

THE SVP BULLETIN

MAGAZINE OF THE SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

SUMMER 2024

The Voice of Social Justice in Ireland

**RENEWING OUR
VINCENTIAN PROMISE**

**IN SOLIDARITY WITH THE
COMMUNITIES WE SERVE.**

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“A single sunbeam is enough
to drive away many shadows.”

– St. Francis of Assisi



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

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SVP – Society of St. Vincent
de Paul Ireland



Saint Vincent de Paul Ireland

Editorial

by Linda O'Connell
Editor



As we pass the midpoint of 2024, it has been a bustling few months with both local and European elections having recently been held. I felt quite proud that, as a country, we didn't succumb to extreme far-right ideologies when casting our votes, despite the surge of hatred and violence seen on online platforms. The rise of national populism is an alarming trend that is geographically widespread, raising concerns about the future, given the precedent from 20th century history. The lesson for me here is that, in these times, it is ever more important to exercise your franchise at every opportunity as apathy plays into the hands of the extremists.

It's easy to feel overwhelmed when you realise you are just one person among nearly 7 million on this island or over 8 billion on the planet. How can your actions or words make a difference when there are so many others to drown you out?

Nevertheless, individual action is the only way to bring about tangible change. Your choices count more than you realise. No matter who you are or what you're trying to achieve, each person has a unique influence that is far from insignificant. You don't need to be loud; simply showing up and making the right choice impacts those around you.

My faith and trust are continually reinforced by the work of SVP and our volunteers, who try to buttress the lives of those who are experiencing difficulties wherever they can. Their actions are a true testament to human compassion. As Mother Teresa said, *"Not all of us can do great things. But we can do small things with great love."*

As an employee of the Society, it might appear that I don't fully grasp what our volunteers go through, but I truly believe I do. I've shared this before, but SVP supported me at a critical time early in my life. I'm convinced that without the friendship and listening ear of the volunteers back then, my life would have taken a different path.

So, when I work to highlight and promote the Society's efforts, it's personal as well as professional for me. In so doing, I am hopeful that we might reach another person just like me and perpetuate this chain reaction of friendship and support.

The Society celebrated its 180th anniversary of serving those in need on April 20th; you can read all about it in Rose McGowan's article inside.

In this edition also, you'll read learn about our Social Housing volunteers, recent activities from our Young SVP Regional Days, how education transformed the life of one young man, and much more. So, in short, one person can make a difference and together we can bring about change.

I hope you enjoy the read.

Linda O'Connell

Rose McGowan

Renewing Our Vincentian Promise

This edition of **The Bulletin** provides a comprehensive report on the Members Day in the Dublin Convention Centre in April to celebrate our 180th anniversary.

Almost 1,000 members, volunteers and staff attended the event.

For those who were unable to attend on the day I hope that the report and the photographs gives you a good flavour of the day.

For me the opportunity to renew our Vincentian Promise alongside the hundreds of members who participated in the Mass of Thanksgiving was an occasion to treasure.

The Renewal of our Vincentian Promises reminds us that by practicing works of mercy we have made a commitment to spread Christ's commandment of love. It emphasises the spirit of love and hope in which we carry out our work. The Vincentian Promise also reminds us of the importance of listening with respect to those who seek our help and to respond to their needs, both spiritual and material.

It then calls on us to help the Society flourish and grow in order to extend the network of charity and social justice to embrace the whole world.

Saturday, April 20th was indeed a proud day for all members as it marked celebrating 180 years of dedicated service in Ireland. It was truly a wonderful experience.

An uplifting element of the day was the participation of so many young people who are part of the Young SVP programme. Their enthusiasm for the Society is infectious. While young people are often referred to as the future, we must recognise they are also the present. Their involvement is crucial, as highlighted by their inspiring contribution on 20th April.

While celebrating 180 years of the Society in Ireland the theme of the day, **Changing Times, Continuing Compassion.** was carefully chosen to reflect the present and future. Compassion is a powerful word, embodying



The Renewal of our Vincentian Promises reminds us that by practicing works of mercy we have made a commitment to spread Christ's commandment of love. It emphasises the spirit of love and hope in which we carry out our work.

Rose McGowan
SVP National President

the essence of our approach. In keeping with our Vincentian Promise we offer compassion and empathy to those in need, addressing their challenges with discretion, confidentiality, and a respectful, non-judgmental attitude.

Having celebrated 180 years of work with pride it is now time to look forward. Our **Journeying Together 2024–2028** programme, now in motion, will serve as our roadmap as we strengthen our organisation in terms of governance, risk, and compliance. Crucially the strategy focuses on securing membership for the future through recruitment, training, and retention.

While adhering to the legal and regulatory considerations introduced by the Charities Regulator, we will continue supporting those in need to the best of our ability, always striving to uphold the reputation of our Society. With 250,000 calls for assistance in 2023, our services are needed now more than ever.

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



Learning the meaning of Respect

by **Michaël McCullagh C.M.**

Listening Heart Ministry to Priests at Knock Shrine



A Lesson from Life

One day walking by my father's side as a nine year old in a large town I blurted out to him, "that man over there is drunk." I can still feel that word 'drunk' trundle off my nine-year-old lips. My St. Vincent de Paul Society father, himself a teetotaler simply said, 'Ah Michael, never say he is 'drunk', say he is not well today. My father was teaching me the meaning of respect.

Respect is indeed at the core of the life of the SVP member. It comes from the Latin, re-specere, to look again or more simply to take a second look.

Respect Comes from a Deeper Love

The love and respect of an SVP member is challenged, refined, and purified in the crucible of life and living until it becomes a disinterested love. In words ascribed to St. Vincent, you too could adopt the phrase, *'only for your love, your love alone will those who suffer poverty forgive you for the bread you give them.'*

St Paul is speaking to you directly, when he says, *'you are God's chosen race, his saints; he loves you, and you should be clothed in sincere compassion, in kindness and humility, gentleness and patience.'* (Colossians 3:12).

The Love and Respect of an SVP member is All-Inclusive.

To build a civilisation of love you are invited also to challenge structural injustice. Yet, your respect must be for all. How easy it is to love those who have nothing and despise those who have made them such. St. Oscar Romero will say that we must love the oppressor and the oppressed with the same love.

Blessed Frederic Ozanam was already teaching that similar respect for all when he wrote while yet in his early twenties, *"The question which is agitating the world today is a social one. It is a struggle between those who have nothing and those who have too much. Our duty as Christians is to throw ourselves between these two camps in order to accomplish by love what justice alone cannot do".*

Remembering Our Teachers in the Way of Respect

An elderly St. Paul writing to his young disciple, Timothy, said, 'Remember who your teachers were' (2Timothy, 3:14). Blessed Frederic Ozanam was always blessed by good teachers, in particular, his parents, his father, Dr Jean Antoine-Francois in his care as a G.P. to his people and his mother, Marie, working with a group of women called the Night Watchers who cared for the infirm during the night. Later, as the Society was beginning in Paris, Sr. Rosalie Rendu, a Daughter of Charity, herself schooled in love and respect, became his guide and mentor. Addressing Frederic and his young friends she said: *'I know you will approach each one you visit with humility as His servant. Be kind and love, for love is your first gift to the poor. They will appreciate your kindness and your love more than all else you bring them.'*



VINCENTIAN FAMILY PILGRIMAGE – Knock Shrine

Respect Implies Adopting a Four-Step Programme

Today you remember and honour your teachers in the way of Blessed Frederic, those early founders of the Society in Ireland who have bequeathed to you a legacy of respect. This respect they modelled in a four-step programme of recognition, entry, residence and reflection.

Recognition: Members have that trained eye and ear and recognise instantly those in greatest need. Having recognised the one in greatest poverty he or she then proceeds to enter their lives.

Entry: You adopt a mode of entry based on respect and reverence for the person you serve. In life the disempowered are often faced with daunting avenues whereas the members of the SVP willingly travel down their winding lanes and alleyways to humbly enter their lives. It leads to residence.

Residence: Here you are at home with those you serve. However, sometimes while in residence with, or being totally at home with those you serve, you can occasionally feel rejection and a sense of inadequacy; you are called and challenged to a deeper level of respect. This leads to the fourth step of reflection.

Reflection: This is a call to a deeper and more purified love, a love which is deeper than mere philanthropy, a love which is beyond us, touching on the unconditional love of God.

Ministers of Respect

In the end the Sisters and Brothers of the Society make their own and indeed rephrase the original words attributed to St. Vincent: ***'only for your love, (that love expressed in deep respect), will those you serve, forgive you, for the bread you bring them.'***



Our pilgrimage this year takes place on Saturday 14th September.

This being the 180th anniversary of the foundation of the Society in Ireland, we hope as many members as possible will be present on the day to give thanks for our membership and to pray that we will continue to seek and find those who are forgotten in Ireland today.

Details of the programme will be sent to you nearer the date – and I look forward to meeting with you on 14th September.

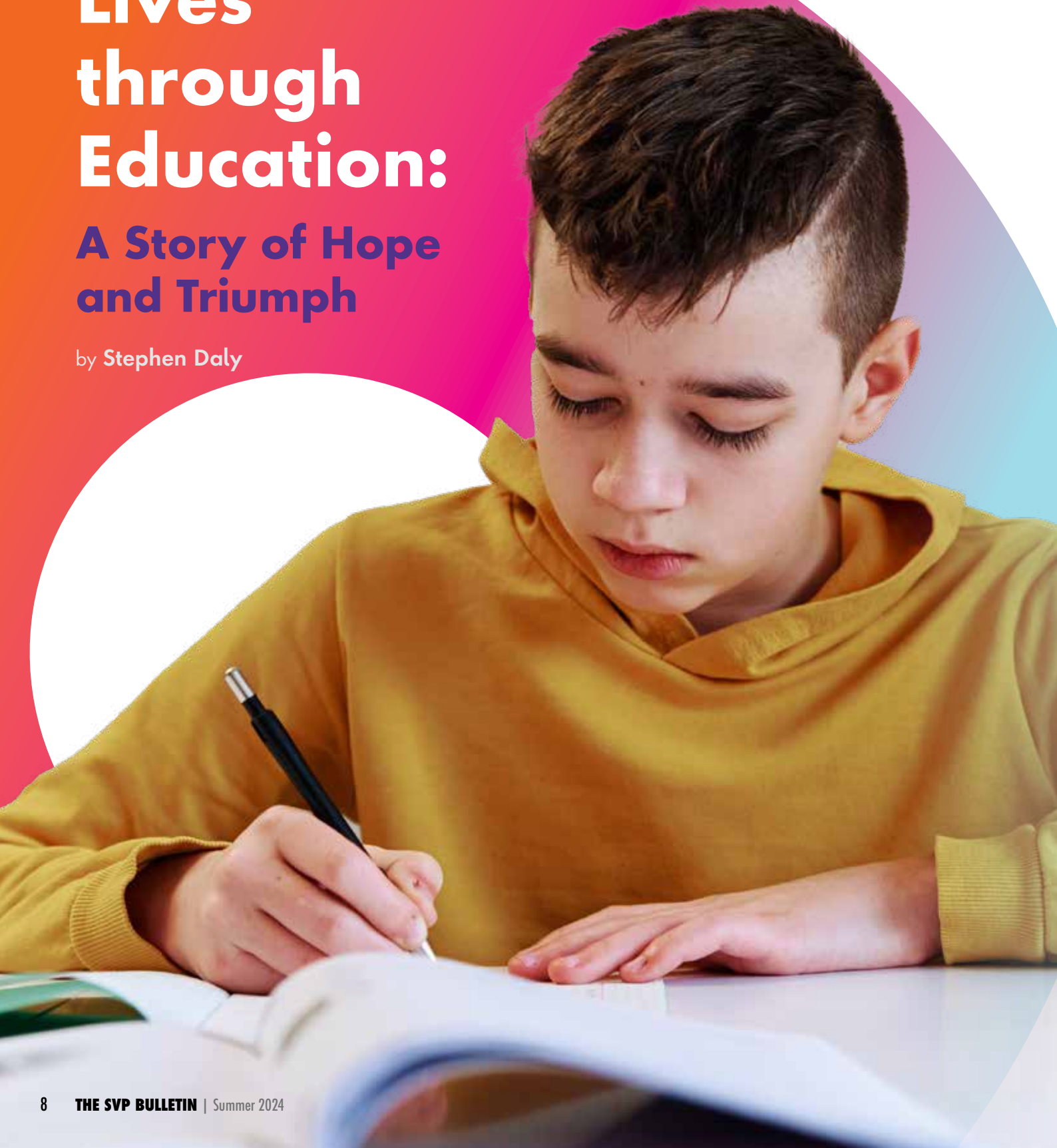
"The Lord God always takes care of our business when we take care of His"

– St. Vincent de Paul

Transforming Lives through Education:

**A Story of Hope
and Triumph**

by Stephen Daly



In Ireland in 2024, we regularly hear the phrase, “Cost of Living Crisis.” At St. Vincent de Paul, we’re perhaps more aware than most the effects rising prices are having on families and individuals across the country. Thousands are struggling with everyday essentials like food, light and heat. The cost of education is another aspect acting as a barrier to equality.

Amidst the struggles, the story of a young man’s journey from hardship to success, with the help of the St. Vincent de Paul (SVP) Education Fund, serves as a beacon of hope.

It’s a testament to the way dedicated support can change not just one life, but potentially many others in the future.

Vincent Murray, an SVP representative, received an email that beautifully encapsulated the transformative power of educational support. The email was from Brian*, a student who had once faced daunting financial barriers but had since achieved remarkable academic and professional milestones.

Brian’s journey began in September 2016, when he enrolled in his initial college course at University College Dublin (UCD). Despite receiving a government grant due to his family’s financial status – his mother was on a social welfare scheme – Brian struggled mentally and eventually dropped out in January 2019. His desire to pursue engineering led him back to college in September 2019, but without the financial safety net he once had, he was forced to juggle full-time work and study.

Reflecting on this period, Brian shared, *“I was leaving the house at 7 am, I’d get into college at 8, be in college from 9 to 5, and then work in a burrito shop from 6 pm to midnight.”* This gruelling schedule, paired with the denial of his grant renewal due to changes in his mother’s social welfare status, left him in a dire financial situation.

Faced with mounting debts and no feasible way to complete his studies, Brian was on the brink of giving up. However, a chance connection through his former teacher to the St. Vincent de Paul organisation changed everything. Brian recalls his first interaction with SVP vividly: *“It was a guy called Vince, and actually, I’ve never met him in person... but yeah, it was a guy called Vince, Vincent Murray. He reached out, did a Zoom call with him, told him the story, and that was the first time literally in four years someone had told me that they’re going to help me.”*

This moment of support was life changing. SVP provided Brian with the necessary financial aid to cover his rent and living expenses for his final year of college. Brian’s determination, coupled with the support he received, enabled him to graduate and secure a position at one of the world’s leading pharmaceutical design firms.

But the story doesn’t end there. Brian’s academic journey took an even more remarkable turn. Last October, he applied for the ESTEEM program at the University of Notre Dame in the US. This prestigious Master’s program in technology entrepreneurship aims to equip students with business skills to start or lead their own companies. Despite coming from a non-traditional background for this program, Brian’s perseverance paid off. He was awarded a full scholarship, including a stipend totalling over \$90,000.

Brian’s gratitude towards SVP is palpable.

“

It’s amazing what can happen when you’re given a chance, and that, you know, St. Vincent de Paul were the ones that gave me the chance. Everything that’s happened since that, regarding my job, my industry experience, the Master’s, all comes down from that one gesture of support,” he shared.

His story is a powerful testament to the impact of charitable organisations like SVP. They provide more than just financial aid – they offer hope, opportunities, and a chance for individuals to change the trajectory of their lives. Brian’s journey from financial despair to academic and professional success is a reminder of the potential within every individual, waiting to be unlocked with the right support.

For those who might be hesitant to seek help, Brian offers this advice: *“Don’t be too proud to ask for help. And there’s no better people than St. Vincent de Paul to ask for help.”* His experience underscores the importance of educational support programs and the profound difference they can make.

As Brian prepares to embark on his next chapter at Notre Dame, his story serves as an inspiration to all. It highlights the transformative power of education and the importance of supporting those in need, paving the way for a brighter future for many.

*Brian’s name has been changed to protect the privacy and identify of the SVP service user.

SVP
180 Years
1844–2024



**Changing
Times
Continuing
Compassion**

CELEBRATING 180 YEARS OF SVP IN IRELAND

On April 20th, nearly 1,000 people gathered at the Convention Centre in Dublin to celebrate the 180th anniversary of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul (SVP) in Ireland. From early morning, the venue buzzed with excitement as coaches from across the country arrived, and the No. 1 Army Band set the tone with uplifting music.

The Convention Centre's escalators and lifts were busy as attendees made their way to the third floor. By 10:30 am, the air was filled with chatter and laughter as members explored exhibition stands and reunited with old friends.

The formal programme began at 11 am with a powerful introduction by Rose McGowan, the National President of SVP. She highlighted the Society's remarkable past, its ongoing mission, and the challenges ahead.





This level of mingling and talking about different experiences renewed during lunch, and in fact, for many people, the call to resume the formal event seemed a distraction. One member said that there was a great buzz and passion about the talk and advice being dispensed.

Back in the theatre at 11 am, Rose McGowan made a strong introduction which not only acknowledged the immense work of the Society in the past and currently but also emphasised the future and the challenges to be faced.

During the rest of the day, the formal events included a keynote speech from former President of Ireland, Mary Robinson, with speeches from the SVP International President Juan Manuel B. Gomez and Kevin Cunningham, founder of Ireland Thinks.

These speeches were mingled with two sessions of 'On the Couch' where volunteers in the morning session and Young SVP representatives in the afternoon chatted with MC Marty Whelan.

The programme was also interspersed with messages of congratulation on the 180th anniversary from dignitaries and celebrity supporters.

There was great appreciation shown to Marty Whelan for the professional and smooth way he kept the proceedings moving with warmth and a witty approach.

The formal part of the day ended with a rousing version of 'Stand By Me' sung by approximately 100 members of Young SVP.

There is an old saying attributed to the showband days that the aim is to 'send them home sweating'. At the Convention Centre on 20th April, it was 'send them home smiling.'



Youghal, Co Cork Alita Kelly, Hannah Kelly, Iga Lesiczka, Sadhbh Watchhorn, Shauna O'Driscoll, Suvi Woloszyn, and Tracy Murray



Belfast, Antrim FR: Anne McLarnon, Brenda Devlin, Ann McCourt, Mary Waide, Regional President, North Region, Josephine O'Neill, Valerie McGreevy, Pauline Brown. BR: John Brolly, Clare Barr, Sean Curley



Clothes upcycled from Vincent's shops Nataliia Poirkaova, SVP volunteer from Ukraine (left) with Rita Zachar, Shop Manager, Kenmare Vincent's, South West Region



MESSAGES OF SUPPORT

There are not many organisations for which celebrating an anniversary could attract messages of congratulations from the leading dignitaries across the Island of Ireland.

President Michael D. Higgins, An Taoiseach Simon Harris, the Northern Ireland First and Deputy First Ministers Michelle O'Neill and Emma Little-Pengelly, Former Presidents of Ireland Mary Robinson and Mary McAleese all acknowledged the Society in Ireland celebrating its 180th anniversary in April. While Mary Robinson was the keynote speaker, messages of congratulations came from all of the others mentioned above, as well as from Malachi Cush, the ambassador for SVP in Northern Ireland, and Brendan O'Carroll (aka Mrs Brown), a long-time supporter of SVP.

The message from **President Michael D. Higgins** was read to the audience by John Lupton, SVP National Vice-President. The message concluded by saying, *"As we celebrate this important milestone, may I once again express my sincere regards and deep gratitude to all the staff and volunteers, past and present, who have contributed to the work of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul here in Ireland. May this occasion inspire renewed determination and even greater achievements in the decades ahead. I look forward to seeing the positive changes that you will bring in the years to come through your efforts to create a more equitable, just, and fair future for all."*

That message was echoed by **Taoiseach Simon Harris**. In a video message, he offered his heartfelt thanks to volunteers and staff and spoke about the invaluable contribution SVP members make to their own communities. He also referenced the untiring efforts of SVP volunteers to get help to those most in need. In referencing the financial help provided by the Government, he hoped that this demonstrated the Government's long-term commitment to the SVP work.

In another video message, **Michelle O'Neill** congratulated the Society on reaching this milestone and thanked SVP volunteers for its essential service for people in need delivered with compassion and dedication. In the same video message, Emma Little-Pengelly said how pleased she was to have the opportunity to acknowledge the great work of the Society and said that what the Society does is invaluable.

The message from **Mary McAleese** was read by the MC for the day, Marty Whelan. It said: *"To arrive at this great anniversary that spans one hundred and eighty years, a baton of care for the poor had to be passed from one generation to the next. Those who have taken on that baton of care and with it responsibility for the work of the SVP deserve huge respect and thanks. Each one a volunteer, each one inspired to act by a personal humanity and a decency that we should never take for granted."*

"There is no let-up, no day in sight when your work will be done. But in this special year, take time to be proud of all you do in the name of SVP and to be grateful for the gift of one another, working together for a great name and a great cause."



Tyrone Eamonn McCusker, Sally McNamee, Attracta McCusker, Brian McCullagh, Patrick Friel, Mary Campbell, Marion McIvor and Michael Deehan.



In his video message, **Malachy Cush** also offered his sincere congratulations and heartfelt thanks to the Society for *"the commitment, love, and support provided for those in need in our society. You have made this place a better place for so many."*

In his inimitable Mrs. Brown style, **Brendan O'Connor** sent a message to all volunteers and his uncle Vincent and Uncle Paul who provided help to his family when he was a child. He said, *"You are so appreciated. Thanks, from me, my family, and all you are doing for other people. They say that 'charity begins at home,' and nobody does it better than St. Vincent de Paul."*

SPEAKERS

The keynote speaker, **Mary Robinson**, is currently Chair of the Elders, an independent group of global leaders working for peace, justice, human rights, and a sustainable planet, which was founded by Nelson Mandela in 2007. She spoke about the climate crisis and its connection to injustices: injustices in relation to poorer countries, gender, intergenerational, pathways of developing countries, and nature. She also spoke about the power of unity, using Project Dandelion, the first global, women-led campaign for climate justice, as an example. She also struck a positive note by saying that she believes that we are on the cusp of a much better world, one that will be safer and cleaner. She said that we need to talk about it more because we are not moving fast enough.

In his address on the day, SVP International President **Juan Manuel B. Gomez** offered his sincere congratulations and all his support so that the Vincentian work continues for many years to come, being a reference of quality for the rest of the countries of the Confederation.

Clare Students from St Caimins Community School, Shannon.



Fermanagh Eamonn Kate Beggan, James Breen, Justine Magee, Annette McGrade, Grainne McQuaid, Joe Maguire, Brendan Hueston, Area President Fermanagh, Mary McGarrity, Martha Smyth, Patricia Donnelly, Anne McBrien, Niall O'Keefe.



Kevin Cunningham, CEO of *Ireland Thinks*, guided the audience through a presentation on potential future changes in Ireland. *Ireland Thinks* provides extensive research information to media and state organisations. Kevin said that in late 2022, one figure which was a surprise to him but would have been known to SVP was that in answer to the question, 'Are you struggling to pay bills?' 48% of the respondents said that they were.



NATIONAL PRESIDENT SETS THE SCENE

The National President, **Rose McGowan**, opened the celebrations and delivered a passionate address about SVP's enduring mission, which underscored the day's theme of **'Changing Times, Continuing Compassion'**. She gave a particularly warm welcome to the international SVP colleagues in attendance, including the International President Juan Manuel B. Gomez. She also welcomed three previous National Presidents in Ireland, who she said have done so much for the Society not only during their office but also before and after their terms as National President. They were Geoff Meagher, Kieran Stafford, and Cormac O'Broin. Cormac was 99 on Good Friday, and he attended the 100-year Congress in 1944 as a schoolboy.

She then went on to say, *"Throughout every period of change, our members have been a bedrock of support for hundreds of thousands of Irish people. And we should be proud of that."*



Galway
Marie O'Donovan, Anne Broderick, Jacinta Niland, Sadie Mullin, Maseabata and Carmel Shortt.



"Today is not just an opportunity to celebrate our history in Ireland but also to use the occasion to reflect and renew our commitment as we face into yet another period of change.

"Our country's strength is grounded in our ability to work together to solve problems, and SVP will continue to fight for investment in our communities and services based on the dignity and human rights of all.

Waterford Mavis Cullen, Anthony Deevy and Catherine Kinsella.





Holy Family, Dublin

Shona Cussen, Ada Ugochukwu, Uwa Omusi, Aisling Murphy, Aoibheann McCarthy, Ella Jane Morrissey and Amelia Skehan.

Wicklow (Greystones)

David Lowen, Julian Plant and Greg Lynch



Mayo (Castlebar)

Monica Mireku and Funmilayo Adeoti



Westmeath (Mullingar) Jim Buckley, Martin Shaw, Deirdre Bane, Paul Devaney, Maria Barry, Frank McCrum, Joe O'Meara.

Sligo Vincent Murray, Mairead McGurran, North West Regional President and Mary Murtagh.



"We need to make brave decisions at national and community levels that put all human beings at the centre for securing homes, decent healthcare, incomes that help us thrive, community infrastructure, and community cohesion for everyone."

"Like most European countries, while there has been an increase in people arriving to Ireland, the increase is small in comparison to the overall population, which has exceeded the five million threshold for the first time in 171 years."

"As the largest charity organisation working with people affected by inequality, poverty, and racism, we can show leadership by lending our voice to those who promote a society built on respect, compassion, and inclusion."

"We have responded humanely and generously to the needs of migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers for many years, and when providing support, we establish relationships built on trust and friendship. We do not tolerate hatred or racism; everyone deserves to be helped and welcomed when in need. Our work is that of charity, and no act of charity is foreign to the Society. Our support and friendship are to the person, regardless of their ethnic background or nationality."

"SVP is a multicultural and diverse organisation, and people from different countries and cultures have contributed significantly in our shops, national and regional offices, local conferences, parishes, and communities."

She went on to speak about the environment in which charities like SVP must operate in Ireland. *"We now operate in a society where all organisations, including charities, must not only act responsibly but be seen to do so. It is a society where perception plays a major part in how individuals and organisations are judged."*

"We also now have to observe rules relating to discrimination, data protection, safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults, Garda vetting, consent, confidentiality, and safe recruitment policies."

"Managing an organisation in this modern era also requires us to embrace technology in a way unheard of 20 or 30 years ago."

In addressing the future, she said, *"We have taken a big step forward for the Society with the roll-out of a new strategy entitled 'Journey Together 2024–2028'. Thank you to many of you who have participated in the surveys and meetings to prepare this strategy."*

"As Blessed Frederick Ozanam said, 'Do not be afraid of new beginnings, Be creative, Be inventive.' Some of the aims of Journey Together 2024–2028 are to strengthen our organisational structure in terms of Governance, Risk, and Compliance as well as ensuring that membership is secured for the future with a focus on recruitment and retention."

While our new strategy was being developed, we kept in mind that the key focus of everything we do has to be those in need who seek our help. Our history and the exhortation of our founders, especially Blessed Frederick Ozanam, all have that as the cornerstone of our existence."

With your support in the coming years, we will continue to support and wrap our arms of friendship around those in need who seek our help."

ON THE COUCH

There were two sessions, one in the morning and one in the afternoon entitled 'On the Couch'. In both sessions, MC Marty Whelan spoke to the participants. The morning session involved **Máire Mhic Aodha**, a Home Visitation volunteer from Connemara; **Lucy O'Kane**, a volunteer from Vincent's in Magherafelt, Derry; **Bill Kearney**, a volunteer at St. Benedict's, Social Housing in Malahide, Dublin; **Kate Devanne**, a volunteer from the Child and Family Services Drop-In centre in Limerick; and **Kelsey May**, a recipient of an education bursary from SVP who is now a Councillor in Dublin City Council. They spoke about their experiences and the effect SVP has had on their lives.

In the afternoon, it was the turn of Young SVP. This time, **Neil Lacey**, National Youth Development Manager, **Megan Foy**, Ballybay Community College, Co Monaghan, **Devin Synnott**, Trinity College, and **Sinead Rushe**, UCD spoke with Marty Whelan. They talked about why they joined the Young SVP programme and what it means to them.



INFORMATION ON DISPLAY

A feature of the day was the opportunity provided through the exhibition and advice available by staff from the various functions within the Society. This was supplemented by the attendance of other organisations with whom many volunteers work, such as MABS, Threshold, and the Citizens Information Service.

The North Dublin Citizens Information Service had so many visitors to its stand that of the 1,500 stress balls it brought to the event, it only had 7 left at the end of the day. No doubt they will be a help to the members who will use them.





MASS

The formal part of the day was followed by a Mass of Thanksgiving. The celebrants were Father Michael McCullagh, Father Jim Noonan, and Father Jose Alves.

The day was put together by an organising committee of members and staff who deserve great congratulation. To view the videos and photographs from the day, visit [SVP Celebrates 180 Years in Ireland](#).



SVP
180 Years
1844-2024



Changing
Times
**Continuing
Compassion**

SOCIAL HOUSING – **Volunteers** **in Focus**

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul is an Approved Housing Body and provides homes to over 900 people nationally with homes and tenants managed through a network of 59 Conferences across the country.

Our social housing delivery is only made possible due to the collective hard work and dedication of our volunteers. Aligned to our **Social Housing Strategic Plan 2022–2026** there are positive strides being made by Conferences in many areas in meeting our regulatory obligations including the ongoing progression/completion of various projects to improve our housing standards through refurbishment/energy upgrades in addition to a number of new delivery projects on track to increase our provision.

In a time of housing crisis there has never been such an important time to strengthen and reinvigorate our volunteer base in order to continue our vital provision nationally. Our National Committee continue to support regions and local Conferences with recruitment efforts of new members with particular focus on acquiring skills and experience aligned to the work of social housing management e.g. architecture, engineering, surveying, health and safety, social work/social care, business, legal and IT.

**We recently met with
some of our Social
Housing Volunteers....**



Maureen McGovern,
St Attacta's Conference
Ballymote, Co Sligo

“ How long have you been involved in St. Vincent de Paul Social Housing?

I've been involved 12 years.

What was the motivation to begin delivering housing in your community?

I saw the need for returned immigrants and older people who wished to return to their home place and the lack of housing in the area. I also knew of older people living in poor conditions in isolated areas, unable to drive and the need for them to move closer to town to live in safety.

I retired and wished to become involved with my local community.

What skills do you bring to your work with St. Vincent de Paul Housing?

Retired nurse with lots of social care experience also.

What particular area of housing/tenant management are you involved in?

I attend fortnightly meeting where I co-ordinate how to address tenant issues such as repair works and around other issues such as tenant well being and supports that may be needed.

How would you describe your experience in terms of being involved in St. Vincent de Paul Housing?

Very rewarding to see older people live in safety as part of a community. **”**



Brendan Dempsey,
Ard Mhuire Conference,
Cork City

“ How long have you been involved in St. Vincent de Paul Social Housing?

50 years with SVP and about 20 years in social housing.

What was the motivation to begin delivering housing in your community?

The Conference was originally running a night shelter in Cork city. This enabled us to take people off the street. The need for housing followed that.

Why/how did you get involved?

To give those most in need a home, somewhere they could call their own. I have seen a lot of hardship, the most distressing of situations where lives have been lost. But I'm full of optimism because I've come across some lovely stories that would make you laugh, they're not all sad stories.

What skills do you bring to your work with St. Vincent de Paul Housing

I like people and talking to people and helping where I can.

What particular area of housing/tenant management are you involved in?

All aspects, on the ground, the day to day running, meeting with the tenants, ensuring units are compliant. Last night I took out the dustbins. Each tenant in their own right has specific needs, where they may require assistance with dealing with authorities such as rental assistance payments or setting up direct debits for utilities, to that end the setting up of the housing officer roles namely Clare Fox in the South West by the National Committee has been fantastic in supporting us and the tenants.

How would you describe your experience in terms of being involved in St. Vincent de Paul Housing?

Extremely satisfying, fits in easily to my beliefs as a Christian. Members give up their time so freely, what strikes me is the new young faces and I watch them fighting for our clients and it makes me feel so proud.



Seamus Heron,
St Brigids,
Drumshanbo, Co. Leitrim

“ How long have you been involved in St. Vincent de Paul Social Housing?

I've been involved 9 years.

What was the motivation to begin delivering housing in your community?

I saw the need for housing in the local community also I was aware and trained of the new regulations that needed to be addressed in the housing sector due to my background in construction.

Why/how did you get involved?

Retired and wanted to get involved more with the local community.

What skills do you bring to your work with St. Vincent de Paul Housing?

Construction Manager.

What particular area of housing/tenant management are you involved in?

I attend fortnightly meeting where we discuss tenant issues/repairs and support that tenants need and plan how best to address/deliver these supports.

How would you describe your experience in terms of being involved in St. Vincent de Paul Housing?

Very rewarding, particularly when we have helped house vulnerable and older adults within our community who would not be able to access housing elsewhere.



How the SVP Assessment of Need Form is Making a Difference

by **John Lupton**

National Vice-President for Membership



The Assessment of Need (AON) Form came into operation across the SVP in the Republic of Ireland in 2021 and in Northern Ireland in 2023. The form is a practical tool designed for SVP Conferences to assess need based on knowledge of household income and expenditure, to reflect on the financial and non-financial requirements of a person or family and to consider and review referral pathways and promoting self-sufficiency.

The 'AON' form uses 'Reasonable Living Expenses' figures to calculate baseline expenditure figures for households, to which are then added the specific family's additional costs (e.g. rent, loans etc.). These living costs are then considered in light of household income to understand financial needs

Parallels with MABS

MABS (The Money Advice and Budgeting Service) have spoken at SVP online briefings and area gatherings. Increasingly we have found colleagues in MABS drawing parallels to the AON form and their own income and expenditure discussions. This underscores the widespread use of the approach in addressing need, and it's legitimacy amongst practitioners and the public.



In the following 3 case-studies, shared with us by Conferences in the North West and Mid West, we can see how they used the **Assessment of Need Form** to help their understanding, approach and response to different types of need in the community.

The Assessment of Need Form gives us clarity

We were contacted by a man close to Christmas seeking help as he had received a large car repair bill and it put him under huge pressure coming up to Christmas. We hadn't ever come in contact with this man before and the Conference was surprised at the request as he was known to be working and presumed to be financially secure. We called out to find him sitting in a coat and scarf in a freezing house. He was separated with a teenage son who lived with his mother. He was on very modest wages and paying a small mortgage. The combination of maintenance, mortgage, cost of oil and a large car repair bill pushed him over the edge.

We sat down with him and worked through the Assessment of Need form and realised that he was 'short' about €70 a week which adds up to a substantial amount every month on an ongoing basis. We gave him €500 for the car repairs, €400 for oil and €100 in grocery vouchers. We would not have given this level of assistance without the clarity the AON brought to the case and anything less would not have meaningfully changed his circumstances.

Using the Assessment of Need Form gave us confidence

We had been working with a foreign-national, a lady with two young kids living in a rented house on her own. She had been referred to us by a housing organisation and we had given a lot of assistance with oil purchases and grocery vouchers. Due to her poor English we hadn't visited but worked through the housing organisation.

However, due to the repeated requests we decided to visit and we carried out the Assessment of Need using the form and found that even with HAP she was 'short' about €40 a week. She had actually just been offered a local authority house, so we decided to assist her with €160 in grocery vouchers. What the AON gave us was clarity on what exactly the need was. It's very easy to second guess people who repeatedly ask for assistance, but in this case we were much more confident and knew the exact nature of the need.



By asking the right questions, this man was able to get the support he needed

A young man made a request for help with food vouchers as "things were very tight". Initially the Conference was thinking of giving the man €100 in vouchers for groceries, but then thought of the AON form and used the form with him.

It turned out that the man was an apprentice, whose training was attached to a third level education institution. He owed fees to the college of €1,100, and until these were paid, the college would not release his results. He had agreed a payment plan of €50 per week. On his low apprentice wages, he had enough money to get by in general, but could not afford an extra €50 per week.

The Conference agreed to pay the €1,100 fees directly to the college. This had a major impact on the man's life. It saved him 22 weeks of trying to come up with €50 per week which may have resulted in him leaving the apprenticeship program altogether.

The Conference reflected on this experience and felt that if they had given the €100 grocery vouchers no doubt the man would have been grateful as he was receiving what he had requested. Indeed, the Conference would have been pleased as they were providing what was requested, but ultimately the man would not have received what he needed.

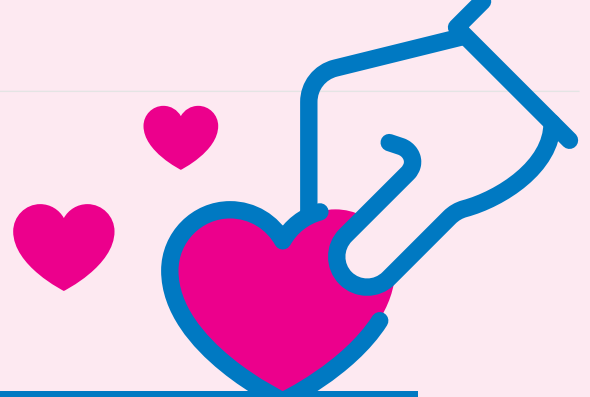
Assessment of Need becoming part of SVP's mainstream training

Increasingly we are hearing of the Assessment of Need Process becoming a mainstream approach for SVP Conferences. This is a very welcome development, and means our assistance is based on a clear process and that our assistance is meeting real need. The case-studies about have highlighted that using the process is giving Conferences clarity and confidence, and most importantly means the households we are assisting are receiving what they need.

If you require copies of the form or guidance on its use, please contact your Regional Office or membersupport@svp.ie



Fundraising Update



If you are seeking to increase donations to your Conference, this is for you!

The Fundraising Team would like to highlight two ways in which we are supporting Conferences in your fundraising efforts. The first is tackling the decline in cash donations by introducing cashless donations on Tap to Donate devices. The second is ensuring that you maximise return on donations over €250 by claiming tax relief from Revenue.

Tap to Donate

These days, many people are less likely to carry cash which can really impact church gate collections. Now your donors can support SVP with just a tap of a phone or card.

At SVP we use **Tap to Donate** devices for taking cashless donations. They are easy to use and are a quick, safe, secure way to receive contactless payments.

The National Office Fundraising Team are here to help you use Tap to Donate, with step-by-step instructions on how to use the devices and support if you need it.

"The devices are a worthwhile investment and necessary in these times of reduced cash and phone technology."

– Paul O'Dea, Blessed Virgin Clontarf

"We found the Tap to Donate device very easy to set up and use. Since many people no longer carry cash, it enabled us to raise much more at our Christmas collection."

– Richard Dwyer, St John's Kilkeny

"We are delighted to have this option available to us, particularly post Covid because many parishioners do not carry cash. Without it we would be losing out on donations."

– Dominick O'Brien, Holy Family Rathmines

"Tap-to-donate has given our conference extra donations as those non-cash donors now have a quick, easy, and receipted method to help others in the community"

– Fergal Mulcahy, St Wolstan's Celbridge.

If your Conference would like to use **Tap to Donate**, or need to ask a few more questions first, the Fundraising Team are available to help. For further details, please contact Orlaith at fundraising@svp.ie.

Tax Effective Giving

Tax Effective Giving allows charities like SVP to claim tax relief on donations of €250 or more in a year. Donors who give €250 or more can sign an Enduring Certificate (formerly CHY 3), allowing SVP to receive a 45% tax refund on their donation. The Enduring Certificate lasts for five years, enabling tax reclaims for any donations made during that period.

All donations by a donor over €250 are eligible provided the donor is:

- A PAYE worker
- A Self-Assessed tax-payer
- A retired donor **if** in receipt of a private work pension on which they pay PAYE.

Please note donations from Limited Companies are NOT eligible for tax relief under this scheme. Their donation is viewed as a trading expense which qualifies for relief under Corporation Tax.

We recently sent Donation Record Sheets to Conferences. This document outlines the list of all certs we have on file with recorded donations. If any of the listed donors have made a new receipted donation over €250, please fill in the amount received under the year the donation was received. Return to us in the enclosed prepaid envelope by 30th June 2024, so they can be included in this year's claim. If a donor does not have a cert on file or if their cert has expired, please ask the donor to fill in the Enduring Certificate and post it back to us directly.

We then submit eligible donations to Revenue for a tax relief claim. Once processed, Revenue returns the rebate to National Office, which is distributed to Conferences accordingly. Please note the timeline from submitting certs to payment is approximately one year.

If you have any questions about the tax reclaim process or would like us to send you Enduring Certificates for your donors, please contact Laura at laura.conlon@svp.ie.

Working towards the 'Triple Bottom Line' in solidarity with the communities we serve.

by **Dermot Gilloway**

National Retail Development Manager SVP



As we navigate our way through an increasingly complex world, lurching from one existential crisis to another, from a global pandemic to a cost-of-living crisis, to the displacement of millions of people from their homes due to conflict, violence, human rights violations, and the impact of climate change, it is critical that SVP retail understands its potential economic, social and environmental value to wider society and fulfills that potential.

Our community shops must never lose sight of our Vincentian purpose and values. Working in true solidarity with the communities we serve, our shops offer an ethical and inclusive alternative, providing affordable preloved clothing and household items and serving as a gateway to SVP whilst affording people the opportunity to reconnect safely and conveniently with wider society, liberating them from the trap of poverty, loneliness or other isolating circumstances.

SVP Ireland's **vision** is for an Ireland where no person or family lives in continuous disadvantage or hardship; where their support needs are met; where their rights are promoted and protected, and where they are supported and empowered to live with dignity.

SVP Ireland's **mission** is to support and empower economic independence, self-sufficiency, and personal self-worth, through friendship, support in times of need, and through our work for social justice and equity.

SVP Ireland believes in a fair and just society for everyone and is committed to using its resources to lighten the burden of disadvantage and hardship felt individually and collectively by wider society. In addition to maximising its impact, SVP is deeply committed to extending its reach into the margins of society to support people in need everywhere and is committed to increasing its visibility and relevance in the service of our community.



The Vincent's retail network, with a mixed portfolio of 230 shops across every county in Ireland, is one of the most effective ways that SVP can extend its reach and impact, particularly in disadvantaged or isolated communities. Vincent's shops offer a unique and compelling blend of social justice, social interaction, and a stimulating shopping experience, in an environment that authentically celebrates sustainability, diversity and inclusion, whilst providing affordable pre-loved clothing and household items. As our community grapples with a plethora of economic, social, and environmental issues, it would be inadequate for SVP to measure the impact of its charity shops only against its fundraising capabilities but must now also look at the social and environmental issues that impact on our community and measure the success of our shops against a broader 'Triple bottom line'.



Origins of The Triple Bottom Line

Most people are familiar with the concept of the 'bottom line' which refers to the surplus or profit generated in business. Whilst the fund-raising aspect of SVP retail is one of its main functions, the challenges we face in society today as a social justice charity, demand a more meaningful and sustainable contribution from SVP retail than simply raising funds.

The 'Triple Bottom Line' (often abbreviated to 'TBL' or '3BL') was developed by management consultant and writer, John Elkington, who argued that the net income or 'bottom line' generated in business gave an incomplete picture of the true value of that business activity.

Elkington argued that business activities also needed to measure the value added to social equity and value added to the environment. The 'Triple Bottom line' is often referred to as seeking to add value to the 3 Ps of People, Planet and Profit / Prosperity and has become the foundation of most sustainable business strategies, providing a more comprehensive and long-term view of the true value of a business activity to wider society. At Vincent's we are committed to working towards the Triple bottom line.



Economic Prosperity

The role of SVP retail as a fundraiser is well enough understood. The need to generate surplus funds for Conference activities was one of the main motivations for many Conferences seeking to open a charity shop in the first instance.

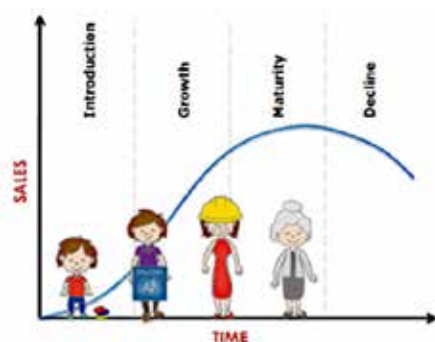
Charity Retail Ireland (CRI) reports that 43 charities, excluding SVP, operating 432 charity shops generated the following value in 2023:

- €81.4 million in turnover
- €53 million in garments sales – 68% of total sales
- €20.9 million in homewares & books – 27% of total sales
- €178,000 of average sales per shop
- 9 million customer visits
- 9.5 million of garments sold.

The average sales per shop in SVP is lower at €149,995. Whilst mainstream charity shops are fund raisers for their parent charities, focused on sales growth, SVP shops are service providers, committed to providing affordable clothing for people in need, often in isolated and deprived communities, and run a higher percentage of part time shops run by volunteers, generating lower sales. Average sales will be lower and probably should be lower!

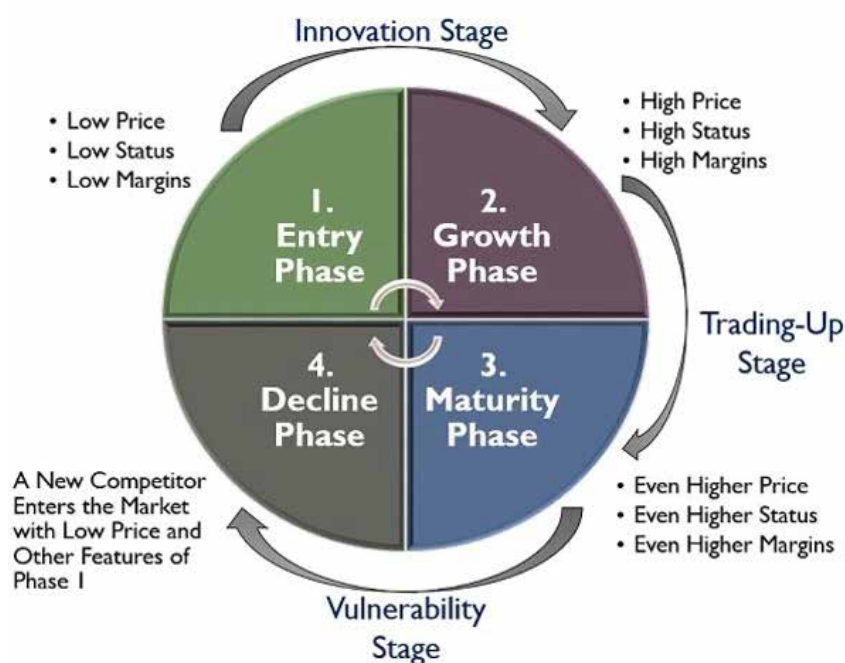
Contribution

UK charity shops report a surplus of approximately 33% of total income once payroll, rent, rates, utilities, and consumable costs are applied to shops and subtracted from the total income. The figure for Ireland varies from Region to Region but many Regions are retaining between a third and a half of income from retail to support core work. This income is also "unrestricted" and can be spent on SVP charitable purposes at the discretion of SVP trustees.



Shop Life Cycle and Customer Life Cycle

It should be remembered that all shops, like all products, go through a **life cycle**. It is vital that each stage of the life cycle is recognised and managed to ensure that shops maximise their financial performance whilst serving the evolving needs of the consumer. Individual Shops go through the anthropomorphic stages of birth, growth, maturity, and decline, but the journey must be circular, not linear, and a set of interventions should be developed and implemented to bring shops back out of decline mode and back into that innovative stage that led to such growth in the first place. This is easily achieved when the products and services within the shop are refreshed and updated to meet changing consumer demand.



Whilst the retail life cycle does not translate precisely to charity retail, there are enough similarities as to warrant a review of the model.

1. Entry / Birth

A new shop opens in the community, with an exciting new product range or retailing format, catching the attention of the shopper. The new shop will achieve temporary competitive advantage by luring curious shoppers away from their usual shops, but the advantage can be lost if the novelty wears off and customers revert to old habits.

2. Growth / Accelerated development

This stage is experienced where new customers, and indeed donors, are successfully retained. Sales, customer interactions and market share all increase dramatically, but costs also inevitably increase over time as the shop services more customers.

3. Maturity

At this stage, the growth starts to level off as the vitality of the new retailer dissipates and competitors re-assert themselves. The shop becomes more vulnerable now as customers are tempted away by a new competitor or a new offering from an existing competitor.

4. Decline

At this stage, sales start to decline and can go into a more permanent decline unless management introduce some interventions to bring the shop back into growth stage. Interventions might include a new format, product range, extended opening hours or adjustment of shop management style. All shops will eventually reach this stage but can be brought back into the growth cycle with careful planning, support from stakeholders and recognition of the importance of the **customer life cycle**.

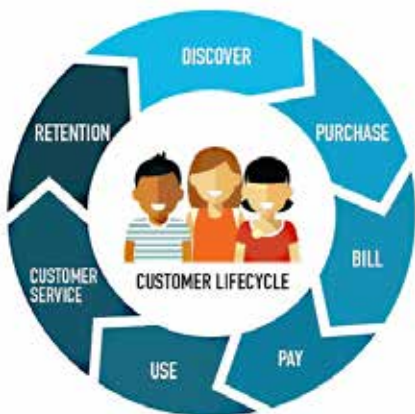
Customer Life Cycle – The importance of Customer Retention

When managing new and existing customers, the objective is to get them to return to the shop and therefore we need also to recognise and manage the **Customer lifecycle** to ensure that the customer has a sequence of positive experiences or “**Moments of truth**” that will encourage a repeat visits and ongoing support for SVP.

The Defining Moments of a Visit to Vincent’s

If a customer successfully completes a purchase in Vincent’s, the customer will have assessed the premises, the product range, the prices, and staff before deciding. Below are just some of the defining moments experienced by a customer in a typical charity shop:

- Is the shop easily located?
- Is the shop open as advertised?
- Is the shop window clean and bright?
- Is the window display attractive and relevant?
- Is the shop atmosphere warm and welcoming?
- Did a member of the team greet the customer on arrival?
- Is the shop well stocked with interesting products?
- Are the products relevant and affordable?
- Is the sales assistant knowledgeable friendly and helpful?
- Is the transaction completed efficiently?
- Is the customer offered a receipt?
- Does the customer feel valued by the staff in Vincent’s?
- Is the after sales service acceptable?



People – Social Value

We talk about the social value generated by charity shops, but is it a real thing and how can we measure it?

In early 2023, The Charity Retail Association in the UK commissioned a report to try to quantify that social value generated by over 10,200 charity shops. We know that some charity shop customers buy from charity shops out of financial necessity and **need** and are focused on price and affordability and the utilitarian value of what has been bought. Other customers enjoy the shopping experience and extract recreational value from it, seeking out unusual or collectible items to meet a **want** rather than a **need**. This study of social value identifies a whole other set of benefits of shopping in a charity shop that surpass either the utilitarian or recreational value of spending time or money in a charity shop.

Using robust and rigorous methodologies, based on the 8 Principles of Social Value (see diagram) and SROI framework and approved by Social Value International, the researchers took a stakeholder-informed approach, talking to staff, volunteers, customers, and donors, and uncovered a treasure trove of benefits which included delivery of greater social cohesion and a surprising contribution to social and environmental value as well as the generation of economic value.



Key Findings included:

- During the calendar year 2022, a total of £75.3 billion of social value was generated by UK charity shops.
- The SROI ratio was £1: £7.35 – i.e., for every pound invested in charity retail, £7.35 of social value is generated – a vast positive impact on those people whose lives charity shops touch.
- The most important outcome for all stakeholder groups (staff, volunteers, customers, and donors) is 'giving back' to other people, and it is through enabling this that charity shops are making the most difference to people's lives.

This table provides the financial value of the outcomes for all stakeholder groups (staff, volunteers, customers, and donors).

Outcome	Value	%
Feeling that I am 'giving back' to others	£22,136,126,049	29%
Feeling that charity shop staff meet with me with friendliness and compassion	£15,092,075,244	20%
Feeling that I am 'giving back' to the planet	£14,952,768,472	20%
Excitement from the shopping experience	£10,659,962,289	14%
Feeling part of a community	£7,107,399,215	9%
More financial choice and independence	£5,235,149,196	7%
More self-confidence	£98,361,347	0.13%
More empathy	£49,190,904	0.07%
Feeling less distress (from H&S concerns)	£12,390,409	0.02%
Feeling adequately compensated financially for work	£4,366,034	0.01%

“

..., our local communities are enriched in so many ways when a Vincent's charity shop becomes part of the local landscape.



We know that Vincent's generates much needed economic value by raising unrestricted funds for SVP Home Visitation across Ireland and by providing high quality and low-cost clothing and household items, but our local communities are enriched in so many ways when a Vincent's charity shop becomes part of the local landscape.

Additional benefits include:

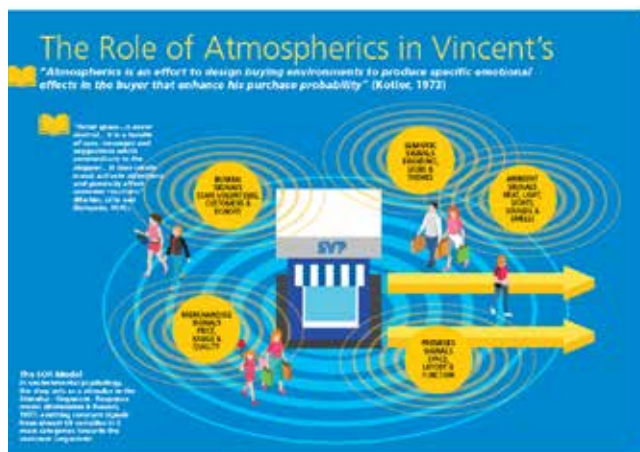
- A source of affordable clothing & household items located at the heart of the communities who need them most.
- An ethical and sustainable shopping alternative
- A brand ambassador for SVP and a gateway to our services
- A community hub for people disconnected from society through poverty or other isolating circumstances where spending money is optional.
- An invaluable community asset that affords all local people the opportunity to volunteer their time or donate preloved clothing or household items.
- A safe and welcoming environment for asylum seekers and refugees who can shop, browse, or volunteer and start the journey of integration into their new community.
- Development of an authentic relationship where staff, volunteers, customers, donors and even suppliers get to know each other and become invested in the well-being of the larger community.

Retention, Attraction and Expansion

All retailers strive for growth in income, but this can be achieved by authentically putting service ahead of sales and focusing more on the customer than the sale. Too many retailers are eager to **attract** new customers without sufficiently valuing, understanding, and **retaining** the customers they already have. For that reason, Vincent's has developed a programme of "Service before sales" to ensure that existing customers continue to enjoy whatever motivated them to visit the shop in the first instance. Vincent's is committed to developing and **expanding** our relationship with existing customers that we **retain** whilst **attracting** new customers to our community shops.

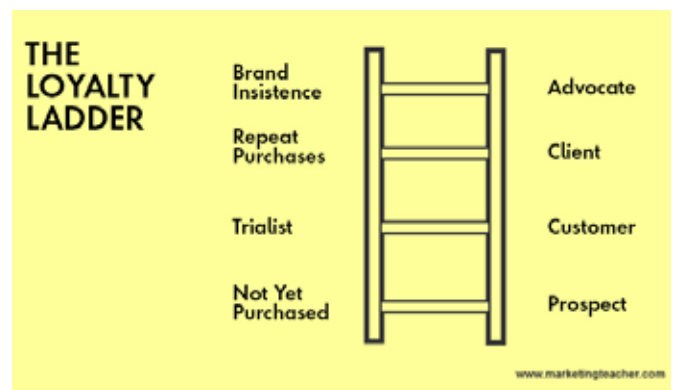


We are now trading in the “Experience” economy where consumers value the experience of shopping as much as the product on sale. Using atmospherics and our branded shop landscape, SVP is managing shop ambience, layout, décor, and function to communicate some key messages to the wider community about our core values.



If our messaging is properly managed, we can attract potential customers, donors or volunteers to our shops and work on building a trusting relationship with them as they consider moving up the loyalty ladder. Retail traditionally looks at customers in 4 categories:

Prospect	a visitor who has not yet engaged in shopping, donating, or volunteering.
Customer	a visitor who has completed a trial, one off, activity.
Client	a visitor who engages in repeat activities.
Advocate	a visitor who is committed to SVP and promotes the brand at every opportunity.



Celebrating Diversity

Our most successful charity shops are the ones where volunteers and indeed customers from all backgrounds establish a sense of belonging which grows into a sense of shared ownership of the community shop. In these locations, our shops become deeply embedded in the local community and, to quote Abraham Lincoln, becomes a service “*of the people, by the people, for the people*”.

Our Hand of friendship leaflet has already been translated into 12 languages to ensure that as many visitors as possible can understand access our products and services.



Our rainbow logo was developed back in 2004 to celebrate diversity and can be seen as an invitation for people from all backgrounds to participate in the life of our shop.

Our recent **Heroes** campaign celebrated our volunteers, members and staff and put them front and centre of all retailing activities.



Planet – Environmental Stewardship

As an associate member of UNESCO, a special adviser to the UN Economic and Social Council and a member of the Global Catholic Climate movement, SSVp globally is aligned with the UN sustainable development goals (SDGs) and committed to good environmental stewardship.

At a local level, SVP retail receives an estimated 1.2 million bags of donated textiles annually and is committed to the reuse of as many donated garments as possible. The shops operate from a circular business model connecting our shops with a network of collection and redistribution centres (OFCs) and uses EPOS technology to track sales and transfer surplus stock from one location to another. This business model, in addition to our heritage, values and structure also form the basis of our Sustainable Competitive Advantage

In addition to reusing donated textiles, the SVP retail network enables ethical shoppers to buy pre-loved garments and, in the process, is slowing down the over consumption of Fast Fashion.



Summary

In summary, Vincent's Retail is making a verifiable contribution to the delivery of economic, social, and environmental value across Ireland by working towards the Triple Bottom Line of People, Planet and Prosperity. This approach is also leading to the attainment of Sustainable competitive advantage as we serve up a compelling, distinctive, and unique retail offering, infused with Vincentian values, targeting the Triple Bottom Line, that is helping to differentiate Vincent's from all competitors, in an increasingly crowded market trying to serve an increasingly complex world.



Young SVP back in business for the East Region

This academic year, I have had the pleasure of working with 28 different schools across the East Region. The enthusiasm and commitment of the students and staff has been truly inspiring and a joy to work with. The Young SVP Programme is once again thriving in the East, bringing new energy and opportunities to our schools and local Conferences. I am proud to see the programme back on the map, making a positive difference in the lives of young people and their communities.

On April 30th, the Lucan Spa Hotel was buzzing with excitement as we celebrated our annual Youth Day. The event was a momentous one as it marked my first Youth Day as East YDO, but it was also the first to be held in the East Region in a number of years. The event brought together schools and students we work with from all over the Region and was a tremendous success.

To open proceedings, we had a very insightful talk from our East Regional President, Marie Cronin. Marie talked to the students about all the important work which the East Region of SVP carries out on a daily basis and set us up for a really great day. We also had an opening prayer from **Holy Child Killiney** students and their teacher Ellen Moisselle.

EAST

Our very own Stephen Daly (SVP National Content Creator, and much-loved radio and TV presenter) took the stage as MC, expertly guiding us through a day filled

with inspiration and shared experiences. We were privileged to have comedian Enya Martin and social justice advocate Laura Horan as our guest speakers. Both Enya and Laura shared heartfelt stories of growing up in poverty and the transformative impact that charities like St. Vincent de Paul (SVP) had on their lives. Their talks were not only moving but also highlighted the critical role of SVP support in changing lives.

The event also featured insightful contributions from SVP Members, Noel Boyce and Thomas Madden, along with TY student volunteer, Maddison, from our Lucan Store. They spoke passionately about their volunteering experiences and the various types of work SVP engages in daily. Their stories painted a vivid picture of the dedication and impact of our volunteers.

One of the highlights of the day was the panel discussions involving students from each school represented at our Youth Day. These students shared what they had learned about SVP, the benefits they gained from participating in the Young SVP Programme, and the projects they undertook. Their reflections underscored the value of the programme, both for personal growth and community development.

To add even more fun to the day, we had performances from singers Saibh Skelly and Georgia Gaffney, as well as live DJ and games from Damo at So Fresh Entertainment and a photobooth from Photobooth Ireland. I would like to thank Photobooth Ireland for sponsoring the hire of their services for the day. We had an amazing pop-up shop from the

Lucan SVP Shop, which went down a treat! Thank you so much to Roza and her team of volunteers who helped so much with it!

To close our day, we had an address by our National President, Rose McGowan, who spoke about the importance of our young people and the impact that they have on the SVP and the world all around them. They were truly inspiring words which I have no doubt the students will carry with them going forward.

Thank you also to SVP alum, Thomas Nugent, who kindly took all photos on the day and helped to capture its essence so well!

Thank you to everyone who participated and contributed to making Youth Day a memorable and impactful event. Together, we are fostering a spirit of compassion, community, and change.

Schools in attendance:

Greenhills Community College, Edmund Rice College Castleknock, Castleknock College, Templeogue College, Holy Child Killiney, Newbridge College, Holy Family Newbridge, St Gerard's School Bray, Dominican College Sion Hill, Griffeen Community College, St David's Greystones, Salesian College Celbridge.

Emma Barry

Youth Development Officer
for the East Region.





South West students share their great work!

Our annual Youth Day Celebration finished out the year with a positive bang! The celebration allows students to display their hard work throughout the year. Their projects ranged from creating awareness in relation to the work of SVP through illustrated art pieces, cultural awareness projects, supporting our annual SVP food appeal, providing education on wide variety of social justice issues within their school and communities, befriending projects which meant they went out into their communities providing support where it was needed and volunteering in their local Vincent's shops.

Amazing projects were presented from all schools within the region. Students delivered clothes packages directly to the homeless on the streets of Cork City, they did many fundraising activities such as bake sales and non-uniform days in aid of SVP as well as other local-based charities within their communities.

One school Conference, **Pobalscoil Na Tríonóid** in Youghal, Co. Cork completed a very special project within their community. They decided to visit their local nursing home to spend quality time with its residents but didn't stop there. They set up a pen pal project with another school Conference **Coláiste an Átha** in Wexford to bring as much joy to the residents as they could for as long as they could. The students from both schools brought life and enjoyment back into the lives of the residents in both nursing homes and helped them to make a new friend along the way.

All schools who engage in the programme showed a strong sense of community and delivered the message of SVP through their hard work and commitment.

Alita Kelly

Youth Development Officer
for the South West Region



Mid West Young SVP cap off a busy year!

It has been wonderful working with the Young SVP Groups in the Mid-West Region this year. All students showed tremendous enthusiasm, energy and creativity when planning their projects this year. Secondary School Students involved in the Young SVP Programme from the counties of Limerick, Clare, Tipperary and Offaly engaged in a variety of Befriending, Education, Awareness and Direct Aid projects. **St. Joseph's Secondary School** in Spanish Point, Co. Clare were involved in a very heartwarming project where they used their gifts and talents to brighten the lives of others in the community.

The students from the Young SVP Conference in this school went on weekly visits to 'Cois Mara' a residential facility for adults with intellectual disabilities. Each week they entertained the residents with music, songs and dancing. They got the residents involved in the action by bringing a karaoke machine too and great fun was had by all! This Young SVP Group were also extremely active at Christmas time and a great support to their local Conference. The students raised a whopping €2,000 between a Christmas raffle, Christmas Jumper Day and Bake Sale! The students purchased food and fuel vouchers from the local shops with this money to donate to the local SVP Conference to help families in need.



Clonmel CBS



MID WEST

Loreto, Clonmel, Co Tipperary

The schools in Clonmel, Co. Tipperary were also very creative with their projects and raised a lot of funds for their local SVP Conference. The Young SVP Group in **CBS High School** organised numerous fundraisers for SVP throughout the year including a soccer tournament, basketball tournament, non-uniform day and a speed dating event in collaboration with the local girls **Loreto Secondary** school. The boys managed to raise over €1,200 and really enjoyed all the activities.

Gallen Community School in Ferbane, Co. Offaly formed a Young SVP Conference for the first time this year. They organised a Halloween Fancy Dress Fundraiser and Bake Sale with all proceeds going to SVP. They also engaged in a Befriending Project, where they went on weekly visits to the local nursing home and involved the residents in art and craft activities there.



Gallen CS, Ferbane, Co. Offaly

Lots of Limerick schools were involved in the programme too and helped spread awareness about SVP in their school communities. These examples are just a snippet of all the fantastic work achieved by the students involved in the Young SVP programme in the Mid-West Region.

I want to thank each and every school who got involved this year for their amazing support to SVP. I look forward to working with all the schools again in the next academic year and hope that more new schools will get onboard too.

Clodagh Lenihan

Youth Development Officer
for the Mid West Region

NORTH
EAST &
MIDLANDS

Charlie and Isabel



Castlepollard, Westmeath



Mercy, Navan



Scoil Mhuire, Meath



Thrills and Talks at Emerald Park!

On May 16th, the Northeast & Midlands hosted its Youth Day at Emerald Park in Ashbourne, Co. Meath. This event brought together schools participating in the Young SVP programme from across the region, representing counties Cavan, Longford, Louth, Meath, and Westmeath. Throughout the year, Students engaged in workshops designed to explore social justice issues that SVP addresses daily, in an engaging and thought-provoking manner. The workshops emphasised promoting social action and empowering young people to contribute to helping those in need.

Our Youth Conferences provided students with opportunities to participate in the four types of Young SVP projects: Befriending, Education, Awareness, and Direct Aid. It was inspiring to see the variety of projects that students showcased during the event. It's crucial for young people to recognise their potential to effect change, just as our founder, Frederic Ozanam, did as a young man. Over 300 students attended Youth Day with the support of their schools and teachers. Throughout the day, students were encouraged to step out of their comfort zones and interact with like-minded peers from other schools. This facilitated the sharing of ideas and opinions, helping students to connect with one another.

Youth Development Officer for the Northeast & Midlands Region, Clodagh Naughton remarked, "I'm thrilled to say that our Regional Youth Day was an amazing showcase of the work done by schools, students, and teachers for SVP. The projects were of a very high standard, highlighting the ways they could help in

their community." She added, "As always, if there is anything we can do to support your local Conference, please don't hesitate to reach out to us. It's vital to nurture connections between youth Conferences and local Conferences. I am also available to attend Area/Conference meetings to discuss Young SVP with members. Thank you all for your continued support!"

Regional President Hannah Clarke praised the students for their commitment and acknowledged the impressive projects and hard work they had put in. The day featured a fantastic performance by **St. Vincent's School** in Dundalk, which saw everyone cheering along. Isabel from **Scoil Mhuire Trim** and Charlie from **Colaiste Na Mi Meath** led our opening reflection for the day. The National President of SVP, Rose McGowan kicked off the day with a welcoming speech to the students.

The day was thoroughly enjoyed by students, teachers, SVP members, volunteers, and staff alike. We are already looking forward to the next Youth Day event in 2025.

We also want to thank the schools that were unable to attend our Youth Day for the incredible work they have done: **Cnoc Mhuire Longford, Mean Scoil Mhuire Longford, St. Louis Louth, Columba College Westmeath, Mercy Kilbeggan Westmeath, Marist College Louth.**

For more information about the Young SVP Programme, please contact **Clodagh Naughton** Youth Development Officer for the North East and Midlands Region Clodagh.naughton@svp.ie.



WEST

Youth Day – West Region

Over 350 students from Galway, Mayo and Roscommon gathered in the TF Royal, Castlebar on the 25th of March to celebrate the work they carried out for the Young SVP programme.

The Young SVP youth day is a chance for students from across the counties to come together and showcase the work that they have carried out throughout the academic year. All the projects that young people carry out are based on the work of the Society and are youth led.

Some of the projects showcased and spoken about were Befriending projects, **Castlerea CS** wrote letters and cards to the local nursing home and read a beautiful poem on the day. **Scoil Muire & Padraig** hosted a Christmas party for the elderly people in the local community which seen music, dancing and an afternoon tea. In **Dominican College, Taylors Hill** the students invited older people in the community into the school every week and built up a friendship with them. In **Gort Nor Abbey Crossmolina**, the students organised a grandparents walk which finished with a cup of tea and a chat. All inspiring projects which truly reflects the ethos of the SVP and that important element of Support & Friendship

On the day students also spoke about the importance of the environment and particularly the work they have done to create more awareness among their peers about the dangers of Fast Fashion and the importance of shopping more sustainably. Many of the schools took part in pop up Vincent's Shop projects and clothes drives. **St. Marys** in Ballina held an upcycling workshop with the 1st years, they made bags and pencil cases from denim.



All schools who participated in the programme took part in social justice workshops and the students carried out projects to combat the social injustices they see in their community. **St. Joseph's** in Charlestown hosted a 'sleepless night' sleep out. James Breheny, the president of the Conference explained on the day *"In March we held a sleepless night for St. Vincent de Paul. We decided to do this because unfortunately sleepless nights are all too common now a days. Throughout the night we participated in various activities to keep us awake during the night. We set up a go fund me a couple of weeks beforehand and shared. We raised over €800 in total which we are very grateful to everyone who donated."*

St Gerald's College spoke about their heartwarming project to paint a vibrant mural on an outside wall of the women's refuge centre, Castlebar. The project aimed to bring colour, positivity, and hope to the residents of the centre while showcasing the artistic talents of the students involved. *"We decided to go with nature and open green spaces, we wanted the mural to be peaceful, the mural includes tress, rivers, mountains and images of nature that we hope will evoke a sense of peace and hope in the lives of those who are staying in the refuge"* explained Aaron one of the members of the Young SVP group. *"We were very aware of the space that we were in and that we had to show respect during our time there"* continued Aaron.



High Cross College in Tuam ran a variety of projects throughout the year, they spoke about their breakfast club, their peer pals, and their many fundraising initiatives.

Maureen Mitchell the regional president in the West Region opened the day with a congratulations to each of the students who participated in the programme.

'It is vital that young people like yourselves continue this good work and use your energy and enthusiasm to make changes in your community and work towards achieving social justice for all'

Helen Ralph

Youth Development Officer
for the West Region





'We were very aware of the space we were in and had to show respect during our time there.'

St. Gerald's College Embarks on Mural Project at Safe Ireland Mayo Refuge

St. Gerald's College has launched a heart-warming initiative to paint a vibrant mural on an outside wall of the women's refuge centre in Castlebar. This project aimed to bring colour, positivity, and hope to the residents while showcasing the artistic talents of the students involved.

The initiative is part of the students' participation in the Young St. Vincent de Paul (SVP) programme, which aims to teach young people about the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, its ideals, and its work towards social justice. This programme plays a significant role in the Society, offering students the opportunity to engage in positive social justice actions within their local community.

During a brainstorming session, the students decided to create something that stands against violence towards women and provides support. They worked tirelessly to design and execute the mural, featuring uplifting imagery and messages of solidarity and empowerment. *"We decided to go with nature and open green spaces. We wanted the mural to be peaceful, including trees, rivers, mountains, and images of nature that we hope will evoke a sense of peace and hope in the lives of those staying in the*

refuge," explained Aaron, a member of the Young SVP group. *"We were very aware of the space we were in and had to show respect during our time there,"* he added.

The project was funded by the local SVP Education Conference, St. Aloysius Conference, and was a collaborative effort between SVP, Safe Ireland Mayo, and the local school. Safe Ireland Mayo, under the governance of Safe Ireland, is the frontline agency in County Mayo working with women and their children experiencing domestic abuse and coercive control.

"Thank you so much to the TY students of St. Gerald's and everyone involved for creating this colourful, bright, and fun mural. It is a very welcome additional ray of sunshine here," expressed Safe Ireland Mayo.

Safe Ireland Mayo offers a range of supports in County Mayo, including crisis refuge accommodation, outreach supports at various locations, and children's support services. The local Society of St. Vincent de Paul built the refuge with the help of the Archdiocese of Tuam and the Sisters of Mercy, but it is Safe Ireland that manages the Mayo Women's Support Services (MWSS).

The St. Aloysius Conference supports students with bursaries, occupational therapy, psychology assessments, and more, up to and including third level.

"This project is very important within the community. Understanding the seriousness of violence against women and coercive control is crucial for young men as it empowers them to break the cycle of abuse, promote healthy relationships, and contribute to building a safer and more respectful society for all. This project not only enhances the space aesthetically but also signifies that the community is there to help. In SVP, we strive to help people fully participate in society and reach out to those on the margins. For us, this project beautifully shows women and families dealing with these situations that we are here to help," explained Helen Ralph, Youth Development Officer for SVP in the West.

It is hoped that this project will inspire other schools to get involved with the Young SVP programme in their area and encourage organisations to undertake similar initiatives that promote inclusivity and compassion.

Young SVP in the South East round out a busy year

On the 23rd April 2024, we celebrated another hugely successful Youth Day in the South East Region. The SETU Arena was, again, the setting for this exciting gathering of Young SVP members from across the 5 counties (Waterford, Wexford, Carlow, Kilkenny and Laois). 450 students from 25 different schools travelled to Waterford this year making it our biggest youth day to date!! All schools had the opportunity to showcase their achievements and display the projects they completed as part of the Young SVP programme this year.

The day started with the ever-popular activity hunt which encourages the students to mix and meet with each other and share their Young SVP journeys. The retail team in the South East hosted a fantastic pop-up shop this year. Lots of students and teachers were thrilled to pick up some lovely pieces, at bargain prices! All money that was raised on the day was donated to an education Conference in the region. The most popular part of the activity hunt this year was the time capsule, a piece to commemorate the 180 year SVP anniversary, where students, teachers and members had the opportunity to write a message and put it into a time capsule that has been sealed for 20 years and will be opened on the 200 year anniversary of SVP in 2044.

Our students went above and beyond this year, designing some fantastic display boards and putting together

some amazing stage presentations. The display boards are the student's chance to show everyone all the projects they completed this year. Each display stand had an interactive part to it, to ensure fun was had by all. It was safe to say the karaoke machine that Coláiste an Átha had was very popular this year! On stage this year, we were treated to some jiving and line dancing, singing, rapping, dancing and some very creative video presentations. The stage presentations give the students a chance to reflect on their year and share with everyone what their time in Young SVP meant to them.

A massive thank you to our Regional President, Annette Beckett, who kicked off the day with some lovely and encouraging words for our Young SVP members. I'd also like to extend my thanks to the SVP members, staff and Young SVP members that helped me on the day. I couldn't have done it without you all.

Schools involved in Young SVP this year: **Ardscoil na nDeise, St Augustine's College, St Declan's Community College, Our Lady of Mercy Secondary School, Presentation Secondary School, Waterford, Mount Sion CBS, De la Salle College, St Angela's Secondary School, St Paul's Community College, Our Lady of Lourdes Secondary School, St Mary's Secondary School, Meanscoil Gharman, Presentation Secondary School, Wexford, Coláiste an Átha, Gorey Community School, Bunclody VEC, FCJ Buncody, Scoil Aireagail, Duiske College, Presentation Secondary School, Kilkenny, Loreto Secondary School, Castlecomer Community School, Presentation De La Salle, Presentation College Carlow, St Leo's College, Heywood Community School, Mountrath Community School, Scoil Chríost Ri.**

Debbie Donohoe

Youth Development Officer
for the South East Region





On Saturday, April 20th, St. Vincent de Paul celebrated 180 years of dedication to serving those in need across Ireland.

The event took place at the members' day at the Convention Centre in Dublin, Young SVP were invited to sit on the afternoon couch session on the day. The speakers on the couch represented Young SVP at all levels, from Ballybay in Monaghan Megan Foy, UCD and also a member of the SVP Social Justice committee Sinead Rushe and Devin Synott from Trinity college. The students explained how they got involved with Young SVP and the different activities they engage with in their communities as part of their Conference. Representing the Youth Development Team Neil Lacey took a closer look at how Young SVP focuses on social action within the ethos and mission of SVP, finishing up by saying that he had huge faith in the young people involved in SVP and that the future is in safe hands. Closing out the show we treated to 100 plus students singing us out with a wonderful medley of song.



COLLEGES

The close of the college year 23/24 has seen the Colleges programme continue to grow and extend its outreach. Over the year, we have engaged with twenty-five third level institutions reaching over 900 students from Donegal to Galway to Cork. This has included delivering workshops on such topics as *Volunteering: A bridge between Well-being, Connection & Community* which encourages students to volunteer with SVP as much for their own benefit as for the benefit of those we assist. It also involved attending Open Days and delivering Information sessions on the work of SVP and how to become involved. In addition to this, we have begun to link in more closely with existing local Conferences and other SVP services as a result of which we now have some students volunteering in local Conferences, a foodbank and an SVP Youth Club. We also had two students join the Vincentian Lay Mission programme and spend a summer volunteering in Ghana.

Our established college Conferences continue to serve their communities through youth work, visiting the elderly, writing letters to residents of nursing homes and Street Outreach, where they testify that the most important part of that experience is listening and talking with the people they encounter. A special mention must also be given to the first president of SVP TU, Dublin Alan O'Regan. Alan was hugely instrumental in getting the Society up and running in TU Dublin. It was fitting then that at the campus-wide awards for TU, Dublin (which includes campuses in Tallaght, Blanchardstown, Bolton St, Aungier St. and Grangegorman) that Alan was awarded the 'Most Inspiring Social Justice Volunteer' on campus. TU Dublin also raised €2,300 for SVP which was presented to SVP on the night.



A huge, heartfelt 'thank you!' to all our wonderful students for all the time, commitment and enthusiasm they gave to the Society this year. We look forward to developing the programme further and seeing what next year will bring!

EAST REGION

A gathering of friendship and camaraderie.

On Thursday, May 30th our two Areas held a very successful SVP Gathering at Royal Marine Hotel, **Dun Laoghaire, Co Dublin**. We had two speakers, and four case studies were discussed. It was all very successful, and we had a very good attendance. It was a great opportunity to meet volunteers from another Area and share our experiences and form new friendships over pastries and coffee.

Mary Davis and our MSO Caroline Brady from Head Office, and Alan Lennox Rathdown Area President did a wonderful job managing and running event. We all enjoyed a great evening.



Running for Hope:

Carmel Meegan's Marathon Mission for the National Rehabilitation Hospital

Volunteers like Carmel Meegan, from the **Holy Cross Conference** at the National Rehabilitation Hospital in **Dun Laoghaire, County Dublin**, are making a significant impact through their dedication and compassion.

"I volunteer for the Holy Cross Conference for St. Vincent de Paul at the National Rehabilitation Hospital. The patients I meet really touch my heart, all of whom have gone through life-changing events, with many facing the reality of never walking independently again. This experience constantly reminds me of how fortunate I am to have a body that functions well enough to participate in marathons," says Carmel.

Moved by the resilience and spirit of the patients, Carmel decided to run the Zurich Marathon on April 21, 2024, to raise funds for these incredible individuals. *"The support I received from everyone who kindly donated to the patients at the rehabilitation hospital kept me going,"* she shares. The overwhelming response resulted in raising €3,815, a testament to the generosity and kindness of the community.

Carmel expresses her heartfelt gratitude, saying, *"I am so grateful for all the donations and everyone's kindness."*

St Kevin's Conference Tinahely, earns prestigious spot at this year's Bord Bia Bloom Postcard Garden Section

The SVP's Fairgreen Resource Centre Gardening Group in Tinahely, Co. Wicklow, earned a prestigious spot in the Postcard Garden Section at this year's Bord Bia Bloom, held during the June Bank Holiday weekend in Phoenix Park, Dublin.

Established just a year ago, the Fairgreen Resource Centre Gardening Group has made remarkable progress under the guidance of volunteer tutor and horticulturalist, Evelyn Byrne.

Despite strong competition from numerous community and school groups, the Group's application was successful. The Postcard Gardens, each measuring 2 metres by 3 metres, are a popular attraction at the Festival. This year, the inspirational garden created by the SVP Group, titled "Ode to an Irish Bog," won a commendation and generated

significant interest from visitors and fellow exhibitors. The garden emphasised the importance of recognising and protecting bogs, highlighting the diverse flora, fauna, and wildlife that thrive in these environments, and underscoring their integral role in the Irish landscape and national heritage. The Group believes that everyone can contribute, even in small ways, to addressing Climate Change and the threat to Biodiversity.

Group members were present each day to answer questions and provide information on how to recreate similar wetland areas in personal gardens, community spaces, or wasteland. Irish bogs support a rich variety of plant life, including Bog Cotton, Water Lilies, Blueberries, Cranberries, and various Grasses and Mosses. These bogs are also habitats for

Hares, Otters, Frogs, and numerous insects, as well as hunting grounds for birds like Peregrine Falcons, Merlins, Plovers, and Hen Harriers.

After dismantling the bog at the end of Bloom, the Group plans to recreate the garden at the Fairgreen Resource Centre grounds. The community, local schools, and fellow gardeners are invited to visit and see what can be achieved.

For more information on creating a bog garden of any size in your garden or on your land, please contact us by email at fairgreenresourcecentre@gmail.com.



Setting up the Garden:
From Left to Right: Linda Hickey Evelyn Byrne, Carole Nolan, Deirdre Minogue, Ann Kelley and Jane Doyle.

STELLA MARIS: A Beacon for Seafarers in Dublin

A Historic Haven

Stella Maris, meaning “Star of the Sea,” is a Special Works Conference of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, dedicated to seafarers, acting as their parish away from home. Established in Ireland in 1910 on Sir John Rogerson’s Quay, Dublin 2, it initially offered visiting ships’ crews spiritual and recreational facilities, food, and accommodation. Irish seafarers were also catered for, with funding from various businesses, donors, and clergy.

Transition and Continuity

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, the need for accommodation waned, leading to a move to 3 Beresford Place, Dublin 1, opposite the Custom House. This facility has been operational 365 nights a year, providing essential services such as a reception desk, TV room, phone booths, currency exchange, postage services, a small library, snooker and table tennis tables, an oratory for Mass and ecumenical services, and later, a bar, shop, and transport facilities. More recently, WiFi has been added.



The Oratory – showing the altar – a ship’s wheel from the 1st Irish Lights ship (Granuaile)

Financial Viability and Adaptation

Initially, Stella Maris was financially viable through basement leasing and fundraising events, including lectures on topics like humpback whales, and flag days. However, due to new statutory regulations, these activities have ceased.

The Seafarers’ Lives

Seafarers, often from developing countries like the Philippines, Indonesia, Myanmar, and India, spend months away from home, driven by economic necessity to provide for their families. Up to 70% of the world’s 1.75 million seafarers do not or cannot join trade unions, leading to lower salaries and challenging working conditions. Despite this, they rarely complain, valuing their employment but facing loneliness and homesickness. Contracts typically last 6 to 9 months, with seafarers recruited through manning agencies. They carry a Seaman’s Book, similar to a passport, detailing their qualifications and employment history.

Stella Maris’ Role

Stella Maris aims to be a welcoming presence, offering facilities and, most importantly, a listening ear. The staff enjoy hearing about seafarers’ families and achievements, sometimes discussing Irish culture figures like Bono, Enya, and Riverdance. Each interaction focuses on social connection, gratitude for their work, and pastoral support when requested. Stella Maris also provides guidance on where to seek additional help if needed.



Seafarers on a P&O ship celebrating Christmas 2023
Shoe-box gifts from Stella Maris



Crew on board the “Navi Star” – first ship of maize out of Ukraine following the Commencement of the Russian invasion – 22 August, 2022). We supplied them with Hi-vis jackets.

Valuing the Invisible Workforce

Meeting a crew member might only happen once due to their shore leave, vacation, or reassignment to another ship. Stella Maris encourages seafarers, reminding them of the immense value of their work and the tradition of seamanship. They acknowledge the significant responsibilities these individuals bear, including safeguarding the ship, its cargo, and the environment.

The Impact of Seafarers

Seafarers are crucial to global trade, with 95% of world trade transported by sea. Without them, we wouldn’t have access to many essentials such as cars, computers, medical supplies, fuel, food, and machinery. Stella Maris continues to support these essential workers, ensuring they feel appreciated and valued far from home.

South East

Celebrating Dedication:

St. Dominic's SVP Conference Honors Long-Standing Members

In February 2023, **St. Dominic's SVP Conference in Waterford City** hosted a memorable event at the Hook and Ladder café, bringing together current and recently retired members to celebrate the exceptional contributions of Frank English and John Brady.

Frank English's remarkable journey with SVP Waterford began in 1966, culminating in 2022 after 47 years of unwavering service. His dedication was unparalleled as he tirelessly worked to meet the needs of those seeking assistance. Though Frank aspired to reach 50 years of service, he retired due to health reasons. His late wife, Joan, also exemplified the spirit of generosity, volunteering from 1992 to 2017. Together, they embodied the essence of compassion and care, always striving to support their community.

John Brady joined the SVP in 2016 and demonstrated similar commitment until he retired to care for his ailing wife, Mary. Prior to his official involvement with SVP,

John was a community stalwart. As a pub owner in John's Park, Waterford City, he frequently went above and beyond to assist those around him.

To honour their dedication, Frank and John received long-service certificates and medals from SVP Head Office. These tokens of appreciation symbolise the gratitude of the SVP Society for their years of service.

The luncheon also provided an opportunity for Frank and John to meet new members Monika Toliusyte and Paul Comiskey, who joined St. Dominic's Conference in 2022. This gathering was not only a celebration of past achievements but also a welcoming of fresh energy and commitment to continue the vital work of the SVP in Waterford City.

Frank and John's stories serve as an inspiration to all, showcasing the profound impact dedicated individuals can have on their communities through the SVP. Their legacies remind us of the importance of compassion, generosity, and unwavering support for those in need.

In her memory, Marie's daughter Joan is raising funds for the local SVP Conference where her mother spent five decades helping the community. In September, 58-year-old Joan will undertake two iconic long-distance swims: a 2.5-mile swim from Alcatraz to San Francisco Bay on September 10th and a 2.5-mile loop around Liberty Island in New York on September 14th.

Joan, who lives in the UK, has an impressive swimming pedigree, having participated in the English Channel relay, North Channel relay, Bristol Channel relay, Loch Ness relay, and swimming the

St. Dominic's Conference members



Frank and Joan English



Frank English Presentation



John Brady Presentation



Honouring Marie Fennelly: A Fundraiser in Her Memory

Marie Fennelly devoted over 50 years to the local SVP, first in the Ladies' Conference and later in the Holy Family Conference, serving as President, Secretary, and Treasurer. Marie passed away in December 2023 at the age of 94. Born in New York in 1930, her parents had emigrated from West Cork.

entire length of the Thames from source to Henley—a distance of over 100 miles. Joan's love of swimming began humbly, learning the basics from her brother, Will, in the Owenass River in Mountmellick.

SVP Mountmellick feels honoured and grateful that Joan is commemorating her mother Marie's memory and lifetime of service in this way.

To support Joan's fundraiser visit: <https://www.svp.ie/fundraiser/liberty-island-new-york-alcatraz-to-san-francisco-bay-swim-challenges-for-joan-fennelly/>

North

Celebrating 180 Years of SVP

This very special milestone for the Society was recognised in the Northern Region by a letter from former President of Ireland and Chancellor of Trinity College Dublin, Mary McAleese. Video messages of congratulations were received from First Minister Michelle O'Neill and deputy First Minister Emma Little-Pengelly.



Northern Region Yearbook

We have recently published our third annual Yearbook showcasing the impact of the Society around the Northern Region. To view a copy of the yearbook, please visit <https://www.svp.ie/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/SVP-Yearbook-2023.pdf> or you can request a copy by email via info@svpni.co.uk.

King's Award for Voluntary Service

Dame Fionnuala Jay O'Boyle presented SVP Regional President Mary Waide with the first King's Award for Voluntary Service.

Mary and board member Anne McLarnon attended a garden party at Buckingham Palace in recognition of the charity's work in the Northern Region.

DR. MARY MCALEESE

PRESIDENT OF IRELAND 1997-2011

CHANCELLOR TRINITY COLLEGE DUBLIN

11.04.2024

To members of the SVP Northern Region on the occasion of the 180th anniversary of the foundation of the SVP in Ireland

To arrive at this great anniversary that spans one hundred and eighty years a baton of care for the poor had to be passed from one generation to the next. Those who have taken on that baton of care and with it responsibility for the work of the SVP deserve huge respect and thanks. Each one a volunteer, each one inspired to act by a personal humanity and a decency that we should never take for granted. Because of your fidelity to the mission of the SVP hope and help has replaced despair and need in the lives of countless children, women and men. You have been the hands and heart of God's work, of the great Christian commandment, showcasing what love of neighbour and love of a stranger in need can accomplish, how it can change the course of a life, bring light into darkness and renew faith in simple goodness. In back of what you do is a reliance on the charity and generosity of others and because of the integrity of the SVP's work over eighteen decades, the public has responded year after year with the funds that keep you going and that are also a measure of the trust you have earned. Keep going. There is no let up, no day in sight when your work will be done. But in this special year, take time to be proud of all you do in the name of SVP and to be grateful for the gift of one another, working together for a great name and a great cause. Happy Anniversary!

With every good wish

Mary McAleese

Mary McAleese



New Ambassador for the Northern Region

In a harmonious fusion of melody and philanthropy, Malachi Cush, the celebrated singer songwriter, has assumed the role of Ambassador for the Northern Region. With a shared commitment to making a positive impact across the Northern Region, this partnership heralds a new era of creativity and compassion.

Known for his soul-searching performances and heartfelt lyrics that resonate with audiences of all ages, Dungannon man Malachi brings musical prowess and a genuine dedication to humanity. His ability to connect deeply with local communities, coupled with his unwavering commitment to doing good, makes him an ideal ambassador for SVP.

Mary Waide, SVP Regional President for the Northern Region, expressed her deep gratitude to Malachi Cush and said: "We are humbled to welcome Malachi Cush to be an Ambassador of St Vincent de Paul as his values are perfectly aligned with the mission of St Vincent de Paul."

"Loved across the generations, Malachi is a great role model to children and the young and old alike. The qualities he possesses are exceptional and he reaches far beyond the stages he performs on. I believe that his passion transcends boundaries, and his infectious spirit has the ability to lift even the most vulnerable amongst us. As our Ambassador, Malachi will be embarking on a journey with SVP to raise the charity's profile locally through fundraising opportunities and public appearances and we are very privileged to have his support."

Commenting on his new role with SVP, Malachi Cush said: "I am deeply honoured to have been chosen as Ambassador for St. Vincent de Paul. For so many years, this charity has had a remarkable impact on the most vulnerable members of our society, empowering them with dignity and support.

"I admire the dedication and selflessness of the volunteers and staff who tirelessly carry out the organisation's mission. I am inspired by their unwavering commitment



SVP Ambassador Malachi Cush

to caring for others and hope that I can contribute to their noble cause as part of this wonderful team.

"As Ambassador, I am committed to shedding light on the vital work being done by SVP and raising awareness of the ongoing needs within our communities. I hope to serve as a relatable and approachable advocate for the charity, fostering connections and support for many years to come. Together, we can make a meaningful difference and be a light in the lives of those most in need."



Hannahstown Retirement

SVP members in **Hannahstown** marked the recent retirement of Charlie and Geraldine with Peter McAlister, West Belfast Area President, presenting them with an inscribed Belfast Crystal Cross. Combined, they have been members of SVP for over 70 years, and they received a framed certificate of service from Eilish Armstrong and Christine Gaston. A Mass was celebrated by Fr Pat Devlin in St Josephs followed by refreshments in Hannahstown Community Centre. More than 30 SVP members from Corpus Christie, Our Lady Queen of Peace, St Peter the Rock, St Joseph's Hannahstown, St Teresa's, St Peters and Most Holy Redeemer and members of Hannahstown Parish, joined to say thanks to Charlie and Geraldine for their long service. A parishioner of Hannahstown presented them with flowers.



North Down & Ards area gathering

A recent gathering of SVP members from **North Down and Ards** was held in Clandeboy Golf Club with speakers from Women's Aid and South-Eastern Health and Social Care Trust Addictions Team.



Aquinas donation

Mary Waide, SVP Regional President, and Pauline Brown, SVP Regional Manager, had the privilege of meeting with staff and students of Aquinas Grammar School.

We would like to thank them for welcoming us to their school and for their very generous donation.



Vincent's Anniversaries Celebrated

Vincent's Ballymena

Vincent's Ballymena has proudly commemorated 15 years at its current location with unwavering dedication to serving and uplifting the local community. Since its move to Cushendall Road in 2009, Vincent's Ballymena has evolved into a cornerstone of support, providing essential resources, fostering connections, and embodying the spirit of generosity that defines the Society of St. Vincent de Paul.

Vincent's Ballymena is a vibrant community hub, a beacon of hope where individuals from all walks of life converge to find a bargain and meet new friends. Vincent's Ballymena is synonymous with compassion, resilience, and empowerment in the local area.

Central to the success of Vincent's Ballymena is its enthusiastic and dedicated staff and volunteers, whose selfless commitment has fuelled the charity's mission since the shop opened its doors. Their tireless efforts and boundless generosity have touched countless lives, exemplifying the true essence of community spirit.

Mary Waide, SVP Regional President for the Northern Region, said: "As a member of St. Vincent de Paul in Ballymena I worked closely with other SVP Conference members in the town to relocate this much needed

community resource 15 years ago and I am so proud of the staff and volunteers in developing a shop that has made a great impact locally since moving in 2009.

"I want to personally express my gratitude to the staff, volunteers and members of SVP who have been invaluable in making Vincent's Ballymena the success that it is today. The shop truly holds a special place in the hearts of local people who rely on it and for that we are all very proud."

Mid and East Antrim Mayor, Alderman Gerardine Mulvenna, attended the celebrations together with SVP's newly appointed Ambassador Malachi Cush.

Vincent's Portadown

Vincent's on Portadown's Garvaghy Road has celebrated 25 years serving the local community with an event attended by SVP members who founded the shop, lots of young shoppers from Ashgrove Playgroup, and Nora Lavery who, at 98 years young, is the shop's longest supporting customer.

Deputy Lord Mayor of Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Council, Cllr Sorcha McGeown, joined SVP members from throughout the Armagh and Craigavon area, and Vincent's staff and volunteers, to congratulate everyone who has been involved in making the shop the success it is today from its humble beginnings 25 years ago.

Vincent's Portadown has evolved into a cornerstone of support, providing essential resources, fostering connections, and embodying the spirit of generosity that defines the Society of St. Vincent de Paul.

One Vincent's volunteer, Sheila Henderson, has been volunteering in the shop for 10 years. She says she is proud to volunteer a couple of days a week and she became a volunteer in honour of her mum, Nan Heaney, who volunteered from the shop opened, until she sadly passed away



nine years ago. "Mummy loved the whole community and volunteered four days a week since the shop opened. I volunteer two mornings a week and I love to meet the regulars who call in for a chat, to bag a bargain or meet new friends. I appreciate all the people who kindly donate to the shop as we couldn't do without the generous donations."

Bernie McNeice, SVP Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon Area President, said: "It's wonderful to see so many SVP members at today's celebration who enabled this great shop to open 25 years ago, closely followed by the furniture store a couple of years later."

"I would like to recognise the members of the local SVP St Patrick's Conference who were empowered to have their own SVP shop and decided to give it a try. They opened their own Vincent's by emptying out their wardrobes and the local community lent their support by donating clothes, bric-a-brac, books and toys."

"Both shops at the Mayfair Business Centre have gone from strength to strength and stood the test of time. There is a lovely sense of collaboration among the team and other SVP Conference members who provided invaluable guidance in the early days."

"I would like to pay tribute to the staff and volunteers for their dedication and enthusiasm, fuelling the charity's mission and touching lives with their boundless community spirit. They are central to the shop's success."

Eileen McKenna, SVP St Patrick's Conference President, added: "We want to thank all our customers who have supported us for the last 25 years. We are looking forward to the next 25 years of continuing to provide a community hub with compassion for the people of Portadown in these changing times."

SVP members and Vincent's Portadown staff and volunteers are grateful to all those who came out to enjoy the celebrations and are thankful for all the support they have received from volunteers who have passed away but who will always be remembered for their contribution in making the shop what it is today.

Pop Up Shops Success

Vincent's in Armagh and Portadown collaborated with students from Southern Regional College, Armagh, where they held a pop up shop which the business students planned and marketed as part of their course. The focus was on sustainability and reducing items going to landfill. Many thanks to the students and SRC for all their hard work.



Armagh shoppers



Student shoppers in Vincent's Armagh



Stefan, Bernie, Michael in the pop up shop



Working the till – Fiona and students



Killyclogher NI volunteers

Vincent's Killyclogher and Omagh hosted a pop-up shop in St Mary's Hall, Killyclogher. Thanks to all the members, staff and volunteers from Omagh Area. Special thanks to the staff from Power NI who helped hang 1000's of garments in preparation for the event!



Killyclogher pop up shop

Killyclogher and Omagh team shop



SVP Dromore on Song!

SVP Dromore orchestrated a heart-warming event this Bank Holiday Monday with the help of local country singer Ronnie Herdman. The talented musician performed live at both Drumbane Nursing Home and Mount Vale Nursing Home, treating the elderly residents to an afternoon of fantastic country music. The event was a tremendous success, garnering rave reviews from both staff and residents alike.

The afternoon was more than just entertainment; it was a valuable opportunity for SVP Dromore to forge new connections with the nursing homes. Contact details were shared with staff and residents, ensuring that SVP could offer future assistance as needed. This initiative not only helped raise awareness of SVP's presence in the community but also conveyed our continuous thoughts and prayers for the residents.



Ronnie Herdman singing and Conference member Michæla Zigashane sitting on the right.

A special thank you goes to Ronnie Herdman for his wonderful performance and to the SVP team for their dedication and training. Their efforts enable our members to engage creatively with the community and discover new ways to offer support.

We are grateful to Our Lord Jesus for blessing SVP's endeavours and look forward to continuing our mission of service and compassion.

North West

The North West Region held a number of area gatherings in March 2024

The North West Region held a number of area gatherings in March 2024. On the 5th of March there was an area gathering with the **Ardara, Dungloe and South Donegal** areas, this was held in the Abbey Hotel in Donegal Town. The guest speaker was Anne Pym from MABS. Anne discussed the impacts of living with debt, designing budgets with clients and the six step money advice process. This gave members an opportunity to meet with other members from other areas and share experiences with one another.



Sligo and Leitrim Gathering

On March 6th, the **Sligo and Leitrim** areas hosted an all-member gathering at the Castle Dargan Hotel in Sligo. Assumpta Kelly and Phil McLoughlin, two community welfare officers, gave a presentation about Community Welfare service. The purpose of CWO, access to the community welfare system, and additional needs payment were all discussed during the evening. The evening concluded with members participating in case studies.





On the 17th of May, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul hosted a gathering for all **Convoy members** at Friels Bar and Restaurant in Raphoe. The evening was a celebration and appreciation to all convoy members' support and contributions to their communities.

Mary Sheridan, the North West Regional Treasurer, presented medals to members who had served for 25 and 50 years with the Society of St. Vincent de Paul.

First Female President of Bundoran St. Vincent de Paul Conference Steps Down

Ms. Mary Mulreany, the pioneering first female President of the Bundoran Conference, has stepped down after an impactful five-year tenure. Throughout her presidency, Mary led the conference with unwavering professionalism, compassion, and diligence. Thankfully, Mary will continue to be an active member of the conference, contributing her invaluable experience for the foreseeable future.

Mary's journey to Bundoran began many years ago when she moved from Glengelvin, Co. Cavan, to work in the O'Connell household in Magheracar. It was here that she met and married her husband, Johnny Mulreany, a local man. The couple settled in Bundoran, fondly known as 'Beautiful Bundoran by the Silvery Sea,' and started their life together.

Much of Mary's life has been dedicated to her local community. She has worked in Home Support for 32 years, been deeply involved in church affairs, supported the North West Hospice in Sligo, and contributed over 45 years to the St. Vincent de Paul Bundoran. Her extensive participation and commitment to these causes are truly commendable.

What set Mary apart was her modest and private approach. She always worked quietly in the background, never seeking recognition or favour, and focused on helping the most vulnerable in the community.

We extend our best wishes to Mary for her future endeavours and warmly welcome Ms. Sheila O'Gara as the new President of the Bundoran Conference. We are confident she will carry on Mary's legacy with equal dedication and compassion.





Dessie Griffin being presented with a medal and certificate for his long-time service with St. Vincent de Paul by Fr. Kieran McAteer.

SVP has a long and proud history in Sligo.

This image, taken at Ozanam House in Sligo shows members of the Sligo Area Council in 1983.



Pictured left to right are Paddy O'Doherty, Christina Gallagher, Joe Clarke, Kay Horan, John Currid, Colm Fleming, Tony Rouse, Jimmy Keegan, Peter Byrne and Canon C Travers.

In this picture, taken around 1990, we have four members who held positions in the Region.

Pictured here with the late Bishop, Rev Christopher Jones are the late Bill Murray, Regional President, the late Catherine Ramsay, also a Regional President. We also have Frank Murphy, Sheila Scanlon and the late Ray Kelly.



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

John Doorly

St Mary's Conference
Dublin

St. Mary's Conference were deeply saddened by the passing in March of John Doorly, a friend and wonderful member. John was a member of St Mary's Conference Pro Cathedral from 1983. He served as President, treasurer and secretary over the next forty years with weekly meetings.

He also served as North Central Area Treasurer for five years. A devoted Vincentian with total commitment to the Society and his belief in kindness and help for those in need.

A wonderful man to work with and a great recruiter for SVP his wife Rosemary also served in SVP Harrington St and his son Chris was also President of St Mary's.

He will be missed by his colleagues in St Mary's and his many admirers in SVP.

Rest in Peace and God Bless John.

Tom Scully

St Fiacc's Conference,
Graiguecullen, Carlow

St. Fiacc's Conference Graiguecullen and the wider Vincentian family lost a valued member and friend with the sad passing of Tom on 24th April.

For over 60 years Tom was an active and hard-working member of St Vincent de Paul. Initially with St Joseph's Conference in Carlow town before becoming a founder member of St. Fiacc's Conference Graiguecullen. He was devoted to the work of the Society and gave of his time freely and generously. He was a compassionate and caring man, and this was reflected in his work for the Society, which was carried out with care and compassion and always with respect for the dignity of those he helped. There are many families in our parish who will have fond memories of the help they received from the Society during Tom's time with St. Fiacc' Conference.

Tom was also very active in the life of our parish community. He was involved in many projects such as the Lourdes Parish pilgrimage and St Fiacc's House residential and day care centre to name but a few.

Tom will be deeply missed by his family, friends and the wider community.

We extend our deepest sympathy to your son, daughters, grandchildren and extended family..

*May you be reunited with your beloved wife Fred and may you rest in peace.
Ar dheis De go raibh a Anam Dilis.*



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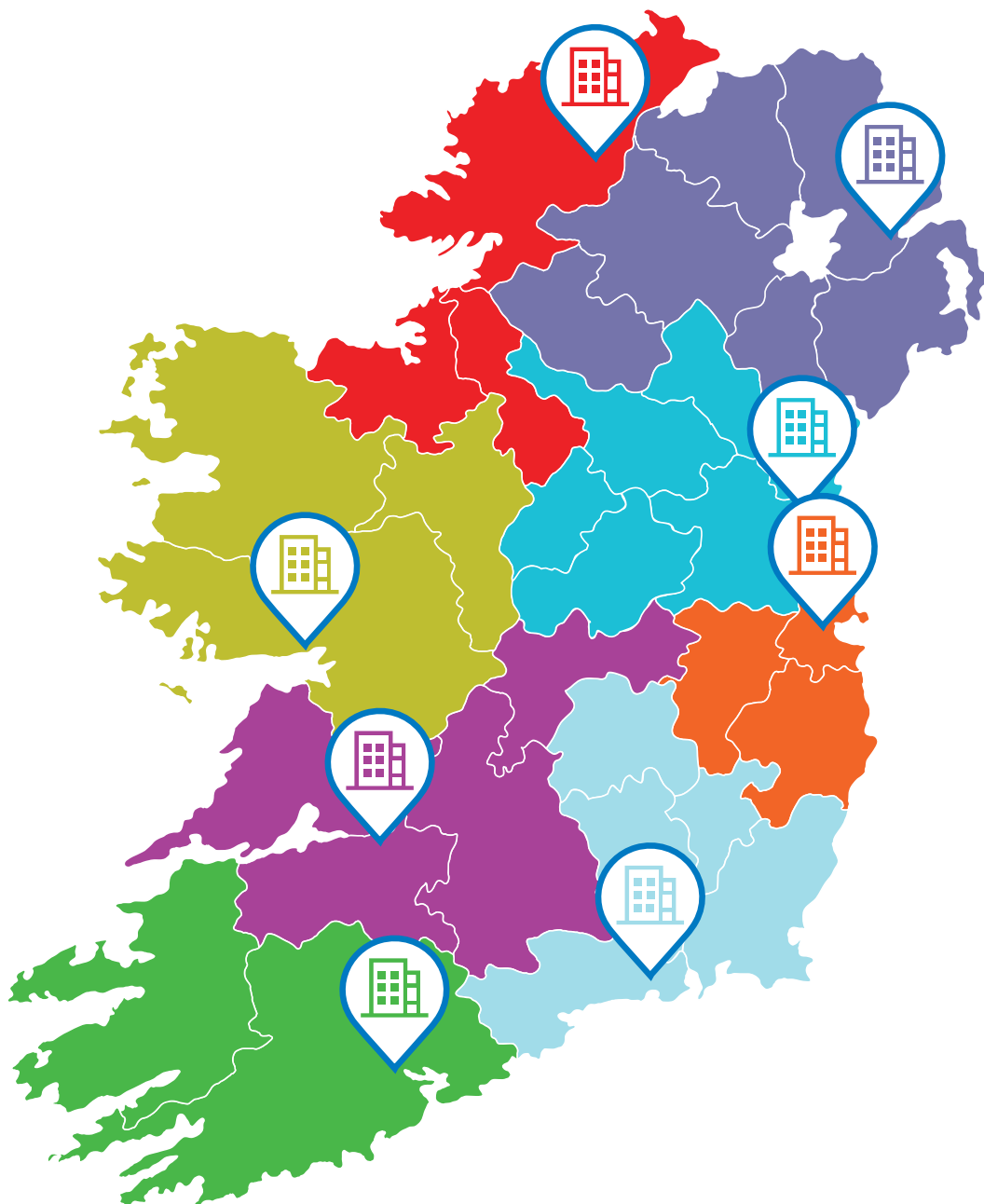
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