

VOLUNTEERING WITH SVP: HOME VISITATION

A member of a home visitation Conference in the Dublin 15 area for five years, Darragh gives an insight into his experiences of SVP.

Why did you decide to volunteer with Society of Saint Vincent de Paul?

About five years ago, I felt that I wanted to do some charity work. I felt the need to 'give something back'. I was aware of the SVP church gate collectors outside Mass each month in my local parish and so decided to enquire with them as to whether new volunteers were required. They were and so began my involvement...

Do you get a sense of achievement from helping people?

The work I undertake with the Society definitely gives me a sense that I am 'doing good', but it's about more than that. I have had a number of experiences through my home visitation work where I have seen the realities of these economic times on ordinary people and how the assistance and advice we give in SVP can make a very real difference to people's lives. For example, there is one client who needed help with paying for a college course who comes to mind. She needed assistance to pay college fees so that she could become an accountant. Education is viewed by SVP as one of the primary ways of breaking free from the chain of poverty and improving financial circumstances long term. Our Conference advised this client on how to apply for an educational grant from SVP and other local sources. With our advice she managed to get her course completely funded; 50% by SVP and the remainder from The Blanchardstown Area Partnership. The day we called her to give her a cheque for her registration fee, she was just overjoyed. On a personal level, this was a very uplifting experience and a real source of encouragement to continue my work with SVP.

Has volunteering with SVP changed your life in any way?

Yes, definitely. I feel that through meeting people who are in need of help, this has in turn made me realise how fortunate I am in my own life in so many ways. It has given me perspective. I have met some amazing people, both fellow volunteers and clients, all with their own stories and life experiences.

How long have you volunteered with SVP and what is your fondest experience?

Five years now. My fondest memories are of the Christmas periods; the SVP's busiest time. We work hard to give out food hampers, gifts and vouchers for items such as groceries. People are always so appreciative of the support and there is a great atmosphere as we hurry from house to house.

What advice would you give to anyone who wanted to volunteer with SVP?

Go for it! No matter what task you are charged with, whether it's holding a box at a church, stuffing envelopes, packing hampers of food or sorting clothes in a Vincent's shop, all support makes a huge difference and is a vital part of the overall work done by the organisation. There is no doubt that you will get a great sense that you are 'making a difference' and from my experience, you will be joining a team of people that have come together to change things for the better.

