the simple poverty of loneliness. After all Mother Teresa did declare that "the greatest disease... is being unwanted, unloved, and uncared for", and my involvement with the SVP has clearly illustrated that everyone of our projects has either been of monetary or human benefit to the local community, which school is inherently part of.

*Elizabeth's Teacher, Mrs Sheilds writes: "Elizabeth has been a fantastic voice for social justice in school in Post 16. She joined the SVP Conference last year and excelled in leadership from the beginning. Elizabeth is passionate about all aspects of equality, human rights, challenging poverty and all forms of discrimination. Her experience in the SVP Group in Year 13 inspired her to apply for the role of Senior Prefect for Justice and Peace in the Senior Leadership Team. The Principal had no hesitation in appointing Elizabeth to this coveted role as she had been an inspiration to so many students in school in her role in SVP."*

## Michael Rooney, St Malachy's , Belfast

Over the past four years involved with SVP I have attended two of the conference days and I have also attended two of the summer camps. Both events try to keep to the same structure; having fun while at the same time increasing awareness about social poverties. One of the most recent camps highlighted the fact that being poor is not just about struggling financially. People can be poor in regards to having no friends and family, no support links and no hope for the future. All of the projects have been of great individual help to me and the rest of the society.

I've learned that I love making a positive difference in the world. The changes I have helped happen may only be locally but there is a great sense of satisfaction that comes with it, whether this is my own SVP group or people in the surrounding community there is always good deeds to be done.

*Michael's Teacher, Mr Lenaghan writes: "He joined our Conference in Year 11 and it was very obvious to me that he had a passion and interest in the work of SVP. He is currently the President of Conference and it is no surprise that he was voted in by the other boys. He is certainly an excellent role model for the younger members of the group and does the work with a good spirit and a good heart. Many of the younger members would look up to Michael and seem encouraged by his loyalty, fun and enthusiasm that he brings with him."*



## Clodagh McGurk, Our Lady of Lourdes, Ballymoney

I have seen SVP in action in my parish of Rasharkin and I was able to see the impact on different families who were given assistance. I was particularly inspired by the work and dedication of SVP, particularly in their social inclusion projects, I wanted to know more and help with the projects. I have always supported the work of SVP members so when the SVP programme started in my school I was eager to join, in order to help make a change for those struggling in my local area.

During my time as a SVP Youth member I have learnt to truly value and appreciate everything I have as some people are not as fortunate as I am and this new mind frame motivates me to help others the best that I can. I have learnt new leadership skills that will help now and in the future.

I have learnt that poverty is not only lack of money but it's also about want and need for company and friendship. I've also learnt that poverty does not only occur in developing countries but also here in our own country.

My social and leadership skills have improved massively; I'm more confident and feel more willing to step outside my comfort zone. I'm more organised than I was before joining SVP. I now have a greater understanding for the need for empathy and compassion for the less fortunate than me. Appearances can be deceiving and one shouldn't judge a book by its cover.

*Clodagh's Teacher, Ms Hartley writes: "Clodagh joined us in Year 8 as a very shy character. Through all her efforts, we have watched her bloom into a confident, capable young leader. A selfless lady, she is willing to push herself out of her comfort zone, trying new initiatives and do things for the sake of others even if they inconvenience her. Her infectious enthusiasm, dedication to all that she does and zest for life experiences all mean her peers follow her lead instinctively and with an assured conviction that they will be successful. An asset to our community, we couldn't be prouder of our Head Girl."*

## Glen Harte, St Joseph's High School, Newry

I joined Young SVP after Claire came in to talk to my year group about what SVP do and how I could help people in my local community. I wanted to get involved in some organisation like this and Martin McGreevy in school encouraged me to take the first step and put my name down. As my granny always said "it's good to help"

I enjoy the weekly meetings we have in school and the planning of different projects we are keen to develop. I also like to see the benefits of getting up and involved and making a difference in people's lives.

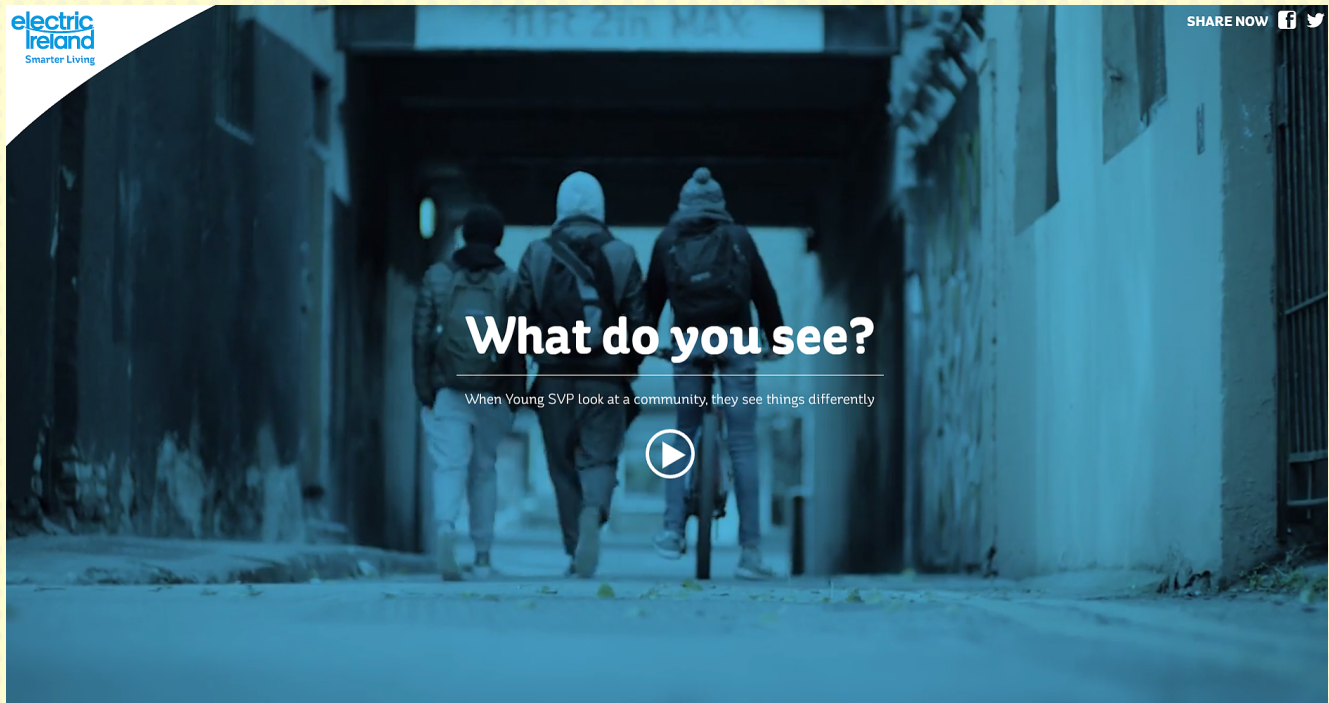
I like helping people and making a difference. I feel I am getting better at communicating and talking out more and I enjoy team work with each member having a role to play in the organisation. I come from an area of social deprivation but people are very proud and don't like asking for charity.

*Mr McGreevy, Glen's Teacher writes "Glen has shown great leadership in his role as President of our school Young SVP Conference. He has grown in confidence and self-belief. This has been reflected in his interaction with teachers and peers. Glen has a genuine interest in his community and making the lives of people better.*

*The greatest quality has been his self-confidence and belief that he can achieve. He has proved that it is okay to be the quiet person in the group, they too have a role to play and his contribution to the life of the school and the development of Young SVP has been a driving force for others.*



# #Whatdoyousee



Over the last two years, the SVP Ireland National Youth Programme has changed its focus by trying to offer as many volunteering opportunities to our young volunteers as possible by setting up Conferences in their schools. We have been very fortunate to have the support of Electric Ireland over the last while and they recently ran a campaign for Young SVP via social media examining the attitudes of the media towards young people. They also created a striking video on our behalf highlighting their findings and the focus of our Programme, which can be viewed on [www.whatdoyousee.ie](http://www.whatdoyousee.ie)

If you would like to view the video, please visit the website above. The video can be viewed from two different perspectives - negative and positive. The negative version is what you will see immediately, which will show you the negative perception of young people that we often see in the media. If you hit the 'shift' button on the keyboard, or if you are using your phone or tablet, 'hit' the screen and the view will immediately change to a positive view. This view is our reality. The reality that young people are unique, talented and doing amazing work for the Young SVP programme! Finally if you would like to further engage with our programme outside of school hours, follow us on twitter and facebook:



Young SVP - Northern Region



@Young\_SVP

