

WINTER/SPRING 2026

THE SVP BULLETIN

MAGAZINE OF THE SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

The Voice of Social Justice in Ireland

**Poverty
hurts
children
hard.**



A TIME TO JOURNEY TOGETHER

SAVING THE PLANET AND THE SALVATION OF OUR WORLD



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

THE SVP BULLETIN

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SVP - Society of St. Vincent
de Paul Ireland



St. Vincent de Paul Ireland

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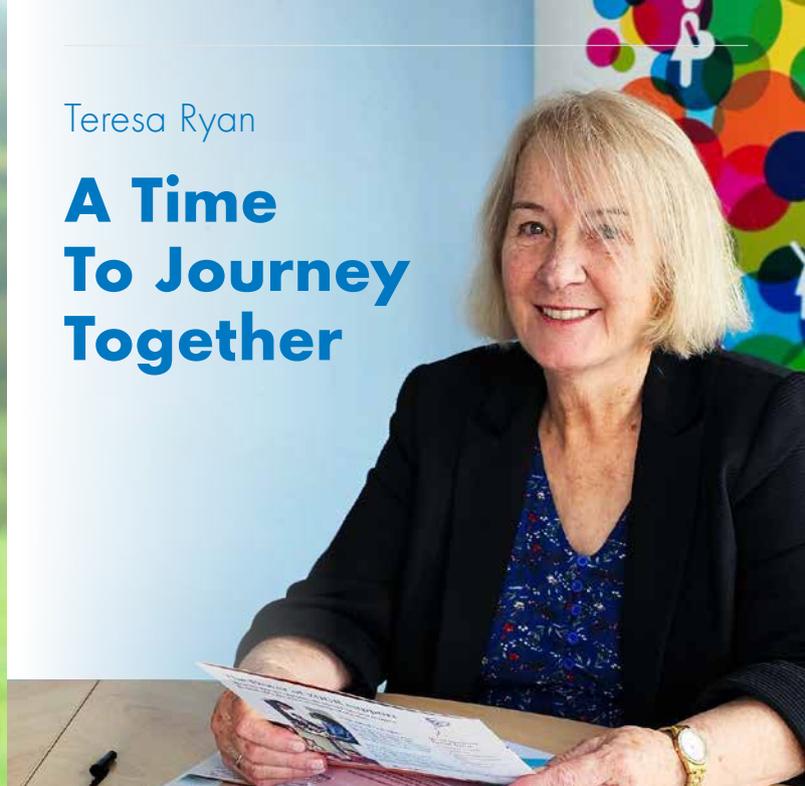
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"Not all of us can do great things. But we can do small things with great love."

- Mother Teresa

Teresa Ryan

A Time To Journey Together



I am very honoured to have been elected to the role of National President of the St. Vincent de Paul Society in September of 2025. I am acutely aware of the vital and irreplaceable role which our Society plays in the lives of hundreds of thousands of people

the length and breadth of our island. My own memories of need in childhood, and of those who supported me, have left me with a strong sense of responsibility towards those who are struggling in our society for a myriad of reasons.

Traditionally, the St. Vincent de Paul Society met the basic needs of people for survival. We live in a society where the rising costs of living, housing insecurity, energy poverty, and barriers to education are putting a lot of stress on people and families all over Ireland. Every day, the steady stream of calls for help reminds us that people are now suffering at multiple levels of need and deprivation.

We must continue to develop appropriate and multi-layered responses to the ever-evolving needs if we are to play a meaningful role in creating a more equal society.

Responding, in particular, to any disadvantages or needs in educational provision may well be the way forward to bringing real and lasting equality among our people.

The strong dedication of our Vincentian family gives me a lot of hope. I see amazing kindness, strength, and determination across all of our conferences and regions. You continue to treat the people you serve with compassion and dignity, whether through home visits, working in our shops, support services, advocacy, or education scholarships.

The real Vincentian way is to listen first, answer with care, and walk with people when they need it most.

One of the many challenges we face within the Society is sustaining and growing our membership. This year, 2026, is dedicated to volunteerism in Europe. In order to ensure that the Society can continue its work in communities across the country, recruitment and retention of members is very important. We are all ambassadors of SVP. The way we speak about our work, the welcome we extend to new members, and the support we offer one another all play a vital role in securing the future of the Society. As National President, my top priority is to listen to our members, volunteers, and staff. I want to learn from your experiences, understand the challenges you face, and make sure that your voices continue to shape the Society's future. Being a leader at SVP means walking together with everyone else, guided by our shared values and commitment to social justice.

Managing an organisation in this modern era also requires us to embrace technology in a way unheard of 20/30 years ago. 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. It would be easy to lose focus in the face of this mountain of policy requirements. While new strategies are being developed, we must keep in mind that the key focus of everything we do has to be the respect and support of all those in need who seek our help.

On a personal note, I wish to thank all those who have given me such a warm welcome since my appointment as President. The staff at our Dublin headquarters has been hugely helpful to me in every way. I wish to thank the outgoing President, Rose McGowan, for her unstinting support in ensuring as smooth a transition as possible. There is an amazing willingness among the staff and volunteers I have met in the small number of areas I have visited so far to bring forward new ideas and to contribute in any way they can. I look forward to visiting all regions in the country and meeting with you all. A special thanks to those who agreed to serve as officers on the National Management Council, and on national committees, at my invitation. Táim an-bhuioch díobh.

We will keep responding to needs with love, courage, and hope, just like Blessed Fréidéric Ozanam did. I look forward to journeying with you in the years to come as we work together to carry on the mission and spirit of the Society for this generation and beyond.

Go raibh maith agáibh as bhur gcomhoibriú. I really appreciate each and every contribution.

Teresa Ryan

Teresa Ryan
National President,
Society of St. Vincent de Paul

Saving the Planet and the Salvation of the World

by Paschal Scallan CM
SVP Spiritual Advisor



I can't say I'm much of an environmentalist. I'm as careful as most people about recycling, I suppose, but I'm not a gardener and I'm not much good with trees.

In spite of myself, though, I have found over the years that I'm usually very pleased to hear about the reintroduction of species in various habitats. I like to hear about sea eagles and the possibility that the pine marten is the answer to the invasion of the grey squirrel. It's a real pleasure to hear about rewilding gardens and all that's happening with bee keeping. But, it's still depressing to hear about the north Atlantic salmon and what's going on with fish stocks generally. Urban foxes are fascinating but if they're in our towns, what's happening in the countryside?

And speaking of foxes, the reintroduction of wolves to the Yellowstone National Park in the US is probably one of the most awe-inspiring stories the environmental movement can tell, of how restoring the animal at the head of the food chain has led to the revival of the entire ecosystem in Yellowstone, its flora and fauna and even the courses of its rivers.

Our widening and deepening environmental awareness is a real help to a personal and global examination of conscience that compels us to reassess our sense of who we are and our part in the healing and restoration of our world, and our brothers and sisters who have been isolated and broken by all that has gone wrong.

Because, we often make the mistake of thinking that we live in the best of times and in the best of all possible worlds. We pull our coats around ourselves and shudder at the thought that the past was a colder, darker place.

But if we think like that, we may have allowed ourselves to be misled because even though so much has advanced beyond what our ancestors experienced; in many parts of the world human living is as difficult as it ever was and is often made worse by an acceptance that the winner takes it all and the rest can make the best of what's left. Human life and the life of the planet itself, we are learning, cannot for long take much more of this.

If the environmental movement is showing a way ahead in terms of the restoration of a 'natural order', so to speak, then what are we to make of the way in which we are prompted and led by our faith and our religion?

What sort of change would it take to see the kind of world envisaged by the prophet Isaiah in which predator and prey live in harmony with each other, in which no harm is done in all God's holy mountain? This is a quantum leap beyond the challenges the environmental movement asks of us, where we move from saving the planet to contemplate the salvation of the world. This is the connection Pope Francis wanted us to make.

Many of us try to be selfless and generous, and whether we are led by a sense of faith or of a common humanity, we would like to think that whatever we do makes a difference to someone. This has been the focus of the members of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul in Ireland for around 180 years. In trying to respond to the hundreds of thousands of requests for help the Society receives every year, we ask the whole country to be part of what it takes to heal the world.

Pier Giorgio Frassati: A New SVP Saint

by Larry Tuomey



On 7 September 2025 Pope Leo XIV added the name of a young Italian Vincentian, Pier Giorgio Frassati, to the Register of Saints.

Born in Turin on 6 April 1901 into a wealthy and well known family, St. Pier Giorgio was the son of Adélaïde, a well-established painter and Alfredo Frassati, a politician who also owned a newspaper still influential today.

From a young age Pier Giorgio had a deep spiritual life. He was devoted to the Rosary and attended Mass every day. He said "Jesus comes to me every morning in Holy Communion and I reciprocate in a very small way by visiting his poor." He belonged to so many Catholic organisations he found it impossible to attend them all. But his membership of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul was very special to him from the day he first joined age 17 until hours before his death at age 24.

Pier Giorgio had a remarkable combination of qualities – political activism and social justice, piety and devotion, humanity and goodness, holiness and daily life, compassion and practical action.

Like many young Vincentians, Pier Giorgio sometimes disagreed with the way things were handled within the Conference. In 1922 he wrote to his friend Carlo "If you really want to know, I would abolish certain Conferences."

He was frustrated by the decision of his Conference to abandon a needy family because of the suspected misconduct of one of the family. Pier Giorgio thought that the family should have been given advice rather than being abandoned, so he resigned from that Conference and joined another. This is an issue that has a contemporary ring for many young members!

Even with the pressure of exams, Pier Giorgio kept up his visits to those in need with his Conference members often neglecting to visit his own friends. He strongly believed in the model offered by the SVP since Ozanam's time. In a speech on charity to his fellow students he encouraged them to get involved in a Conference. "It is a simple organisation suitable

for students because it does not involve commitment apart from being in a particular place one day a week every week and then visiting a number of families."

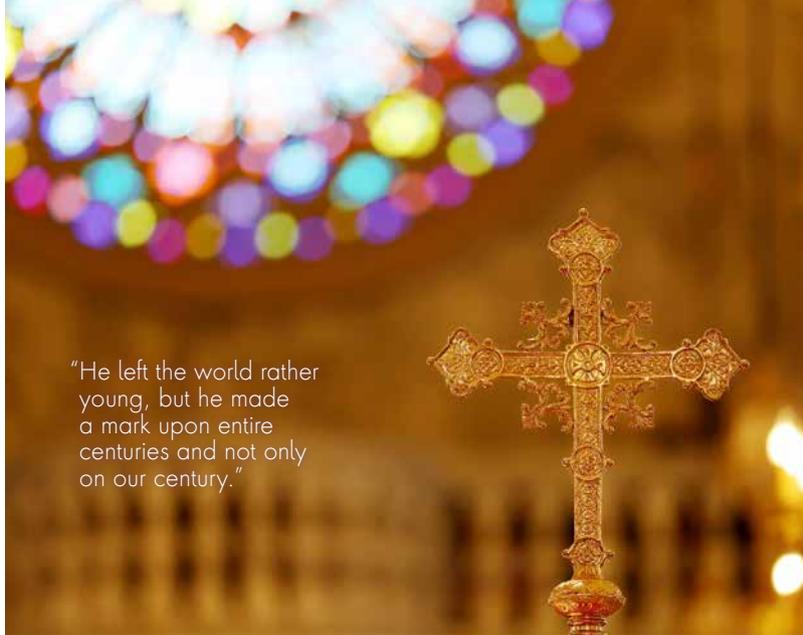
"You will see in a short time just how much good we can do to those we visit, and how much good we can do to ourselves."

Pier Giorgio had a great love for those who were poor. There are many examples of this. His mother often scolded him for being late for dinner after his Conference work (he usually had to run home having given away his bus money!)

His father chastised him for coming home without a coat, a regular occurrence since Pier Giorgio used to give away his own clothes to anyone in need. When asked by his friends why he often rode third class on trains he would reply, "Because there is no fourth class."

"He sacrificed vacations at his family's summer house because he said "If everyone leaves Turin, who will take care of the poor?"

For Pier Giorgio, it was not simply a matter of giving something to the lonely, the sick, those in any kind of need, but rather giving one's whole self. He saw Jesus in those who were poor and to a friend who asked him how he could bear to enter the often dirty surroundings where those who are poor are often forced to live, he answered "Remember always that it is Jesus to whom you go. I see a special light that the rest of us do not have around the sick, the poor, the broken, and the unfortunate."



"He left the world rather young, but he made a mark upon entire centuries and not only on our century."

Side by side with his deep spirituality and great compassion for those in need, Pier Giorgio had many of the normal interests of a young man of his time which it is reassuring for the rest of us to see. He was a mountaineer, an excellent sportsman, and an enthusiastic advocate for political issues. There are photographs showing him laughing, taking a drink and socialising with his friends. He had a reputation as a practical joker. One of his student friends woke up to find a drawing of a donkey on his bed, a reminder from Pier Giorgio that he was being a "fool" for not pursuing his studies.

Even when terminally ill, Pier Giorgio did not forget his closest friends – the poor. On the eve of his death, he asked his sister to take a package from his jacket and with weak hands wrote a note to a fellow Conference member which said "Here are the injections for Converso. The pawn ticket is Sappas. I had forgotten it; renew it on my behalf"

Death did not come as something unwelcome to Pier Giorgio. He often commented on his desire to see Jesus so much

that he believed that the day of his death would be the most beautiful day of his life. He died on 4th July 1925. His funeral was a spectacle. The streets of Turin were lined with a crowd of mourners unknown to his family; clergy, students, and of course the poor and needy whom he served so unselfishly for seven years.

At the beatification of Pier Giorgio in May 1990, Pope John Paul II said "This young Italian really proves that it is really worth giving up everything to serve the Lord. He testifies that holiness is possible for everyone and that only the revolution of charity can enkindle the hope of a better future in the hearts of people. He left the world rather young, but he made a mark upon entire centuries and not only on our century."

Pier Giorgio was a young member of the Society who devoted his life to God while serving those most in need, and the first to be canonised this century. He is a worthy role model for all young Vincentians.

Fundraising Update

by Elizabeth Smyth
Head of Fundraising



Shining a Light on Child Poverty: SVP Launches Its First DRTV Campaign Update



This March, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul is taking an important new step in raising awareness and support for families experiencing hardship. For the first time, SVP is launching a Direct Response Television (DRTV) advertising campaign, a TV advert designed to inspire viewers to take immediate action by becoming monthly donors. The theme of our advert is child poverty, an issue that continues to deeply affect communities across Ireland. The ad highlights the harsh reality that 21.2% of children experience enforced deprivation, the highest of any age group, in a country that

has the resources to do better. As members, you see this reality every day in your visitation work. This campaign aims to bring attention to the wider public in a powerful and compassionate way. The advert will run throughout March and invites viewers to sign up to a monthly donation of €8. To make giving simple and instant, a QR code appears on-screen, allowing people to donate straight from their phone. The campaign is aimed at those who don't regularly engage with us or who may never have donated to SVP before.



Why DRTV, and Why now?

DRTV is a tried-and-tested method widely used by charities to reach new supporters. It allows us to tell an emotive story, build trust quickly, and show the impact SVP volunteers make in the lives of families. It is one of the most effective ways to encourage people to commit to monthly giving, which provides the Society with a stable and predictable source of income.

Monthly Donations Make a Real Difference. They Help SVP:

- Plan ahead with confidence
- Reduce administrative costs compared to once-off gifts
- Respond quickly when new needs arise
- Build long-term relationships with supporters
- And for donors, smaller monthly amounts are more manageable and offer a meaningful way to support families all year round.

A Campaign Supported Across Many Channels

To strengthen the impact of the TV advert, the campaign is being supported in several ways:

- 20,000 existing but irregular donors will receive a direct mail pack
- Email-only donors will be brought through a tailored email journey
- Social media platforms and the SVP website will carry the advert and promotional imagery
- Still images from the advert will be used in print and online materials.

All of these elements work together with one purpose: to draw attention to the issue of child poverty and to invite new supporters into the mission of SVP.

Stewardship in the Context of Our Ethos

By John Lupton



Let us discuss Stewardship, in the context of the conflict between Stewardship and ownership, and in the context of our Ethos.

While we all know what our Ethos is, I would suggest that we can only claim our Ethos if we live it. The key to Ethos is Relationship i.e. relationship with a treble lock; Relationship with:

- Jesus Christ in the Eucharist.
- One another as members.
- Those whom we serve.

The greatest challenge to inter personal relationships in the Society is, I would suggest, an obsession with ownership and control. These are natural human traits inherent in us all but which we must endeavour to manage and to challenge. I believe our individual Vincintian journeys are ones from ownership to Stewardship or Trusteeship.



It is only when we accept our own frailty and our natural traits for ownership and control that we can start our Vincintian journey which brings us from ownership to Stewardship, from diviseness to unity, that we can begin our visitation journey to where the one in need is actually at.

The ownership mentality is reflected in attitudes and comments / reactions such as 'our money... or my clients ... or ... no one wants to take over 'my' role ...or... When I look around a house on a visit I know the difference between 'wants' and 'needs'... or... I suppose we could do with a new member or two, but we can't get someone suitable ...or ... I wouldn't believe in a public recruitment event at all! You could get the wrong type of person.....' And it goes on! The 'Ownership' mentality is so certain, so safe and so secure.

Stewardship or Trusteeship is however the opposite of ownership. The development of a stewardship mentality is I would suggest the inherent process and goal of our journey as Vincintians. It gives us an awareness that we are "agents" and not owners of the Trust.

The Trust belongs to those we serve, belongs to the poor. It is liberating to be merely an agent, or a steward as we act on behalf of others and not on behalf of ourselves and thus can unshackle ourselves of the stifling mentality of "control". Thus, without the limitations of ownership and control no act of charity is alien to us, for no need is excluded, no individuals or groups are excluded, and there is no limitation to our visitation. We do not have the burden of being masters but are liberated through a consciousness of our role as servants to the poor and of the transient nature of any particular role of service that we may be asked to carry out by way of an assignment or officership in the Society.

As we embark on those two related relationship journeys i.e. our relationship with one another free from ownership and control and secondly our relationship with those we serve, free from bias and judgement, may we be prepared, and have the courage, and, absolute loyalty to our Ethos, that we'll all go forth from today to enjoy and treasure our relationships with one another and with those we serve, strengthened by the wonderful Ethos that binds us together.

MESL Costs for School Age Children

The Vincintian MESL Research Centre at SVP has published a new paper on MESL costs for school age children.



In 2025, we carried out a review of the Minimum Essential Standard of Living (MESL) basket contents for households with children. Members of the public met and deliberated on what is required for a life with dignity. The updated 2025 MESL costs reflect the outcomes of the project, and we found that costs remain highest for older children – at least 60% higher than younger children – a finding which has been consistent in previous iterations of the MESL research.

Following the review, our new paper draws on the in-depth discussions of parents, offering rich insights into what people believe an up-to-date, socially acceptable minimum standard of living should look like for a primary school child and second level child in Ireland. It gives us a better understanding as to why older children's needs differ from younger children and the reasoning behind the higher costs associated with older children.

Whether it is being able to afford a certain level of branded clothing to fit in with peers and avoid social stigmatisation, having access to digital content to foster friendships, or having nutritious and adequate food to meet higher energy requirements, the paper illustrates in the words of the parents, why older children age 12 and over have additional and different needs that are distinct from younger children.

Costs remain highest for older children at €158 per week, approximately €60 higher than the expenditure needs for primary school children. The findings

show the expenditure areas that are greater for an older child. Higher calorie intake for a teenager means higher food costs at €51 per week. This is approximately €24 higher than food costs for a primary school age child. Greater social inclusion needs for an older child means a weekly cost of €43, compared to €30 for a primary school child.

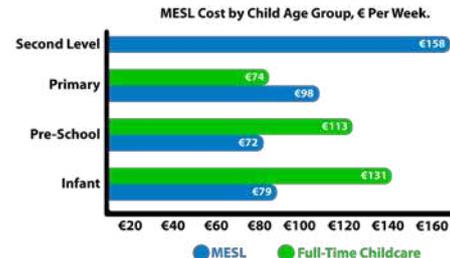
The research examines the real value of core child related social welfare supports, relative to the direct MESL needs of school age children. The results reveal the inadequacy of child social welfare supports, including the Child Support Payment (CSP), particularly for the second level child and highlights the need for higher social welfare rates for older children, aged 12 plus.

While the introduction of hot school meals at primary level and the extension

of free schoolbooks to Leaving Cert, have had a positive impact, it is not enough to meet minimum needs. For the primary school child, social welfare supports meet 88% of needs, compared to only 64% of needs for the second level child.

It is essential that income supports consider the different needs at each stage of childhood to achieve a MESL in Ireland today, a standard that no child should be expected to live below. At a time when child poverty and deprivation rates are high, and in recognition of the Government's commitment to combatting child poverty, it is hoped that this research can make an informative contribution to the ongoing debates around appropriate policy responses.

To read our recent working paper, visit www.budgeting.ie



New Website For The Vincentian MESL Research Centre at SVP



The MESL Research Centre is delighted to announce the launch of our redeveloped Minimum Essential Standard of Living (MESL) website at budgeting.ie, now including the MESL Calculator tool.

This major update brings a fresh look, improved functionality, and easier access to the research and resources that support evidence-based policy and advocacy for income adequacy in Ireland. The new site supports desktop and mobile, with streamlined navigation making it easier to access the key resources and data. The updated Resource Library provides a publications hub for all the latest annual MESL reports, working papers, policy submissions, etc. in one place.



MESL Calculator

In addition to providing access to the research reports and policy recommendations, the most significant update to the website is the redesign of the MESL calculator (formerly at MIS.ie) and its integration into the Research Centre's website.

The MESL research identifies the cost of the goods and services needed to live with dignity and have an acceptable minimum standard of living in Ireland today. The Calculator helps you apply the MESL research to practical situations, estimating what the MESL costs for the household situation you describe.

This tool is now more powerful and user-friendly than ever, working on mobile, tablet and desktop devices. By following answering a few questions, the tool provides an estimate of:

- The average weekly cost of the goods & services needed by a specified household.
- An assessment of the potential gap between social welfare supports and costs for this situation.
- If employed, the salary that a household like this would need to earn to afford the MESL costs.

The results are tailored to the situation described, and can be adjusted for household make-up, and the individual's costs for housing, childcare, electricity, heating, and also the transport needs of the household under consideration.

To use the calculator, follow four steps answering a few short questions. This will produce the average weekly MESL budget for the household situation in question. The results will provide a breakdown of the household's weekly costs by category, and also include an estimate of the potential income of the household if in receipt of social welfare or if employed the salary that would be needed to afford the MESL costs.

Visit budgeting.ie/calculate-minimum-income/ to try the new MESL calculator.

We hope you find the new MESL website and Calculator helpful, and if you have any questions the MESL team can be contacted at MESL@svp.ie.

Location

Is the household in an Urban or Rural area?

Urban applies to people living in and around cities and towns, while Rural is defined as anywhere with a population of 1,500 or less.

Where do you live?

I live in an urban area
 I live in a rural area

Household Type

Describe the make-up of the household.

Selecting the number of either working-age adults and any dependent children, or the number of older adults (66+) in the household.

Your household

Who lives in your household?

Adults
 Children
 Older adults (66+)

Household Details

To get the most accurate estimate of the households need, supply a few details about the income / employment situation, and the ages of any children in the household.

Your household

Who lives in your household?

Adult 1:
 Adult 2:
 Child 1:

Household Expenses

The MESL living costs data informs most of the calculations. But as individual circumstances vary the calculator asks about areas of expenses (such as housing & childcare) to tailor the results to the individual situation as much as possible.

If these details on rent, energy costs, etc. aren't available the calculator will default to standard values instead.

Your expenses

How to report and expenses

Housing type:
 Childcare (optional):
 Home heating (optional):
 Electricity (optional):
 Transport (optional):

Looking Back on Decades of Service

By Bernard Colgan

At a recent meeting of the St. Joseph the Worker conference, we were provided with the attached letter from Bernard Colgan, reflecting on his time as a SVP member from 1943 to 1971. The letter was provided to our conference by the widow of Tom Berry, who was a member for 50 years, when she was going through her husband's old papers.

ST. VINCENT DE PAUL SOCIETY

1943 – 1971

I joined the St. Vincent de Paul Society in 1943. I was sharing a flat in Homefarm Road, Drumcondra with my three sisters and was friendly with a young man, Des Strickland, who was a member too of the Whitehall Boys Club, where I went dancing on Wednesday and Sunday nights. Des and I also were followers of Drumcondra Football club and went to their home matches in Tolka Park.

Des's father was President of St. Paul's Conference, St. Vincent de Paul, Arran Quay, and Des persuaded me to go to a Conference Meeting one Monday night. I became a member straight away, and remained in the Conference until 1971, when my work-load in Brooks Thomas made it impossible to attend the meetings and do the visits to the poor families. When I moved to Johnstown in 1972 I had to resign as a member of St. Paul's, but I offered my services to the local Conference in Naas as an Associate Member, to be called on in an emergency situation. I have always had a great love for the St. V. de Paul Society and consider it the most deserving of all the charitable works.

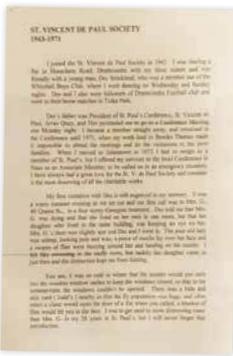
My first visitation with Des is still engraved in my memory. It was a warm summer evening as we set out and our first call was to Mrs. G., 40 Queen St., in a four storey Georgian tenement. Des told me that Mrs. G. was dying and that she lived on her own in one room, but that her daughter who lived in the same building, was keeping an eye on her. Mrs.

G's door was slightly ajar and Des and I went in. The poor old lady was asleep, looking pale and wan, a piece of muslin lay over her face and a swarm of flies were buzzing around her and landing on the muslin. I felt like swooning in the stuffy room, but luckily her daughter came in just then and the distraction kept me from fainting.

You see, it was so cold in winter that the tenants would put nails into the wooden window sashes to keep the windows closed, so that in the summer-time the windows couldn't be opened. There was a hide and skin yard (Judd's) nearby so that the fly population was huge, and often when a client would open the door of a flat when you called, a blanket of flies would hit you in the face. I was to get used to more distressing cases than Mrs. G. in my 28 years in St. Paul's, but I will never forget that introduction.

The conference was composed of about 12 Brothers, mostly employees of C.I.E. (Kingsbridge) and Guinness, which was just across the river. Des and I were the youngest members, and eventually I brought in other friends of mine, Owen Looby, Seamus McEvoy, Joe Mullery and Joe Hogarty, so we had a lovely blend of age and youth in St. Paul's.

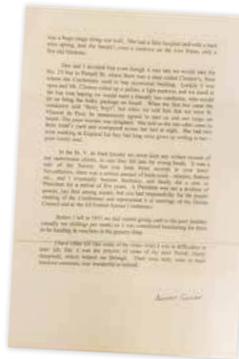
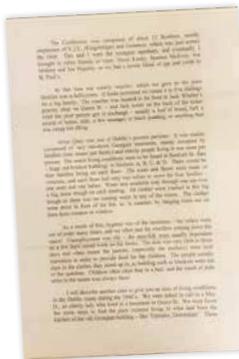
At that time our weekly voucher, which we gave to the poor families was a half-crown. If funds permitted we raised it to five shillings for a big family. The voucher was handed in for food in Jack Whelan's



grocery shop on Queen St. – and Jack wrote on the back of the ticket what the poor person got in exchange – usually a loaf of bread, half a pound of butter, milk, a few sausages or black pudding, or anything that was cheap but filling.

Arran Quay was one of Dublin's poorest parishes. It was mainly composed of very run-down Georgian tenements, mainly occupied by families (two rooms per family) and elderly people living in one room per person. The worst living conditions were to be found in Benburb St. flats – huge red-bricked buildings in Sections A, B, C, & D. There would be four families living on each floor. The stairs and floors were made of concrete, and

Looking Back on Decades of Service



each floor had only two toilets to serve the four families – one male and one ladies. Water was available only through one tap over a big stone trough on each landing. All clothes were washed in this big trough as there was no running water in any of the rooms. The clothes were dried in front of the fire, or, in summer, by hanging them out on lines from window to window.

As a result of this, hygiene was of the minimum – the toilets were out of order many times, and we often met the overflow coming down the stairs! Unemployment was rife – the men-folk were usually dependant on a few days casual work on the docks. The dole was very little in those days and often meant the parents, (especially the mothers) were near starvation in order to provide food for the children. The people usually slept in the clothes they stood up in, as bedding such as blankets were out of the question. Children often slept four to a bed, and the smell of stale urine in the rooms was always there.

I will describe another case to give you an idea of living conditions in the Dublin slums during the 1940's. We were asked to call to a Mrs D., an elderly lady who lived in a basement in Queen St. We went down the stone steps to find the poor caretaker living in what had been the kitchen of the old Georgian building – like 'Upstairs, Downstairs'. There was a huge range along one wall. She had a little hospital bed with a hard wire spring, and she hadn't even a mattress on the wire frame, only a few old blankets.

Des and I decided that even though it was late we would take the No. 23 bus to Parnell St. where there was a shop called Cluxton's, from whom the Conference used to buy occasional bedding. Luckily it was open and Mr. Cluxton rolled up a pallias, a light mattress, and we stood at the bus stop hoping we would meet a friendly bus conductor, who would let

us bring the bulky package on board. When the first bus came the conductor said 'Sorry boys' but when we told him that we were St. Vincent de Paul, he immediately agreed to take us and our cargo on board. The poor woman was delighted. She told us the rats often came in from Judd's yard and scampered across her bed at night. She had two sons working in England but they had long since given up writing to her – poor lonely soul.

In the St. V. de Paul Society we never kept any written records of our unfortunate clients, in case they fell into the wrong hands. It was a rule of the Society that you kept those records in your heart. Nevertheless, there was a certain amount of book-work – minutes, finance etc., and I eventually became Secretary, and finally did a stint as President for a period of five years. A President was not a position of power, just first among equals, but you had responsibility for the proper running of the Conference and represented it at meetings of the Dublin Council and at the All Ireland Annual Conference.

Before I left in 1971 we had started giving cash to the poor families (usually ten shillings per week) as it was considered humiliating for them to be handing in vouchers in the grocery shop. I have often felt that some of the times when I was in difficulties in later life, that it was the prayers of some of my poor friends (many departed), which helped me through. Their own faith, even in their blackest moments, was wonderful to behold.

Bernard Colgan



Society of St. Vincent de Paul

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My Family and SVP

My father Brendan started working with the Conference of SVP in Churchtown in the early 1960's. I think he was inspired to do so as his brother is a Vincentian priest Fr. Harry Slowey CM. He remained in the Conference as a conference president till his untimely death in 1977.

I remember one incident so well that reminds us of different times. A request was made by a single man for a new double bed....this caused my dad a major moral dilemma! My mother Frances joined the Conference on his death and immediately could see the need for good second-hand clothes. This time all predated Freds Fashions. She collected second hand clothes from her neighbours and friends, and the old Penneys Shop in Dundrum was very good to her. She sorted them out in our garage for the various people in the Conference depending on their need and size etc. There was not a poor child in Churchtown whose shoe size she did not know.

I joined Vincent's shop in Dundrum twenty three years ago and have enjoyed it immensely. I have met a lot of wonderful people over the years; people who are warriors in how they face their struggles; generous people; and some great story tellers. I love the chit chat from the customers and I am not adverse to looking for a bargain myself!

It has been a very positive experience. As I also work with the Stillorgan Conference, I am able to see the chain first hand..... from the people donating, the shop selling, and money directed then to the families in need.

I would not trade my experience working
with the St. Vincent de Paul for anything!

New College Support Officer

by Lauren Cleary

Hi everyone! My name is Lauren Cleary, and I am so excited to introduce myself as the new College Support Officer with the Young SVP team. I am originally from Donegal, with a background in youth and family support work. Previous to taking on this role in September 2025, I spent 2 years working in Toronto, Canada as a newcomer youth advisor. This experience has really strengthened my passion for supporting young people, and my commitment to inclusion, social justice and empowering young people to meet their potential.

In my role as College Support Officer, I support the Colleges SVP program at a national level, with a specific focus on engagement across third-level institutions. This involves working closely with colleges and universities to build strong partnerships between SVP and campus communities, promoting the formation of new student-led SVP conferences, and ultimately supporting our future volunteers.

A key part of my role is encouraging student engagement in volunteering, social justice and active citizenship within their communities. Some of the promising activities currently taking place across the country include:

Street Outreach initiatives, supporting people experiencing homelessness through weekly food provisions, hygiene items, friendly conversation and service signposting

Letter writing with local nursing homes, helping reduce loneliness and isolation

On-Campus Food Banks for students experiencing food insecurity

Clothing drives to support students and families in need

Kids Clubs providing safe, fun and positive role models for children in local communities

Social Clubs for adults with additional needs, creating inclusive opportunities for friendship and community participation



Since starting in September, I've had the opportunity to travel to colleges around the country, attending volunteer fairs, recruitment days, and hosting information sessions to promote student involvement in Colleges SVP. This has included visits to campuses in Donegal, Limerick, Cork, Dublin and Kerry where I've met students and staff to share information about the work of SVP and explore opportunities to establish new student-led conferences. We currently have around 2000 students engaged in the Colleges SVP program, with some key success last semester including:

Trinity College: running 20+ weekly activities supporting children, older adults, adults with intellectual disabilities and the homeless

Dublin City University: established a new Colleges SVP conference this year, growing their membership to over 60 members within their first month

Galway University: hosted over 30 new members for Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults and Street Outreach training and have begun making a positive impact on the community

Technological University Dublin: won the 'Green Gown Award' for their contributions to sustainability, with their Food Pantry initiative, supporting students across 3 campuses

I'm very grateful for the opportunity to be part of St. Vincent de Paul and to contribute to the important work being done across the organisation. I'm really looking forward to working alongside colleagues, meeting students across the country and becoming part of the wider SVP community.

Please feel free to say hello or reach out if you'd like to connect!



EAST REGION

Marking 20 Years of SVP House

February 2026 marks the 20th anniversary of the official opening of SVP House, which took place on 4 February 2006. The opening was performed by Bertie Ahern, TD, and was a significant milestone in the life of the Society. Included here are photographs from the occasion, showing SVP House on the day, along with An Taoiseach Bertie Ahern pictured with Patricia Carey, Director of Services, and Richard Whitty, Facilities Manager.



Jubilee Club by the Trinity Conference

Jubilee Club is one of the many volunteering activities ran by the Trinity Conference of VDP. It is a social club for adults who may be experiencing loneliness. Every Friday, a group of student volunteers including myself, Sarah, and Caitlin meet on Trinity College campus at 1:30 pm and either head to a nearby cafe for tea, coffee and chats, or we do something else such as go to a museum or an art gallery, a short activity such as painting or bingo, or another excursion around Dublin.

Some of our plans for this year include a trip on the Dublin Vintage Tea Tour, afternoon tea at Bewley's, a trip to Kilmainham Gaol, a trip to the theatre, a painting session, a dance class, and much more. We are very open to suggestions from our members as we would like the club to be as welcoming and relevant to our members as possible.

Jubilee Club is open to anyone who feels they are in need of a chat and a nice day out. We aim to honour and appreciate the importance of social contact and interaction and how it can change everyone's day.

Jubilee Club used to be much larger than it is now, but was unfortunately very affected by COVID, and our numbers haven't been the same since. We hope this feature might help get the word out and build up Jubilee Club's membership.

Jubilee Club is a volunteer, student-run social club for older adults, part of the Trinity Vincent de Paul Conference.

We meet for tea, coffee, and various excursions and activities around Dublin. We are currently welcoming new members who would like to join us!

When? Fridays 1:30 pm - 3:30 pm
Where? Trinity College Dublin

If you are interested in becoming a member, please email us at trinityjubilee@trinityvdp.com

Immersion Probes

When there is a high wind, energy companies are giving their surplus electricity away, free, to charities around the country. We have availed of it for our tenants.

Energy Cloud Installed these units in 18 of our houses to date and are planning on having them in every house eventually if the tenants agree.

Tenants now get approx. 120 tanks of hot water free per year.

This dramatically reduces our tenants energy bills.



St. Conleth's Day Care Centre Christmas Day Out 2025

Some of our wonderful clients from St. Conleth's Day Care Centre, Kildare enjoyed a visit with Santa at the Reindeer Hospital in Kildare Town on Monday, 1st December. The day was filled with laughter, festive cheer, and shared memories that remind us of the joy this season brings at every age.

As we wrap up another year together, we celebrate the warmth, friendship, and community spirit that make St. Conleth's such a special place.



Initiatives to Address Two Major Problems

The combined St. Rita's and St. Joachim's conferences cover the areas of Dolphin's Barn and Rialto in Dublin 8. As with other conferences, our work in these areas is largely concerned with helping people in their everyday struggle to make ends meet. The cycle of poverty can appear unremitting and our capacity to go beyond bringing temporary, if much-needed, relief can be discouraging.

This year we have been greatly heartened by initiatives undertaken in two areas of considerable distress to many of the people we meet. These relate to learning disabilities and particularly autism, and debt relief.

We have witnessed a significant increase in the numbers of families looking for help with children with autism, other learning difficulties and behavioural issues. With the increased volume of cases, the system of state supports for these children is under severe pressure with appropriate services difficult to access. Early diagnosis is critically important for these children but currently there are lengthy delays in securing a diagnosis, getting a place in an appropriate educational setting and receiving necessary therapeutic

interventions. We are fortunate to have in our conference a member with experience and expertise in this area. She is building relationships with affected families, many of them single mothers, making her expertise available to them and helping them to assert their children's rights to education and access to treatment. Her work has been effective in securing early diagnoses, places in education and access to therapies. This is bringing great relief to the parents concerned and ultimately giving the children with these difficulties the best possible chance in life.

Many people we meet are worn down by the burden of debt. Families and individuals with accumulated rent arrears live with the looming threat of eviction. Others with gas or electricity bills significantly in the red risk having power cut off. We have encountered families sitting in the cold or with the lights off in an attempt to save power. In other cases, individuals failing to keep up with loan repayments find themselves coming under serious pressure from financial institutions with knocks at the door and unwelcome phone calls.

MABS, the Money Advice and Budgeting Service, provides a valuable service to people in this situation by advising on debt solutions available, particularly to those on low incomes, through the Insolvency Service of Ireland. These range from Debt Relief Notices available where debts are less than €35,000, to Debt Settlement Arrangements and Personal Insolvency Arrangements. Use of the appropriate tools can lead to manageable repayment terms being agreed with the relevant agencies or to debt write-offs.

The people we meet who have serious debts have often been unaware of the help available or hesitant to approach the services because of the perceived stigma attached to financial difficulty. We have arranged for MABS to hold a weekly clinic in the Fatima area. There has been such demand for this service that a second weekly clinic is being considered.

We are confident that these initiatives in relation to autism and debt relief are bringing significant improvements to the lives of the people in our area affected by these problems.

SOUTH WEST REGION

Welcome Cormac

We are pleased to announce the appointment of our new South West Regional Co-ordinator, Cormac O'Sullivan, who joined the Society on April 7th. Cormac has had over a decade of experience in operational management, administration, and team development as an officer in the Irish Navy.

His academic background includes a Bachelor of Science in Psychology, Bachelor of Science in Nautical Science and a Master of Science in Data Analysis. He will be based in our Southwest Regional Office, Tuckey St, Cork.

Please join us in the South West Region in welcoming Cormac to the role.



Liam Roche Retires After 43 Years in St. Fionnachue's Conference, Mitchelstown, Cork

Liam Roche, a member of Mitchelstown Society of St. Vincent de Paul for 43 years has recently retired. President of the conference for most of that time, he has been an inspiring and motivated mentor for each conference member.

Liam had a great ability to put people who came looking for help at ease. When someone called looking for financial help with the cost of basic needs – food, fuel, ESB, etc. – Liam by his empathy and kindness would always find out what other issues were worrying them. He was always able to help and sometimes provide access to other resources.

In 1982 when he joined, all meetings were held in the local church sacristy. He could see that a place was needed where people seeking help could come in confidence and privacy to discuss their concerns and get financial help when needed. It took a person of great courage and vision to purchase the derelict site "Moremiles" in Thomas Street that had been vacant for many years.

At that time SVP had a shop in the Square and this was relocated to the new building in Thomas St. In order to get more stock for the shop Liam contacted Cork Co Council and private owners to locate clothes banks in local areas. A truck was needed to collect the material and Liam approached Cavanagh's garage Fermoy with a view to purchase a truck when to his delight and that of the members a truck was donated free

of charge. The clothes and furniture shop has developed and expanded to being the thriving business it is today with the help of our many volunteers and CE personnel.

One of Liam's most ambitious projects was the setting up of a computer training centre. At that time locals had to travel to Cork city or Mallow to attend courses. Our credit union sponsored the computers and a tutor was employed. The centre was a resounding success and was the recipient of a number of awards for excellence.

Liam was always conscious of any need in the community that wasn't addressed and having recognised the need to provide childcare for young parents the Children of Oz Creche was opened as a drop-in service where parents could leave their children while working, attending appointments or shopping. This initiative



was very successful and when other childcare facilities opened up in town, they fulfilled that need.

Around 2008, during a downturn in the economy, St. Vincent de Paul, Cork was short of funds. Liam was asked to open shops throughout Cork as the Mitchelstown model was seen as a huge success, generating much needed funds for those in need. He was responsible for opening a chain of shops in Ballincollig, Ballyphehane, Bishopstown, Blarney, Castletownbere, Clonakilly, Cobh, Douglas, Fermoy, Gerard Griffin St, Hollyhill, Kinsale, Macroom, Mahon, North Main St, Rathcormac and Skibbereen. The shops were an unprecedented financial success, but what meant more to Liam was that it provided clothes at an affordable price to those whose pride and dignity wouldn't allow them to ask SVP for help.

Liam's dedication to helping those in need was the core of what he did. During Covid, people of a certain vintage were asked not to leave their homes but Liam realising some people needed help more than ever, diligently answered emails and phone calls and posted out help when requested.

Liam all the members, staff, volunteers & customers wish you health and happiness in your retirement and thank you from all at SVP! for making life better for those in need and making a such a positive difference in their lives.

MID WEST REGION

Guild of St. Philip Neri Celebrates 30 years in Portlaoise

The Guild of St. Philip Neri, Portlaoise, recently celebrated 30 years in existence. To mark the occasion, the 3 local conferences (St. Fintan's conference, Midlands Management conference and Guild of St. Philip Neri) met in the Parish Centre, Portlaoise to pray, sing and enjoy tea, cakes and chat.

This was an historic occasion for St. Vincent de Paul Society, Portlaoise when the 3 conferences met as a group for the first time. All 3 groups are based in Ozanam House for their individual meetings. Guild President, Maura Hynes, welcomed everyone to this celebratory gathering and invited Midlands chaplain, Fr. Larry Kelly to lead members in prayer.

Sr. Evelyn Byrne, Midlands Management Spiritual Advisor, highlighted the role of Vincentians as outlined in Laudato Si 'Leave no-one behind' and Rev. Alec Purser, St. Fintan's Spiritual Advisor, reminded members of the challenge involved in following in the footsteps of Blessed Frederic Ozanam.

As a prison visitation conference, members in Portlaoise remembered the feastday of St. Philip Neri (1515–1595) on May 26th. Guild member, Tony Moore, told the congregation that Philip was an Italian priest who founded the Gathering of the Oratory, a society of clergy dedicated to pastoral care and charitable work. He is the patron saint of laughter and joy and was known for his playful sense of humour and the joyful way he engaged with people.



Midlands chaplain, Gary Moore, raised the spirits of all present when he led the group in song.

Chaplains from both prisons play a vital role in being a link between prisoners and the Guild. 18 members currently visit men at family visiting time. Most of these men have no other in-person visits and they value the presence of Guild visitors. Tribute was paid to 2 members, Brendan O'Sullivan and Jerry Carbery who joined the Guild in 2007 and have continued visiting ever since. Jerry has visited the same man for most of that time. Brendan is also Guild treasurer and trainer.



Listening and Befriending are at the core of Prison Visitation work and Portlaoise Guild is fortunate to have very dedicated members, who hail from Kildare, Offaly and Laois, quietly doing this work every week. Guild Spiritual Advisor, Sr Angela Phelan, read an adapted piece from the Gospel of St. Matthew which reminded all present that 'the offender should never be seen as a rejected individual but always as a member of God's people'.

Prisoners were remembered in prayer and there was also a special remembrance for all former and deceased members who were part of the Guild.

Catherine Coleman, who set up the Portlaoise Guild in 1995, thanked Fr. Pdraig Shelley and Fr. Jim O'Connell who helped in starting and continuing a very successful visiting service. She also recognised the support, co-operation and kindness of many Governors and staff over those 20 years.

She complimented members of the other 2 Portlaoise conferences for the wonderful Vincentian work that happens every day in Ozanam House, Midlands Visitor Centre and wherever care and support are needed in Portlaoise.

The celebration ended with a social evening where members reminisced and enjoyed lovely baking by Guild secretary, Sandra Mac Manus.

NORTH-EAST AND MIDLANDS REGION

MSD Dundalk employees share the gift of giving with St. Vincent de Paul

MSD donated €1,180 in vouchers including food and toy vouchers. On the 10th of December, MSD employees came together through the company's Giving Tree Programme to support St. Vincent de Paul.

MSD donated €1,180 in vouchers, including food and toy vouchers, along with a large number of gifts such as toys, children's clothes, board games, and sweets.

These donations gave much-needed help to families in the Dundalk area.

At a time when many charities are under extra pressure, this support make a real difference by helping families with everyday needs and bringing some joy to children.

MSD's support shows how businesses can play an important role in helping their local communities and supporting families when they need it most.



Hollywood Magic in Trim

The town of Trim recently experienced a unique blend of Hollywood magic and community spirit, sparked by the 30th anniversary celebration of the iconic film Braveheart. At the heart of the story is Magda Zak, a St. Vincent de Paul (SVP) volunteer who picked up a paintbrush for the first time earlier this year. Her striking portrait of Mel Gibson as William Wallace not only became the centrepiece of a local shop display, but also earned Gibson's personal praise and autograph during his visit to Trim.

What began as a simple idea for a themed window display evolved into a once-in-a-lifetime moment for Magda and fellow volunteers. The signed artwork was later raffled by SVP, generating significant excitement and raising funds to support local families in need. The winner, Edel Giles, described the prize as "unbelievable" and something to treasure forever.

This uplifting story highlights creativity, generosity, and community engagement—proving that even in a small charity shop, extraordinary things can happen.



Opposite Page: Mel Gibson pictured with the striking painting at the Braveheart 30th anniversary celebration in Trim.

Top: Trim SVP President Mary Foley and artist and SVP volunteer Magda Zak.

Bottom Left: SVP Trim shop manager Michael Murrain and artist and volunteer Magda Zak.

Bottom Middle: Magda looking on as Mel signed the painting at the Braveheart 30th anniversary celebration in Trim, deeming the piece of art "brilliant."

Bottom Right: SVP Volunteer Allison Walton, husband of raffle winner Peter Giles and artist and SVP volunteer Magda Zak.

Quiet Acts of Kindness

Let me tell you about my role as a volunteer for St. Vincent de Paul in Dundalk. I'm doing so in the run-up to Christmas when we're at our busiest, and by way of asking for your continued support for the Society's Annual Appeal.

A colleague first got me involved in my 20s, but sports, dances, building a career and family soon took over. Still, the seed had been planted, and forty years later, as retirement beckoned, that seed had matured into something like a vocation. I knew I had to give back to the town that had given me so much. It was the best decision I ever made — apart, that is, from marriage. Giving is the premise on which the Society exists, and through volunteering I have received far more than I gave.

Soon after rejoining, I accompanied a volunteer who had given a lifetime of service. It was a Saturday morning and the family we visited was in desperate need. Funds were low and we hadn't much to give. Realising the seriousness of the situation, the volunteer quietly took €50 from her purse, without hesitation and with no expectation of reimbursement, just to get the family through the weekend. That was my first real indication of the calibre of volunteers I have encountered.

Some join with skills in administration, finance, or digital know-how, all invaluable. But every one of them has a deep thread of decency and empathy running through their veins. They work without recognition and cherish the confidentiality entrusted to them. Sometimes their reward comes in the tears of gratitude when badly needed help arrives. At other times they must explain that support is limited by resources. On rare occasions this can cause

difficulty due to the mistaken belief that the Society is funded by the government, and not by the generosity of those who donate at church gates, through the annual appeal, and in our shops.

Practical help is vital, but so too is the comfort of a home visit to a family facing tragedy or torment. One family I encountered was sick with worry as their house came under attack because they were being pressured to settle a drug debt run up by a family member. In situations like this, advice, support, and keeping food on the table become the Society's priority.

Christmas places extra strain on families, and this year, with the cost-of-living crisis, requests for help are flooding into our helpline. All will be carefully assessed by the eighty or so volunteers in the eleven conferences covering the town and district. We sometimes hear that we don't always get it right, that there are others more deserving. That may happen, but who knows what lies behind any front door? We don't judge. We do our best. Knowing the calibre of the volunteers who work on your behalf, I can assure you that we try to ensure that the funds you so generously donate find a deserving home.

Anonymity is essential in all the Society's work, so my identity isn't important. What is important is that we can rely on the exceptional generosity of the people of Dundalk, and that we continue to deliver support to the increasing numbers asking for our help.

Thank you for taking the time to read this.
Sandra Mac Manus.

St. Patrick's Conference, Cavan

Decades of dedicated service were celebrated recently as members of Cavan St. Vincent de Paul conference were recognised at a medal ceremony. The event included mass followed by refreshments in Cavan's Ozanam Centre.



Back (from left): Anselm Lovett, 60 years of service; Rosaleen Doherty, representing the late Mel Doherty, who gave 53 years of service and Frank McManus, 37 years of service; front, Tom Byrne, 40 years of service; Pat Denning, 65 years of

service; Brigitta Sheridan, collecting medal of behalf of Michael Sheridan, 25 years of service; Dennis O'Donnell, 25 years of service; Noeleen Sharkey, collecting medal on behalf of Sean Sharkey, who gave 31 years of service.

WEST REGION

Croí na Gaillimhe Christmas Newsletter 2025

2025 Year in Review

What a busy year 2025 has been! Across the last 12 months, we have held a wealth of different classes and programmes and welcomed many people from all walks of life into our Centre.

In July, we bade fond farewell to Loretta Needham, Manager of Croí na Gaillimhe since 2009. We wish her all the best in her retirement.

We were also delighted to welcome Gabriel Qualter, former office administrator, as the new manager of Croí na Gaillimhe.

We welcomed other new members to the team in 2025 – Cait Gleeson joined in March as Adult Programmes Coordinator, Jarlath Deacy joined in September as office administrator, and Shauna Fitzgerald joined as Homework Club Assistant in December.



On the following pages, you'll get a glimpse into some of the fantastic work carried out over the last year. The team is looking forward to keeping the good work up for 2026!

Lunch & Social Club

2025 proved to be a very busy year in the lunch and social clubs. The clubs run all year long, every Monday and Wednesday, with plans to introduce a Tuesday club in the New Year. Both clubs are at full capacity with extensive waiting lists.

Community Catering continue to deliver consistently high quality and nourishing meals for our members. We also are very grateful to Galway Contact who provide a bus service for some members who otherwise would be unable to attend.

This year, due to the support of Galway City Council, Creative Ireland, and Healthy Galway City, we ran exciting classes and workshops in the Lunch & Social Clubs. These included yoga, postural stability instruction classes, and workshops on heritage, folklore and music. We had a song circle and small choir which included breath work, and podcast and storytelling workshops that culminated in a lovely podcast with reflections from the group on times past. We also hired Croí to deliver workshops focused on health and wellbeing.

Our own activities continued in between all the various workshops and classes and these included the enduringly popular bingo and other highly competitive games such as bocce, ring toss, and skittles amongst others.

In the summer, we celebrated the Galway races by having an afternoon of racing themed games and activities and, of course, some sweet treats. In conjunction with the wonderful choir of young adults from Atlantic Row and Raleigh Row services, we hosted a mad hatter's themed tea party in the summer. This talented choir joined us again just before Christmas for carol singing.

Also, the annual summer party with music provided by Tommy was held in July.

In February, we welcomed Carmel Manfredi from Galway City Council who gave a very informative talk on age friendly homes and in June the HSE gave a talk about safeguarding older adults from abuse.

Young Hearts

Young Hearts returned for the 2024/25 academic year and finished up in May. This project involved TY students from Coláiste Muire Máthair working with older adults around the theme of atmospheric changes to the earth's climate.



Before Christmas, we explored these themes in art and podcasting workshops. In the New Year, we facilitated three different sets of workshops. The first was bodhrán making, which was enjoyed very much by all. The next was an integration of science, sound and music to explore the theme in more depth. A climate scientist from the University of Galway and a local harpist facilitated these thought-provoking workshops. Finally, we finished with workshops which used puppetry and storytelling to reflect on the year's theme and work.

To encourage integration within the group, we had two day trips which included a trip to Bunratty in November and an empathy workshop and guided tour in the Galway City Museum in February. The programme finished in

May with the school hosting a wonderful graduation ceremony where the students and older adults displayed and celebrated their work.

As popular as the programme is, we had a large drop off in the adult attendees throughout the year, for various reasons. It was decided to postpone the 2025/26 programme and to use this time to reimagine the project and recruit new members and provide another local school with the opportunity to get involved. We hope Young Hearts will return in Autumn 2026!



Digital Skills

Our digital skills programme had an active and engaging year helping older adults build confidence using smartphones, tablets, and computers. Our amazing volunteers assisted our eager students with one-to-one support with everyday tasks such as messaging, emails, online appointments, apps, and staying safe online. The sessions were relaxed, practical, and tailored to each person's needs—helping learners feel more independent and connected in their daily lives. There was great craic too in these classes!

Community Food Initiative

2025 was Croi na Gaillimhe's first year as a leader organisation under the Community Food Initiative, run by Safood. So far, we have run programmes with women living in direct provision centres, holding cooking classes, sessions with a dietician, and providing access to kitchen facilities. At the end of October, we teamed up with the wonderful women in the Melting Potluck to hold a community lunch. We shared delicious food, met new

neighbours, and there were fun activities for kids. We are looking forward to continuing the work in 2026!

Fáilte Isteach

We've had another wonderful year in Fáilte Isteach—our weekly conversational English class for new members of our community. Since January, over 50 people from 18 countries have attended our classes where a wonderful team of volunteers teach English in an informal and welcoming way. Fáilte Isteach is a fantastic national programme that has been running in Croi na Gaillimhe for over a decade. It is a great space to meet new people, learn about different cultures, and, of course, practice your English. We are so grateful to our team of volunteers who run such warm and engaging classes every week.

Men's Group

We were delighted that Autumn 2025 saw the return of Croi na Gaillimhe's Men's Group. The Men's Group had previously run in the centre but ended during the pandemic. The group meets once a week and shares a cup of tea, a chat, and the odd game of chess. The group is gently facilitated by three excellent volunteers.

Homework Club

The Croi na Gaillimhe Homework Club started in the Eglinton Hotel in September 2014 with 28 children. It was funded by the Maureen O'Connell Bequest Fund at that time. It is now in its 11th year and continues to provide homework support to almost 40 children, supported by the BRIDGE project, Galway City Partnership.

It is directed by a Steering Committee, with representatives from the Eglinton management, parents, Croi na Gaillimhe management and St. James' conference. It has two part-time staff and seven volunteers. Our volunteers are very dedicated and without them, we could not run the service as effectively as we do. The Club runs from 2.30—5pm



Monday to Thursday. The majority of the children attend primary schools in the local area, and range from junior infants to sixth class. The children also learn new life skills like knitting and crocheting from our volunteers. When we have free time from homework, we also do board games, jigsaws, and art and crafts with the children. Thirty of the children have also attended one full term of swimming classes, thanks to the funding received from the St. Stephens Green Trust.

Other Programmes

Following a successful open morning in August for registration for classes and an advertising campaign, we are now offering eight different classes which are all full with waiting lists.

The long established sewing and upcycling class is so popular classes are now offered twice weekly. Old favourites like Rose's craft class, art, digital skills, knitting and crochet, and chair yoga continue.

We were delighted to introduce Tai Chi and postural stability instruction classes, which are proving very popular and we hope to continue all classes in the New Year. All in all a busy year at Croi na Gaillimhe!

We would like to thank all our members, volunteers, and supporters for their excellent work and continued support this year.

Thank you for taking the time to read this. Sandra Mac Manus.



Galway Area Luncheon

A luncheon was held for SVP volunteers in Galway on Saturday the 27th of September. The suggestion came from a member who said that other local organisations celebrate their volunteers, spotlighting how much they are valued. On the day, volunteers met and mingled with fellow Vincentians. The luncheon also gave members, who normally never meet each other, a chance to chat and catch up.

Colm Divilly, Galway Area President, welcomed the attendees and thanked them for their tireless dedication. He also took the opportunity to thank retiring members for their long years of service and commitment to the mission of the Society.

"They leave behind not just a legacy of work well done, but a shining example of what it means to serve with purpose and generosity."

RETIREMENTS

Ivan Allison, Margaret Lagara, John Liddy, Denis Maher, Paddy Fatharta, Philip Martin, Mary McGinley, Anne Rooney, Judy D'Arcy, Kathleen McCauley, Margaret Stewart & Julie Hackett



Pictures show Maire Mhic Aodha, Area Vice President, presenting Certificates of Recognition and Appreciation to Ivan Allison, Margaret Lagara, and John Liddy.

East Mayo Council Get Together

East Mayo Area Council had a lovely get together in the Kiltimagh Park Hotel in September where they held an appreciation evening for the members. Members enjoyed some lovely food and afterwards they were presented with a medal and certificate of appreciation of their long service to SVP.

Between them all there was many years of service, but 2 of the members who served the longest were Margaret McGreevy of Ballaghaderreen Conference who has been with SVP for over 40 years, and Eileen Casey of Ballaghaderreen Conference who has been with SVP for over 27 years. In the picture also was Maureen Mitchell, Regional President and Bernadette Carroll East Mayo Area President.



Regional President for the West Region, Seamus McManus

More hands needed to help those in need

• **TUAM native** new President of SVP West

By Niala Kassar

A TUAM native has been appointed as the new President of SVP's West region which covers counties Galway, Mayo and Macroom. Born and raised in Abbeystown, Tuam, Seamus McManus moved to Galway in the 2000s.

After retirement he wanted to do something to help the community, which led him to join the charity St Vincent de Paul as a volunteer in 2012. In 2018 he was appointed the Galway SVP President, a position he held for the next five years.

Over the years, Seamus has witnessed several ups and downs in the functioning of the charity, especially during COVID lockdowns which he understands were tough periods for both the community and the charity.

"COVID was a dominant part of my tenure in the last

few) President, and it was difficult. We had to close shops while donations and income suddenly dropped a lot.

"We lost a good number of volunteers because most of them were either retired or the older cohort who didn't come back after the pandemic," he explained.

SVP provides a wide range of support services, including educational assistance, financial support, food, and more like food, heating and clothes. All of these not only require funds but also a lot of volunteers to cover everything.

"If someone calls in to us for support, we don't just send them stuff. We try to meet them in person, understand their issues and then try to solve them in the best way possible," said McManus.

"Our main priority for funding and support, and we believe that the charity should focus on that. If someone needs help, we need to do it all in, if we cannot help, then we would guide them towards other sources of support that can provide them with what they need."

Seamus believes that nothing about is after challenging in his work, and that's why people need a lot of help, he is for their children's school fees, their housing bill, electricity bill or something else. "Using the funds in the right way while keeping the income flowing becomes a big challenge without people who can be accountable and take care of the processes," he said.



TUAM native Seamus McManus, who has been appointed President of the Galway SVP West Region. Photo: Joe Shalvey

"We also need people to commit for official positions like president, secretary and treasurer, because nobody wants to take the responsibility. Highlighting the benefits of being a volunteer with the charity, Seamus said it can be

Fundraiser for Frank Mullan

Attached photo is a fundraiser done for Frank Mullan (passed member RIP), memorial by the Western Veteran & Vintage Motor Club.

From Left: SVP Regional President Seamus McManus, Miriam Mullan, Kevin Mullan and Michael Spelman, President of the Western Veteran & Vintage Motor Club.



Charity Gig for Galway Area

The young people of Galway came out in force on Wednesday, 29 October, to support SVP at a charity gig held in The Blue Note, Galway.

Bands on the night were: Sakura, Redline, Metanoia and All Thumbs. It was packed to the rafters! All proceeds went to SVP.

Go raibh maith agat!

SOUTH EAST REGION

SVP and Department of Social Protection Celebrate 30 Years in Community Employment

St. Vincent de Paul and the Department of Social Protection celebrated 30 years in Community Employment. Mary Dempsey, management chair of the SVP South East Region community employment scheme, received a plaque commemorating the significant milestone from Michael Ormond Department of Social Protection.



TOP: Michael Ormond DEASP and Mary Dempsey SVP Management Chair.
 BOTTOM: David O'Neill, Richie Henderick, Michael Ormond DEASP, Michael Heaphy DEASP, Mary Dempsey, JP McGwire, Suzanne Breen, Annette Beckett, Mary Helsing & Mary Murray.

St. Nicholas and Mollerans Conference Christmas food appeal 2025

St. Nicholas/St. Mollerans Conference of St. Vincent de Paul in conjunction with the local Secondary and Primary Schools ran their annual food hampers appeal which provided one hundred hampers delivered to the elderly and families in our community before Christmas.

This year the Conference wrote to all the Schools in the locality enquiring if they could produce some different ideas on raising funds for the occasion. As the Students and Teachers are best placed for ideas on raising funds, such things as jumper day, a quiz/question time, raffle etc. The Response has been overwhelming with over €5,000 raised by the Secondary and Primary Schools. Kildalton College students were also involved.

This money collected was used to provide Food Hampers and Food Vouchers including solid fuel to the needy in our Community. The President of the Conference, Michael Lonergan, thanked the Principals, Teachers, Staff and Students in all the Schools and the parents who took part in the campaign and congratulated them on the magnificent effort in raising funds to help those less fortunate in our Community and the effort and initiative shown by our young people in our Schools has to be commended and we in the Conference are very grateful for all their hard work and support.



Join Team
SVP



Run for people in need.

Sign up today and run for SVP.

Invite your friends and family to support you.



NORTHERN REGION

Feast Day of St. Vincent de Paul Celebrated in Cookstown

A large congregation of St. Vincent de Paul members gathered in Holy Trinity Church Cookstown to mark the Feast Day of St. Vincent de Paul with a special Mass honouring the mission, values, and tireless dedication of The Society of St. Vincent de Paul (SVP). The celebration paid tribute to the organisation's volunteers and highlighted the essential support they provide to individuals and families in local communities throughout the Northern Region.



The Mass was celebrated with reverence and reflection, with the officiating priest, Fr McNally, using his homily to speak about the enduring importance of SVP's work. He emphasised the compassion, selflessness, and commitment shown by

members who, often quietly and without recognition, offer practical and emotional support to those facing hardship. He reflected on the life and legacy of St. Vincent de Paul, drawing parallels between his example and the efforts of SVP members today who uphold his mission of service, dignity and care.

The Mass was attended by Sean Gallagher, the newly elected SVP Regional President for the Northern Region. Sean said: "I am grateful that so many members of SVP in the Northern Region attended the Feast Day Mass and I would commend our volunteers for their deep-rooted dedication, as I know that their involvement extends far beyond providing financial or material assistance during our core work of home visitation. SVP members listen and befriend individuals and families navigating difficult times.

"It was a particular honour for me personally, that my first event as Regional President for the Northern Region was in attending this Feast Day Mass and delivering a reading from Corinthians."



In conclusion Sean thanked Fr McNally for leading the congregation in song and SVP Regional Ambassador Malachi Cush for adding his own blend of music and worship, by performing the Psalm, offering an uplifting backdrop to the Mass.



Positive Ageing Event

We as members attended the positive ageing event in Newtownards in October. SVP was promoted and we had a lot of people come to say hello. This is Gillian McCollum the Mayor of Ards and North Down who in fact has chosen SVP as one of her charities this year.

Tide and Turf Event

Members Una and Lara at The tide and Turf event in Portavogie in September. They collected along with the other members of our Mayors chosen charities for this year. It was a huge event and a great day!



SVP Members Celebrate Volunteers' Week at Annual Members' Day

Over 150 St. Vincent de Paul members from across the Northern Region gathered to celebrate Volunteers' Week at the Society's annual Members' Day. The joyful and reflective event recognised the vital role of SVP volunteers and the theme of the day centred around SVP's newly launched strategic plan 'Journey Together'.

The strategic plan has come to fruition after three years of consultation, listening and inclusion. SVP Spiritual Advisor Fr Perry Gildes, who addressed members, spoke powerfully about the importance of listening in the work of SVP. He reminded those attending of the Society's founder, Blessed Fr  d  ric Ozanam, and that often the greatest support members of SVP can give is a presence and attentiveness to those who seek help from SVP. His words resonated deeply with the theme of the day and the lived experience of SVP members and volunteers.

Delegates were encouraged to join in 'Caf   Conversations' with roundtable discussions considering the values and virtues of SVP, the meaning of membership and looking ahead to shaping the future of the Society.

Attendees put pen to paper on a 'Volunteer's Star' sharing a word that embodies their interpretation of the Society and the impact SVP has in the world today. Words including 'compassionate', 'kind', 'hope', 'love', 'empathy' and 'dignity' were frequently noted, capturing the heartfelt essence of SVP and its dedicated volunteers who bring its ethos to life.

Five SVP members were singled out by Mary Waide, SVP Regional President for the Northern Region, to receive a

Certificate of Commitment acknowledging their selfless service in their local communities.

An inspirational address was delivered by Counsellor Marie McGuigan, who is a former renal nurse. Marie encouraged members to take care of themselves while taking care of others as we are all 'fearfully and wonderfully made'.

After dinner entertainment was provided by SVP Ambassador Malachi Cush. His performance included a carefully chosen selection of songs that reflected the values of SVP, culminating in a moving rendition of 'How Great Thou Art'.

This Members' Day also marked a poignant milestone as Mary Waide completed her final year as Regional President, following five years in the role. In her farewell address, Mary reflected on the challenges and achievements of her presidency – which began in the midst of the pandemic. She paid tribute to the board, SVP staff and her fellow members, expressing heartfelt thanks for their support, resilience and shared commitment during some of the Society's most testing times.

Mary said: "It has been an honour and a privilege to serve as your Regional President. These past five years have taught me more than I could have imagined – about courage, about hope, and above all about the unwavering strength of our Vincentian family. Thank you to each and every one of you for walking this path with me.



"I'm grateful that with God's help I have led you, our members, on this 'Journey Together' and it is now our responsibility and our duty to look to the future. We must embrace change and commit to the aims and objectives of the new strategic plan. We must continue on our 'Journey Together'. We already know that together we are stronger. We can however, achieve much more, as we reach out to provide support with continued compassion to those in our local communities who need it most."

NORTH WEST REGION

Area Leadership Council

The North West region held an Area Leadership Council in Jackson Hotel in Ballybofey on the 16th of September. A number of Area and Conference Presidents were in attendance on the day, with the workshop facilitated by Michael Higgins, National Membership Support Manager.

We would like to sincerely thank all Area and Conference Presidents for the time, energy, and commitment you continue to invest in your roles. Your dedication makes a meaningful impact to your local communities. This event offered a valuable opportunity to acknowledge your efforts, strengthen connections across Area Councils in the North West, and reaffirm our shared values and behaviours.

Together, we explored the interdependent nature of leadership within the region and engaged in thoughtful discussion on key areas including home visitation, membership, domestic and international vetting, and the importance of maintaining alignment with the ethos, values, and policies of SVP.



Your contributions were truly appreciated, and we look forward to continuing this important work in the months ahead.

Special Gathering and Appreciation Event at An Griánán Hotel

On the 8th of October, we were delighted to host a special gathering and appreciation event at An Griánán Hotel in Burt. The evening brought together sixty-four dedicated members from the Convoys and Inishowen areas, in recognition of their ongoing commitment, compassion, and invaluable service to their communities through their work with SVP.

The event served not only as a moment to celebrate the outstanding dedication of our members, but also as a chance to strengthen connections, exchange experiences, and reaffirm the values that unite us in our shared mission.

We were honoured to welcome guest speaker Cora McAleer, Assistant Director of Nursing, Alcohol & Drug Service, Mental Health Service Donegal, HSE, who delivered a thoughtful and engaging presentation on mental health and wellbeing. Her insights were both relevant and inspiring, sparking meaningful discussion and reflection. Cora also generously took time to answer questions from attendees, adding great value to the evening.



The evening was marked by a spirit of warmth, gratitude, and connection. It served as a powerful reminder of the strength found in unity and the value of acknowledging each other's contributions. We extend our sincere thanks to all who attended and contributed to making the evening such a success.

Celebrating and appreciating members at Mount Errigal Hotel

On October 9th, we came together to celebrate and appreciate our members at a special event held at the Mount Errigal Hotel in Letterkenny. The evening united thirty-four devoted members from the Letterkenny area, providing a meaningful opportunity to honour their continued commitment, compassion, and service to the community through their work with SVP.

We were delighted to welcome guest speakers Claire O'Kane, Project Manager, and Annmari McDevitt, Family Support Worker, from the Donegal Parent and Family Support Service. Claire and Annmari delivered an insightful and engaging presentation outlining the essential work their service provides to families across Donegal. Their presentation highlighted the challenges faced by families in the region, the supports available, and the collaborative approach they take in working with local services, including SVP. They graciously took time to respond to questions from attendees, fostering thoughtful discussion on how we can strengthen our partnership to better support those most in need within our communities.

Pat McArt, former editor of the Derry Journal, renowned author, and respected commentator, was a special guest at the event. He spoke passionately about the invaluable work carried out by SVP and highlighted how members make a significant and lasting impact on their communities. Drawing on his extensive experience in journalism and community affairs, Pat praised the dedication, compassion, and selflessness of SVP members, emphasising the vital role they play in supporting those facing hardship and fostering stronger, more caring communities.

The evening concluded with a special presentation of Silver and Gold medals, honouring members who have dedicated 25 and 50 years of service to the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. The atmosphere throughout the evening was positive and uplifting, with a strong sense of connection, mutual respect, and shared purpose. It was a meaningful occasion that not only acknowledged the contributions of our members, but also deepened our understanding of the broader network of supports available to individuals and families in Letterkenny.



Celebrating Creativity at St. Vincent's Shop, Bundoran

Here at the Bundoran branch of the St. Vincent de Paul Conference, it is all systems go with the delivery of our Annual Appeal envelopes, collection of same and the distribution of our Christmas food and energy vouchers to those struggling in our Community.

However it is in our St. Vincent's Shop where our dedicated window dressers of Marian Carmody, Beirne Dillon and Carol Matthews have once again excelled themselves in their absolutely beautiful Christmas display scene.

Nevertheless it is not just at Christmas that the ladies display their creative artistry, appropriate beautiful displays are also created for St. Patrick's Day, Easter, Summer and Autumn and consequently are often the recipients of various accolades and quite deservedly so.

So Ladies, congratulations and take a bow, it is absolutely fantastic to see your beautiful, colourful display during the dark Winter nights leading up to Christmas.



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

Sean Grant

All Saints Newtowncunningham/Killea Conference
Co. Donegal.

It is with deep respect and heartfelt sorrow that we remember Sean, a cherished colleague, faithful servant, and dear friend, whose life embodied the values of humility, hard work and compassionate service. As a farmer, Sean understood the rhythms of the land, the values of patience, and the rewards of honest labor. Sean's life was rooted in the soil and in the strength of community.

Sean rose with the sun not only to tend to his fields, but also to care for those around him with generosity, quiet strength, and unwavering dedication. But it was through his work with the

Society of St. Vincent de Paul that Sean sowed a different kind of harvest, one of hope, dignity, and love. In every home visit, every kind word, every act of service, Sean lived out the Gospel call to "love thy neighbour".

Sean brought compassion where there was struggle, presence where there was loneliness, and dignity where there was need. We offer our sincerest condolences to Sean's wife Mary and his family. May you find peace in knowing the depth of the impact Sean made, and the enduring respect with which Sean will be remembered. Rest in peace Sean.

"Small acts of care for our environment can create lasting change for people and communities."



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