



**Grant to AMACH LGBT Galway
Statement from Society of St Vincent de Paul**

October 2014

Donations to local Conferences of the Society of St Vincent de Paul are only used by those Conferences to provide assistance within their area. What is given locally stays local.

Earlier this year the members of SVP St Augustine's Conference who administer the SVP Maureen O'Connell Fund in Galway agreed to provide funding to another non-profit volunteer organisation, AMACH! LGBT Ltd, to be used in establishing a resource centre in Galway city.

AMACH LGBT Galway provides support for LGBT people in Galway City and County. It is not affiliated to, nor does it support, any other political party, group or campaign. The planned centre is required to provide supports and services to individuals and families of individuals in the LGBT community in the area.

SVP is one of eighteen voluntary, community and statutory bodies which are supporting the LGBT resource centre project. Galway City Council has a commitment in the City development plan to make funding available to AMACH! LGBT to rent a suitable city centre premises for the resource centre.

The SVP support for the centre has been made on the basis that it will be used to provide support and services to those vulnerable people in the community who because of sexual discrimination may suffer isolation, exclusion, discrimination, mental health issues and bullying. The funds provided can be used for no other purpose.

The St Augustine's Conference decision was ratified by the SVP National Management Council.

The grant is being made over three years and subject to strict criteria. St Augustine's Conference will monitor the grant to ensure that it is used for the purpose for which it is intended. AMACH! LGBT Galway will submit quarterly financial projections for approval by the Conference and quarterly financial details of how grant money is spent, as well as quarterly written reports on their activities. The grant will be paid on a phased basis and subject to ongoing satisfactory reports.

Some critics of the grant have sought to interpret the grant as benefitting a wider agenda of AMACH! LGBT. That is simply incorrect. We are not supporting any wider agenda. It is a grant provided to a local organisation in the same city, for a specific purpose. Nothing more or nothing less.

SVP Mission

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul charity is a Catholic lay voluntary organisation, working with poor and disadvantaged people. Inspired by our principal founder, Blessed Frederic Ozanam, and our patron, St. Vincent de Paul, we seek to respond to the call every Christian receives to bring the love of Christ to those in need: "I was hungry and you gave me food" (Matthew 25). No work of charity is foreign to the Society. We are involved in a diverse range of activities characterised by support and friendship, promoting self-sufficiency and working for social justice.

We see no conflict between this grant and our stated ethos. Our founder, Blessed Frederic Ozanam, based his work on the background of a strong faith and spirituality that remains a cornerstone of every SVP Conference to this day.

All SVP members across the country make decisions to support people based on need only; we are non-judgemental; the background of people we assist is not relevant. We respond to need, without differentiation on the grounds of religion, race, colour, creed, ideology or gender.

Tackling poverty

In relation to helping the poor the SVP objective is the relief of poverty in all its forms, material and emotional. The SVP provides approximately €40m annually in direct assistance to individuals and families and a further €29m approximately on activities in furtherance of its objectives. These activities include the management of homeless support services, community housing, crèches, resource centres, charity shops and affordable holiday centres for children, families and older people.

In addition the Society tries to support people to restore their dignity by getting them back to self-sustainability. To quote Blessed Frederic "You must not be content with simply tiding the poor over a poverty crisis: but rather you must study their condition and the injustices which brought about such poverty with the aim of a long term improvement'.

Maureen O'Connell Fund

St Augustine's conference was set up in 2007 to disburse a large bequest from the late Maureen O'Connell, to be used in Galway city and county. No other specific instruction was made. The conference has a dedicated team of SVP members, who are also active members of local conferences, supported by two professional staff members.

St Augustine's Conference considers requests for funding from conferences and Area Councils within the Society and from organisations and community groups in Galway city and county which aim to respond to the needs of families, individuals and groups who are experiencing poverty and social exclusion. This focus is different, but complementary, to the work of the Society's visitation conferences, which provide support, friendship and financial assistance directly to households which request support. To date sixty projects have been funded in the Galway area by the Maureen O'Connell Fund.

We trust that this statement clarifies our position.