

SPRING 2025

THE **SVP** BULLETIN

The Voice of Social Justice in Ireland

A YEAR OF HOPE

A JOURNEY OF GIVING BACK

**THE POWER OF EDUCATION
TO CHANGE LIVES**



“The day the Lord created hope was probably the same day He created Spring.”
– St. Francis of Assisi



Principal founder of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, Frederic Ozanam

THE SVP BULLETIN

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Editorial



by Linda O’Connell
Editor

Holding Hope Close to Home: How We Can Make a Difference in 2025

As the world reflects on the trials of 2024, it’s impossible not to acknowledge the heavy toll global events have taken on our collective hearts. Stories of unimaginable loss and resilience have dominated headlines from the devastation in Gaza to the ongoing conflict in Ukraine. Families torn apart, homes reduced to rubble, and communities enduring relentless hardship remind us of humanity’s fragility and remarkable strength.

Yet while these distant struggles are heartbreaking, they often leave us wondering — how can we help from so far away? The truth is, while we may feel impotent about direct intervention abroad, we can still find some solace and purpose by making a difference here at home. In Ireland, many people within our communities face significant hardships that deserve compassion and support. Choosing to help those closer to home gives us hope and reminds us that kindness is a powerful force.

This mission is at the heart of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, which has stood by those struggling in Ireland for 180 years. That’s not just a milestone — it’s a testament to countless lives touched and transformed by empathy and action. In 2024 alone, SVP received nearly 250,000 calls for help. Each plea was a story of someone facing hardship, whether due to financial strain, housing insecurity, or simply the overwhelming weight of life’s challenges.

The beauty of SVP’s work lies in its simplicity: ordinary people choosing to lift up their neighbours. These aren’t grand gestures by heroes on pedestals but small acts of extraordinary kindness. Volunteers step up to listen, provide food, assist with education costs, or remind someone in need that they are not alone. These actions echo a profound truth — compassion is sacred work.

As we step into 2025, uncertainty still lingers. The global conflicts may not cease overnight, and economic and social hardships will continue to challenge communities worldwide. But what sustains us is knowing that kindness persists even in chaos. Just as communities in Ireland have historically risen to support each other in times of difficulty, we can continue to do so today.

SVP’s stories are filled with hope — from a volunteer finding purpose in giving back, to a local Conference highlighting the power of education to break cycles of poverty. These narratives show that change often starts small but grows exponentially when people come together with love and determination.

Supporting organisations like SVP, volunteering our time, or even lending a compassionate ear to someone struggling can create ripples of positive change.

Linda O’Connell

Rose McGowan

A Year of Hope where Dignity, Respect and Support are extended to all



As we say goodbye to 2024, I want to extend my heartfelt gratitude to everyone who has contributed to another meaningful year for the Society in Ireland. Your dedication and compassion have brought light into countless lives during a challenging and transformative time.

This year, we continue our progress with our new strategy, Journey Together 2024-2028, a guiding framework that helps us adapt to the evolving needs of those we serve. Its introduction follows our historic 180th anniversary celebration, which had the theme "Changing Times, Continuing Compassion." That legacy of service remains unwavering, even as the demands on our Society have reached unprecedented levels.

Every day, families and individuals across Ireland face complex challenges — the strain of rising living costs, energy bills, education expenses, and unforeseen household needs. Food insecurity remains a troubling concern, affecting far too many in our communities. Despite economic progress and increased social supports, financial hardship still grips many, including households with older children and individuals on jobseeker payments.

The persistence of these struggles reminds us that our work is more vital than ever. Further Governmental measures to address poverty, particularly child poverty, are urgently needed. While recent commitments from policymakers are steps in the right direction, we continue to advocate for stronger, more comprehensive frameworks — including a Poverty Act that establishes binding targets and protects socio-economic status under equality laws.

Yet even in the face of these challenges, there is a profound sense of hope. This hope lives in the unwavering dedication of our volunteers and members, who embody the spirit of compassion and community envisioned by Blessed Frédéric Ozanam. Whether through Home Visitations, work in our shops, or support for social housing and family services, you have shown that acts of kindness and charity can transform lives. Without the input of other support services within the Society, such acts of kindness and charity would be difficult to sustain.

As the landscape of charitable work continues to evolve, SVP remains steadfast in its commitment to transparency, accountability, and responsible action. These values not only strengthen our operations but also inspire trust and collaboration as we advocate for a more compassionate and inclusive society.

As we step into 2025, let us carry forward the lessons of resilience, compassion, and shared purpose. The challenges may persist, but so too does the hope that comes from standing together.

We are, and will, continue to be prepared for those challenges when the Journey Together 2024-2028 strategy becomes fully operational.

It will help the Society continue to provide the high level of service expected of us and operate effectively within a now highly regulated charity sector.

One of the aims of Journey Together 2024-2028 is to focus on recruitment and retention. Membership recruitment has to be a key focus in 2025. We need new members.

Please remember that we are all advocates for SVP and our enthusiasm and approach to our work for the Society can be a tremendous encouragement for others to see the importance and benefit of becoming involved.

Thank you for your unwavering commitment to creating a world where dignity, respect and support are extended to all.

Rose McGowan
National President,
Society of St. Vincent de Paul

A Year of Hope

by Fr. Perry Gildea, c.m.
Regional Spiritual Advisor



The beginning of this New Year is also the beginning of the Papal Year of Jubilee. Pope Francis has chosen the theme of Hope, a hope that does not disappoint. Given the many crises facing both global and local society a firm grasp on hope is sorely needed. As I write, a small glimmer of hope has just broken on the world scene with the very fragile ceasefire between Hamas and Israel and an end to the cruel bombardment and the near total destruction of the homes and businesses, hospitals and schools of the residents of Gaza.

Pope Francis asserts that the "first sign of hope should be the desire for peace, reminding us of Jesus' words that peacemakers are the children of God. He continues "during the Holy Year, we are called to be tangible signs of hope for those of our brothers and sisters who experience hardships of any kind". He then lists persons who need these sign of hope "prisoners who apart from their lack of freedom also frequently suffer lack of respect. "In every part of the world, believers, and their pastors in particular, should be one in demanding dignified conditions for those in prison, respect for their human rights and above all the abolition of the death penalty, a provision that is at odds with Christian belief and one that eliminates all hope of forgiveness and rehabilitation."

He then continues to list the sick, the elderly, the disabled, the young. He singles out for a special mention "migrants, exiles, displace persons and refugees,... ought to be guaranteed security and access to employment and education." As this was being typed Donald Trump was being sworn in as President of the United States, with an avowed policy of mass deportation of refugees and immigrants. Pope Francis' words are a call to all to protect the needs and the rights of these people of the margins and a challenge to the charity of all who profess to be good.

In his document promoting this Jubilee Year, Pope Francis reminds us of the Jewish origins of such Jubilees. Every seventy years in Judaism a jubilee was declared which involved the dissolving of all debts. In our world of today there is a huge debt crisis both national and international. Reminding society that the roots of international debt lie in the misappropriation of property and goods in developing nations by the affluent

nations; these debts are the legacy of injustice and should be absolved. "If we really want to prepare a path to peace in our world, let us commit ourselves to remedying the remote causes of injustice, settling unjust and unpayable debts, and feeding the hungry."

“
May the Christian community always be prepared to defend the rights of those who are most vulnerable, opening wide its doors to welcome them, lest anyone ever be robbed of the hope of a better future.”



"New Government Leaders...Please Invest In Our Future Leaders NOW"

by **By Marcella Stakem**
Research and Policy Officer



Columba's in Crumlin, Dublin, (both CDNTs), have vacancy rates of 50% and 60%, respectively.

The social justice team in April 2024 asked Conferences to fill out a survey on the important issue of supporting households who is caring for a child presenting with additional needs. The below case studies gives a snapshot of the financial worry, and the stress being experienced by families right across the country:

“A family sought assistance with speech therapy for their 11 year old son. He had not got any therapy for four years since Covid-19 pandemic due to the HSE recruitment ban. Cost €500 for six sessions”.

“One adult, two children family. Mother on social welfare. Mother is saving for the €900 approx. private assessment. She is sad that this is the only way for assessment. Her child is in primary school but feeling isolated and angry because of his behaviour. We help with vouchers every two weeks and Smyths vouchers for sensory toys”.

SVP members are all too aware of the negative impact on children who are forced to wait long periods to be seen by professionals in the HSE. Their parents, and often times their teachers come to SVP in distress and desperation, seeking to access a private assessment of need and/or vital therapy supports. When it comes to children who need additional or specialist support to achieve milestones or support with learning and overall development, early intervention is critical, not only for the here and now, but for their future lives.

In September 2023, approximately 15,000 children were waiting on initial contact from their Children's Disability Network Team (CDNT) in the HSE, with almost two thirds waiting over twelve months. One of the key issues contributing to the long waiting lists for services and supports for children are staff shortages in the HSE. The 2023 CDNT staff census noted an average vacancy rate of 36% across Community Healthcare Organisations (CHOs). This rises to 40% for occupational therapists and 70% for dieticians and play therapists, while Chamber House in Dublin 24 and St.

What are the Government doing in response?

The previous Government have developed the waiting list initiative which targets those families waiting longest for assessments of need, with the HSE reimbursing clinicians directly from approved private providers. The new Government have committed to continue this initiative. An Assessment of Need (AON) is an assessment carried out for children or young people to identify their health needs and what health services are needed to meet the child's needs.

In the first half of 2024, 1,841 AONs have been completed, which is a 28% increase on the same period in 2023. Also, the roll-out of Regional Assessment Hubs sees the provision of personnel dedicated to the delivery of AON, while preserving the time of other clinical staff for the purposes of therapy interventions for children within the CDNT network. The new Government has committed to increase the number of Regional Assessment Hubs.

The new incoming Government states it will “consider measures to attract and retain staff in the disability sector, as well as developing a new workforce plan to address immediate staffing shortages and longer-term needs” It will also increase staffing, and prioritise children's disability teams to deliver supports and services. However, they have given no indication when waiting lists will be cleared.

It is clear that much greater investment and overall focus is needed by the new Government to address this issue. Findings of the Disability Capacity Review to 2032 shows the high levels of current and future demographic and unmet need for disability supports including therapy supports.

It estimates that the lowest amount of investment required up to 2032 is €54 million for therapies. This rises to €80 million as the higher estimated amount required up to 2032. The Action Plan for Disability Service 2024-2026 was published in December 2023 to respond to these findings. Both publications are important documents as they provide the evidence of the investment required, and the level of service expansion needed to address the needs of people living with a disability. There is a reference in the Programme for Government of the Action Plan, it states, it will “tackle waiting lists for specialist disability services by implementation of the Action Plan for Disability Services 2024-6, and resourcing and delivering on its targets”.

It is essential that funding is put in place on a multi-annual basis to deliver the Action Plan, and this is committed to by the new Government. It is disappointing to not see a stronger commitment by Government on this issue. They state, “After reviewing the recent two-year healthcare funding agreement, we will consider the development of a multi-annual approach for disability services, which will be linked to productivity, staff

levels and the delivery of services”. While the lack of adequate funding is not the only issue for the reasons children are waiting for vital services, it is a big part of the issue. A pledge to multi-annual funding is needed, no less.

What are SVP Social Justice doing?

Some of the advocacy work undertaken by the social justice team on this issue include meeting with the previous Minister of State with Responsibility for Disability, Anne Rabbitte. Meetings with officials from the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), National Council for Special Education (NCSE) and the Health Service Executive (HSE). Further advocacy work planned for 2025 include budgetary recommendations to Government for Budget 2026 and ongoing investment in children's disability services, a webinar with the HSE for SVP members and a roundtable event with all relevant stakeholders involved in this issue, including SVP members.

Our social justice team will keep members informed of those upcoming events. We thank you for your continued involvement and mutual desire seeking solutions for children affected; not only so they can thrive today, but have the opportunity to reach their future potential.



Louise Bayliss Appointed Head of Social Justice and Policy at SVP



Louise Bayliss

Louise Bayliss has recently been appointed as the new Head of Social Justice and Policy at the Society of St. Vincent de Paul (SVP). She has extensive experience in policy and advocacy around social justice issues. She has an MSc in Equality Studies from UCD and has made many written policy submissions to Government Departments around social justice issues and on tackling poverty. She has appeared before many Oireachtas Committees and spoken to Commissioners of CEDAW (Convention of the Elimination of Discrimination against Women) in Geneva and secured a recommendation that the state examine the need for a statutory maintenance agency.

Before stepping into this role, Louise was a volunteer member of the National Social Justice Committee for four years. During this time, she focused on issues affecting lone parents and homelessness, contributing her insights to help shape effective policies.

Louise's background includes seven years of advocacy work at Focus Ireland, a leading homelessness charity. Her work there including setting up a Lived Experience Ambassador Programme, policy submissions around lone parent families and their children and executing public facing campaigns to effect policy changes. Louise is also a member of the Child Poverty Advisory Group for the Children's Rights Alliance.

In addition to her professional work, Louise is a founding member of SPARK (Single Parents Acting for the Rights of Kids) and has served as the national spokesperson for the past 12 years. SPARK advocates for the rights and welfare of single parents and their children, addressing the unique challenges they face.

Louise also chairs the board of Treoir, the unmarried parent's federation of Ireland, where she works to ensure that unmarried families are treated equally under the constitution and in social policies. She also

works to support parents to navigate difficult situations around guardianship, child maintenance and access, and to promote a 'Best Interest of the Child' approach to these complex issues. She is also chair of their policy sub-committee.

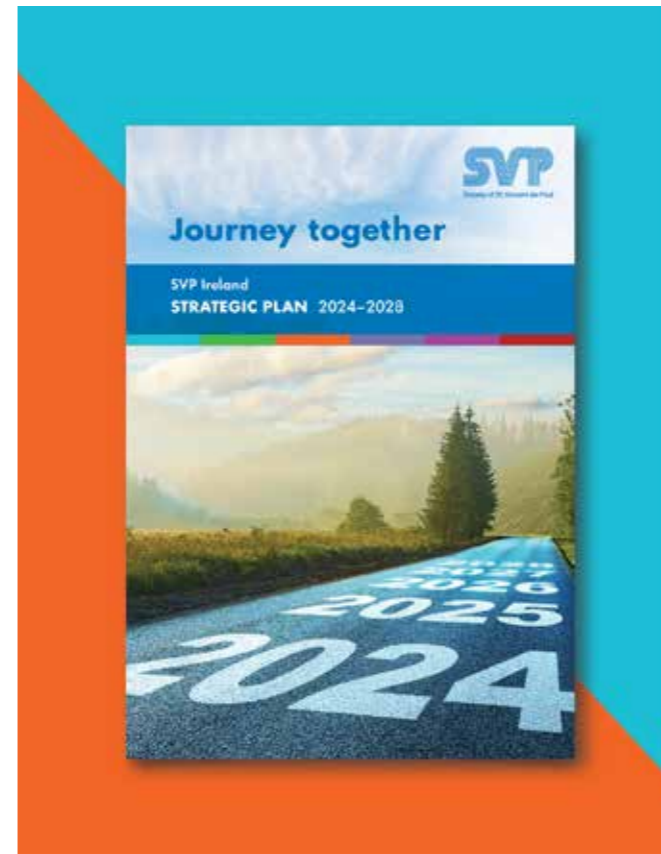
As a frequent media commentator, Louise shares her insights on shows like the Brendan O'Connor newspaper panel on RTÉ and The Tonight Show on Virgin Media. Her contributions to these discussions highlight her knowledge and commitment to social justice issues.

Recently, Louise was appointed as one of 50 women thought leaders to the Women's Assembly, chaired by former President Mary McAleese. The assembly aims to explore and elevate women's perspectives on the future of the island of Ireland through a feminist lens.

In October 2021, Louise featured in a documentary called Misneach which explored her journey as a whistleblower, when she exposed mistreatment of women psychiatric patients in Grangegorman Hospital.

Louise Bayliss's new role at SVP is a continuation of her work in social justice and we are delighted to welcome her on board.

Journey Together SVP Ireland National Strategy 2024-2028



As a strategy project manager, Linda Kavanagh joined the organisation in September '24 to support the implementation process.

The proposed programmes are wide-ranging and reflect the complex and multifaceted nature of SVP work. They bring together work under the following themes:

Knowledge and Information

This work programme will enhance SVP's delivery of its mission, values, and goals by further developing its policies, processes, capacity, and systems for gathering, managing, and using knowledge and information across the organisation. This will ensure that we have a clear, evidence-based understanding of the scope and impact of our work.

Marketing and Communication

This programme of work will enhance member and volunteer recruitment, position our service, and extend the reach of our messaging.

Organisational Development

This programme of work will ensure that our governance structures, core systems, measures of success, policies, and review protocols are fit for purpose.

People Development

This programme of work will facilitate the identification and development of support required by people working for SVP in any capacity. It will ensure they are empowered to develop the skills and knowledge to operate effectively within their roles.

As these programmes of work take shape and gather momentum over the coming months and years, we will see development in the way SVP operates and plans. These changes are aimed at better meeting the needs of people who come to SVP for help and assistance; demonstrating our commitment to continuous improvement and community service.

The St Vincent de Paul Ireland National Strategy is an ambitious statement outlining how the organisation will meet its existing and emerging challenges. It sets out six priorities and associated objectives.

Over the past year, three working groups of staff across SVP have built on these objectives by developing four proposed work programmes. These programmes of work are designed to meet strategic goals. The NMC has established the Strategic Oversight Group (SOG), which is made up primarily of SVP trustees appointed to guide and oversee the delivery of the strategy.

“The Wonder of Christmas”

The 2024 Annual Appeal for The Society of St. Vincent de Paul (SVP) was launched on November 12th by Rose McGowan, National President.

Themed “The Wonder of Christmas” the Appeal aimed to support struggling parents and individuals who were concerned about how they would provide a wonderful Christmas for their families.

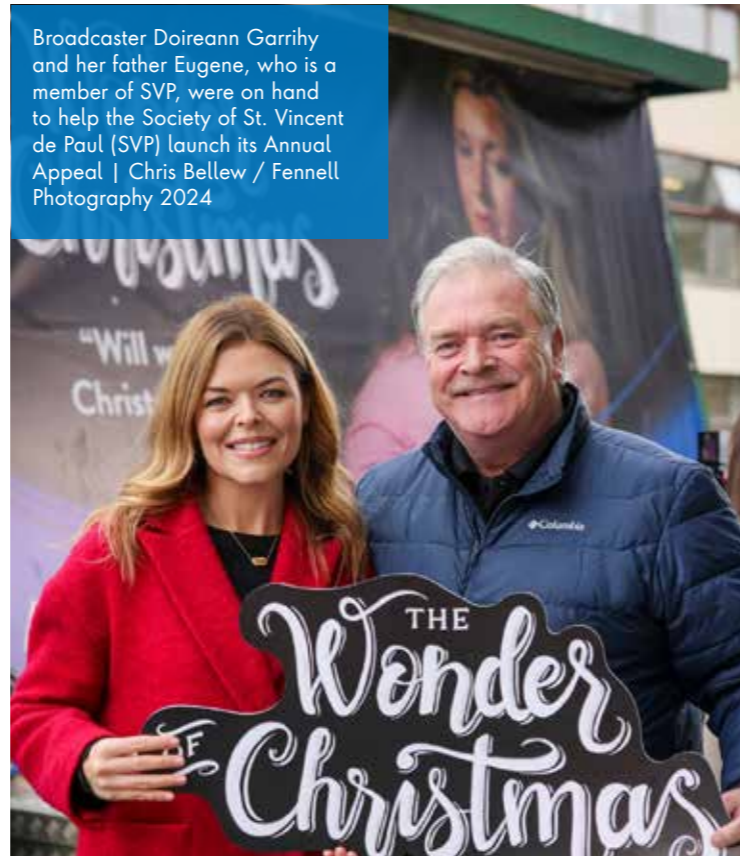
Our National President Rose, highlighted the increasing demand for help with essentials like food and energy, noting a 1.4% rise in requests by the end of October compared to the same period in the previous year.

Despite government-issued one-off payments, many individuals continue to face challenges in meeting basic expenses, especially during the festive season.

The appeal targeted assistance towards one-parent families, low-income workers, households on fixed social welfare incomes, rural low-income households, and people with disabilities and their carers.

Donations were solicited through various channels, including online contributions, phone donations, direct mail, and special blue envelopes distributed in newspapers, churches, and homes nationwide. We also used TV adverts and outdoor advertising with many banners and bus shelter posters placed around the country to create awareness of the Appeal and the Society as a whole.

The launch of the Annual Appeal featured several notable attendees for which we are very grateful to. Broadcaster Marty Whelan officially launched the appeal. Special guests included Mary Kennedy, who recently received the Irish Academy Lifetime Achievement Award for her contributions to television, and Doireann Garrihy, broadcaster and podcast host. Both Mary Kennedy and Doireann Garrihy have strong family connections with SVP, which we wanted to highlight given that the Society is 180 years working in Ireland and this is mainly attributed to our members and their history with the Society over these years.



Broadcaster Doireann Garrihy and her father Eugene, who is a member of SVP, were on hand to help the Society of St. Vincent de Paul (SVP) launch its Annual Appeal | Chris Bellew / Fennell Photography 2024



President Rose McGowan launching the Annual Appeal



Mary Kennedy, Marty Whelan, Doireann Garrihy and Rose McGowan help the Society of St. Vincent de Paul (SVP) launch its Annual Appeal | Chris Bellew/ Fennell Photography 2024

The Appeal, also featured a new avenue of promotion namely a paid social media partnership with Goss.ie. which provided us with many benefits including increased visibility & engagement with their readership. This exposure helped raise awareness and encourage more participation in our fundraising activities, like our Christmas Jumper Campaign, with a younger audience.

This engagement was further amplified through social media promotions with the support of ‘influencers’. The partnership facilitated involvement from well-known personalities associated with Goss.ie, such as Doireann Garrihy, Lauren Whelan & Michelle Up the line, who supported SVP’s campaigns. Their participation added credibility and appeal to the initiatives.

This year’s Appeal was the second year of a three-year campaign ‘The Wonder of Christmas’. Each year after the Appeal, a thorough assessment of all Appeal activities is undertaken by the fundraising team. This helps build a plan for the coming years’ Appeal and gives insights of what worked and what didn’t work to ensure the Annual Appeal continues to be a success for us all.

On behalf of the Fundraising team, we would like to thank you all for your support, encouragement and work on the Annual Appeal.

Why I Joined St. Vincent de Paul: A Journey of Giving Back

By Fred Price

Member of the The Society of St. Vincent de Paul De Paul



Hello, my name is Fred, and I'd like to share the story of why I joined the Society of St. Vincent de Paul (SVP). Living with Cerebral Palsy, I've been fortunate to receive the help and kindness of many people throughout my life. I felt a deep desire to give back, and in 1998, that opportunity came my way.

It all began when a friend of mine, who uses a wheelchair, was president of an SVP hospital Visitation Conference. They organised visits to hospitals and residential homes, bringing companionship and joy to patients. One year, she asked me to help at a Christmas party in Bri Chaomihin on Cork Street, Dublin. My role was simple — I handed out cigarettes and played the part of a barman — but I loved the atmosphere and sense of purpose.

Later, my friend invited me to volunteer as a steward during "hospital week" at Kerdiffstown. This was a special holiday for clients from institutions or nursing homes, a break from their routine. As stewards, we made sure their week was full of fun and care. There were familiar faces each year, and though we sometimes mourned for those who couldn't return, the joy of those we served made it all worthwhile.

One of my favourite memories was the final night, when guests dressed up for a fancy dress party, received prizes, and participated in a sports day. Inspired by those experiences, I wrote a little poem:

Stewards rock,
Party frocks,
Cowgirl dances,
Devil prances,
They all strive,
To do Kerdiffstown jive.

It was a privilege to help ensure everyone had a wonderful time, even if my week was spent checking bingo numbers!

Joining SVP

In 2001, I made the decision to officially join SVP. On a rainy September night, several conferences gathered at the Tara

Towers to recruit new members. I spoke to representatives from the Our Lady of Victories Home Visitation Conference, who were in urgent need of fresh faces as their team was aging.

Soon after, I briefly volunteered with a hospital visitation team that served patients in the National Rehabilitation Hospital in Dun Laoghaire. While I hoped my own experiences with disability would help me relate to the patients, I found it emotionally challenging and decided it wasn't the right fit for me.

Instead, I fully embraced Home Visitations with Our Lady of Victories. When I joined, the conference was a small group — just the President, Treasurer, two nuns, and an occasional spiritual director. My friend Robert and I were the "young blood" the Conference needed, and over the years, I've had the privilege of serving as Vice-President, Secretary, and finally as Conference President.

The Heart of Service

Our work has evolved over time. Initially, most of our visits were to elderly people. Today, many of the families we support are single mothers. I've witnessed poverty in many forms, and though I have faced challenges, I feel privileged to be welcomed into people's homes and to offer support during difficult times.

One of the most fulfilling parts of this journey has been seeing the impact of our work. I remember a young man from a family we visited who lacked confidence but had great potential. With our encouragement, he found a job he truly enjoys. Moments like that remind me why we do what we do.

Of course, there have been hard times — visits that were emotionally overwhelming, or the sadness of hearing about a client's passing. There have also been moments when I thought about stepping away, but something always pulled me back.

A Legacy of Hope

Over the years, I've seen many dedicated people come and go, but the current members of our conference are truly inspiring. They embody the Vincentian spirit of listening without judgment and offering hope to those in need.

What saddens me most is seeing generations of families trapped in poverty, but I believe SVP's work is crucial. We may not solve every problem, but we can make a difference.

Looking back on my journey, I'm proud of the work we've done and grateful for the lessons I've learned. Joining SVP has been one of the most rewarding decisions of my life, and I hope my story inspires others to lend a helping hand. Together, we can continue making a difference, one family at a time.

The power of education to change lives: an optimistic story of moving on from disadvantage



Kelsey May Daly addressing students in Terenure College.

St Rita's Conference has had a long association with Terenure College, a boy's secondary school in Dublin run by the Carmelite Order. The work of the conference in the Dolphin's Barn/Rialto area has been greatly assisted by the support received from the College, its staff, past pupils, current students and their parents.

Increasingly, the work of conferences has focused on the ambition of SVP to promote self-sufficiency by enabling the people we help to achieve their fullest potential through education. Because poverty and disadvantage are so deeply embedded in the communities we work with, this is not an easy project and many barriers impede progress. So when we see positive results, we are delighted to celebrate them and the individuals concerned and where they are willing to do so, provide opportunities for them to share their stories.

On 4 December 2024, a young woman, Kelsey May Daly, gave an inspiring address to the Transition and Fifth Year students in Terenure College. She outlined her journey from its unpromising start when she dropped out of secondary school, suffering from depression and anxiety, to going on later to achieve a First Class Honours degree in UCD. She topped this off with a Master's degree and went on to become a member of Dublin City Council. She now works as a community and social worker in Belfast. She came down specially, at our request, to talk to the students in Terenure.

A couple of important points emerged from Kelsey's address. Firstly, she emphasised that hers was not a case of abject poverty or neglect, that she came from a loving family and lived in a secure home. Because of disability, her parents were totally dependent on social welfare. There was never money for the extras that other girls in her class could afford. This financial and social disadvantage had set her apart from her peers, making her feel inferior and isolated. She felt ashamed of her relative poverty and her educational performance suffered as a result.

Secondly, Kelsey acknowledged the ongoing support her family received from the Society, and the encouragement she got to return to education.

“ She said that it was not just the financial help that mattered but also the kindness she and her family had experienced.

Thirdly, Kelsey's story illustrates how difficult it is for children from disadvantaged families dependent on social welfare to do well in education, how easily they can become alienated from the traditional educational system and how much talent is wasted as a result.

Finally, Kelsey's development into a highly articulate, confident and successful young woman highlights the power of education to change lives and bring real freedom and fulfilment. The resources the Society expends on bursaries and other educational supports and the encouragement it gives to individuals to develop their talents can achieve wonderful results.

The boys in Terenure College were greatly impressed by Kelsey's story. They gained new insights into the deprivations and the struggles of other families living just a few miles away from them.

Kelsey May with her mother Sarah Daly and Mr Philip Wallace, Principal, Terenure College, Volunteer Noel Boyce.



Society of St. Vincent de Paul Conference Opens Sixth House



Castle Terrace Apartment 2



Castle Terrace Information booklets



Castle Terrace Street, Phibsborough, Co. Dublin

On 13th June the Conference of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, based in Primrose Street, Dublin 7 opened its sixth house in Castle Terrace, Phibsboro.

The house, formerly in four bedsits and in poor condition, was architecturally redesigned and reconstructed into three comfortable self-contained apartments with a rear shared courtyard.

This brings the number of houses to six, and the number of individual units managed by the Conference to twenty two. The Conference has already acquired and upgraded two houses in Dominick Street Lower, two in Primrose Street and one in Palmerston Place, giving a home to twenty two people and taking the same number off the homeless list.

The tenants/residents for the houses come from hostels. Independent living, security of tenure and a friendly, caring relationship with the Society members enhances the quality of life, and encourages the seeking of employment, and this

has been achieved. Regular, weekly visitation builds up a good relationship, and ensures careful house maintenance.

Over the thirty odd years since the Conference engaged in the provision of housing, many of the tenants have moved on to accommodation provided by Dublin City Council, or gone to other accommodation. Many have passed on, but in all cases, whether it is for change of life or end of life, the Society of St Vincent de Paul was there to help.



Corkman wins as SVP Car Draw Generates €251,181

As we emerged from the recent severe weather the sun shone brightly as a young Carrigaline man won a new Ford Focus car in SVP's Annual Car Draw which has generated an amazing €251,181. This money will be used to assist those in need throughout the winter months ahead. The draw took place on 15th January 2025 at the Cork City Ford showrooms, Forge Hill, Cork where Lord Mayor Cllr. Dan Boyle drew the First Prize and rang the lucky winner — **Séan Kennedy Jr., Carrigaline, Co. Cork.**

There were six other lucky winners of cash prizes, The Bishops' Prize of €1,500 (supported by the Bishop of Cork & Ross, Bishop of Kerry and Bishop of Cloyne Prize was won by Ger Conroy, Co. Laois. We want to say a special thank you to the three Bishops for their generous support every year.

Other winners included: Maria McGeever, Marian Creedon, Gemma Robins, Breid McCole and Alan Mc Cormack.

Speaking at the handover of the car to the lucky winner at Cork City Ford Showrooms by the Lord Mayor of Cork Cllr. Dan Boyle, Mary Frances Behan South West Regional President said "she is most grateful for the generosity of the Cork and Kerry public for their support of the Annual Car Draw which is now in its 24th year, and said the funds would help offer a lifeline to struggling families and individuals in the region.

A special word of sincere thanks to our Car Draw Ambassador Francis Brennan and to our suppliers and sponsors throughout 2024, due to their generosity, we have raised a staggering €251,181 this year".

As we wish the lucky winner safe driving and close off our 2024 Car Draw, do watch out for our 2025 Annual Car Draw later in the year where another beautiful car awaits another lucky winner with many cash prizes.

Northern Region Celebrates 180 Years of SVP in Ireland

Members of SVP in the Northern Region gathered together during Volunteers' Week to celebrate 180 years of the Society in Ireland. The service that the dedicated members devote to SVP and who were celebrating milestone anniversaries of volunteering were recognised at the annual Members' Day, between them having clocked up an incredible 546 years of volunteering for SVP.

This year's event provided a platform for 150 members in attendance to reflect on the achievements of SVP over the last 180 years but members also considered the escalating need throughout the region where people living in poverty is on the rise daily.

Speaking about the annual Members' Day, Mary Waide, SVP Regional President for the Northern Region, said: "Our 180th Anniversary Members' Day provided us with an opportunity to celebrate our wonderful volunteers during Volunteers' Week. I was personally humbled to meet the volunteers who between them have clocked up 546 years of service. It is a blessing to have so many eager volunteers who give of their time to help people living in poverty throughout the Northern Region every day.

As we continue to serve in our local communities with renewed compassion, I would appeal to anyone interested in joining the Society to please do so, as we aim to continue to grow SVP with likeminded volunteers who have the SVP ethos at their hearts.

"Whether you have 180 minutes to spare or 180 hours, if you are interested in becoming a member of SVP, I would ask you to please consider joining today."

Speakers at the event presented an overview of the history of the Society and delegates were encouraged to look after themselves as well as others while being urged to ignite their collective commitment to volunteering for the future with continued compassion.

There were lively roundtable discussions bringing innovative ideas to the table and members from the longest established SVP Conference in Enniskillen, which was formed in 1848, and newest serving SVP Conference in Crossmaglen, which was formed in 2023, shared their experiences with the audience.

Guests joined in as Malachi Cush, SVP Ambassador, performed a variety of songs bringing Members' Day to a close.



Civic Receptions in the Northern Region

Members from across the Region attended a Civic Reception in their local Council Chamber to commemorate 180 years of SVP in Ireland.





Northern Region Celebrates 180 Years of SVP in Ireland

Almost 100 SVP members attended a Feast Day Mass for St Vincent de Paul, celebrated by Most Reverend Alan McGuckian SJ, Bishop of Down and Connor, at St Vincent de Paul Parish Church Ligoniel, in Belfast.

Fr Perry Gildea who is the charity's Spiritual Advisor read from the Holy Gospel According Matthew and then delivered the Homily. He reflected on the charitable legacy of St Vincent, highlighting his mission of helping strangers in war torn places and raising much needed funds to aid the hungry and thirsty. Fr Perry emphasised how the Society founded by Blessed Frédéric Ozanam 180 years ago continues to still be very relevant today, with members visiting people in their local

communities across the Region who seek practical assistance from SVP on a daily basis.

Mary Waide, SVP Regional President for the Northern Region read from Corinthians, and board members of SVP also took part in the service with music provided by SVP Ambassador Malachi Cush.

Mary, said: "It was a privilege to welcome Bishop McGuckian to celebrate our Feast Day Mass in this special anniversary year for The Society of St Vincent de Paul. We all enjoyed the beautiful music performed by our Ambassador Malachi Cush and I would like to express my special thanks to Fr Vincent Cushnahan who hosted SVP with such warm hospitality."



SVP Northern Region Annual Appeal

SVP in the Northern Region launched its Annual Appeal as calls for help were expected to continue to rise due to the crippling increased costs associated with day to day living.

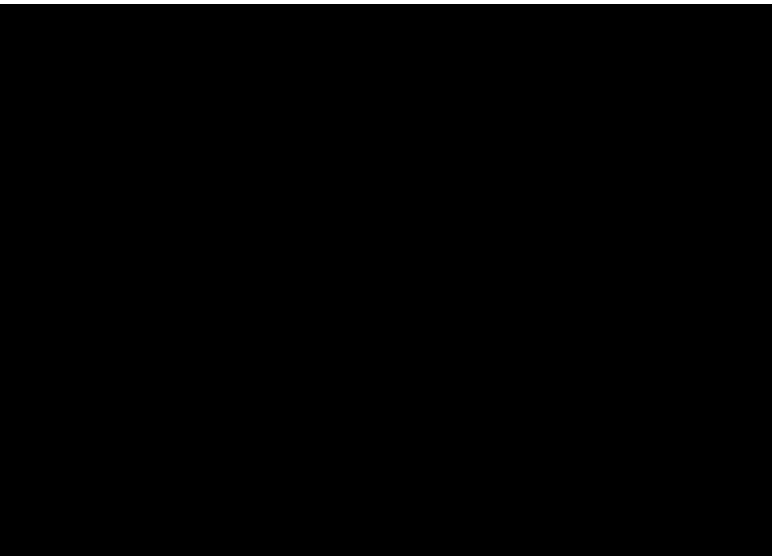
Although it can be the most wonderful time of the year, for some families at this time of year they wonder whether they will have Christmas at all.

Launching this year's Annual Appeal in the 180th year of SVP in Ireland, SVP Regional President for the Northern Region, Mary Waide, said that the Society is focused on providing help to those in our local community needing support, as they wonder whether they will be able to provide a happy Christmas for their families. Mary said: "Requests for help from families faced with impossible choices across the Region sadly continue to increase. We are recording on average 200 calls per day to our Regional Office in Belfast and we have helplines operating throughout the Region where direct calls to our members can rise to anything between 500 and 1,000 a week in winter. People are desperate. They are wondering how they will provide for their loved ones this Christmas and the most popular of the requests we receive are for help with food and energy. That's before they decorate a tree or place a gift underneath it."

"Our theme, 'The Wonder of Christmas', reflects the questions our volunteers face most regularly in the run up to Christmas; I wonder will I have enough to buy food for the Christmas dinner? I wonder if I will be able to keep the house warm? I wonder if I will be able to afford to buy a toy from the Santa list? I wonder do the kids know we are struggling? I wonder if SVP can help?"

Mary added: "SVP members visit homes all year round where people are continually trying to meet basic family expenses every day but affording these expenses typically seems to cause more worry at special occasions such as Christmas. Those hardest hit include a range of households with varying circumstances including those dependent on benefits; one parent-families; low-income workers; low-income households in rural areas; people with disabilities and their carers. That is why we are seeking donations in the form of vouchers to give people the gift of choice and help families pay for food, heat their homes and ensure their children wake up to a magical Christmas."





Children from St Patrick's Primary School in Dungannon took part in a series of videos where they chatted with SVP Ambassador Malachi Cush about the meaning of Christmas. These were broadcast across SVP digital channels to encourage donations to the Annual Appeal.

“ I’m proud to be the SVP Ambassador for the Northern Region. There are lots of ways that people can get involved in fundraising for SVP this Christmas and it was a joy to speak to the children from St Patrick’s about what Christmas means to them. Schools, youth organisations, sports clubs and businesses can host a Christmas Jumper Day, participate in the Gift of Choice campaign and donate vouchers so families can prioritise what they need to buy with dignity. Everyone is so generous with their giving at Christmas and I know that the Society is very grateful for the continued public support across the Region during the festive season.” - Malachi Cush

Malachi made a personal donation to the Annual Appeal from his Christmas at the Cathedral concert in St Patrick's Cathedral Armagh, and invited members from SVP to collect donations from those attending on the night.



MP Meets With SVP

Fleur Anderson MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Northern Ireland Office, requested to meet with members of SVP and volunteers of Vincent's just before Christmas.

Fleur listened intently about the invaluable work that members are engaged in throughout the region and about some of the challenges members face on the doorstep.

Fleur browsed Vincent's on Antrim Road and congratulated the volunteers on their dedication and even enjoyed a sneak peek of the Bridal Shop.

Fleur browsed Vincent's on Antrim Road and congratulated the volunteers on their dedication and even enjoyed a sneak peek of the Bridal Shop.



Retail

After a busy year for Retail, the year ended with the shops taking part in a Christmas window display competition. The judges had the unenviable task of deciding on a winner – all the designs were exceptional!



Christmas Tree Second 1



Christmas Tree Second 2



Christmas Tree Winner

Vincent's strengthens its circular business model and supply chain with the introduction of a national Epos system for all charity shops and OFCs across Ireland.



by **Dermot Gilloway**
National Retail Development Manager SVP

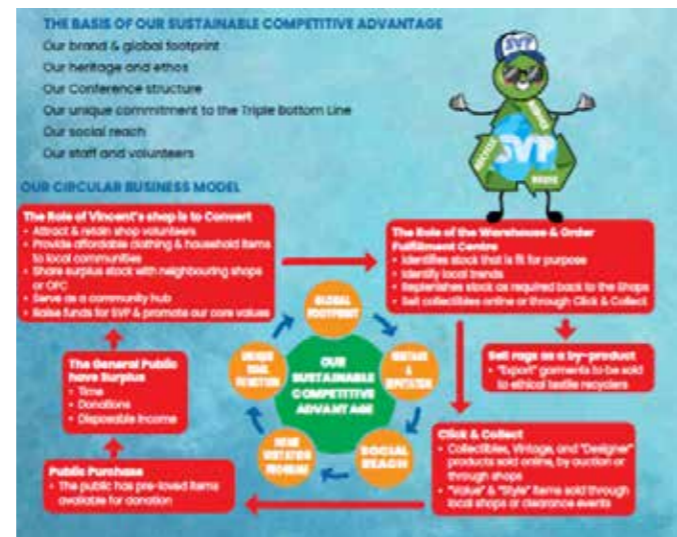
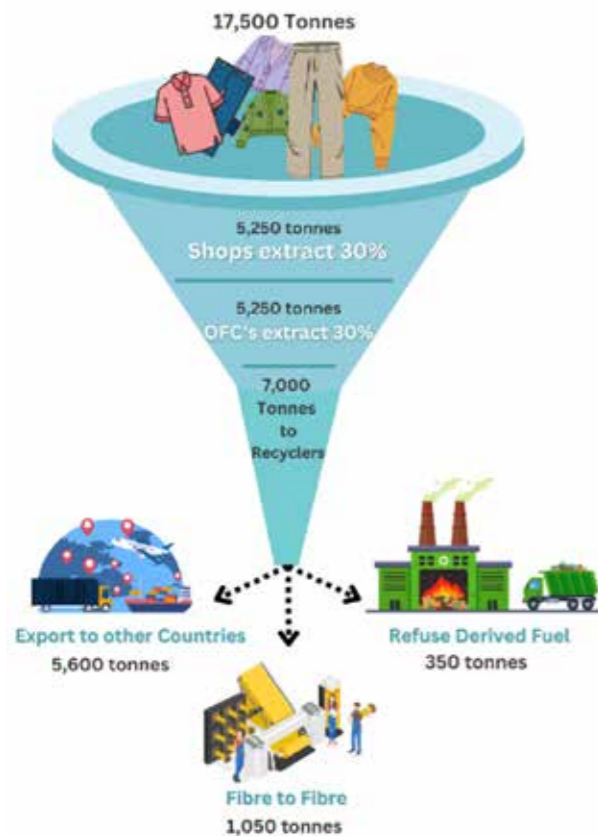
Background

The St Vincent De Paul in Ireland receives an estimated 17,500 tonnes of donated textiles annually through our national network of 224 shops, 8 Order Fulfilment Centres (OFCs) and clothing banks. The donating public is extremely generous in their support of our charitable purposes, and we, in turn, are committed to honouring donor wishes by extracting the maximum value and use from every donated item. As Vincentian retailers, we are committed to the principle of sharing surplus stock and have invested a lot of time and effort into developing our national supply chain. A more integrated supply chain also enables greater social equity, environmental stewardship and economic prosperity (the Triple Bottom Line).

SVP has now opened eight OFCs across Ireland, and they can service most of the national network of shops, with journey times between shops and OFCs not exceeding 90 minutes. OFCs have doubled our resell rate for donated textiles from 5,000 tonnes annually to over 10,000 tonnes but until now, stock transfers between OFCs or Regions could only be done manually and not digitally.

A More Circular Business Model

Whilst all SVP shops across Ireland are governed and overseen by either a Regional, Area or local Conference retail committee, all shop teams are committed to our circular business model and use our Order Fulfilment Centres to collect and redistribute surplus or unsold stock where possible. This activity had been further enhanced by the installation of Electronic Point of Sale technology (EPOS) in most shops starting back in 2015. Since December 2024, all Vincent's charity shops and Order Fulfilment Centres across Ireland have started using the same Epos till system. This additional enhancement has now enabled the seamless transfer of stock across the national network to



meet local customer demand whilst maximising the use and value of donated items.

Before the existence of our OFCs and Epos network, however, our ability to share was limited, with local shops extracting value from whatever donations they received locally and usually selling any surplus donations off to a textile exporter without regard for demand elsewhere within the SVP retail network. Whilst local shops will have benefited from a small amount of income from the clothing exporter, this arrangement failed to recognise or utilise the true value of donations to the wider organisation. Individual shops were routinely paid lower than market value.

By using a single Epos supplier, SVP shops will be able to transfer stock within and between regions seamlessly and directly and immediately respond to customer demand. Shop managers are now asked to sort donated textiles into 1 of 5 possible donation streams to ensure that we extract maximum value and use from every single donated item.



“We are very conscious of the damage that the over consumption and over production of Fast fashion is doing to our environment, so it’s great news that we have been able to strengthen our circular business model and integrate our supply chain in this way. SVP is committed to supporting the UN Sustainable Development Goals so it’s a source of great pride for the team that our shops and OFCs are in the vanguard of efforts to bring greater circularity to the Irish retail sector, and this latest development also increases our competitiveness and ensures that our supply chain remains customer centric.”
- Dermot Gilloway

Young SVP East gets busy!

So far for the 24/5 academic year, I have been working alongside fifteen different schools across the East Region. It is always a pleasure to see the enthusiasm and commitment of our young people to the work of SVP and I am proud to see Young SVP in the East Region as a positive influence in the lives of these young people and their communities.

The first few months of the 2024 school year (September – December) were filled with many visits to schools for talks which detail the work of the Society. I was lucky enough to be joined by local Members, on occasion, who spoke openly about their volunteer work with SVP and how the experience of helping others had benefitted their own lives. One example of such a visit was when I first visited Greystones Community College to talk to their entire TY cohort and was joined by Karen Purcell, Member of SVP Holy Rosary Greystones. Karen spoke so well about her role with SVP and her personal experiences; her talk resonated with the students and made the work of SVP more 'real' to them. Having a Member attend school visits, especially an introductory talk, can be really impactful and I would recommend getting involved, where possible!

There has been incredible work carried out by the schools in the East over the past few months! Students have organised and completed a variety of projects within their communities! To list some examples: led by a team

of 6th Year students, the Young SVP Conference in St Paul's College, Raheny, held a fundraiser where they showed a screening of a popular Halloween film just before the Mid-Term Break! The TY students in Greenhills Community College handed out goodie bags to fellow students and staff as a Random Act of Kindness and spread some cheer! Students in Holy Family Newbridge and Newbridge College have been working closely together to help their community! The two school Conferences held a bake sale in aid of SVP's Newbridge Day Care Centre and raised an incredible amount of money, as well as spreading some cheer amongst the Centre with their visits! Another triumph was in St Gerard's School, Bray, and their annual Christmas Hamper Day! On 16th December, TY students from St. Gerard's put together over 200 food and toy hampers which were delivered by local Conference Members and parents to families in Bray and its surrounds! There was more Christmas good-will in St Raphaela's Secondary School where the TY students organised a Christmas Market in the school, showcasing their entrepreneurial, design, and creativity skills – all whilst raising amazing funds for SVP!

With the beginning of the second half of the school year as we enter into 2025, the preparations for our East Youth Day for 2025 have begun! Our Youth Day will be held on Thursday 8th May in the Lucan Spa Hotel and all the schools I have been working with will be invited for a day of learning and fun!



Greenhills Community College, Co. Dublin



Holy Family Newbridge, Co. Kildare



St. Gerard's Catholic School, Co. Dublin



St. Raphaela's, Co. Dublin



St. Raphaela's, Co. Dublin

Youth Development Officer Mid West Region

The Young SVP Conferences were a hive of activity in the Mid-West Region in the lead-up to Christmas. Many schools got involved in donation drives, toy appeals, food appeals and created Christmas Hampers. Many more schools engaged in various types of fundraisers to raise money for their local SVP Conferences. The Young SVP Groups organised Christmas Raffles, carol singing, Christmas Jumper Days, bake sales, bag packing, bucket collections, soccer tournaments, treat bag sales, wellness walks and much more!

Many schools also support the SVP Drop-in Centre in Limerick City, which helps people experiencing homelessness. Castletroy College organised a very successful Shoebox appeal where they donated Christmas Shoeboxes filled with sweet treats, toiletries and winter woollies, and all gift-wrapped beautifully. The Young SVP Groups in Ardscoil Mhuire, Limerick Educate Together Secondary School, Villers School and Coláiste Nano Nagle all participated in donation drives where they collected and donated huge amounts of food, clothes, sweet treats and toiletries for the SVP Drop-In Centre. St. Caimin's Community School in Shannon also created 'Brrr Bags' to donate here. These bags were specifically designed to help those experiencing homelessness by filling the bags with essential toiletries and hygiene products, practical hats, scarves and gloves, and some sweet treats.

St. Caimin's School, Co. Clare



Ardscoil Mhuire, Corbally Co. Limerick



Glenstal Abbey School, Co. Limerick

Ennis Community College and Gaelcholáiste an Chláir worked together on a joint venture to raise funds for their local SVP Conference in Ennis. They ran a Sustainable Christmas Market in their local Vincent's shop, selling homemade Christmas crafts and upcycled household items. They also helped run the shop for the day, and this innovative initiative raised over €2,900.

This brief outline is just a snapshot of some of the brilliant work carried out by the amazing Young SVP Groups in the Mid-West Region, across the 4 counties of Limerick, Clare, Tipperary and Offaly. Over 30 secondary schools in the Mid-West Region are engaged in the Young SVP Programme this year and have all completed various Be-Friending, Education, Awareness and Direct Aid projects in aid of SVP. I look forward to continuing to work with these fantastic young students in 2025 and can't wait to see what they have planned next. We



Castletroy College, Co. Limerick

are all looking forward to the Mid-West Youth Day on the 10th of April 2025 in the Radisson Blu Hotel in Limerick where these students will get the opportunity to showcase their wonderful project work.

Clodagh Lenihan
Youth Development Officer
for the Mid West Region



Pallaskenry, Co. Limerick

Young SVP Program Thrives in the North East and Midlands Region

The Young SVP program in the North East and Midlands continues to flourish, demonstrating remarkable growth year after year. Currently, this impactful initiative is active in 30 schools across the region, inspiring young people to engage in meaningful community-focused projects. These activities include befriending, direct aid, social justice advocacy, and education — all embodying the core mission of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul (SVP).

Students gain hands-on experience in giving back to their communities through their participation. This involvement not only allows them to make a tangible difference in the lives of others but also helps them develop essential life skills, fostering empathy, leadership, and a deeper understanding of social justice issues.

Preparations are now underway for the upcoming Youth Day in April, with 20 schools set to attend. Students are eagerly finalising their projects and preparing PowerPoint presentations to showcase their work. The enthusiasm and dedication of these young participants reflect the heart of the Young SVP program.



Niamh, a student from Enfield Community College, shared her perspective on the program:

"I think it was very good that we got to meet a lot of new people and try different experiences. When we did our befriending project, the group was all excited, and our energy was felt by the residents in the nursing home. I would encourage schools to sign up for this project, as it gives you a new perspective on helping people, poverty, and the importance of not judging others."

Her words highlight the program's profound impact on participants, instilling a sense of purpose and compassion that will guide them throughout their lives.

The success of the Young SVP program would not be possible without the unwavering support of primary and post-primary schools across the region. Their commitment to encouraging students to participate in this initiative is invaluable. Additionally, the dedicated volunteers who work tirelessly to mentor and guide these young people deserve heartfelt thanks for their incredible contributions.

Clodagh Naughton said, *"We would like to thank all volunteers in our region for the amazing work they do, and we will continue to grow our Young SVP."*

The continued growth of the Young SVP program stands as a testament to the power of young people when they are empowered to make a difference. Together, they are building a brighter future for their communities, one project at a time.



Coláiste na Mí, Co. Meath



St Josephs Mercy, Navan, Co. Meath



Franciscan College, Co. Meath

Young SVP — Julie Barr

Hi, my name is Julie Barr, and I'm the new youth development officer in the North West, covering the areas of Donegal, Sligo and Leitrim. I'm excited to step into this new role, even though I'm relatively new to it, having volunteered with the Raphoe Conference over the past year. I'm particularly eager to continue growing the Young SVP Programme in the Northwest and ensuring its impact reaches as many young people as possible. In just a few short months, the programme has already seen remarkable success, and I'm thrilled to see how it will evolve in the year ahead.

Over these past months, I've been deeply impressed by the dedication and support of the incredible members I've had the privilege of working with. I'd also like to extend special thanks to my colleagues in the regional and national offices, as well as my Area and Regional President, whose ongoing encouragement has been invaluable to me.

St. Eunan's College, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal

Young SVP provides secondary school students with the opportunity to engage in social action. Rooted in the values and mission of SVP, the program focuses on teaching young people about social justice and how to actively participate in positive, purposeful, and meaningful initiatives. Through the programme, students can learn about the work of SVP and contribute to making a difference in their communities.

The students at St. Eunan's College are truly embodying the spirit of generosity and community. Their involvement in the Young SVP Programme, especially through initiatives like the Christmas Jumper Day and the hamper drive, shows how young people can make a meaningful difference in the lives of others. The €900 raised and the support for families in need are clear reflections of their commitment to giving back. Teacher Mrs. Dawn Costello's guidance and support also play a crucial role in nurturing their sense of responsibility and compassion. It's inspiring to see this kind of collective effort to spread kindness and joy, especially during the Christmas season!



Programme engagement during Term-1

Our '24/'25 school term kicked off extremely well. September-December 21 schools including 5 new schools engaged in the programme. 4 schools also availed of the SVP Guest Speaker information workshop as part of their LSA, junior and first year programmes. All schools engaging in the programme participated in the SVP Annual Christmas Food Appeal providing food and fundraisers to support their local conferences, while also creating awareness in relation the work off SVP. 1 school donated 93 toy boxes for children at part of the Christmas Toy Appeal. Programme feedback from teachers have been extremely positive one saying, "the programme is

extremely beneficial to the students, and the work/support of the YDO helps them to develop and encourages them to support their communities through the work of SVP". Feedback from students have also been very positive feedback on the programme saying, "we love what we learn and it's great we get to have fun while learning", "we get to focus on doing something good for our school and community, and we feel good doing it". The school conferences have put a lot of effort into focusing on community support and are looking forward to engaging in 'Befriending projects for the upcoming term.



Niamh, Enfield, Co. Meath

SOUTH EAST

Young SVP South East

A busy 4 months so far in the South East Region with 30 school conferences taking part in the programme this year. A big welcome to Castlecomer Community School and Selskar College Wexford who launched their first ever Young SVP conferences this year and welcome back to Ardscoil na Mara, Tramore, St Mary's CBS Portlaoise, Tyndall College Carlow and Ardscoil na nDeise, Dungarvan.

This year, most groups began with a planning session where they mapped out their projects for the year and this has been a huge success. Here is a little insight into what some of our groups are getting up to:

Presentation College Carlow are huge supporters of SVP all year round but especially at Christmas time. The Young SVP group organised a food appeal, a Christmas Jumper Day and Carol Singing in Carlow Town for their direct aid project and raised an amazing €2600 for their local SVP.

The girls from Young SVP in Loreto Kilkenny organised a food appeal for SVP for their direct aid project and donated 85 food hampers to the local SVP. Amazing!!

For their befriending project, Young SVP members from Our Lady of Lourdes Secondary School in New Ross visited their local nursing home to sing Christmas Carols and chat with the residents.

As an awareness project, Young SVP members in De la Salle College Waterford took part in an ice bucket challenge, to highlight the difficulties rough sleepers face in cold weather.

Our Young SVP conference in Mountrath Community School are taking sign language classes for their education project this year in the hope they can teach it to others and make Mountrath CS more inclusive for the deaf community.

And finally a special mention to the Young SVP members from Our Lady of Mercy Secondary School, Presentation Secondary School, St Paul's Community School, St Angela's Secondary School and De La Salle College in Waterford who volunteered for the Waterford City Annual Appeal Collection in December. SVP member Maragret Grant was blown away by their kindness and generosity and their commitment to SVP.



De la Salle College, Co. Waterford



Presentation College, Co. Carlow



Our Lady of Lourdes Secondary School New Ross, Co. Wexford



St Paul's Community College, Co. Waterford

WEST

Spotlight on an SVP group in the West Region



Name, Year and School and how many are in your conference?

St Raphaels, Loughrea. There are 22 members in our Conference.

Why did you sign up for Young SVP?

Some of our older siblings were involved in Young SVP and they encouraged us to do it. We also thought it sounded very interesting and wanted to get out in the community and help.

What projects has your Conference done so far?

We created an appreciation poster for our teachers for World Teacher Day. We have also help host a culture day in the community. We have also taken part in the social justice workshops and learned more about SVP and social justice.

What's next?

We are planning a darts competition for our the TY students to raise some funds for SVP. We are also teaming up with the local active retirement group and inviting them into our school for bingo and some tea and chats. We are also thinking of bringing in our grandparents to take part in the bingo also.

What's been your favourite thing so far?

We've enjoyed working together as a team to get projects done. We also invited in two local members of SVP. They chatted to us about the work they do locally so it was very interesting to hear about that especially all the help they give to third level education and the stories of success around that. We have enjoyed exploring the workshops and of course getting the Young SVP wristbands!!

What's your message for your fellow Young SVP members around the country?

It's great to know that so many students are taking part in the same programme we are doing. We would say to them

“Keep going, and keep up the good work!”

We are looking forward to meeting all the other students in the West Region at our Youth Day in April and excited to see what projects they have been working on.

NORTH WEST REGION

Celebrating 20 Years of Dedication: Honouring Briège Stevens and Edel Hendry for Their Remarkable Service

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul (SVP) North West region would like to express its heartfelt gratitude to two exceptional individuals: Briège Stevens and Edel Hendry. Their unwavering dedication and commitment as trainers with the organisation have made a lasting impact over the past two decades.

For 20 years, Briège and Edel have been at the forefront of training and mentoring, ensuring that those involved in the SVP's mission have the skills, knowledge, and compassion necessary to serve those in need. Their tireless efforts have provided invaluable training to countless volunteers and inspired and empowered others to become beacons of hope in their communities.

As trainers, both Briège and Edel have played pivotal roles in shaping the future of the SVP, cultivating a deep understanding of the values that drive the organisation's work. Their ability to connect with people and wealth of experience have made them invaluable assets to the SVP family. Their expert guidance has ensured that volunteers are prepared to assist others and do so with the utmost care and empathy.

Over the years, their influence has reached far beyond the classroom. Their compassion has been a guiding light for so many, instilling a sense of purpose and passion in those who have worked alongside them. Through their leadership, Briège and Edel have helped foster a culture of service that continues to thrive, rooted in kindness, dignity, and a deep respect for those they serve.

Their work has had an immeasurable impact. It has touched the lives of countless individuals who have benefited from the SVP's services. Whether through direct support or empowering others to serve, their contributions have left an indelible mark on the organisation and its communities.

As we celebrate this remarkable milestone, the SVP North West region wants to express its profound appreciation to Briège Stevens and Edel Hendry for their 20 years of exceptional service. Your legacy of dedication, compassion, and expertise is truly inspiring.



We are grateful for the time, energy, and love you have poured into this vital work and thank you for your two decades of outstanding contributions.

Your commitment to the mission of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul has made a world of difference. The positive changes you have created will continue to resonate for many years. On behalf of the SVP family, I extend our sincere gratitude. We look forward to the many more lives your kindness and service will touch in the years ahead. Thank you, Briège and Edel, for your invaluable contributions and for inspiring us all.

SVP Sligo and Charlestown Gathering: A Day of Solidarity and Inspiration

On the 18th of September, members of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul (SVP) from Sligo (North West Region) and Charlestown (West Region) came together for a joint area gathering at Castle Dargan, Sligo. The event proved to be a deeply meaningful and inspiring occasion, fostering connections, sharing insights, and reinforcing the shared mission of the SVP.

The gathering offered a valuable platform for members to reflect on their ongoing efforts to support those in need and to explore innovative strategies to tackle the persistent social justice challenges faced by vulnerable communities. With a focus on solidarity, compassion, and service, the event underscored the organisation's steadfast commitment to improving the lives of those most at risk in Irish society.

Throughout the day, attendees engaged in discussions that highlighted the importance of collective action and the power of collaboration. Members shared local initiatives and success stories, offering valuable insights and inspiration for future endeavours. These exchanges not only strengthened connections among members but also reinforced the SVP's role as a united force for good.

The gathering was further enriched by a thought-provoking presentation from Marcella Stakem, SVP's Research and Policy Officer. Her compelling address on the importance of social justice resonated deeply with attendees, shedding light on the pressing issues marginalised communities face and emphasising the need for continued advocacy and action. Marcella's presentation was a powerful reminder of the organisation's role in addressing systemic inequality and fostering a society where everyone has the opportunity to thrive.

The event also served as a moment of reflection on the profound impact of the SVP's work. Members took time to acknowledge the challenges and triumphs of their efforts, reaffirming their dedication to the SVP's mission. The gathering was a testament to the power of unity, reminding all present of the importance of their shared values and goals.

As the day concluded, it was clear that the gathering had successfully strengthened the bonds within the SVP community and reinforced the organisation's commitment to social justice. The insights and inspiration gained during the event will undoubtedly fuel continued efforts to make a positive and lasting difference in the lives of the most vulnerable.



The SVP Sligo and Charlestown Gathering at Castle Dargan was a celebration of solidarity, compassion, and service — a powerful reminder of what can be achieved when people come together with a shared purpose. It is this spirit that continues to drive the SVP forward in its mission to create a more just and equitable society for all.



SVP Inishowen Gathering: Strengthening Connections and Addressing Local Challenges

On the 19th of September, SVP North West hosted a gathering for its members in the Inishowen area at Simpson's Bar and Restaurant in Carndonagh. The event provided a meaningful opportunity for members to come together, fostering connections and deepening the sense of community within the organisation.

The gathering served as a vital platform for addressing local communities' pressing challenges. Attendees engaged in open discussions, sharing insights, experiences, and collaborative strategies to navigate and respond to these issues effectively. This collective exchange highlighted the strength and resilience of the SVP community as it continues to support those in need.

Two insightful guest speakers enriched the evening: **Michelle Coyle**, Defective Concrete Blocks Facilitator with Inishowen Development Partnership, and **Paul Gibson**, Area Coordinator with GROW.

Michelle Coyle delivered a powerful address on the ongoing crisis faced by communities impacted by defective concrete blocks. She highlighted the significant challenges families are experiencing, including housing insecurity and financial strain, and shared the efforts being made to provide advocacy and support for those affected. Her discussion underscored the importance of solidarity and action in addressing this critical issue.

Paul Gibson's presentation centered on the vital work of GROW in promoting mental health and well-being. He emphasised the importance of community-based support and the transformative power of peer-led recovery initiatives. Paul's insights shed light on the significant role organisations like GROW play in fostering resilience and hope among individuals facing mental health challenges.

Both speakers offered valuable perspectives on key social issues,



reinforcing the need for collaboration and collective action to address the diverse needs of local communities. Their contributions informed and inspired attendees, leaving a lasting impact on all present.

The Inishowen Gathering exemplified the spirit of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul — bringing people together to confront challenges with compassion, innovation, and a commitment to making a difference. The event underscored the importance of unity and collaboration in achieving the shared goal of improving lives and addressing social injustices.

As the evening concluded, members left with a renewed sense of purpose and strengthened bonds, ready to continue their vital work in the Inishowen area. This gathering was a testament to the power of connection and the unwavering commitment of SVP members to serving their communities.



SVP Leitrim, Elphin, and Longford Gathering: Collaboration and Insights for a Better Future

On the 26th of September, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul (SVP) hosted an area gathering in Carrick-on-Shannon, bringing together members from the Leitrim (North West), Elphin (West), and Longford (North East and Midlands) regions. This event served as a vital forum for fostering collaboration, sharing knowledge, and charting a path forward to address the evolving needs of vulnerable individuals and families.

The gathering provided a platform for participants to reflect on SVP's ongoing initiatives and its vision for the future. Through engaging discussions, attendees explored practical solutions to tackle the complex challenges faced by those the organisation serves. Strengthening community ties and enhancing the effectiveness of SVP's programs were key themes throughout the event, underscoring the organisation's dedication to promoting social inclusion, alleviating poverty, and driving sustainable change across local communities in Ireland.

A highlight of the evening was the guest speaker, **Mary Holahan**, a Money Advice Coordinator with North Connacht & Ulster MABS, based in the Leitrim office. Mary provided invaluable insights into the financial struggles many individuals and families face today. Her presentation highlighted the critical role MABS plays in offering expert guidance and practical support to those experiencing financial hardship.

Following Mary's presentation, attendees participated in interactive case study sessions. These sessions focused on



assessing the needs of individuals and providing tailored assistance, exploring client-centred approaches to addressing financial difficulties. The collaborative exercise emphasised the importance of a holistic approach to supporting vulnerable communities, encouraging participants to develop strategies prioritising empathy, sustainability, and empowerment.

The event also highlighted the essential partnership between organisations like MABS and SVP. By working together, these groups can amplify their impact, ensuring that those in need receive the comprehensive, compassionate, and practical support they deserve.

The gathering in Carrick-on-Shannon was a powerful reminder of the strength that comes from unity and collaboration. Members left the event with renewed energy and purpose, inspired by the insights shared and the collective commitment to building stronger, more resilient communities.

As SVP continues its vital work across Ireland, events like this underscore the organisation's enduring dedication to creating a more just and equitable society for all.



EAST REGION

Sr. Angela's Retirement Party

My name is Eimear Burke and I am the librarian in St. Vincent's Hospital, Fairview. The early days of January heralded an invitation to my email inbox. It was from Ann Cuffe Fitzgerald, Chair Higher Education and Training Bursary Committee Society of St. Vincent de Paul. Our beloved chaplain, Sr Angela [who had been a member of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul Conference], had retired in December and Ann had joined the hospital in our celebrations. Ann's request was beautiful. "Would I like to write a short piece about our farewell celebration?" My honour and pleasure.

St. John Henry Newman wrote "to live is to change and to live well is to change often".

Here, at St. Vincent's Hospital Fairview, we have been blessed by the companionship of Sr. Angela for 14 wonderful years. As news filtered out about her impending retirement there was only one question on everyone's mind. How could we mark this important occasion and celebrate the work of someone who brought such love, kindness and fun to us all? By happy coincidence Sr. Angela's farewell coincided with our Christmas celebrations. The hospital was festooned with twinkling lights, an assortment of shiny decorations and with foraged, green and red berried foliage. A clandestine conversation with our VIP consolidated our plans and we began our preparations. Invitations were penned and sent out, tasty treats and a very special cake were baked, a selection of gifts lovingly gathered together and a BIG card and notebook were magically passed around for everyone to share their memories of Sr. Angela. Our exciting preparations continued apace until the day of the party finally arrived.

Sr. Angela was radiant as she greeted her guests and the hospital chapel filled to the rafters with colleagues, friends, guests and a very important group from Cork! The Staff Carol Service began and we all joined in singing a beautiful selection of carols and listening to Christmas readings arranged by Sr. Angela. Following the service guests, staff and patients gathered in the canteen to enjoy some refreshments and conversation. It was lovely to see so many people coming together for our very special celebration and to witness the joy in the room. A number of people said a few words but all eyes were on Sr Angela as she gave thanks in a heartfelt speech for her wonderful years of service. The Homefarm Men's Choir serenaded as the cake was cut and we presented Sr. Angela with a selection of gifts as a token of our gratitude and thanks. One gift in particular deserves a special mention. The hospital is situated among many century old trees and on occasion,



Photo Eimear Burke Chair Workplace Wellbeing Committee, Eoin Culliton Acting CEO, Sr Angela. Gift above presented.

branches or a tree can succumb to stormy weather. One of our talented chefs is also a master wood-turner. The seed of an idea for a gift emerged – a simple cross with a base made from an elm tree felled on the grounds to symbolise Sr Angela's connection to the hospital and a cross fashioned from a piece of ivory to memorialise the connection of the Daughters of Charity to Nigeria. The cross has particular significance and poignancy. Sr Angela is the final link of the hospital to the Daughters of Charity who have been part of the fabric of the hospital since its inception.

In the days after the retirement party hospital staff were filled with happiness and joy at the memory of such a wonderful occasion. Sr. Angela's final gift to us.

We are all going to miss her so much and we will continue to hold her in our hearts as she begins this next part of her life journey. And, in the words of John O' Donohue:

“
Now is the time to enjoy your heart's desire,
To live the dreams you've waited for,
To awaken the depths beyond your work
And enter into your infinite source.”

Thank you Sr Angela.

Eimear Burke
Librarian

Chair St. Vincent's Hospital Fairview, Workplace Wellbeing Committee.



Left to Right, Front: Battie White, Carol O'Dowd, Frances Crowe, Christine Walsh, Deirdre Cooke, Catherine Doyle, Mary Sheridan, Miriam O'Brien, Kay Skelly. Left to Right, Back: Declan Nestor, Vincent Egan, Ann Taylor, Charlotte Vaughan, Breda Sinnott.

SVP Honours Three Long-Serving Members with Heartfelt Retirement Lunch

Conference President Mary Sheridan and the members of St. Anne's Conference, Killinarden, recently marked the retirement of three long serving members with a most enjoyable lunch in the Dropping Well, Milltown. Between them, Charlotte Vaughan, Breda Sinnott and Kay Skelly had served as Conference members for the amazing total of 130 years, and week in week out they gave their time freely to help the people who had come to live in the newly developed suburb of Killinarden, Tallaght. **Charlotte Vaughan** was an SVP member for 52 years, having initially worked as a volunteer in Sunshine House, Balbriggan, and later with the Sunshine House Conference. At that time, around 1970, there were separate Conferences for men and women. This made no sense to Charlotte, who was one of a delegation to Head Office to demand the end of this outdated idea. The delegation succeeded, the men's and women's Sunshine Conferences were merged, and Charlotte became the first President of the new combined Conference. She subsequently joined the St. Anne's Conference in the new community of Killinarden (Tallaght), and gave dedicated service to those who needed

help throughout a very long SVP 'career', serving as President for a number of years.

Charlotte remembers the appalling poverty in Dublin in the early years and says the conditions in which some people live have definitely improved. She notes the growth of the organisation in recent years, and the employment of additional professional staff. Her hope is that the real meaning of work with the SVP does not get lost with the changes. The Garda vetting process is very welcome, which wasn't in place when Charlotte joined the SVP.

I will leave the last word to Charlotte herself –

“
Joining SVP was the best thing I ever did; it has given me lifelong friends and opened up my life to a wide range of people.”

Breda Sinnott has been an SVP member for over 45 years. She joined SVP in Cork in 1975, and initially served with a Hospital Visitation Conference. She moved to Dublin in 1978, and joined St. Joseph's Conference, Terenure. An appeal came from

St. Anne's Conference for members to transfer to the rapidly developing area of Killinarden, and Breda volunteered to join St. Anne's in 1980. She has vivid memories of her first visit to Killinarden. It was winter, there had been heavy snow for days, and the families were freezing cold in the new houses. There were no local amenities and the whole surroundings looked bleak. Many of the new arrivals had been transferred from Ballymun, when the flats were all centrally heated, and in fact some of them went back to Ballymun.

Tallaght is a very different place now, she says. There is the Square Shopping Centre, Tallaght Hospital, the Headquarters of South Dublin County Council, fabulous facilities like Tallaght Stadium – it is now like a small city.

Breda has fond memories of her time with St. Anne's Conference. She made great friends with both Conference members and with many of the people she visited and got to know over the years. She appreciated the great friendship within the Conference, and the wonderful volunteers who joined them during her time there.

Kay Skelly was a member of St. Anne's Conference for 30 years, up until the Covid pandemic broke out in 2020. She remembers how bad things were for some of the families visited when she first joined. Some families had the electricity and gas cut off because they were in arrears and had to put up with dreadful conditions. One evening she arrived at a particular house which had been cut off to find a young mother heating up the baby's bottle in a bean can over an open fire, a memory she has to this day.

She has seen many changes in her 30 years, mostly for the better. People are generally better off now, and the number



Left to Right: Kay Skelly, Breda Sinnott, Charlotte Vaughan.

of calls for help in the area has gone down. On the negative side, the prevalence of drugs in the area is causing enormous problems for families, which hadn't been as big an issue when she joined the Conference.

Kay has many happy memories when she thinks back on her time in the SVP. She mentions her "admiration for the resilience of people, who against all the odds have the ability to be happy, and to help out their neighbours if they possibly can." She also recalls "the friendship among the Conference members, and the way they support each other". She has fond memories of the occasions when they could all meet up socially at Mary White's parties and have a good chat and a laugh.

Charlotte, Breda and Kay, thank you for being fantastic colleagues over many years. We in St. Anne's Conference wish you all the best in your future endeavours.

East Region Honours Long-Serving SVP Members at Annual Mass

The East Region hosted its Annual Members' Mass on December 5th, 2024, at Clarendon Street Church, drawing a large attendance. The service honoured members for their long-standing dedication, followed by refreshments for all attendees. Four members were recognized for over 50 years of service, while 16 members celebrated over 25 years with SVP.

The East Region sadly announces the passing of David on February 7, 2025. He served in key roles, including Conference President, Area President, and Head of the Training Committee. May his gentle soul rest in peace.



Marie Cronin, East Regional President, presents David McDonough with his long-service medal.

A Heartfelt Christmas 2024: Gratitude from the Community

By Philip Brady, Conference Secretary

As the festive season of 2024 unfolded, the Conference of St. Joseph the Worker, Bonnybrook, Dublin, had the privilege of spreading Christmas cheer and support to those in need. In the week leading up to Christmas, the Conference carried out a successful Christmas distribution, providing much-needed assistance to 88 households. This effort, made possible through the dedication of members of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul (SVP), brought hope and relief to many facing challenges during this time of year.

Following the distribution, the Conference received a moving message of gratitude from one of the recipients. The heartfelt words, shared below, capture the profound impact of SVP's mission:

“Dear members of SVP Conference, I really want to express my gratitude and appreciation to you. Such a huge blessing you gave me. That support was amazing. I want you to know that. I really hope you have a safe and happy Christmas. Thanks so much. Amazing.”

This message resonated deeply with our Conference, and we felt it was important to share it with all members of the Society. It reflects the gratitude and appreciation for the work we all do, particularly during the Christmas season, when the pressures on those in need are often at their peak.

Finley Doyle and Laura Cuddihy

A Small Child With a Big Heart

The magic of Christmas often reveals itself in unexpected ways, and this year, it arrived at our Conference in Kilquade through the thoughtful heart of an eight-year-old boy named Finley Doyle.

Just a week before Christmas, we received a message from Head Office letting us know there was a donation waiting for collection in our area. As I followed up on the details, I found myself speaking with a young mum whose story warmed my heart and reminded me of the true meaning of Christmas.

Her son, Finley, had recently been gifted a raffle ticket by his grandad. The ticket was part of their local GAA club's annual Christmas raffle, with prizes generously donated by the community. To everyone's delight, Finley's ticket was drawn, winning a €150 voucher for the local grocery shop.

But what happened next turned

this simple prize into something extraordinary. When Finley's mum shared the exciting news, his response was immediate and selfless. Without hesitation, Finley said, "Our family has plenty. Could this voucher go to a family who doesn't?"

In that moment, Finley displayed a generosity of spirit that is rare at any age. His thoughtful decision brought an unexpected blessing to our Conference, and through his kindness, we now have the opportunity to pass on his gift to a family in need in our area.

Finley's story is a reminder that the heart of Christmas lies in giving and thinking of others. His unprompted generosity and awareness of others' needs inspire us all to reflect on how we can share our blessings, no matter how big or small.

From all of us in Kilquade, thank you, Finley Doyle, for reminding us of the joy in giving and for bringing the true spirit of Christmas to life.



MID WEST REGION

Heartfelt Thank You from St. Vincent de Paul Templemore Conference

As we reflect on the joy and generosity of this past Christmas season, we at St. Vincent de Paul Templemore Conference would like to extend our deepest gratitude to everyone who supported our efforts to help those in need within our community.

A Special Thank You to Our Local Supporters

We were delighted to receive a generous donation from the local Londis bottle return initiative. A big thank you to Patrick Lakatos, Pat Brett, Valerie Sargent, and Elizabeth Dunne for their support, and a heartfelt acknowledgment to Margaret Hassey (SVP member) and Trish O'Brien (Conference President) for representing us so beautifully in this effort.

Templetuohy National School

A huge thank you to the students and staff of Templetuohy National School for their thoughtful donation from their Christmas Jumper Day fundraiser. Your festive spirit and generosity made a significant impact! We also extend our gratitude to Mary Meagher (SVP member) and Trish O'Brien for being part of this special moment.

Our Lady's School, Templemore

Your wonderful Christmas donations truly captured the spirit of giving! Thank you to the students, staff, and parents who contributed so selflessly to brighten the season for those in need.



Thanks to the incredible kindness and efforts of our community, we were able to provide essential assistance to families, individuals, and the elderly during the Christmas season. Your contributions — whether through fundraising, donating, or simply spreading the word — helped bring comfort, warmth, and hope to many.

As always, we are deeply grateful for your unwavering support and generosity. Together, we continue to make a meaningful difference in the lives of those less fortunate.

With warm wishes and heartfelt thanks,

St. Vincent de Paul Templemore Conference.

Honouring a Legacy of Service: Tribute to Retired SVP Volunteers

In a gathering held last year, retired St. Vincent de Paul (SVP) volunteers Billy Collier and MaryAnne Fogarty were celebrated for their remarkable commitment and long-standing service to the community. The Sacred Heart Conference in Templemore, Tipperary welcomed the esteemed retirees and presented them with certificates and the prestigious Frederick Ozanam medal, a testament to their invaluable contributions.

For many years, Billy and MaryAnne embodied the spirit of compassion and kindness that defines the SVP mission. Their work often involved assisting individuals and families facing difficult circumstances, finding solutions to problems, and providing much-needed relief and comfort. Their efforts not only eased immediate burdens but also brought hope and reassurance to countless lives.

Patricia O'Brien, Conference President, led the tribute by welcoming the honourees and expressing heartfelt gratitude for their dedication and example. "Your work has been a beacon of kindness and perseverance," Patricia said, emphasising the lasting impact Billy and MaryAnne have made on their community.

The ceremony served as both a celebration of their



contributions and a call to action for others to follow in their footsteps. SVP continues to seek volunteers willing to spare a few hours to support their vital work. Training is provided, and Garda vetting is required, making it a rewarding and accessible way to give back.

If you feel inspired by the commitment of Billy and MaryAnne, consider joining the team of SVP volunteers. Visit SVP.ie to learn more and take the first step toward making a difference.

SOUTH WEST REGION

Southwest Regional Council Honours Outgoing President Paddy O'Flynn

At the South-West Regional Council's meeting in late September, members gathered to honour outgoing Regional President Paddy O'Flynn for his dedicated service to the St. Vincent de Paul (SVP) Society. The event featured a special presentation by Mary Frances Behan, the new South-West Regional President, who expressed the Society's heartfelt gratitude for Paddy's years of leadership and commitment.

In her remarks, Mary Frances highlighted Paddy's pivotal role in guiding the region through challenges and his unwavering dedication to the Society's mission of serving those in need. His tenure was marked by compassion, effective

leadership, and a strong focus on community engagement.

The occasion also brought together key members of the Southwest Regional Council for a commemorative photo, including Trevor Leacy (Regional Treasurer), Mary Frances Behan (Regional President), Jason Boyle (Regional Vice President), Sinead Gallagher (Regional Secretary), and Gerry Garvey (Regional Coordinator).

The evening served as both a reflection on Paddy O'Flynn's exceptional contributions and a celebration of the continued dedication of the Southwest Regional Council as they look to the



future under Mary Frances Behan's leadership.

The St. Vincent de Paul Society expressed its deepest appreciation for Paddy's service and commitment, a legacy that will undoubtedly inspire the team as they continue their vital work in the region.



Above: Noreen Kelleher, President of St. Dominics Conference pictured with the St Vincents Secondary School TY Students, and teachers Áine Murphy H.S.C.L and Emma Kincaid T.Y. Coordinator.

St. Dominic's Conference Teams Up for a Successful Flag Day

Last October, the St. Dominic's Conference came together to assist with the South West region Annual Flag Day, an event dedicated to raising funds for their vital community initiatives. Volunteers took to the streets and shopping centers of Cork City, armed with flags and collection buckets, to engage the public in supporting their mission. However, the event faced an initial challenge: a shortage of volunteers to cover the area assigned to St. Dominic's Conference.

Thankfully, the spirit of collaboration and generosity shone through when St. Vincent's Girls' School stepped in to help. Their students volunteered enthusiastically on the day, significantly boosting the Conference's efforts and ensuring that all areas were well covered. Their involvement not only brought in much-needed funds but also highlighted the impact of community spirit and teamwork in achieving shared goals.

The members of St. Dominic's Conference extend their heartfelt gratitude to St. Vincent's Girls' School for their support and dedication. The funds raised during Flag Day play a crucial role in sustaining not just the SouthWest region's work but all the Conferences work, and the contributions made by these young volunteers will undoubtedly make a difference in the lives of many.

Celebrating Dedication: SVP Honours Long-Standing Volunteers in Cork

Late last year, the St. Vincent de Paul (SVP) Society in Cork gathered to honour several remarkable individuals for their outstanding commitment to the community. This special event was a heartfelt celebration of their unwavering dedication and generosity over decades of service.

Mary McHale of the St. Francis and St. Dominic Conferences was recognised for her extraordinary 45 years of service. Standing proudly by her side was Antionette Curtin, also from the St. Francis and St. Dominic Conferences, who contributed 30 years of dedicated service. Their efforts have left an indelible mark on the community, embodying the compassion and care at the heart of the SVP mission. Mary and Antionette were presented with certificates and medals as a token of appreciation.

Jack Flahive from the Blessed Virgin Doneraile Conference was honoured for his remarkable 40 years of service. His long-standing commitment and dedication have played a crucial role in supporting individuals and families in need within the Doneraile community. The recognition was a testament to his positive impact over the years.



Jack Flahive 40yrs service

Catherine Kelleher, a founding member of the St. Eltins Kinsale Conference, was celebrated for her 20 years of devoted service. As a pioneer who played a key role in establishing the Kinsale Conference, Catherine's contributions were instrumental in laying the foundation for ongoing efforts to support the vulnerable in the area.

During the special evening hosted by the Conference members, heartfelt gratitude was expressed to all honourees. The presentations highlighted their invaluable contributions and demonstrated the enduring spirit of volunteerism that continues to drive the work of the St. Vincent de Paul Society.

The celebration honoured the past and inspired future volunteers to continue the vital work of the St. Vincent de Paul Society in Cork. The dedication of these individuals serves as a beacon of hope and a powerful reminder of the difference that compassion and commitment can make in the lives of others.



Mary MacHale 45yrs & Antionette Curtin 30yrs



Catherine Kelleher Kinsale Retired 20 yrs service

WEST REGION

West Region Celebrates Dedicated SVP Members in Southeast Galway

In October, the West Region of St. Vincent de Paul (SVP) hosted an Area Gathering for Southeast Galway, a night dedicated to recognising the remarkable dedication of its long-serving members. The evening was a heartwarming celebration of service, honouring members who have devoted over a decade of their lives to supporting their community.

Among the honourees were two exceptional individuals: one with an impressive 48 years of service and another surpassing 50 years — an extraordinary milestone that reflects a lifetime of commitment and compassion. In addition, members with 10, 15, 20, and more years of service were recognized, each receiving a medal and certificate to commemorate their contributions.

The atmosphere was filled with joy and pride as members gathered to celebrate their shared dedication to SVP's mission. Honourees expressed their happiness and gratitude for the recognition, while the gathering provided an opportunity to reflect on the impact of their collective efforts.

The evening highlighted the enduring spirit of volunteerism within SVP and served as a reminder of the vital role its members play in transforming lives and strengthening communities. It was, indeed, a lovely and inspiring event for all who attended.



NORTH REGION

St. Brigid's Conference Reflects on a Year of Generosity and Community Spirit

St. Brigid's Conference in Ballycastle has had a busy and fulfilling year, thanks to the incredible generosity of our community. Their support has enabled us to extend kindness and assistance to those in need, making a real difference in many lives.

One of the standout moments of the year was the fundraising initiative led by Year 14 students from Cross and Passion College. These dedicated young people raised an amazing £650 for St. Vincent de Paul (SVP).

This remarkable effort would not have been possible without the support of CPC staff, who worked tirelessly to help the students organise the fundraising activities.

Another highlight of the year was our annual Christmas Dinner held at The Marine Hotel Ballycastle. This event brought together 75 senior citizens from our community for an evening of good food, entertainment, and festive cheer. It was a joy to see everyone enjoying themselves and connecting with others during the holiday season.

We are deeply grateful to the SVP members who volunteered their time and energy to make this event such a success. Their hard work and dedication ensured that the evening was a memorable one for all attendees.

As we reflect on the past year, we are inspired by the kindness and community spirit that has made these achievements possible. St. Brigid's Conference looks forward to continuing our work in the year ahead, with the support of our wonderful community.



Year 14 Cross and Passion College students who raised an amazing £650 for SVP.



CPC staff who helped organise the fundraising.



Senior citizens enjoying the Christmas Dinner at The Marine Hotel Ballycastle.



SVP members who helped at the Christmas Dinner.

Celebrating Dedication: Ian Falls Honoured for 55 Years of Volunteering with St. Vincent de Paul

In a heartwarming ceremony last year, Ian Falls was recognised for an extraordinary milestone — 55 years of dedicated service to the St. Vincent de Paul Society in Newtownards and Comber. The occasion highlighted the enduring impact of Ian's volunteer work, which has touched countless lives over more than half a century.

Fr. Martin O'Hagan presented Ian with a certificate of recognition, praising his unwavering reliability, deep compassion, and steadfast care for his community. Fr. O'Hagan spoke of Ian's remarkable commitment, emphasizing how his service exemplifies the core values of the St. Vincent de Paul Society.

The event also honoured other devoted volunteers who have significantly contributed to the Society's mission of serving those in need. Alice McKibbin was celebrated for 20 years of service, while Orla Patterson and Carrol Black were each acknowledged for their impressive 10 years of commitment.



Together, these volunteers exemplify the spirit of selflessness and community care that the St. Vincent de Paul Society represents. Their collective efforts continue to strengthen the fabric of the Newtownards and Comber communities, offering hope and support to those who need it most.

The recognition of Ian Falls and his fellow volunteers serves as an inspiring reminder of the power of dedication and compassion in transforming lives and fostering a spirit of unity.

SOUTH EAST REGION

Finbarr Kerr Honoured with Melvin Jones Award for Outstanding Community Service

The Wexford Lions Club has recognized Finbarr Kerr, a dedicated member of the St. Vincent de Paul (SVP) St. Patrick's Conference in Clonard, Wexford, for his exceptional contributions to supporting people in need within the Wexford community. Finbarr received the prestigious Melvin Jones Award, named after the founder of the Lions Club, during the annual Wexford Lions Club BBQ at the Wexford Golf Club. The award was presented by Immediate Past President Willie Roche, with the moment captured in a photograph by Jim Campbell.

The Melvin Jones Award is reserved for individuals whose humanitarian efforts align with the spirit and purpose of Lionism. Finbarr's recognition reflects his tireless work and the profound impact he has made within the Clonard parish. Praised for his humble approach to his responsibilities, Finbarr has provided significant assistance to those in need, embodying the core values of compassion and service that are central to both the Lions Club and SVP.



The Wexford Lions Club highlighted Finbarr's unwavering dedication to his community, emphasizing how his efforts have brought relief and support to countless individuals and families. His recognition serves as an inspiration to others and underscores the vital role of selfless service in fostering strong, supportive communities.

Finbarr's contributions to Wexford stand as a shining example of the difference one individual can make, and the Lions Club's acknowledgment of his work is a testament to his remarkable legacy of care and commitment.

To deceased members of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul

Gerry Millett

Sacred Heart Visitation Conference
Castlebar Co. Mayo

A light has gone out in Castlebar SVP with the passing of Gerry Millett on 13th June 2024.

Gerry, a dedicated member made an immense contribution to the SVP both locally and nationally since the 1960s. He joined the SVP as a teenager in his hometown of Clonmel.

His warm, friendly nature, kindness and good humour shone through during his weekly visits to the Sacred Heart Hospital, Castlebar.

Gerry had many roles within the SVP and had the determination and foresight to help establish the St. Catherine Labouré holiday home in the shadow of our Lady's shrine in Knock many years ago. In its time it was one of the premier holiday homes in the SVP network. For many of the guests who came there it was the

first time they had been on a holiday. The kindness shown to them and the joy they experienced was thanks to Gerry and his fellow committee members.

A remarkable man. He will be greatly missed and always remembered by his friends in the SVP and the Sacred Heart Hospital, Castlebar.

Gerry's fellow members of the SVP extend their condolences to his family, daughters Siobhan and Marina and his sons Declan, Paul and Alan, his sister Rosaleen and brother Tony and their extended families. Gerry was predeceased by his beloved wife Christine in 2021.

To deceased members of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul

Lexie Ross

St Baithin Conference, St Johnston
and Convoy Area, North West Region

We remember and celebrate the remarkable life of Lexie Ross, whose deep dedication to his community, football club, and the St. Vincent de Paul Society has left an enduring legacy.

As a long-serving member of SVP, Lexie gave selflessly, offering care and support to those in need with unwavering kindness. His work touched countless lives, and his compassionate spirit made a lasting difference in the St. Baithin Conference in St. Johnston and Convoy area. Members of these SVP communities will miss him dearly, as will everyone who benefited from his generosity and commitment.

Beyond his work with SVP, Lexie was a passionate and active member of his local football club, Kildrum Tigers. He brought people together through sport and strengthened community

ties. Whether coaching, organising, or cheering on players, his enthusiasm for the game was infectious, helping create a stronger, more united community.

Even after Lexie's passing, his family showed incredible generosity by donating the leftover refreshments from the wake and funeral St. Baithin Conference. This thoughtful gesture was a testament to Lexie and his family's spirit of giving, continuing his legacy of compassion and support for those in need.

Lexie's legacy is one of service, kindness, and connection. His commitment to improving the lives of others, along with his ever-present smile and readiness to help, will be deeply missed.

Rest in peace, Lexie. Your memory will live on in the hearts of all who knew you.

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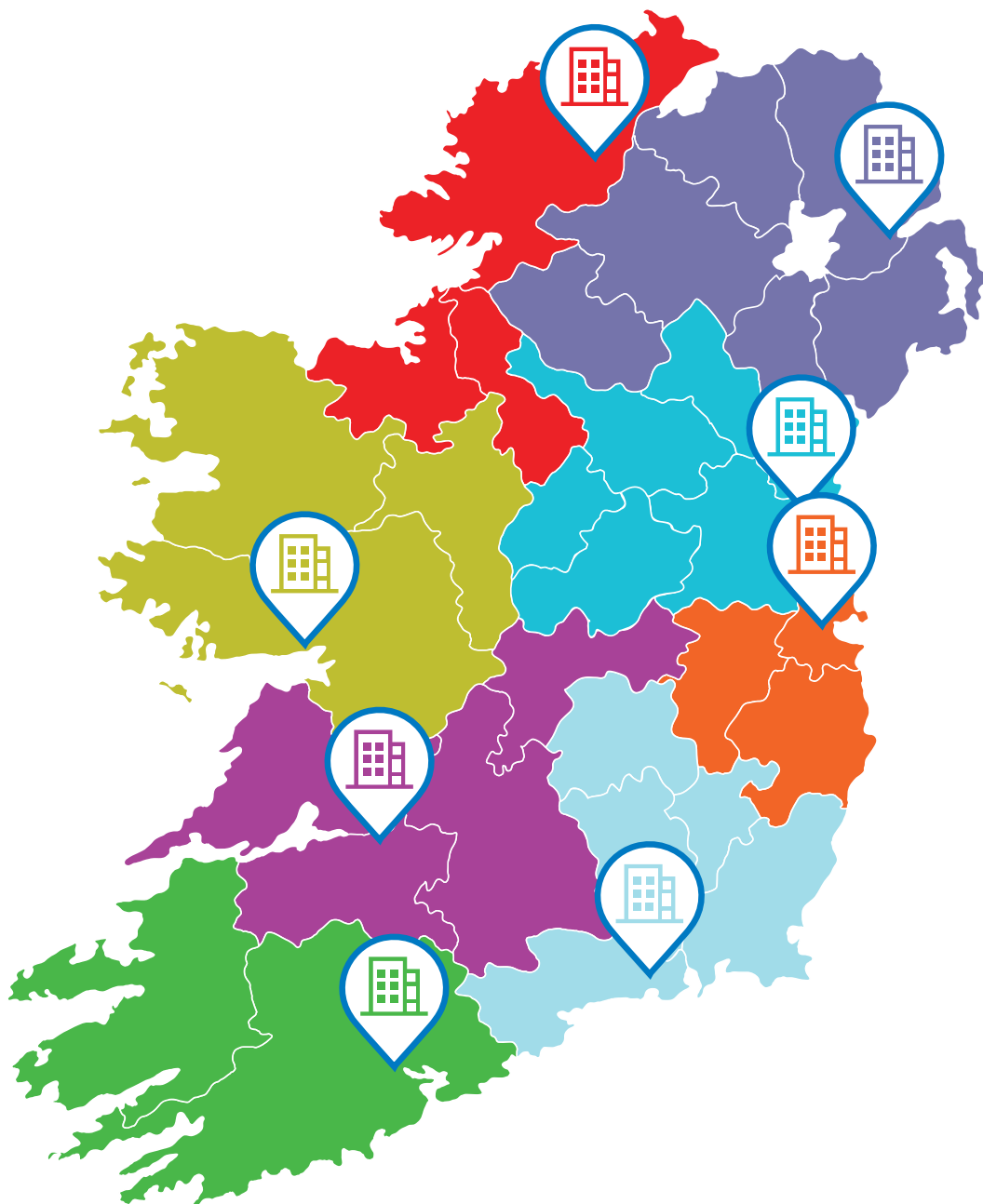
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