

THE



SUMMER 2018

BULLETIN

MAGAZINE OF THE SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

**A BLUEPRINT FOR AN
EQUAL SOCIETY**

SOCIAL ACTION SUPERSTARS

**SVP INTERNATIONAL
PRESIDENT VISIT TO IRELAND**



THE VOICE OF SOCIAL JUSTICE IN IRELAND



*“Family like branches on a tree,
we all grow in different directions
yet our roots remain as one.”*



This magazine is named in honour of the principal founder of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, Frederic Ozanam

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Contents

4	KIERAN STAFFORD REFLECTION
5	DETACHED
6	HIDDEN HOMELESSNESS
8	THE WORLD MEETING OF FAMILIES
10	A LIFE LONG INFLUENCE
11	PAVING A PATHWAY OUT OF POVERTY – PRE-BUDGET SUBMISSION
24	FINANCES
25	SVP INTERNATIONAL PRESIDENT VISITS IRELAND
31	TWINNING
32	SVP TRAINING
34	65 YEARS OF SERVICE TO OTHERS
36	HOW WE SHOP
40	YOUNG SVP
45	NATIONWIDE
51	IN TRIBUTE

What does the word “family” mean for you?

There are so many different types of groups in the world today crossing various segments of society such as culture, religion, beliefs, etc. However, the oldest and most sacred group is probably “The Family”.

But “Family” is a strong word that can mean different things to different people, for a myriad of reasons, and can mean a lot more than a relative by blood or marriage. It can be people who accept you no matter who you are, or where you are from with no hatred or judgment. A belief that you can rely and count on them when you need them, someone to share your problems with and help you through difficult times.

But family also means to have respect for each other and can be used metaphorically to create more inclusive groups and categories such as community, nationhood, and global village. When I first started working for the Society I can recall typing up many minutes of meetings. I noted frequent mentions of Br. Brendan and Sr Mairead and asking in my naivety, how come I had never met all these priests and nuns? This was met with smiles and mini outbursts of laughter, and I soon realised that all these brothers and sisters were members of the SVP and the expressions were used to describe how everyone was included in this big family.

I was again exposed to a similar experience when visiting a large village in India earlier this year. As I showed photos to

people I had met the previous year I continually heard “oh that is my grandmother; that is my uncle” This didn't make much sense at first, as it seemed the children had dozens of grandmothers. I soon learned that this was how everyone in the community saw and related to each other; one big happy family and being blood-related had nothing to do with it.

As we celebrate the World Meeting of Families themed “A Year Dedicated to Families” we should all keep this image in our heads and heart, that as humans, we are all part of a much bigger family then the traditional one most of us think of.

This Bulletin is about the SVP ‘family’ and its work. Every week over 11,000 SVP members, volunteers and staff pour their hearts and souls into trying to make it easier for our fellow human brothers and sisters around the country.

In this edition, you will read;

- How SVP strives to create “a pathway out of poverty” by petitioning the government to make changes to its policies and put the most vulnerable at the top of their agenda.
- How the SVP Vincent's charity shops too are doing their part to create more inclusive communities with their “extending the hand of friendship” leaflets available in 12 languages to ensure that every single member of our community has equal access to the support and friendship available from SVP.
- SVP Young also works in many local communities instilling a sense of family and compassion for others through its school and college projects.
- But the Society is not just working tirelessly in Ireland, it is carrying out similar activities all around the world through various initiatives like Twinning, and you will read how the SVP International President recently visited several regions in Ireland to see the work and commitment of the Irish members and staff and also met with representatives of the Vincentian Family of which SVP is part of.

One thing is for sure, the Society of St Vincent de Paul is a living, breathing example of what it means to be part of a large family, caring for others by offering friendship and support.

Linda O'Connell

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What impact will it have on the people we assist?



Often blamed for their circumstances or made feel guilty due to the many misconceptions about the impact of growing up in a one parent family on children.

Research from Ireland's Growing up in Ireland study looking at the issues faced by families with children has found that the most important determinants of child well-being are not whether there are one or two parents in the household, but rather the access to resources, financial and otherwise, and the levels of education of mothers. Low-income families, whether they have one or two parents, tend to have poorer outcomes for children. Poverty is always the common dominator.

Pope Francis recently recognised the economic difficulties one parent families often endure and why they need support and encouragement.

"Single parents must receive encouragement and support from other families in the Christian community, and from the parish's pastoral outreach. Often, these families endure economic difficulties, uncertain employment prospects, problems with child support and lack of housing."

Over the past number of years, the landscape of Irish family life has changed dramatically. Families are now much smaller and more children are growing up in households headed by one parent.

According to the Census, the number of one parent families stood at 218,817 in 2016 of which 189,112 were mothers and 29,705 were fathers. The majority, 125,840, had just one child. This means that 1 in 4 families with children in Ireland is a one parent family. But family supports and services have not responded to sufficiently to this increased diversity.

One parent families have the highest poverty and deprivation rates of all household types, which explains why SVP sees so many of these families struggling. The 2012 reforms of the One Parent Family Payment did not consider the additional challenges of parenting alone or the systemic barriers to employment such as the lack of childcare and affordable housing. As a result, poverty increased significantly as a result of the cuts and more families were pushed into deeper and more persistent poverty. The lone parents we help are doing one of the most difficult jobs of all – that of raising children on a low income on their own. Even the smallest of tasks, such as the school run, is all the more difficult when you are parenting alone or even in co-parenting relationships.

Today, many children and parents living in one parent families still experience negative stereotyping about their family form.

SVP must continue to challenge unjust policies and highlight the real-life experiences of children and parents living on low incomes, and ensure that their voices are heard.

In this edition, you can read extracts from our annual pre-budget submission, which outlines a number of incremental changes that will assist families in paving a pathway out of poverty. Access to education, good quality childcare, affordable and adequate housing, and decent employment opportunities that fit with the realities of everyday family life are just some of the issues that need to be addressed.

Irish family life has changed, but such change brings a richer tapestry of family life that should be acknowledged and celebrated. As Vincentians, we work every day with a variety of family types and always in the spirit of respect, compassion, and acceptance. Irrespective of family structure, we want to empower and support parents to be able to give children the best possible start to life.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kieran Stafford'.

Kieran Stafford
National President



detached

Conference Member, Galway

Yvonne is a very kind and generous person, a volunteer with a local Conference. Over the past few years, the Conference is meeting more and more homeless families. Each week, she and co-volunteers visit the families. Parents with young children living in one room in a local B&B or Hotel. Each story is different; some had been served notice on their old accommodation as their landlords wanted to sell, others evicted due to rent arrears.

You might say, *"isn't it great?"* *"Haven't they a roof over their heads"*. This is true, they are warm and have shelter - but it's not a home. They have no cooking facilities in their rooms, no fridges, nowhere to wash their clothes. Breakfast is not provided in a lot of accommodation. Their Mums/Dads cannot make a sandwich for their school lunches. They cannot even make up a baby's bottle. The kids have nowhere to play or do their homework. There is no privacy. It's transient accommodation, to say the least. The families don't know from one week to the next where they will be. One mother said to Yvonne that she told her children she won the Hotel stay in a raffle. How sad is that!

Yvonne is concerned about the families, especially the children. What toll is this having on them? How will this affect them developmentally in the future? What about their education? They are accommodated miles from their schools. Their schools are probably not even aware of what's going on. The parents are probably too embarrassed to tell the Teachers what's causing absenteeism. The children are losing out on so much. There is no normality in their lives. Everyone is cramped into one room. The Hotels do not want them to use their facilities or to mingle with other guests. The parents feel that they have let down their partners and families, that they have failed to provide for them. The lack of adequate interim and permanent accommodation is causing unknown stress and mental health issues.

Yvonne finds it hard to disengage from these visits. She goes home to her own cosy house, where there is full, and plenty while these families are struggling, enduring this homelessness. Yvonne tries to put the homeless families to the back of her mind until the next week, but they are always niggling there.

She recently met a neighbour who had travelled to California on his holidays. What intrigued him was how the Californians seem to accept homelessness on their streets. They appear to ignore it and go on with their everyday lives. Yvonne thought to herself. *"Well! Aren't we the same in Ireland, we are ignoring our homeless too"*.

In the media, homelessness is seen as a Dublin problem only. Well, it's not! Communities are not even aware that it is an issue in their own hometowns. Our homeless are trying to go about their daily lives, anonymously, privately, without drawing attention to themselves. They don't want themselves or their children to be put in the spotlight. They just want a home.

Deep down Yvonne cannot forget those children. She tries to remain detached.

"Detached" she thinks *"- a detached or semi-detached...isn't that the solution."*

We seriously need to ask ourselves. What can be done? Who has the vision? How can we resolve this? We need action now.

Think of our 3000+ homeless children.



Urgent action needed to address hidden homelessness

*By Jennifer Thompson
Social Policy Development Officer*

On almost a daily basis, there is a new article in the paper or on the news, or report published, highlighting the scale of the housing and homelessness emergency that grips our country. Often when we first think of homelessness, it is the image of a person sleeping rough that comes to mind. However, most of those that are homeless come from the private rented sector.

Homeless statistics are at a record high as Government initiatives aimed at tackling the crisis have failed to stem the tide of people into homelessness, curb rent increases or build enough social and affordable housing. Almost 100 hotels / B&Bs continue to be used to provide emergency accommodation a year after a commitment was made to cease their use.

On first having to leave a home, households often have no choice but to rely on support networks of families and friends in order to maintain a roof over their heads. Temporarily accommodated, their living situation is precarious and unsustainable. These families and individuals go largely unnoticed, and despite the fact that they have no home, are residing in temporary accommodation and experience many of the same challenges faced by those living in emergency accommodation, the hidden homeless are not counted by government and don't qualify for many support services. Too many families are being forced into such situations of hidden homelessness. Emergency accommodation is overflowing, and when people present to their Local Authority, they are often asked if they have anywhere else they can stay.

While living with grandparents, or a family friend can initially be seen as a novelty, an adventure, it often isn't long however, before the stress and strain of living in overcrowded accommodation on both the family and the host take their toll. Lack of space to store belongings, increased financial pressure on the host household, and the uncertainty of not knowing when, or if, a house may become available, all take their toll.

In May, SVP joined Barnardos, Focus Ireland, and Simon Communities in Ireland to call for urgent action to address hidden homelessness, raising concerns about the thousands of individuals, families and children who are experiencing hidden homelessness.

Thousands of children and families are currently experiencing hidden homelessness because they have nowhere else to go. This experience profoundly affects a child's social, emotional and physical development. There is no space to play or do homework, children often have to share beds with siblings or parents so there is a lack of privacy or personal space. These children are failing to meet their developmental milestones and falling behind in school. The uncertainty of where they'll live and seeing the stress experienced by their parents leaves them worried and anxious for their future.



There is an urgent need for enhanced supports for households that are at clear and imminent risk of homelessness, to rethink how people in these circumstances can be supported to avoid homeless accommodation and establish more sustainable homes. If the State is serious about doing more to prevent people from becoming homeless and work towards everyone having a place to call home, a range of preventative supports are needed to reach out to these individuals and families in crisis. We need to move away from the heavy reliance on the private sector for the provision of social housing and ensure a greater focus on affordability.

Addressing hidden homelessness is central to prevent the constant rise in the numbers becoming homeless. From what SVP members are consistently seeing across the country, it is clear that the cost of inaction, and failure to address the growing issue of hidden homeless, will have much greater and longer-term impacts and costs on families and for wider society.





DUBLIN, IRELAND

WORLD MEETING of FAMILIES

21-26 AUGUST 2018

The World Meeting of Families will take place in 2018 in Dublin in August. Held every three years, the World Meeting of Families is the world's largest Catholic gathering of families and is a celebration of family life and of the Catholic Church's commitment to support families.

Pope Francis has chosen *The Gospel of the Family: Joy for the World* as the theme for the ninth World Meeting of Families, which will take place in Dublin on 22 – 26 August 2018.

Pope Francis will arrive in Dublin on Saturday, 25 August, and will take part in the 'Festival of Families' in Croke Park. The Festival of Families is the faith-based cultural concert of the World Meeting of Families six-day programme. The next day, Sunday 26 August, Pope Francis will be the chief celebrant at Holy Mass in the Phoenix Park and this liturgy will bring to a conclusion the World Meeting of Families 2018.

Archbishop Eamon Martin said, "It is my hope that families in every parish in the country will be able to participate in the preparation for the World Meeting, and that many families will take part in the various events being planned for late summer 2018. The World Meeting provides the perfect context for us to rediscover the vocation and mission of the family in the life of the Church and in Irish society.

Supporting families is one of the most important aspects of the mission of the Church. As a priest and bishop I have come to know and admire the wonderful work of many individuals and groups who are involved in family support and ministry here in Ireland. The World Meeting provides an opportunity to affirm their work and to inspire new initiatives to



sustain the family as a source of joy, hope and cohesion in the Church and in society.

Of course, as Pope Francis reminds us often, *“no family is perfect and every family has its struggles and wounds. The World Meeting of Families in Dublin will be a success if it helps us to celebrate and support family life whilst encouraging us to reach out in love to families who are overwhelmed by the challenges and pressures of everyday living.”*

The World Meeting Of Families during August 2018 will consist of catechesis, liturgies, and gestures of solidarity, exhibitions, cultural events and musical performances around the city. At its heart it will have the following four key elements:

1. A National Opening of World Meeting of Families on 21 August will take place simultaneously in each of the 26 dioceses on the island of Ireland;

2. From 22 to 24 August, a three-day Pastoral Congress will be hosted in the RDS and this will include a joyful and reflective programme of workshops, talks and discussions centered on the WMOF theme. This Congress will also offer an

engaging programme which includes faith and fun activities for young people and children;

3. A Festival of Families will be held in Croke Park on Saturday 25 August at which Pope Francis will attend. This will involve a cultural concert within a prayerful and joyful atmosphere to include personal stories of faith to be shared by families representing the five continents; and,

4. On Sunday 26 August Holy Mass for WMOF2018 will be celebrated by Pope Francis in the Phoenix Park involving hundreds of thousands of pilgrims from Ireland and from around the world.

The World Meeting of Families was first celebrated in Rome in 1994. Since then Meetings have been hosted in Rio de Janeiro (1997); Rome (2000); Manila (2003); Valencia (2006); Mexico City (2009); Milan (2012); Philadelphia (2015); and now Dublin (2018). The principal events of the World Meeting of Families 2018 will be held in Dublin but events will also take place in other centres around Ireland.



A Life Long Influence

by Larry Tuomey

Does experience as a young member of the Society help to form ones thinking on social issues and influence one's response to these issues in later life? Three former Presidents of Ireland - Eamon DeValera, Sean T O Ceallaigh and Mary McAleese- all members of Youth Conferences at one time - certainly thought so and had spoken about the positive influence their Society experience had on their thinking. Sean T, for example, has written that as Minister for Local Government in the 1930s his experience as a young member visiting the tenements in inner city Dublin shaped the major programme of social housing for which he was responsible.

An example from the sphere of economic and social development, is Brendan O Regan, the former Chairman of Shannon Development whom Mary McAleese has described as *"a true visionary who leaves a legacy that permeates throughout all levels of economic, social and cultural life in Ireland."*

In a recently published biography of Brendan O Regan, (Irish Academic Press), the author, Brian O Connell, describes the work of the school Conference in Blackrock College (of which O Regan became Secretary in his final year in 1935 when Fr. John Charles McQuaid was college President)

"Visiting the poor in their own homes was a special object of the Society... and O Regan's group in Blackrock College paid weekly visits to Emmet Square, a development of labourers houses not far from the school, where they had three families under their care. They also visited Linden Convalescent Home and, in cooperation with members of the Catholic Seamanship Institute, met with merchant sailors on ships in Dublin Port."

It is interesting to speculate that this early contact with people in need may have influenced O Regan's later career, which was devoted to creatively generating sustainable employment. O Regan established Ireland's first industrial estate at Shannon; attracted export orientated industries; created a Newtown; founded Ireland's first hotel management college; developed the first "duty-free" business at Shannon Airport. In his later years,

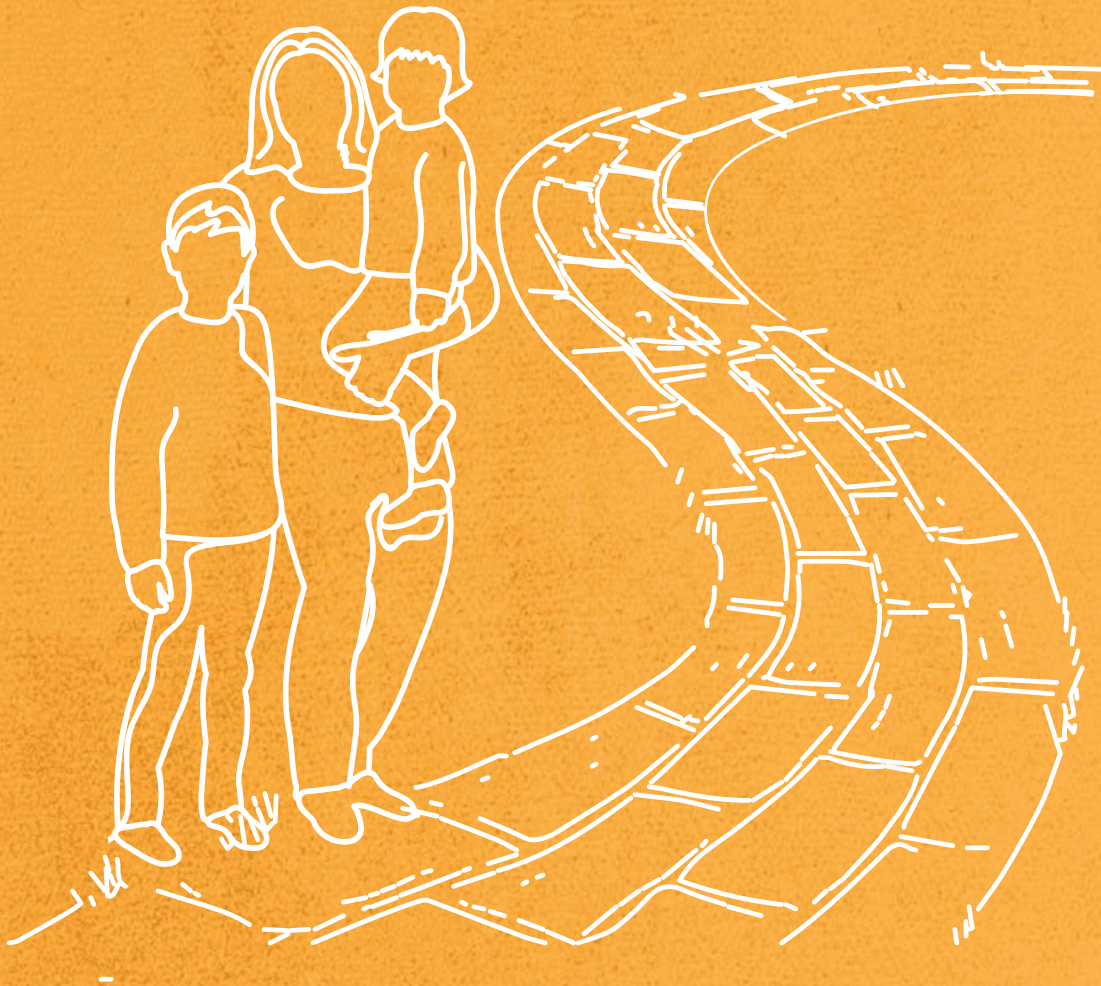
O Regan worked tirelessly for reconciliation and social justice, establishing three peace organisations, including Cooperation Ireland.

In O Connell's biography, O Regan's daughter, Carmel, remembers something that her father had learnt from his social work that she believes guided his thinking on the development of Shannon

"He was involved in the Vincent de Paul (in Ennis), and he would do the church collections and stuff like that but I remember him telling me that he began to realise very quickly that just getting money for people and giving them handouts wasn't going to help the country and that what was needed was more fundamental. So, I think his whole move towards bringing industry into Shannon.... came from realising that handouts weren't going to make the difference."

It's not often that we are privileged to get a glimpse of what drives people who make a real difference in the life of their community and country. In Brian O Connells biography we see in Brendan O Regan someone did just that and whose experience in the Society both as a young man and later influenced his actions for the common good.

Paving a Pathway out of Poverty



A blueprint for an equal society

Kieran Stafford, SVP National President



With austerity no longer featuring in news headlines, it is easy to forget that there are still thousands of people who continue to struggle on limited incomes. Particularly stark is that compared to 2008, 70,000 more children are growing up in poverty and are missing out on childhood experiences others take for granted. Every week we meet families caught in a poverty trap and struggling to afford basics. In 2017, one in three of the 130,000 calls to SVP for help were related to food poverty. Our experience shows that when times are tough, food is typically what families cut back. Rising housing costs mean this is increasingly the case.

SVP know from our visits that it's not possible for anyone to have a chance in life unless they first have a secure, safe home. State investment in social housing always pays dividend by sup-

porting citizens to work or study and bring up their children in a secure environment. But the situation is not improving. As I write this, there are currently 5,989 adults and 3,755 children homeless. We constantly are engaging with people who just want a home. Many people we meet, including those living in emergency accommodation, are working but cannot afford private rents.

We also know that education can break the cycle of poverty. But if children don't have the materials they need to learn, or they can't take part in activities like their friends, this negatively influence their experience of school. If we want all children to reach their potential, school costs must stop being a barrier to participation. At the same time, we need to start investing much earlier. Before children from disadvantaged backgrounds even start school, they have already fallen so far behind their peers, that it is almost impossible to make up the lost ground. For those who defy the odds and get the results they need, college may still be out of the question due to costs.

"I am asking that you look after people who have too many needs and not enough rights – people who demand with reason a greater say in public affairs, freedom from poverty, access to education and security in employment."
Blessed Frederic Ozanam

Irish society must not accept that poverty or inequality is acceptable. It is a basic human right to live with dignity, but poverty takes away that right. Our submission is a blueprint for an equal society, promised by so many in authority, and if implemented, would positively change many lives.

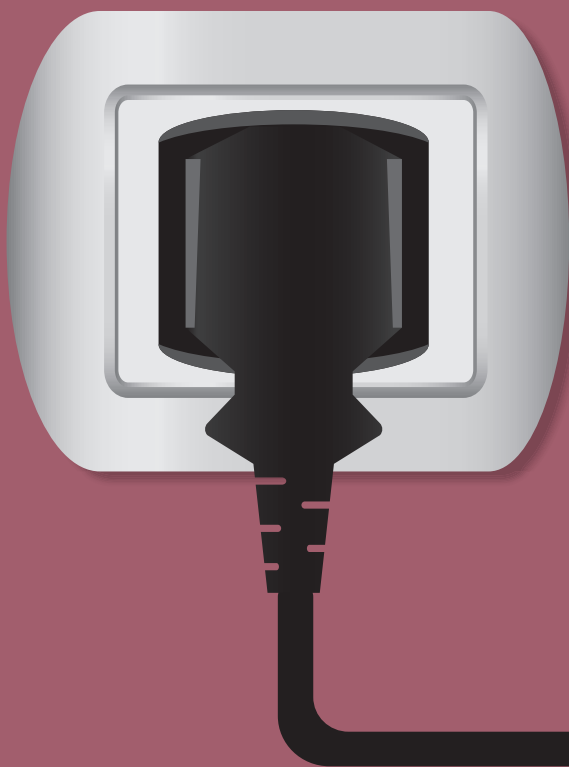
THE PERVASIVE IMPACT OF POVERTY



130,000 calls for assistance

SVP's Response

 €12.5m on food	 €5.1m on direct financial support to households	 €4.3m on fuel & electricity
 €3.7m on education	 €1m on clothing & furniture	 €0.6m on holidays & outings



Certainty and efficiency in the face of increasing energy costs

*By Jennifer Thompson
Social Policy Development Officer*

The last nine months has witnessed unusual and severe weather events, with warnings issued in relation to hurricanes, storms, and most recently, hot weather. What has become clear, is that changing weather patterns mean that the winter season is no longer a neat set period.

According to the latest Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC), 48% of people living in consistent poverty went without heating at some stage in the last 12 months due to cost and 29% were unable to afford to keep their house adequately warm.

SVP continue to address the needs of families in energy poverty by providing advice and financial assistance. The Society is an active on-the-ground advocate for affordable energy and energy efficiency initiatives. Recent weather events have served as a stark reminder of the stress many households continue to face over being able to meet their utility costs, a reality that SVP members know all too well.

When considering the Public Service Obligation (PSO) levy, standing charge and VAT, the uncontrollable related costs of the average electricity bill accounts for 37% in urban areas. For rural areas, this increases to 39%. The PSO levy alone has increased by more than 231% over the last five years.

Increasing energy costs are a particular concern considering a report by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) which found that after a decade of decline, the typical amount of energy used in Irish homes is again on the rise. Between 2005 and 2016, electricity use in households increased by 5%.

As weather patterns become more unpredictable, it is important to future proof support and provide assurance for energy poor, vulnerable customers. This will be particularly important in light of increasing wholesale prices, which has resulted in nearly all energy suppliers increasing their costs over the last six months. Energy costs have seen an increase of 7.6% in the 12 months to May 2018, with an average increase in energy costs of 24.2% since 2010.

Clearly more needs to be done to improve the energy efficiency of the housing stock. SVP welcomed the announcement made by Minister Naughten in March 2018 that the standard measures available under the Warmer Home Scheme are being expanded, allowing for deeper retrofit measures. Such measures broaden the number of homes eligible to receive works, and will help to deliver greater energy savings. A review of other relevant European subsidy schemes has identified that energy consultants can increase awareness and confidence of government schemes.

Many of the households that approach SVP for support are from the private rental sector. This sector has a higher proportion of E, F and G Building Energy Ratings (BERs) than either local authority or owner-occupied homes. With upward pressure on rents in Ireland over a number of years, there is less incentive for landlords to improve the energy efficiency of rental properties. Given the expansion of the private rental sector, Government intervention to support the implementation, and monitoring, of minimum standards for the rental sector will be vital if vulnerable tenants are to be assured of energy efficient homes and protected against health implications and energy poverty.

With 1 in 4 households living in energy poverty, SVP present a number of initiatives in the area of energy in its recent Pre-Budget Submission. Additional arrangements are needed for low-income households in need of extra fuel assistance in the event of adverse weather patterns. To avoid the uncertainty experienced by energy poor customers during recent storms, the Government should introduce a new Cold Weather Payment scheme that would provide a guaranteed extra one-week payment in the event of extreme cold weather. The rate of Fuel Allowance should also be increased to bring it back to 2010 levels. Uptake of energy schemes can be maximised by investing in more appropriate and tailored dissemination and outreach initiatives and campaigns towards those households in energy poverty. And considering the growing rental sector, it is crucial that the Government make available the evaluation and consultation paper on energy efficiency standards in the rental sector.

The above, if introduced by Government would help realise significant improvements and alleviate the stress faced by thousands of low income, energy poor households.



Reassessment of housing policy needed in Budget 2019

By Jennifer Thompson
Social Policy Development Officer

There are many, complex reasons behind why an individual or family comes to leave, or lose, their home. SVP members are receiving a growing number of requests for assistance from families in emergency accommodation, but increasingly from households who have received notices to quit, or are facing rent hikes that they are simply not in a position to make. As can be imagined, this is a time of immense shock, stress and uncertainty.

The past twelve months have been marked by further economic growth, falling unemployment and continued job creation. However, the last year has also seen the price of housing and rent continue to spiral, becoming increasingly out of reach for those on low and median incomes.

It is over 4 years since the Convention on the Constitution favoured changes to the Constitution to include the right to housing. Over the intervening years, the number of households becoming homeless or having to rely on support networks to take them in, has reached unprecedented levels and far exceeded predictions even just two years ago by housing experts.

SVP members gain a unique insight into the lives of people by meeting them in their homes and listening to their stories. We know that it is not possible for anyone to have an equal chance in life unless they first have a secure, safe home. Many of us are unfortunately all too aware of the statistics. But as always, real families, children and individuals lie behind these figures, facing the daily stress and strain, as well as the practical challenges that come with living in overcrowded conditions, being located at a distance from school, work and communities, living out of bags, while dealing with the uncertainty of not knowing how long this will last for, and when moving into a secure home of their own might be realised.

“A mother and her children are staying in a friend’s spare room. She knows this is only a temporary measure as her friend did not want to see them stuck. But they were living

out of bags. There is no room for clothes or toys. At night, she finds it hard to settle her youngest daughter. She is actively applying for jobs to help get back on her feet.” (SVP member)

Of particular concern is the precariousness that tenants continue to find themselves in, including those who entered the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) scheme as a way out of homelessness but who are once again becoming homeless as their HAP tenancy breaks down for a variety of reasons, including unsustainable top ups and unrealistic HAP limits.

An experience of homelessness at a young age has the potential to have life-long consequences. Young people who are homeless require a range of specialist policy and service responses. Recent proposals from several banks to sell off distressed mortgages to so-called ‘vulture funds’, is likely to result in a dramatic increase in the number of home repossessions. The sale of such loans does not however, represent the sole solution to the problem. It is also clear that we need to be intervening at a much earlier stage, particularly for vulnerable groups – and before people become homeless.

An urgent reassessment of the Government’s housing policy is needed, including prioritising the scale-up of the delivery of social and affordable housing while protecting and expanding financing options to ensure this can be realised, enhancing prevention supports to enable people to remain in their homes, ensuring the provision of adequate resources and capacity for Local Authorities and the Residential Tenancies Board to conduct inspections - all with the ultimate aim of ensuring that everyone has the right to an affordable, secure and adequate home.

From what SVP members are consistently seeing across the country, it is clear that the cost of inaction, and failure to address the homeless emergency, will have much greater and longer-term impacts and costs on families and for wider society.



Budget 2019:

Investing in Ireland's Future - Our Children

by *Marcella Stakem*,
SVP Social Policy Development Officer

The Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Katherine Zappone in 2017 stated, "Our vision is for Ireland to be one of the best small countries in the world in which to grow up and raise a family". Access to affordable and quality early years care and education is identified in the national policy framework for children and young people 2014-2020, Better Outcomes Brighter Future as central to achieving this vision. However, Ireland currently spends 0.14% of GNI* on pre-primary education compared to an OECD average which has increased from 0.5% to 0.8% of GDP. It is in this somewhat contractionary context that we highlight SVP's policy recommendations for Budget 2019.

What a child experiences during the early years sets a critical foundation for the entire life course. Our three recommendations highlighted in our pre-budget submission, if implemented would have life-long positive outcomes for children and their families.

The Department of Children and Youth Affairs need to ensure that, not only do they make significant progress in implementing the Affordable Childcare Scheme but the ongoing difficulties within the childcare sector are addressed. The Affordable Childcare Scheme must be informed by an independent review of the cost of providing quality childcare in private and community settings. Following that, state subsidies need to be sufficient to ensure children receive a quality service from their childcare setting.

The quality of childcare has been shown to be a key factor in child development outcomes. As an organisation working with marginalised and vulnerable families to empower them to reach their potential this is significant. The quality of services for young children lies partly in environmental characteristics (e.g. space, areas of interest) but above all quality lies in the interactions between children and staff. Effective early years educators nurture children's learning and development in a number of ways by valuing children's ideas and thoughts and extending their opportunities to learn. Factors that affect the ability of staff to engage responsively and appropriately with young children include their professional training, the ratio of adults to children, the curriculum and the continuity of staff. At the moment in Ireland, half of all early years staff work part-time compared to a national rate of 21.5%, and a substantial proportion are

only employed for 38 weeks per year. This contributes to a high staff turnover within the sector; 28.2% compared to a national turnover rate of 13%.

Many children are looked after in the informal and largely unregulated childminding sector where there is no oversight or inspection of quality for children. Nearly 50,000 pre-school children are cared for by childminders every day, but approximately only 122 childminders out of an estimated 22,000 are registered with TUSLA. Therefore only those 122 childminders are subject to inspection and can sign up to the Affordable Childcare Scheme which allows for more affordable childcare to parents. Childminders are an invaluable support to many families SVP support and they too need to feel supported in their work. The recommendations from the Childminding Working Group must be implemented which would ensure all involved in the childminding sector are spending time in a safe, secure and holistic environment.

The purpose of prevention and early intervention is to give the best start in life by providing services and supports to children and their families. Early intervention has also been found to be economically efficient. Research on early intervention programmes has demonstrated high rates of return such that the individual and societal benefits accrued from intervening early typically outweigh the costs. Implementation of the High Scope curriculum in the US resulted in higher levels of education, em-



Highlighting the imbalance in our education system:

What can Budget 2019 do?

*by Marcella Stakem,
SVP Social Policy Development Officer*

SVP members know of children that will spend their brief childhood years feeling different and isolated. Different and isolated because they do not have the correct sized uniform or they cannot go on the school trip because their parents cannot afford the costs involved. This, not surprisingly leads to under-achievement in the education system for marginalised and vulnerable individuals and groups in Irish society, many of whom SVP members support:

We know one mother in extreme financial difficulty who went to a post-primary school with €200 (out of the combined weekly Social Welfare payment of €360 for herself, her husband and her daughter) towards her daughter's trip which cost €640. They lived on meagre fare for the week and paid no bills, but there was a deadline for the payment of the money!
SVP volunteer North East

Despite Ireland having the youngest population in Europe, with 28.2% of the population aged 0-19, Ireland spends relatively limited amounts on education. Ireland's total expenditure on education is 11.1% of overall Government spend, which is just above the EU average of 10.2% but this fact does not take in to account our young population. What this has meant is schools have continued to experience funding shortfalls and have had to rely on parent's 'voluntary' contributions to meet day-to-day running costs. These costs and others associated with schooling, such as clothing, books, equipment, stationary and transport, obviously bear most heavily on families with limited incomes.

Based on SVP members working with disadvantaged families, SVP recommends the following in budget 2019: End the 'voluntary' contribution system in non-fee paying primary and secondary schools and restore the capitation grants to schools back to 2010 levels. Increase funding for the School Meals Programme to improve access to adequate nutrition for low-income students, and extend the medical card waiver to students eligible for concessionary school transport. These recommendations, while not going to transform the educational experience of already disadvantaged students, would go some way to levelling the playing field between advantaged and disadvantaged students.

Education should be made readily available to all who wish to participate in it. It should not only be available to a privileged few, young in age or financially capable. Adults in particular who decide to return to education do so for varied reasons be they career orientated, personal or both. Often, adults have overcome substantial barriers from personal and social perspectives to make profound changes in their own lives via the medium of education. Despite a number of policy responses and access initiatives during the period of economic prosperity, there remains a continued divide between those who access education and those who do not.

In Budget 2019 SVP propose a number of recommendations, which if undertaken would ensure that more disadvantaged students could access third level and further education and participate fully.

Many lone parents who seek support from SVP have expressed their interest in attending higher education on a part-time basis but the fact they cannot receive the SUSI grant is a major barrier. This creates unfairness and unequal participation of some groups in education. Given the anomaly that exists between full-time students and part-time students in respect of tuition fees, we believe that the student SUSI grant should be provided for part-time students to engage in education and learning. In the 2016/17 academic year, the Higher Education Authority statistics show that only 9% of full-time undergraduate new entrants were mature. This clearly demonstrates the need to consider expanding the SUSI grant to part-time learners to create a fairer education system, a system that is more reflective of the different needs that exist within society.

We are still seeing the effects of the economic downturn in the education system. Many of the cuts made to the third level and further education system have disproportionately affected low-income families. It is now time in budget 2019 to address these inequalities. SVP contend that that cost of education allowance should be extended to all participants who are eligible for the Back to Education Allowance and the adjacent grant distance should be restored to 24km.

Under-achievement in school can have profound consequences for children and adults in later life, not only in terms of economic uncertainty but also in terms of well-being, health, self-esteem and participation in family and community life. A whole of Government approach is needed to address and prevent many of the barriers faced by marginalised groups accessing and participating in education. Budget 2019 can address many of these barriers, however, by decreasing the actual costs of participation in education in primary, second level and third & further education and investing accordingly.



Why we need an adequate social protection floor?



*by Tricia Keilthy,
Acting Head of
Social Justice*

No one could argue that Irish public services are severely underfunded. The costs of childcare, housing, school supplies, further and higher education, utilities, healthcare, and transport dramatically impact on people's ability to get out and stay out of poverty. It is clear that Ireland needs to invest significantly in these critical areas if we want to tackle inequality and social exclusion.

However, social welfare schemes are still an essential form of support for households and are the last resort for those in difficult circumstances. Importantly, the impact of investment in services won't be felt for many years, and that's why we believe it is vital that all social welfare payments are "adequate" so that people do not continue to be trapped in poverty.

Recent research published by the VPSJ showed that Budget 2018 increases in social welfare helped some households afford a Minimum Essential Standard of Living (MESL). Yet, over 70% of households in their analysis do not have a sufficient income to meet a MESL. One parent families, people living in rural areas, single adults, and households with older children are at the highest risk of income inadequacy. For example, income for a one parent family with two children and living in a rural area is €153 euro short of what they need to cover basic needs.

Every week members see the reality behind these statistics. Income inadequacy means having to choose between whether to pay the rent, the electricity bill, or pay for food and the daily worry about whether the car will break down or someone

will get sick, and then deciding which necessity will have to be sacrificed to pay for an unexpected bill.

In 2017, one in three of the 130,000 calls to SVP for help were related to food poverty. Members experience shows that when times are tough, food is typically what families cut back. In our pre-budget submission this year we are asking that social welfare rates are benchmarked at a level that is sufficient enough to lift people out of poverty and provide them with a Minimum Essential Standard of Living. We also have detailed proposals on how the Government can improve income supports which will enable lone parents to take up education and employment, recognise the costs associated with raising an older child and increase income supports for older people living alone and people living in direct provision. We are also asking to restore the unjust cuts to the rate of Jobseekers Allowance for young people aged under 26, which contributed to the rate of deprivation increasing twice as fast among this group than other adults of working age during the crisis.

SVP believe that an adequate social welfare floor provides people with stability in their lives and supports them to be active in society. It can protect the unemployed and older people from undue hardship, value caring work and support those who cannot access employment due to an illness or disability and ultimately fulfils the fundamental human right of living with dignity.

SVP Finances & new Online Treasurers System Agresso

As summer approaches, we are well on the way with Audit 2017. It is a massive undertaking, probably being one of the largest financial consolidations in the country. I would like to thank members for the work being done to keep SVP's financial records up to date in each conference throughout the year and for getting the Annual Return back to the regional offices in a timely manner.

SVP's Annual Financial Statement is an important document for the society for all kinds of reasons as you can imagine. It is used to inform our members and donors about the finances of the Society. It is a key part of our compliance with the Charities Act as well as making us compliant with the Rule to 'Keep Proper Books'. Finance reports can be found <https://www.svp.ie/financialreports>. We would encourage you to have a look.

FINANCE gives a graphic highlight of 2016 finance activities

FINANCE SUMMARY gives a one-page detailed account of 2016.

FINANCE REPORT which has full reports for years 2016 back to 2009.

The last couple of years have been very busy with the introduction of our new Online Treasurers System Agresso. We are very excited to report that at the end of 2017 we had 970 conference activities live. This number leaves us in a good position to comply with Charities Regulation Act while also helping us to plan our finances better. It has been a fantastic achievement for the membership and the staff involved.

The system continues to be developed. We have some very useful reports for Conferences to run throughout the year. For example, a Conference can now see their current financial position alongside their last year's figures. They can also see the breakdown by month. The report is called the Finance report

by Month. Training manuals and training videos are available which show how to run reports & use the system.

Finally, if you would like to know more about the Online Treasurers system or get help using it, you can email agresso.support@svp.ie or contact Treasurers Support in the regional offices.

Region	Name	Email
South West	Mary Callaghan	mary.callaghan@svp.ie
East	Stephen Friel	stephen.friel@svp.ie
Midwest	Caroline Manifold	caroline.manifold@svp.ie
Northern Ireland	Ciaran Liggett	ciaran.liggett@svpni.co.uk
North East & Midlands	Anthony Nixon	Anthony.Nixon@svp.ie
South East	Siobhan Heffernan	Siobhan.Heffernan@svp.ie
West	Frank Leonard	frank.leonard@svp.ie

Again, we would like to thank everybody for their work during the year, and would like to wish the Consolidation team, members & staff, well in bringing Audit 2017 to a close.

Consolidation involves reports from over 1 200 Conferences from over 900 Treasurers, and is consolidated with the work completed by 8 regional office and the National Office, audited by Deloitte and approved for publication by the Trustees of the Society.



SVP International President Visits Ireland



On arrival at Vincent's Shop, Church Street, Roscrea, The International President with Members, Volunteers and Staff outside the shop.

SVP International President Visits the Midwest Region

The Society of St Vincent de Paul Midwest extended a warm Irish welcome to Renato Lima de Oliveria, the International President, to Roscrea, Nenagh, Limerick and Clonmel on Monday June 25th last. Mr. de Oliveria, himself an SVP Conference Member, hails from Brazilia, the capital of Brazil and was elected International President in 2017.

Arriving in Roscrea on Monday morning, he was welcomed by John Lupton, Midwest Regional President, Conty Cunningham, Roscrea Conference President, Tony Brennan, Acting Regional Treasurer, Michelle Putti, Midwest Regional Co-ordinator and

Conference Members and shop Staff and Volunteers. He attended an open meeting of the Conference where he heard details of the work that engages local Member; in assisting families and individuals in need. Canon Jane Galbraith, Church of Ireland welcomed him to Roscrea and was generous in her praise of the work carried out by SVP and her long association with the Society. Rev Tom Kingston, from the Methodist Church was equally generous in his praise as he thanked the International President for visiting the town. The International President shared details of his own background and involvement with the Society and the work of the International Council and was



Being presented with a Tipperary Jersey

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The Order Fulfilment Centre in Nenagh is a sorting depot for donations to the 20 Vincent's Shops in the Region. This initiative is overseen by the Midwest Regional Vice President Pat Carroll and the Members of St. Christopher's Conference of behalf of the Midwest Regional Council. Pat extended a warm welcome to Mr. de Oliveria and outlined details of the work undertaken at the Centre and the income generated through the shops which is passed on to the Visitation Conferences to assist those in need in the Midwest Region.

The next port of call for the SVP International President was the Regional Office, Ozanam House, Hartstonge Street, Limerick where Members from across the Region gathered with Regional Office Staff to meet and welcome him. Mr. de Oliveria heard of special works that SVP in the Region undertake including the Drop In Service in Limerick City, Social Housing, Youth work in the secondary schools, the work involved in Twinning with Sierra Leone, and the two hostels for homeless men – in Ennis and Limerick City. A special feature of his visit to Ozanam House was the rededication of the Chapel first dedicated in the late 1880s and used as such until 1919.

The final stop in the tour of the Midwest was Clonmel where there was Mass in St. Oliver Plunkett Church followed by refreshments and the awarding of long service medals to Members from the South Tipperary Area. The National President, Kieran Stafford was on hand with the South Tipperary Area President, Mary Stafford to extend a warm welcome on behalf of the Members and a large crowd turned out for the occasion. It was a great privilege for the Region to be included in the International President's itinerary which also included the North of Ireland and Dublin.



Presidents at all levels of the Society – Mary Stafford, South Tipperary Area President, John Lupton, Midwest Regional President, Kieran Stafford, National President and Renato Lima De Oliveria, International President



A warm Drogheda welcome to International President-General of the St. Vincent De Paul

It must have felt more like his native Brazil than a town in Ireland for President-General of the St. Vincent De Paul, Br Renato Lima de Oliveira, who was given a warm Drogheda welcome on his recent visit to the town.

The reason for his visit was the official opening of the new Vincent's 'Living' Shop on George's Street in the heart of the town. It was a warm June day, and the sun beamed down on the considerable crowd, which had gathered for this special occasion.

The National President Kieran Stafford accompanied Br Renato, on this their first visit to the town. Both were captivated by the rapid success of our new shop, considering we had only moved into this our new premises at the end of May. Charity shops were a foreign concept to Br. Renato as he explained they don't have them in Brazil.

In March last we received just two months notice to vacate the building where we previously ran our thriving Vincents 'Living' shop for the past four years. A monumental challenge was in hand to find new premises and to relocate in such a short timeframe, all without loss of revenue.

To see the impressive, well-appointed shop filled with the finest furniture, clothing and household items, you would ever imagine was the result of a mammoth effort by Staff, Tus/CE participants and Volunteers - to get those doors open in just a matter of a few weeks. With the new store fully stocked and ready for business, people were queuing on the day of opening to buy the goods on display.

The pride and ownership that the shop managers and all who work in retail clearly take with their responsibility is unmistak-



Kieran Stafford SVP, Fr Colm O Mahony, Monsignor James Carroll, Fr Phil Gaffney, Cllr Frank Godfrey Mayor of Drogheda, Joe Sweeney SVP Area President and Renato Lima de Oliveira International SVP President cutting the ribbon at the opening of the new Vincent's shop at the North Road Drogheda - Photo Jimmy Weldon.

able. The way they share the ethos of SVP with customers and visitors alike, has contributed to the expansion of the shops, and they have won numerous awards locally, nationally and internationally.

"It was an incredible honour to welcome Br Renato and Br. Kieran to see our new shop, something which gave great recognition to the work of the St Francis Conference," said Michael Grogan, incoming Area President.

"In the Drogheda Area revenue from the Vincent's shops has increased threefold over the past five years, and 'Living' has been a substantial part of that growth, so it was imperative for us to get up and running again as soon as possible."

Revenue from the shops is now the main source of funding for the Visitation Conferences in Drogheda, overtaking public donations in recent years. *"There is such a strong connection between the shops, the Conferences, and getting help to people who are in need,"* explains Michael. *"Increased revenue means increased help to those who need it."*

The Living concept was developed initially to help young and migrant families to acquire good condition household goods at a reasonable price. Their needs were for beds, wardrobes, household furniture, and clothing - all of which were necessary for a basic standard of living. However, today our customers

range from those who are in need of household furniture or clothes, to those browsing for a book or hunting for that bargain to take home.

If there's one thing St Vincent de Paul understands, it's responding to a challenge in the face of hardship. *"We want to reach out to those people who are in need and encourage them to ask for help. People really don't have to go without, but we can't help you if you don't ask."*

Our Visitation Conferences provide support in many forms, some of which are food, fuel and education. We also help to bridge the gap for expenses like funeral bills and medical bills. All of this support relies on donations from the local community, which in Drogheda, is clearly a force to be reckoned with.

In his final words, Michael expressed his interest in Bro. Renato's circular of January 31st, 2018 and his recommendation of the establishment of the International General Ombudsman, and also the great similarity there is throughout SVP worldwide. He urged consideration to be given to the establishment of an Ombudsman at National Level for many of the same reasons as outlined in the circular.

Before Br. Renato left for his onward journey, Joe Sweeney, Area President was delighted to present his honoured guest with a souvenir book on the town, but sadly there wasn't time to visit



International President, Renato Lima-de-Oliveira, presented long service medals to 23 SVP members from all over Northern Ireland.

International St Vincent de Paul President visits Northern Region for first time

International President of the Society of St Vincent de Paul (SVP), Renato Lima-de-Oliveira, who is from Brazil, recently visited Northern Ireland and Ireland for the first time.

As part of his three-day visit, which included travelling to meet those based in the SVP regions of Clonmel, Dublin and Drogheda, Renato also visited the Vincent's shop on Mill Street, Newry and the SVP drop-in Centre which supports homeless people and refugees, also in the County Down town.

Brendan O'Neill, Regional President for SVP, commented: "We were honoured to welcome Renato Lima-de-Oliveira to our Region. He is an inspiration to all those in SVP, having joined his local SVP Conference at the age of 16 and going on to hold various posts in the Society, culminating in his installation as International President in 2016.

"In addition to his six year tenure in this role, Renato is also an Assistant Professor of Management at the Asia School of Business."

Brendan added: "As well as meeting volunteers in Newry, we took the opportunity to celebrate his first visit with a Mass in St Malachy's in Alfred Street, Belfast. Following Mass, Renato presented 23 SVP members from across Northern Ireland with long-service medals, with 20 volunteers receiving 25 years' service medals and three volunteers being presented with 50 years' service medals.

"We very much hope that this will be the beginning of a long and fulfilling relationship between Renato and our Region and look forward to welcoming him again in the future when all of our members will extend an equally warm welcome as they did on this occasion."

In addition to 150 SVP members, the Mass was concelebrated by Bishop Noel Treanor; Fr Perry Gildea, SVP Regional Spiritual Advisor and Fr Michael McGinnity, Parish Priest at St Malachy's, Belfast.

SVP is a volunteer-led organisation and teams work tirelessly, 365 days a year, to provide assistance to all sections of the community across Northern Ireland.

Through Conferences (groups), SVP works with those in need, irrespective of creed, ethnic or social backgrounds, health, gender or political opinions, in local areas. Around 1800 SVP volunteers carry out activities for the charity, including paying weekly visits to around 2,500 people and run crèches, breakfast clubs and the network of 33 Vincent's shops across the province.

Anyone interested in supporting SVP by volunteering, please get in touch on 028 9035 1561 or email info@svpni.co.uk.

Nazareth Shelter Zimbabwe Complete:

SVP North East & Midlands Region Twinning Project Update

*by Michael Kenny, Twinning Officer,
North East & Midlands Region.*

Twinning (links between SVP regions in Ireland and SVP in countries in Africa) is a principal of Vincentian work since 1958. Yet it is still relatively unknown in SVP circles in Ireland. This article shows you one project.

Mary Toole was a Vincentian with a special vision. Mary was a member of the St Oliver's Navan conference and Regional Twinning Officer for what was, at that time, the North East (NE) Region [now North East & Midlands (NE&M) Region]. Many still grieve Mary's her sudden death in January 2013.

Mary, along with Michael O'Keefe, Regional President until his death (August 2013), had a vision for a project in Zimbabwe. They undertook, along with the SVP National Council of Zimbabwe, to renovate a home for older destitute people in the town of Chinhoyi, North West of Harare, Zimbabwe. It is unusual for an older person to be left alone or without family support in East African culture but some people, through the vagaries of life, find themselves older and without support. There is no old age pension or social protection from the state in Zimbabwe or most developing countries; so what can an older person do. Chinhoyi Dioceses through the local Caritas organisation provides a respite home for the older destitute with places for 40 residents. With very little funding over time the building has deteriorated. Mary and Michael with SVP Zimbabwe took on to rehabilitate the building.

Over the last 3 years, and with modest funding from the NE&M Region and the SVP National Twinning fund, the SVP Zimbabwe National Council and the Chinhoyi SVP conference have renovated the building. The roof and kitchen were repaired, rooms renovated, services installed, security improved, and facilities such as a cooker and washing machine added. You will see pictures of outer-building repairs, wardrobes being built, and a washing machine and cooker installed attached.

The SVP Zimbabwe National Council and the Chinhoyi SVP conference have invited SVP National and Regional Leaders from Ireland to join them for a dedication and opening of the Nazareth Shelter in August 18th next – a time for celebration and rededication of a quality building for the older destitute in the East Africa Region.

The North East & Midlands Regional Council at their June meeting welcomed the completion of the project. Liam Reilly, outgoing NE&M President, said "Mary Toole and Michael O'Keefe would be very proud". A dedication plaque to Mary and Michael in Irish and Shona (A Zimbabwean language) will be unveiled in the building compound at the opening.

This project could not have been completed without the twinning partnership of SVP Ireland with SVP Zimbabwe, and will be a practical Vincentian service to the very poor - a lasting memory.





The National Member Training Development and Recruitment Committee

Hello, my name is Matt Quinlan and I've been a member of SVP since 2001. In the last year I have been a member of and currently chair the National Member Training Development and Recruitment Committee (NMTDR). This committee was established by National President, Kieran Stafford in 2017 to continue developing the Society's ability to recruit, train and develop its members. The committee has seven members, Ben Doyle (SE), Marita Moore (NE & Mid), Ger Mawn (NW), Rose McGowan (E) and Celine Martin and Mary Davis from National Office. Additionally, Regional Representatives from each Region (Frankie McClure (N), Hannah Clarke (NE & Mid), Mary Kiely (E), Mary Quigley (SE), Rose Adair (SW), Paddy Carroll (MW), and Bernie Carroll (W) meet with the NMTDR every 3 months to discuss training matters in each Region, problems arising and identifying possible solutions. Bernie Carroll has written a short piece for this edition of the Bulletin, to share an insight into her role as Regional Representative in West Region.

Consultation

In the spirit of the Rule of the Society, consultation has been a major concern of the NMTDR Committee and we have tried to reach out to as many trainers as possible for their views on the challenges facing training and development in the Society and how best these challenges might be addressed. Two Trainer Consultation Days have been held in National Office so far (in November 2017 and May 2018) with another planned for October/November 2018. These days have been open to all train-

ers and offer each trainer an opportunity to shape the direction of training and member development within the Society. We have opened up an email address through which the Committee can be directly contacted by any member about any training or development matters (volunteertraining@svp.ie) and through which suggestions about improvement can be made.

Developments

We will be running a Train the Trainer course in September and October of this year to increase trainer numbers throughout the Society. We also plan to conduct another such course in 2019. Work is ongoing at the moment to develop an online training option which means that new members can complete training online in the areas of History, Poverty and Structure. A face to face option for these modules will also be retained to ensure maximum coverage of new volunteers. Visitation training will be conducted in person only. This will ensure that new members have the appropriate practical and interpersonal skills for their volunteer role. While we cannot go into detail here on all the ongoing work, in the coming weeks we hope to reopen a dedicated Training and Development webpage on the SVP website (www.svp.ie) where trainers and members alike can view updates on training, development and recruitment matters. Additionally we hope to keep you informed through regular articles in SVP Bulletin. Please feel free to get in touch via volunteertraining@svp.ie if you have any suggestions or comments. Thank you!

The Regional Training Representative View



Bernadette Carroll
West Region Regional Representative

The dictionary says training is the process of learning skills you need for a particular job or activity.

To members who do not feel that training is necessary I say it is absolutely essential, we seldom take on a new occupation in life without receiving some form of training. Volunteering is no different. The work of St Vincent De Paul hasn't changed but the needs of the people we meet in our volunteering has changed considerably in recent years so we take part in training to equip ourselves with the tools we need to help us deal with the requests we get. Training gives us the confidence to carry out our duties and assurance that we are doing it right.

I am a member of PiusX Conference Kiltimagh Co Mayo and the Regional Representative for the West Region. I believe we all need to update our skills and utilize our gifts; every volunteer has a place within the Society. There are eight (8) regions in SVP Ireland and each one has a Member Support Officer; get to know this person in your region, they are your go-to person for any issues or ideas you have as a member. Unfortunately, the need for our Society is as great now as it was when it was founded in 1833 so our work is ongoing and training must be an ongoing process. My wish for all of our members is that you will have the support you need for whatever part you play in the Society.

Do you have Experience in Training? Join SVP Trainers!

SVP Member Training is looking for Members with Training experience to join our Volunteer Training Team across Ireland. SVP Trainers deliver induction training to new volunteers, as well as occasional training for officer roles. The team is looking for enthusiastic and interested Members with a background in or experience of delivering training to join the team and help support new Members in carrying out effective and impactful Visitation.

Members should have 2 years' experience with a Visitation Conference. Full training and support is provided.

Why not be part of supporting the next generation of Members to make a difference in their community? Contact volunteertraining@svp.ie or your Regional Representative for more information.



65 YEARS OF SERVICE TO OTHERS MICHAEL WALL

In late 1953, a young man by the name of Michael Wall joined the Society school Conference at Colaiste Mhuire, Parnell Square, Dublin 1. The Conference visited families living in tenements in Maryborough and Sean McDermot Street.

After leaving school two years later, Michael was invited by Michael Kelly to join St Gaul's Parish Conference in Milltown. Together both Michael's along with others (all men) set up the Conference of St Christopher on 5th February 1961, up to this time all members of the Society were male. At this stage, Michael Wall was elected Conference secretary, and their duties involved visiting male patients in several hospitals including St Mary's, Phoenix Park, St Vincent's on the green, Hume Street and St Ann's on Northbrook Road.

In 1982 he became a founder member of the parish Conference St Attracta's, Meadowbrook, Dundrum and was later elected as President in 1983 and again in 2015 where he remains Conference President and an active member.

Michael served as Area President for South Dublin in 1985, now known as Rathdown Area Council and arranged for the meetings to be held at St John of God's hospital where he was an employee.

In 1989 Michael played a leading role in setting up Fred's Fashions charity shop now Vincent's in Dundrum and with Michael's encouragement a shops council was set up by the Dublin Regional Council in 1991. From there he was appointed Director

of Services by the Shop Council in 1993 to take charge of the Clothing and Salvage Bureau then located at Ozanam House on Mountjoy Square and over the next ten years further developed the shops and opened up a number of Fred's Fashion shops around Dublin. Michael retired from that position in 2003 having made tremendous progress in growing revenue through the charity shops for the Society.

During his role as Director of Services, Michael noted that Ozanam House had become not fit for purpose for carrying out the shops work so made a proposal to the shops council that a more suitable premises be sought and in 1996 acquired a large garage premises at Chapelizod to rent from the Linder's family to house their furniture department. "A fortuitous move" states Michael. Jane Bergin who was his assistant at the time knew that they were looking for a new premise and suggested that they look at Eason's warehouses, which were for sale at Sean McDermot Street/Railway Street, Corporation Street, a large city block. A proposal was drafted to purchase the Eason's building and submitted to the shops' council and property committee which was accepted and on November 8th, 1997 the new facility was opened by then Taoiseach Mr Bertie Ahern and blessed by Bishop Fiachra O Ceallaigh. This premise became known as the Ozanam Centre.

The 1990's saw a major focus on the redevelopment of the North inner city by Dublin City Council. The Linder's family mentioned previously had developed a large block on the corner of Talbot Street and James Joyce Street (formally Corporation Street). They also owned a derelict site on James Joyce Street/Railway Street, which they intended to rebuild. The Society of St Vincent de Paul owned the last block of property and Michael proposed the rebuilding of the Ozanam Centre to the SVP property committee with the approval of the Dublin shops council.

Larry Tuomey now chairman of the property committee sought expression of interest from developers in the project. The plans were forwarded to the developers, and finally, the project was awarded to a company owned by the Linders Family. After agreement Linders cleared the site and built a block of apartments and a new building for SVP to become known as SVP House on Sean McDermot Street and it is now the offices and

warehouse of the Dublin shops Council, the offices of the East region and national headquarters of the Society of St Vincent de Paul in Ireland.

As a dedicated member of the Society, one memory that stands out for Michael and a considerable honour was to attend the beatification of Blessed Frederic Ozanam by Pope John Paul II at Notre Dame Cathedral, Paris in 1997.

It seems Michael's service to those in need seems endless. "On my behalf, I have had great satisfaction with my membership of the Society of St Vincent de Paul, and it seems one could say I was in the right place at the right time", laughs Michael. He retired as Director of Services with the Dublin shops council on his 65th birthday on 13th June 2003 with the opening of a new shop in Blessington, Co. Wicklow and received his Blessed Frederic Medal (50 years long service) that same year.

Other Activities

1. Minister of the Eucharist
2. Life member of Pioneer Total Abstinence Association
3. Member of the Diocesan Committee for the Canonisation of Venerable Matt Talbot
4. Founder member of the Irish Charity Shops Association and honorary life president
5. The founder and first president of Dundrum Credit Union (now Capital Credit Union)
6. Trustee of Simpsons Hospital, Dundrum
7. And most importantly married to Ann (nee Kenny) since June 1962 with six amazing children and 12 wonderful grandchildren.

'How We Shop' in Simple Steps



"Retail space.... is never neutral... It is a bundle of cues, messages and suggestions, which communicate to the shopper.... It does create mood, activate intentions and generally affect customer reactions" (Markin, Lillis and Narayana, 1976).

Our Trading Context

The Irish consumer has more shopping choices than ever before. An increasing number of consumers are choosing to shop online, which means that the purchase can now happen at any time of the day or night, without the customer ever having to leave the house!

For those customers who prefer the physical activity of visiting a shop, they also face more choices and will now select a shop based on any combination of at least 17 criteria. See diagram below.



SVP is now competing in an environment where the customer derives at least as much pleasure from the experience of shopping as from the product or service that has been purchased. In this 'Experience Economy' the retailer needs to deliver a memorable service that stands out from the crowd, providing a product that is 'fit for purpose' is no longer enough, the experience needs to be memorable.

A study of environmental psychology in retail tells us that shops are sending out a constant stream of messages and signals about the premises, products and people that the

customer perceives and then responds to, by either approaching or avoiding the shop.

The three steps in the process are based on the Stimulus - Organism - Response (SOR) model, first introduced by Mehrabian and Russell.

The role of atmospherics

The signals and messages that are sent from shops all contribute to the overall atmosphere in that shop can be divided into 5 categories:

Human signals, merchandise signals, premises signals, ambient signals including heat, light, sights sounds and smells and semiotic signs including branding, signs and themes. SVP has developed the atmospherics within its shops to immerse the customer.

How the customer processes signals from the shop Assuming that the shopper is not too distracted (heavy cognitive load) or has a specific purpose in mind when shopping, (shopping motive), the customer perceives shop signals and messages aesthetically, interprets and evaluates the information to determine how the environment might affect them emotionally or physically and then decides whether to approval the shop or avoid it.

Emotionally the customer reacts to the shop with pleasure, displeasure, arousal, distress or boredom. Ideally SVP shops will generate excitement in our customers. Excitement is experienced when the customer experiences pleasure and arousal in equal measure. Overstimulation, overcrowding or over design can lead to distress whilst under stimulation can lead to boredom. (The Circumplex model, Russell and Pratt, 1980).

It is also worth remembering that research has demonstrated that a positive impression of one aspect of a shop will positively influence the customer's perception of the shop generally. This creates multiple opportunities for SVP to exceed the expectations of our valued customers and provides a useful framework to understand how customers shop. (Cornelius. Natter and Faure, 2009).

How SVP uses atmospherics
"SVP has developed the atmospherics within its shops to immerse the customer in a Vincentian experience that cannot be replicated by the competition. Across Ireland, Vincent's teams serve up a unique blend of value, quality and choice in an environment that also heavily promotes Vincentian identity, social justice, friendship and self sufficiency at the heart of our local communities. In an economy that values the shopping experience as much as the product on sale, the key to our success is finding the perfect blend for each individual shop". (McGilloway , 2018, ☺).

'HOW WE SHOP' IN SIMPLE STEPS

How shop design and atmosphere influence the thoughts and actions of the Vincent's customer.

(Based on the Stimulus - Organism - Response model from studies in Environmental Psychology, Mehrabian and Russell).

Step 1 - Shop Signals (Stimulus)

Shops send out a constant stream of signals, cues and messages from 60 physical and non physical sources located all around the shop.

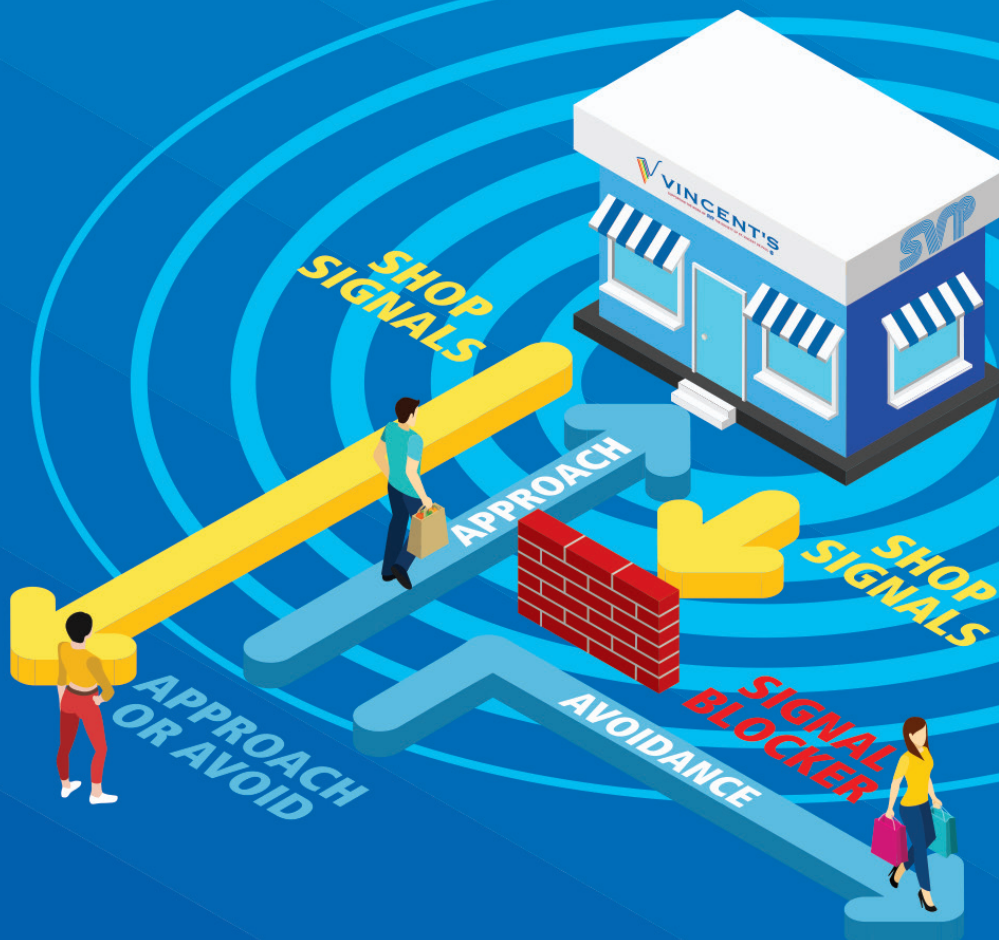
Step 2 - Customer Perception (Organism)

The target customer perceives and processes the oncoming signals. The effect of the signals can be moderated by signal blockers such as shopping motive (buy v browse) or level of preoccupation (cognitive load).

Step 3 - Customer Behaviour (Response)

Having interpreted, evaluated and reacted emotionally to the shop signals, the customer either approaches or avoids the shop.

The Trading Context: *In our 'experience focused' economy, the shopping experience has become at least as important as the product or service purchased.*



The Role of Atmospheric in Vincent's



"Atmospherics is an effort to design buying environments to produce specific emotional effects in the buyer that enhance his purchase probability" (Kotler, 1973)



"Retail space...is never neutral... It is a bundle of cues, messages and suggestions which communicate to the shopper... It does create mood, activate intentions and generally affect customer reactions" (Markin, Lillis and Narayana, 1976).



The SOR Model

In environmental psychology, the shop acts as a stimulus in the Stimulus - Organism - Response model (Mehrabian & Russell, 1977) emitting constant signals from almost 60 variables in 5 main categories towards the customer (organism).

Vincent's extends the 'Hand of Friendship' to our new communities

The National Retail Management team has just launched a colorful and easy-to-use guide in 12 languages for our new communities across Ireland. The guide is entitled "SVP – The Hand of Friendship" and will shortly be available across the national retail network.

The guide is divided into 6 short sections and is available in English, Irish, Arabic, Chinese, Filipino, French, Latvian, Lithuanian, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian and Russian.

The guide addresses:

- Who are we?
- What you can expect from a member of SVP.
- How we work
- What we can provide
- What do we do?
- How to contact us.

National Retail Development Manager, Dermot McGilloway said "Our Vincent's charity shops are ambassadors for SVP in the local community. We have a duty to reach out to people of all backgrounds who may need help. By extending the hand of friendship in 12 languages, to our visitors, customers, donors and volunteers, we want to ensure that every single member of our community has equal access to the support and friendship available from SVP".

For further information, please contact your local Regional Retail Manager or contact Dermot McGilloway at demot.mcgilloway@svp.ie.

How the customer processes signals from the shop

AESTHETIC
The customer perceives up to 60 signals / cues from a shop environment (stimulus)

COGNITIVE
The customer (the organism) interprets & evaluates the experience

PHYSIOLOGICAL & AFFECTIVE*
The customer evaluates any impact on physical comfort
* Emotionally the customer reacts to the shop with pleasure, displeasure, arousal, distress or boredom

SHOP SIGNALS →

→ **APPROACH OR AVOID**
In response we either approach or avoid the shop or product

Approach Or Avoid

Emotionally the customer reacts to the shop with pleasure, displeasure, arousal, distress, or boredom. Ideally our shop will generate excitement in the customer. Overstimulation, overcrowding or over design can lead to distress, under stimulation can lead to boredom.
(The Circumplex Model, Russell & Pratt, 1980)

The Spillover Effect
Empirical research has demonstrated that a positive impression of one aspect of a shop will positively influence the customer's perception of the shop generally.
(Cornelius, Natter & Faure, 2009)

Vincent's The Society of St Vincent De Paul 91/92 Sean McDermott Street, Dublin 1 T: 01 8848200 W: www.svp.ie





Social Action Superstars

Young SVP East Region Youth Day 2018



"I tell myself...that the mission of a young person in society is very serious and very important..I rejoice at being born at an epoch when perhaps I shall have to do much good"- Blessed Frederic Ozanam

This year has been an exciting one for Young SVP in the East Region. We have had the privilege to work with hundreds of young people (and their teachers/leaders) in a range of different settings. Each young person is unique and brings something special and creative to Young SVP. Young people have taken time to learn about social justice, to consider the needs in their communities and worked together to make sure their actions were effective. All of this learning, research and planning has resulted in a wonderful array of Young SVP projects.

Befriending Projects

This year Young SVP members have; formed an intergenerational choir; visited residents of an Alzheimer's unit, held events for local Senior Citizens, organised a children's party and visited retired nuns. They have held a sports tournament to get to know other students in their school better; arranged a brass band afternoon for members of the local community and invited 6th class students to their school to help them get ready to make the transition to secondary school. They have truly given, as Frederic Ozanam asked, of their time and their talents.

Education Projects

Recognising the importance of education, Young SVP members have this year; set up a study buddy club in their school, created and delivered a mental health workshop to their fellow students and held an SVP Awareness week in school.

Direct Aid Projects

To support the work of SVP and address social justice issues they feel strongly about, Young SVP members have; made food hampers, held a bake sale to raise funds for people experiencing homelessness, held a Christmas tree sale, organised clothes appeals, created a winter wonderland themed fundraising event, taken part in the Giving Tree and participated in a sponsored run.

Research and Action Projects

Having learned that the third pillar of SVP's Mission Statement is Working for Social Justice, Young SVP members have been involved in researching and raising awareness about social justice issues. One group of students chose to research social justice issues they were concerned by and then deliver presentations to the rest of their school to raise awareness. One Young SVP Conference held a poster and poetry campaign to raise awareness about homelessness.

These are just some of the actions taken by young people in the East Region this year. A big thank you and well done to all the young people, teachers and schools who took part in the Young SVP programme and supported the work of SVP this year! Young SVP East Region Youth Day 2018

"Justice is a fixed star which human societies try to follow from uncertain orbits. It can be seen from different points of view, but justice itself remains unchanged"- Blessed Frederic Ozanam

On the 12th of April 2018, 200 young people, their teachers and SVP members gathered together for the East Region Youth Day. This was an opportunity to acknowledge the hard

work and dedication of the young people involved in Young SVP. It was a chance for them to meet young people from other schools and to share ideas. The theme for the day was 'Social Action Superstars' as Frederic Ozanam who said "Justice is a fixed star" and also to acknowledge all the ways in which Young SVP members have been social action superstars this year! The young people set up their own interactive stands, took part in fun activities, learned more about SVP, listened to speakers, gave presentations, took part in workshops, received certificates of achievement and visited the reflection space. In the afternoon there was a talk from the key note speaker Joanne O'Riordan. This was a fantastic experience for the attendees and Joanne received a standing ovation. The Youth Day was a fun and positive celebration and learning opportunity. Thank you to everyone who attended and supported the event and made the day a success!

At the Youth Day we asked the young people to share their thoughts on being part of Young SVP:

- "I learned things I never knew and was given a chance to help people. I don't feel helpless anymore".
- "Young SVP made a difference to my self-esteem".
- "Young SVP gave me a greater understanding of social justice"
- "Young SVP is very encouraging, involving and welcoming".
- "Being part of our has assisted me in finding myself and creating a passion within me".
- "Young SVP gave me an opportunity to put my values into practice".

Young SVP in the East Region at Third Level

"I wish that all young people might unite in head and heart...and that there be formed, throughout the whole country, a vast and generous association for the relief of the people"- Blessed Frederic Ozanam

This year the young people engaged with SVP at third-level have demonstrated remarkable motivation, enthusiasm, and innovation in their work.

Trinity College Dublin

This Conference works with children and young people through; homework clubs, drama clubs, art clubs and other afterschool clubs and weekend activities. Each week, Trinity SVP volunteers work with around 100 children across each of their activities. They also run Friends of the Elderly, Puppet Pals with Temple Street Children's Hospital and various social clubs. They have a Social Justice Club, where their members researched homelessness and developed campaigning strategies. They are further engaged with the homelessness crisis through their Street Outreach activity and working in the DePaul shelter at Little Britain Street.

University College Dublin

UCD SVP run Street Outreach to people sleeping on the street and where this is welcome, to spend some time talking with the person, inform them of services available and supply a hot drink and some food. The Conference has strong links with DePaul and the hostels at Brú and Little Britain Street. They ran a Homeless Week across campus with panel talks, debates, sleep-outs and fundraisers.

UCD SVP are also engaged with flat decorating and gardening. They also ran monthly Social Justice Club meetings, discussing issues around racism, homelessness, poverty, Direct Provision, and many more. They ran a Social Justice Week this year on the theme of climate justice. They also ran a Christmas toy appeal called the 'Generositree', during which toys were donated for children living in emergency accommodation.

Dublin City University

This year DCU SVP worked with Localise, a youth volunteering and development group, and supplied volunteers for their activities. DCU SVP ran a 24-hr sleep-out for SVP homeless services. The college named them Best Society of the Week for the event.

Dublin Institute of Technology

The DIT Conference took part in the annual DIT Christmas Appeal, during which DIT societies raised money for the charities chosen by the college – this year SVP, Jigsaw, and the Irish Underwater Search and Recovery Unit. DIT Conference ran a Social Justice week, which included a workshop, movie night and a clothes drive and a pop-up shop on campus with the Mature Student Society.

Maynooth University

This year the MU SVP Conference held a number of fundraisers – a Giving Tree and food drive (for their local Conference), a 24hr sponsored walk, a quiz night and movie night. The funds raised were used as a Welfare Fund for students.

Awards and Commendations

Trinity College Dublin

Best Large Society 2018 – Trinity College Central Societies Committee
Best Overall Society 2018 – Trinity College Central Societies Committee

University College Dublin

President's Award – Daniel Kiernan, UCD SVP Vice-Chair 2017/18

Dublin Institute of Technology

Student Volunteer Leading the Way Award – Deirdre Wray, DIT SVP Chair 2017/18

Dublin City University

Students' Union Society of the Week – DCU SVP





Hello! My name is Sylvia Doherty and I recently joined the Young SVP team. I am based in Ozanam House Galway and from September 2018, as a Youth Development Officer, I will cover schools in Galway, Mayo and Roscommon. It is a big region but I am looking forward to the challenge!

I have worked in secondary schools for over 5 years as both a careers adviser and teacher; I am a great believer that education may be the ticket that allows people to surpass the cycle of poverty. I will join SVP members in voicing the importance of helping marginalised groups or vulnerable people to access education. Already I have received lots of questions about the SVP Education and Training Bursary from both teachers and students, all of whom are grateful and reassured by the support from SVP (see Education Grants, SVP website).

I had the pleasure of attending the most recent Youth Day in the west whereby young SVP members gathered to exhibit their projects and advocate on behalf of others on issues that the group felt passionately about. It was notable that we can learn a lot from each other! Students were rewarded with certificates of recognition for their hard work and there was a common consensus that youth conferences within our secondary schools are invaluable for both young people and the wider community. I enjoy listening to young people's opinions on social and policy issues relating to poverty/income distribution; healthcare; inequality; social justice; education; well-being; public services; human rights, etc. Over the past two months with SVP, I have been learning about SVP's work including visitation, fundraising projects, Vincent shops, social housing projects, older people's daycentre and resource centres.

Both SVP staff and members have been very welcoming. As there is loads to learn, I am still in the process of familiarising

myself with all the good work that takes place across the region. As someone who is new to SVP, it's inspiring to be around those working to help improve the quality of life for others. The most enjoyable part of my job is meeting and getting to know young people. I also get great satisfaction seeing a project through to the end so I look forward to supporting young people through projects relating to befriending, direct aid, education or social justice action. I look forward to delivering the Young SVP programme in the new academic year and believe it's going to be an exciting learning curve.

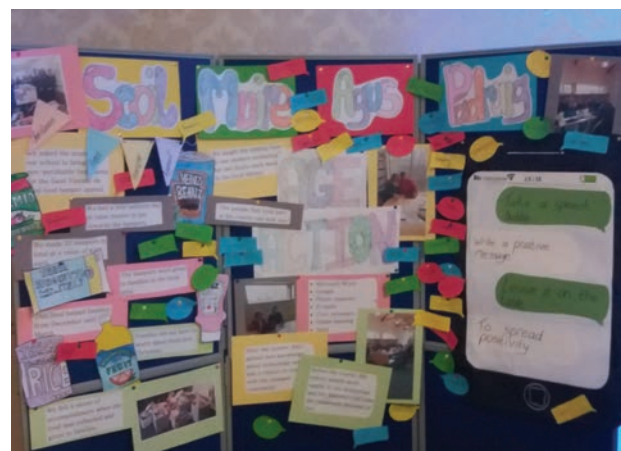
Reflections from students undertaking Young SVP programme

"Definitely get involved with Young SVP, don't hold back, you'll be surprised at your ability to be innovative and creative. Mostly have fun as volunteering should be... Oh, don't forget to research and be prepared to get involved in a variety of activities!"
Conference member, Presentation College, Tuam

"I learned to be grateful for what we have not what we want"
Conference member, Presentation College, Tuam

"In particular, I learned a lot about the traumatising stories of the Syrian families. I had the chance to think of others and what their lives may be like, it's important we don't take things for granted, I realised during some of the workshops what may or may not constitute as a privilege".
Conference member, Presentation College, Tuam

"There are so many reasons to join and continue with the Young SVP programme, it's surprisingly fun as I got to know some people in my school better. I think we all enjoyed the active participation of



the Conference. It kind of felt like we all had our own active role to play in our area”.

Conference member, Coláiste na Coiribe

“The biggest challenge we faced as a group was relaying our ideas to teachers and staff and getting people on-board outside of the Conference. We knew what we wanted to achieve but putting plans into action took team work and dedication”.

Conference member, Coláiste na Coiribe

“We launched the first Young SVP programme in our school, we’ve been involved in different activities including visiting the elderly, making/selling Easter flower baskets, card making, choreography/dance sessions and fundraising (bag packing) at a supermarket, etc. Most of us volunteered to get involved and contribute to our community”.

Conference member, Abbey Community College, Boyle

West Region Youth Day - Young SVP

On the 18th April 2018 over 200 young people and teachers from 12 schools in the west of Ireland attended the Youth Day in Castlebar. The event was co-ordinated and facilitated by Helen Ralph, Youth Development Officer for Galway, Mayo and Roscommon.

On the day, we heard from long standing SVP members, ??? and Marion Flynn. Both were inspirational and encouraging of youth participation in SVP related projects. Padraic Gavin spoke enthusiastically about the positive impact of volunteering giving an insight to his commitment for over 60 years. Marion Flynn spoke about the SVP Education and Training Bursary which aims to eliminate barriers to accessing further education and training (see Education Grants, SVP website). A special effort was made to allow students to interact and showcase their projects that demonstrated their hard work and commitment. Students stood proudly by their displays of various befriending, education, direct aid and social justice projects. Each stall represented numerous student led projects, the core ethos of the Young SVP Programme. Many students took part in short Q & A panels, speaking about experience gained and skills developed because of volunteering through their school conference. Each stall had prepared interactive activities and encouraged student participation in various activities.



We also heard from Marcella Stakem, representing the SVP Social Justice department in Dublin. Marcella reminded us of the challenges/barriers that many people face daily. The Young SVP programme was highlighted as a way for young people to raise awareness and take action to tackle some of the issues in our society.

During lunch we enjoyed a delicious meal in the event venue, Breaffy House Hotel, and had great fun making personalised badges and decorating tote bags. Students voiced their appreciation for prizes won and time given throughout the day to meet young people from other schools.

The day will also be remembered for the talented performances from Sacred Heart School, Westport; Abbey Community College, Boyle and Clarin College, Athenry. Indeed, the day finished with a lively performance and many students and teachers still singing as they were going out the door!

Thank you to all those who attended and your participation on the Young SVP Programme. Thank you for your great sense of humour and enthusiasm on the day!

Sylvia Doherty, Youth Development Officer, is a new addition to the Young SVP team, located in Galway, Sylvia will work with Helen Ralph to visit and support schools in the west through their journey on the Young SVP Programme.

E: sylvia.doherty@svp.ie



New SVP Youth Development Officer Encourages Young People to Get Involved in Local Communities

Clare Gilmore, from Kircubbin, was recently appointed as Youth Development Officer for St Vincent de Paul in Northern Ireland (SVP). She is passionate about the work of the Society and inspiring young people to get involved in bettering their local communities.

Clare explains: *"Young people are instrumental in making change happen and it is through them that the future can be better; I love working with them, and their enthusiasm energises me!"*

"I studied theology and ministry at university and have been a school chaplain, school retreat leader, as well as working for the diocese. I have been a volunteer with SVP for many years, and when the role of Youth Development Officer came up, I felt that it would be a perfect fit for me, marrying together my faith, passion and skills."

"I want to spread the word about Young SVP as far and as wide as possible and to try to get as many young people involved across schools. I hope to link many of the active SVP youth groups in local schools with adult SVP conferences so that they are acutely aware of the specific needs in their local areas. We have found, historically, that many young people who are engaged in school social justice projects on behalf of Young SVP often go on to volunteer for the Society in adult life."

"As we are entering exam season, I am introducing myself to schools and raising awareness of the work of Young SVP. We will be organising a major youth day in September, and I hope that many of the schools we are engaged with will come along. SVP have run this event in the past, and it has been a very successful, enlightening day; both for the young people and for our teams and volunteers."

Ideas and inspiration that come from the pupils are second to none, and this can plant seeds of passion which come to fruition over time."

Clare, who describes herself as 'easy-going, fun and reliable', is looking forward to the challenge of watering these seeds, and nurturing the next generation of SVP volunteers.

She adds: *"I stay motivated by prayer and am always myself, which I think young people appreciate. Young people are innately attuned to situations of injustice and desire to make a difference when they see injustice occur. SVP can help them to understand social justice and empower them to explore different perspectives and ways in which they can take positive action to address the imbalances in their communities."*

"Young people dream big, and it is very much my role to encourage that as I believe it is this creative power which will improve the lives of others in the future."

In her spare time, Clare enjoys salsa dancing, watching films and socialising with friends. She concludes: *"My role keeps me busy and is not always 9-5, but when I am not working, I relax and hope one day to fulfil my ambition of learning Biblical Hebrew."*

Any school wishing to learn more about Young SVP can contact Clare on 028 9035 1561 or by emailing her at clare.gilmore@svpni.co.uk.

A Huge thank you to the Saint Patrick’s Cathedral Community Grants scheme



As part of the scheme, SVP St Bernard’s Conference was delighted to receive a grant of €2,000 which will be used to support families in the area with their educational needs.

Each year Saint Patrick’s Cathedral, the National Cathedral of the Church of Ireland, distributes the money raised through offertories, collections and candle offerings to charities and community groups working to respond to the various needs within the community.

Pictured acknowledging the grant are Piaras Kelly, President of St Bernard’s Conference and the Reverend Canon Charles Mullen of Saint Patrick’s Cathedral.

Members of St Attracta Conference Meadowbrook, Dundrum

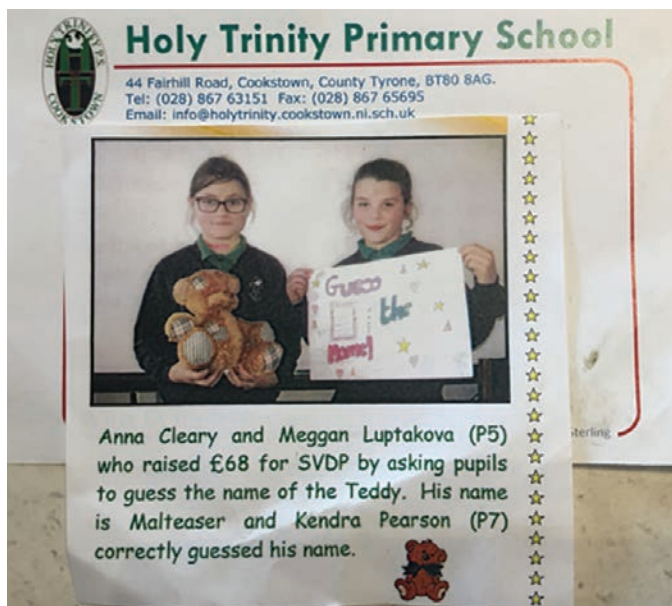


At the recent gathering of South Dublin & Rathdown Area Councils at the Royal Marine Hotel in Dun Laoghaire on Thursday 22 March 2018

Address Conference of St Attracta, Parish Office, 75 Ludford Drive, Ballinteer, Dublin 16

Left to right: Michael Wall, Phylis Verdon, Luan Briscoe, Brenda Carey, Katherine Reilly, Margaret Horan

‘Name the Bear’ for SVP



The Immaculate Conception Conference Cookstown was recently surprised and delighted by an unexpected donation from the local primary school; Holy Trinity.

Every year during Lent, the primary school raise much-needed funds for Trocaire, but this year these two little ladies wanted to raise money especially for their local SVP! They decided upon and carried out their fundraising for their ‘name the bear’ competition! They raised a whopping £68 for SVDP, and we wish to acknowledge and publicly thank Anna Cleary and Meggan Luptakova for their hard work and also thank all pupils who guessed the name of the Teddy.

Well done girls!!!!

St Bernadette's Parish Belfast SVP summer outing



On a gloriously sunny 6th June this year, St Bernadette's SVP Conference Belfast organised a day out for senior members of the parish to visit the Seamus Heaney Centre in Bellaghy in county Derry. Four members of the conference accompanied the group of thirty-two. The bus took approximately an hour to reach Bellaghy, which looked so beautiful in the sunlight that you could readily imagine the influence of this place on the psyche and work of the poet.

On arrival the group were greeted with refreshments in the cafe before embarking on a tour of the centre. The tour guide was excellent and related many anecdotes about the Nobel Laureate and his family. We were then given a hand held piece of equipment which enabled us to listen to the poet reciting his various poems as we read them on our way round the exhibition. The materials were beautifully laid out in chronological order and in a very coherent way. The centre is organised over two levels but with a lift to facilitate those who might have difficulty negotiating the stairs. There was plenty of seating to facilitate visitors and they were well utilised by our group on this warm day.

All too soon it was time to leave the centre to go to the Thatch Inn for lunch. By this time we had worked up an appetite and a delicious and leisurely lunch followed which everyone thoroughly enjoyed.

Afterwards there was time to sit outside and enjoy the gorgeous weather for a while before we headed back for the bus to take us on our return trip to Belfast. After an uneventful journey we arrived back at St Bernadette's Church.

As we used to write in school compositions about a day out; we all arrived home tired but happy!

Sincere thanks to Seamus for 40 years of dedicated service.



Photo is attached; L to R; Deacon Eamon Quinn, Seamus Coyle and Denise McVeigh

The Conference of The Immaculate Conception Cookstown would like to pay tribute to Seamus Coyle on his retirement from our conference, due to ill health.

As a tribute to his dedicated service, the Conference held a very special blessing in their building, where Seamus and other

long-standing members were presented with Vincentian medals. Seamus joined the conference in 1978 and has been an active member during which time he served as President. His kindness won him many friends both with his colleagues and people that he visited and comforted.

He had great insight in forming the SVP ACE Scheme, dedicating many hours with his ACE committee to bring employment to the unemployed in Cookstown and using the manpower to help those who required it in the area. This enterprise enabled The Immaculate Conception conference to purchase their premises with Parish assistance, leading to the set-up of our fantastic flagship centre and shop in Cookstown.

His quiet and non-judgemental manner with families that he visited was an example to us all. He was the quiet sage among us, and he will most certainly be sadly missed from our Wednesday nights' meeting.

We wish to thank Seamus for all his years of service. For his dedication to the society and his Vincentian brothers and sisters. We wish him God's richest blessings, and we extend to his wife Philomena our good wishes and prayers for the future.

A new Vincent's fashion outlet in Banagher

(First published in the Tipperary Tribune 24th May 2018)



The Tullamore Conference of the Society of St Vincent de Paul's new Offaly store on Main Street, Banagher opened officially on Wednesday, May 23rd.

The Banagher shop is a welcome addition to the Vincent's Shops and it, along with shops in Tullamore, Edenderry, Clara and Birr, will bring the number of shops in Offaly to five. The national count of shops now stands at 230 stores in 31 counties making Vincent's the second largest retailer in the country by volume of shops.

The Banagher store, which stocks ladies, gents and children's clothes, as well as handbags, accessories, music and books, has been doing an excellent trade since it opened at the end of March.

"There has been a lot of positive feedback from both members and the store's customers," said Yvonne Corcoran, the senior Volunteer.

The new Banagher shop will ensure a stronger income stream and will be an immense benefit to for the Society integrating other SVP services and will ultimately have a long-term benefit for the Society and those it helps. It'll sell a wide range of reasonably priced clothes, shoes, books and general items and all profits will be used for the benefit of families supported by SVP in the area. The success of the store is dependent on the generosity of its customers and the members of the public who donate items. *"We always welcome good quality donations. However, we can't take electrical goods of any kind."* Yvonne continued.

Despite the much-reported recovery in the national economy, at a local level, SVP Conferences are still busy providing support to the most vulnerable in sections of the community.

Jacqueline Pilkington (Area President) said that although the number of people working has increased in recent years, many families whose breadwinners are on low wages continue to struggle to make ends meet. *"It is important that this cohort, the working poor realise that SVP is there to help them in times of need,"* she said.

The new store's opening hours are 10 am to 5:00 pm (Tuesday to Saturday). If you are interested in Volunteering in the shop for either a morning or afternoon, please contact Yvonne at 0871608301.



Area Gatherings in the South West

by Ellmarie Spillane-Dowd,
Membership Support Officer



The South West Region has been busy holding five Area Gatherings over the past 6 months. The purpose of these gatherings is to bring SVP members together to share and learn from one another; to discuss sample case-studies and to hear from guest speakers. Each gathering had about 25-30 members and they were also a great opportunity to affirm the volunteer spirit of SVP and recognise those who have given long years of service.

We kicked off in February with a joint area gathering of Cork South City West and West City. After discussing some difficult cases and hearing from a Community Welfare Officer the gathering had the lovely opportunity of seeing former National President Mairéad Bushnell receiving her own long-service medal. Mairéad had presented many herself but this was the first time

she was the recipient. As well as long-serving members there were some new members too:

As a new member I found it very informative and engaged. Great night, great charity.

In March we moved on to the Kingdom when the next area gathering was held in Killarney. There was an enthusiastic attendance by members from as far away as Castletownbere





right across to Rathmore. Amongst the topics covered was building links with the Traveller community and solutions to debt issues. The honour fell to Regional President Christy Lynch to present long service medals, some of the members had over 40 years' service! The area team may have their work cut out following this gathering

This was a wonderful informative evening and hope we can do it again sometime.

The next Area Gathering was held in April in Charleville, North Cork with people travelling from all over the area from Kanturk to Mitchestown. In response to hearing the long years of service members had given, one member wrote:

"I was amazed at the amount of years of service given by the volunteers. Perhaps we should now entice young people to join as volunteers."

In May we returned to Kerry where the Area Gathering was held in Tralee, the home town of the Regional President. There was a great turn out and some very lively discussions were had. Members also had the opportunity to thank outgoing Area President, Junior Locke, and again members were awed by the number of years some of the long service recipients had given to SVP.

The case-study exercise was really good. It's always helpful to hear what other Conferences do. It also reminds us of the great work done.

The final area gathering for the 1st part of the year was held in South Kerry, in the delightful O'Donnell House in Killorglin. Members travelled from Caherciveen, Castlemaine and Killorglin for the evening and contributed to informative discussion from

which members garnered new information and additional supports. As one member said of the area gathering:
Found this gathering very enlightening and makes it all seem worthwhile

Throughout the gatherings many topics were discussed, such as housing, debt, money-lending, addiction and education. We all learned a lot from each other and received tips, guidance and advice on how to deal with common problems that many people in need experience. As ever; members enjoyed meeting each other; discussing different topics, catching up with old friends and making some new ones. The Area Gatherings are co-facilitated by area presidents and the member support team. I expect there to be many more in the months ahead!



In Tribute

To Deceased Members of the Society of St.Vincent de Paul

John Costelloe **St.Peter & Paul's Conference, Cappahard, Ennis**

The Conference of St. Peter & Paul's Conference was deeply saddened by the passing of John Costelloe. John joined SVP in 1958 and became a very active visitation member of St.Peter & Paul's Conference, which was the only Conference in Ennis at that time and all male.

John with his foresight saw the need to establish three Conferences in Ennis to cover the increasing population in the town and its environs, as well as a number of other Conferences throughout the County. Having been elected as Conference President in 1980, he introduced a number of changes to SVP's operating practices, such as the admission of females for the first time as Conference members to St. Peter & Paul's Conference. Today there are more female members than male in most of the Visitation Conferences particularly throughout the County and their contribution to the Society in Clare is excellent. That was a most enlightened and progressive approach at the time, which has yielded many dividends.

John will be remembered as a founder member of the SVP Shop and Special Works Conferences and he held dual membership of both Conferences for many years. He also served as Clare Area President, a member of the Mid-West Regional Board and a member of SVP's National Council's Committee on Training. He was a tireless, most efficient and effective organiser and practical activist on behalf of the Society in Clare for 55 years. He displayed considerable talents in working with and motivating other likeminded progressive people to carry out significant projects that have benefitted members of the general public. If ever a man personified the essence of service to others it was John Costelloe.

Our deepest condolences to John's loving wife Breda, sons Vincent, Joe and Declan.

May He Rest In Peace.

Sean Mulqueen **Our Lady of Perpetual Help Conference, Raheen Limerick**

Our Conference and a wide circle of friends were saddened by Sean's death on Feb 13th of this year. Sean was a dedicated member who gave more than generously, of his time to helping those in material and emotional need.

He had great empathy with people who confided and trusted in him.

His wisdom and quiet humour enhanced many a Conference meeting; he could especially get to the core of a problem presented.

In a practical way, Sean from Crecora, proved invaluable, when our Conference work expanded out from urban Limerick to embrace rural areas. Sean's knowledge of people and townlands helped greatly as we struggled to locate places in isolated areas.

We were particularly pleased to have Sean as a friend; this friendship included in time his family circle, - His wife Phyllis, his children, and grandchildren. The family have become prime supporters now of SVP activities, and continue Sean's good work by assisting in the monthly church gate collections for SVP.

We were proud, and very pleased when Sean and Phyllis invited all of us to their Golden Wedding Celebration in 2017.

We extend heartfelt sympathy to Phyllis and all.

We miss Sean - a true gentleman of kindness and great faith.

May he rest in truly deserved peace.



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