



October 2023

Vincentian **Wisdom**
Quotes • Charism



Meeting

Board of Directors Meeting
Tuesday, 10/17, 9:30 AM-11:30 AM
Family Resource Center, Pittsburg

Training

Ozanam Orientation
Wednesday, 10/18, 8:00 AM-3:30 PM
The Most Holy Rosary, Antioch

Event

Tips for Change Fundraiser
Gianni's Italian Bistro, San Ramon
Monday, 10/23, 4:30 PM-8:00 PM

Training

Home Visit Workshop
Tuesday, 10/24, 6:00 PM-8:00 PM
St. Agnes, Concord

Training

2023-24 Officer Training
Saturday, 10/28, 9:00 AM-Noon
St. Joan of Arc, San Ramon

Meeting

Board of Directors Meeting
Tuesday 11/14, 9:30 AM-11:30 AM
Family Resource Center, Pittsburg

Event

SVDP Thanksgiving at the DC
Thursday, 11/23, 11:00 AM-12:30 PM
Family Resource Center, Pittsburg

Bob Liles Corner

MY SECOND TERM

I want to express my gratitude to everyone who placed their trust in me by re-electing me for a second term, even in a race where my only opponent was listed as "Other."

As we embark on the next three years, I've been inspired by the diverse ideas put forth by our recent National Assembly. Some councils operate free pharmacies, providing vital prescription medications to our neighbors who struggle to afford both rent and medicine. Unfortunately, this shortage often leads to emergency room visits.

Others extend loans to individuals to alleviate the burden of exorbitant payday loan fees, and some run housing programs. These are all admirable initiatives, but they demand a collective effort that goes beyond my individual capacity.

To bring these programs to fruition, they require the active involvement of many dedicated Vincentians coming together to make a difference. If any of these causes resonate with you and you'd like to champion them, please don't hesitate to reach out.

However, let us not forget that while big, new programs are appealing, it's equally important to continuously strive for small, incremental improvements in everything our conference undertakes. Together, we can make a lasting impact on our community.

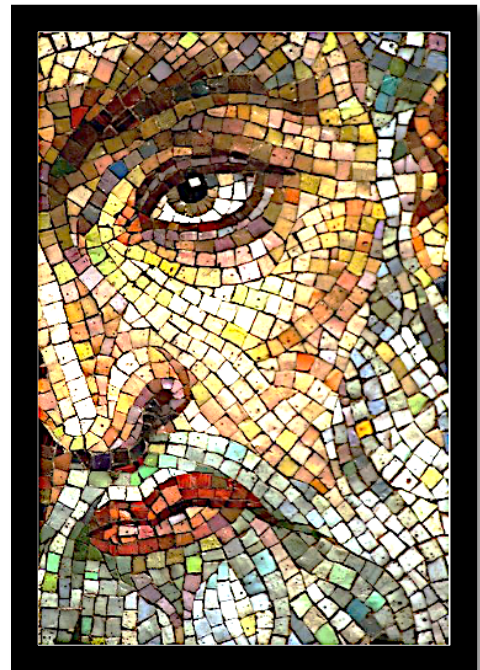
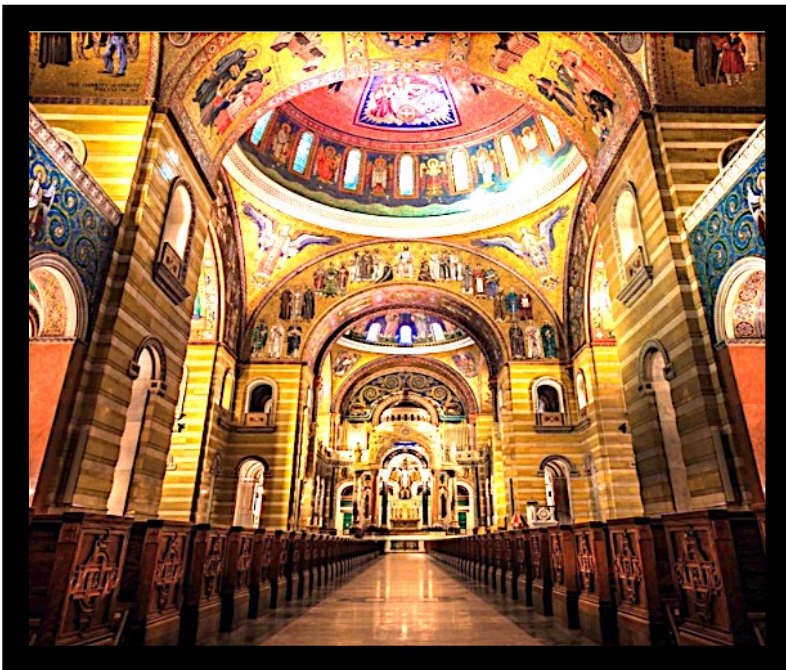
MY SECOND TERM CONT.

The board is always open for new members. Several of our funders have said that our board has insufficient diversity and that in the future that may affect how much we receive. We tell them that it is hard to get people to volunteer for the board and that I have never turned down anyone who asked to be on the board. We meet for two hours on either the 2nd or 3rd Tuesday of the month at the Pittsburg office. If you are interested you can ask me for more information on the responsibilities of a board member and you can attend one of the meetings to see what actually happens.

BOB

"EVERY VINCENTIAN'S CONTRIBUTION"

Like the individual pieces of glass in a Mosaic, it has come together to create a beautiful mosaic of Christ's love for our neighbors. Sometimes, we must take a step back to fully appreciate our collective work's beauty. From the 2023 National Assembly in St. Louis, MO."



Of all the most remarkable moments at the 2023 National Assembly was the transition of Servant Leadership from Ralph Middlecamp, the outgoing national president for the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, to the Servant Leadership of John Berry. This historic event occurred in The Cathedral Basilica of St. Louis, a masterpiece of art and architecture characterized by its soaring vaults and radiant mosaics—a true testament to beauty.

The Cathedral Basilica is an awe-inspiring work of art, comprising over 43,000,000 individually cut-glass pieces that seamlessly blend the concepts and craftsmanship of a dozen architects and artisans. From every angle, it draws one's attention heavenward, inviting contemplation of the transcendent.

Sitting at the cross arch beneath St. Vincent de Paul, each piece of glass serves as a reminder of the countless lives touched by the love and compassion of the Society throughout its history as Vincentians.



John Berry

President, National Council of the United States, Society of St. Vincent de Paul
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Yesterday I was humbled, blessed, and honored to be Installed as the 14th National President of the National Council of the United States Society of St. Vincent de Paul for a 6 year term.



John Berry was sworn in as President of the National Council of the United States, Society of St. Vincent de Paul, by Bishop Donald J. Hying, National Episcopal Advisor for SVdP.

Also continuing her service on the National Council Board of Directors is our Executive Director, Claudia Ramirez. Claudia has served on the National BOD for three years representing Executive Directors and has been asked by John Berry to serve another year on the newly installed board.

Reflections on the 2023 SVDP National Assembly

During the National Assembly, I had the privilege of attending a number of enlightening talks and engaging in meaningful discussions over just three days. These sessions covered a wide range of topics, each shedding light on different facets of our Vincentian Charism:

1. "Survival to Success: Sustainable Housing Model"
2. "How to Start a Charitable Pharmacy"
3. "Examining Frederick's Family Life"
4. "Starting a VOP Committee"
5. "Alternative Loan Programs"
6. "When Our Neighbors Need More"
7. "Blessing and Living as Vincentian"

The assembly offered a unique opportunity to connect with around 800 like-minded friends who share our commitment to serving those in need. Amidst Masses and workshops, we explored the depths of our Vincentian identity and addressed the challenges faced by our Conferences and Counsels.

Workshops pushed the boundaries of our understanding and introduced us to new resources to better assist our neighbors in need. The assembly served as a platform for mutual learning and growth.

Friendship and advocacy were fostered during meals, where we had the chance to discuss SVDP Contra Costa County's initiatives, such as the Family Resource Center, Free Medical Clinic, Oasis Day Center, and Dental Program. These projects exemplify the dedication of our Vincentians.

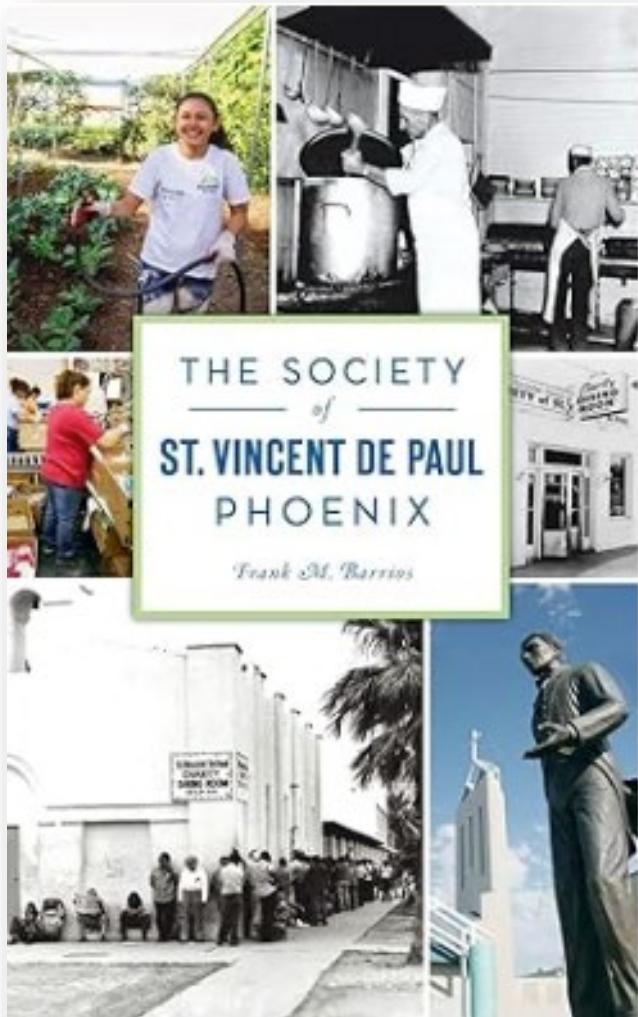
Spirituality, the assembly confirmed Contra Costa County's initiative of forming and hosting Spanish Language Formator and Spiritual Advisor Training. We shared the proactive steps to review Conference leadership and helped reestablish four primarily Spanish-speaking Conferences to reflect better the communities they serve.

Service to our Conferences and Vincentians has been aided by embracing the Seattle Database, which better enhances our understanding of how our neighbors in need are being served. The HOPE Conference and care provided by the Vincentians set a remarkable standard of supporting our Conferences in assisting neighbors with car repair, utility payments, and housing during the pandemic.

One memorable moment during the assembly was an encounter with a fellow Vincentian. She demonstrated a keen eye for detail and a passion for improving the convention's operations. Rather than criticize the current assembly, she intended to note ways to meticulously prevent similar issues in the future. To my surprise, she was later introduced as overseeing the next convention in Phoenix, illustrating her commitment to constructive change.

The 2023 SVDP National Assembly was a rich and enlightening experience that brought together Vincentians from diverse backgrounds. It allowed us to deepen our understanding of our Charism, explore new avenues of service, and connect with like-minded individuals dedicated to positively impacting our neighbors' lives.

2024 NATIONAL ASSEMBLY PHOENIX, AZ Aug 14-17, 2024



Given its proximity to our location, attending the convention is necessary. I understand that Phoenix can be quite hot in August, but the convention center offers air-conditioning, and the rates are affordable. As my local friends often say, 'Mornings are ideal, and during the day's heat, it's best to stay indoors until the evening cools down.' Additionally, I can assure you that the event is well-organized.

Bob

PLEASE JOIN US



OZANAM ORIENTATION
ANSWER THE CALL TO SEE THE FACE OF CHRIST

WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 18, 2023

Parish Center of
The Most Holy Rosary Catholic Church
21 E 15th Street, Antioch
MASS AT 8:00 A.M.
ORIENTATION 8:45 A.M. - 3:30 P.M.
Continental Breakfast and Lunch Provided

RSVP Shawna Costanzo at 925-200-5952 or
Scan the QR code or click here to register <https://bit.ly/Ozanam101823>



St. Vincent de Paul of Contra Costa named Nonprofit of the Year **State Sen. Glazer recently bestowed the district's honor on the organization at its** **Pittsburg headquarters.**

By COMPILED BY EAST BAY TIMES |

State Sen. Steve Glazer, D-Orinda, has named the Society of St. Vincent de Paul of Contra Costa County his district's 2023 Nonprofit of the Year, honoring the organization recently at its Pittsburg headquarters.

St. Vincent de Paul of Contra Costa County has played a critical role for 59 years in the county's efforts to provide essential assistance to thousands of vulnerable families. Since 1964, the St. Vincent de Paul chapter has helped families who have fallen on hard times or are in crises. Its programs help feed, clothe, shelter, and heal the county's most vulnerable residents. In 2022, St. Vincent de Paul distributed \$1.9 million in direct financial aid (rental/utility assistance) and more than \$3 million of in-kind aid (food, clothing, furniture, medical and dental care, etc.).

"I am proud to honor St. Vincent de Paul of Contra Costa County for helping families in desperate situations," Glazer said. "St. Vincent de Paul's support over the last six decades has meant that families with nowhere else to turn can get back on their feet, with food, clothing, health care and financial help."

Here is an excerpt of remarks made by our Executive Director, Claudia Ramirez that day: *SVdP's work is not possible without the important support of our Vincentians, volunteers, donors, and community partners. You have all contributed to our work and we deeply appreciate your commitment and partnership.*

Behind every neighbor-in-need is a unique story and a team of Vincentians. St. Vincent de Paul "Vincentian" volunteers are our "Secret Weapon" in the fight to end poverty and help our neighbors. Our quiet army of 700 selfless individuals give of their time and talents to accomplish our mission, "A network of friends, inspired by Gospel values, growing in holiness and building a more just world through personal relationships with and service to people in need."

Our network of volunteers serves the community from 29 SVdP conferences throughout the county. As Senator Glazer highlighted, these 700 volunteers collectively donated over 80,000 volunteer hours in 2022. Some SVdP Vincentians work weekly at their respective food distributions, and hundreds of others make home visits. The SVdP practice of making home visits is a core practice of the work we do, providing friendship, hope, and yes, basic assistance too. We find that in the privacy of their homes, neighbors and Vincentians are able to build a trusted relationship and, together, provide personalized solutions. With a recent family in need, our SVdP Vincentian team provided food, rental assistance, and access to free dental care via the DOW Pittsburg Free Dental Clinic at St. Vincent de Paul. They also helped place one of the family members in a new job, and even provided the family with a gently loved car!

And speaking of partners, we also have a great partnership with RotaCare Bay Area for the Pittsburg Free Medical Clinic at SVdP; Winter Nights Family Shelter for our Oasis Daytime Shelter, The Bay Church, New Destiny Church, The City of Pittsburg and Loaves and Fishes for the Shower Program. Loaves and Fishes of Contra Costa is our longest partnership, established more than 13 years ago to build and operate this Free Dining Room where we are gathered today.





The Privilege of the Vincentian Home Visit

The St. Vincent de Paul Home Visit is more than the primary work of the Conferences it is our chance to meet the living Christ. Join us to learn how to meet Christ in the Poor and be Christ to those we serve.

Want to know more? Join us on Tuesday, October 24, from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. at St. Agnes Catholic Church, 3966 Chestnut Avenue, Concord, CA 94519

RSVP to Vincentian Life 925-439-5060 or s.krank@svdp-cc.org or
Click here to register: <https://bit.ly/HomeVisit102423>

Empowerment Hub for Vincentians: Get Answers, Resources, and Community



Have questions? Need resources? Are you interested in Home Visits? Enhancing your Conference's spirituality? Wondering about the "Conference of Last Resort"? Are you considering helping a neighbor with a 12-month PG&E bill? Need help with Twinning vs. Co-Pay? Are you concerned about the Diocesan Mission Alignment Process?

Join us every Tuesday at 10:00 am

Bring your questions or simply drop in –
You could be the solution someone seeks.

<https://bit.ly/TuesdayZoomForum>

Meeting ID: 925 439 5060

Passcode: Ozanam

"Transforming Lives through Systemic Change" **by Sheila Banducci, Conference at St. Catherine of Siena, Martinez**

I recently attended my first conference for Saint Vincent de Paul in Saint Louis. Among the numerous classes offered, I chose one titled "Getting Ahead... an Example of Systemic Change." Although I wasn't entirely sure what to expect, the concept of systemic change intrigued me. The class was led by Wayne, an African-American man who shared his remarkable personal journey.

Wayne was born into a challenging environment, with dreams of becoming a California police officer. However, as he grew older and faced the reality of living in a neighborhood rife with gangs, he felt compelled to join one for his safety. Simultaneously, his parents struggled with financial difficulties and substance abuse.

Wayne's life took a critical turn when he was involved in a violent incident during high school. While his gang associate shot someone, Wayne stayed behind to help the victim, ultimately saving his life. This act of kindness spared Wayne from jail time.

Despite this, he continued gang-related activities until the high school expelled him. His mother decided to send him to live with an aunt in a different town, hoping for a fresh start. However, the cycle of gang life persisted.

A turning point occurred when a neighbor observed Wayne's activities and offered him a job at a local Saint Vincent de Paul thrift store. The executive director noticed Wayne's potential and encouraged him to attend night school. Wayne excelled academically, earned his GED, reunited with his girlfriend, and pursued higher education.

Today, Wayne is the Associate Executive Director for Saint Vincent de Paul in Minneapolis, emphasizing the importance of friendship and caring in helping individuals make positive changes. He believes people are strategically placed in each other's lives to offer support and guidance.

Wayne's story is a testament to the transformative power of compassion and mentorship, especially for those born into challenging circumstances. It embodies the Vincentian message of making a difference through personal connections.

If Wayne's journey inspires you, I encourage you to attend the upcoming conference in Phoenix next August. You may encounter more stories of lives changed by the Vincentians' unwavering dedication to creating systemic change.





Rule 3.9 Subsidiarity and freedom of action

The Society embraces the Principle of Subsidiarity as its basic standard of operation. Decisions are made as close as possible to the area of activity to ensure that the local environment and circumstances (cultural, social, political, etc.) are taken into consideration. In this way, the Society promotes local initiatives within its spirit. This freedom of action of Conferences and Councils, which has been kept faithfully since the origins of the Society, enables them to help the poor spontaneously and more effectively, free from excessive bureaucracy.

In exercising this freedom of action to face the challenge of poverty in their area, Vincentians feel called to pray together for guidance and strength and for that creative imagination which is the promised gift of the Holy Spirit, *"Your old men shall dream dreams and your young men shall see visions"* (Joel 3,1).

Help Us Help Others – Volunteers Needed at Our Three Thrift Stores

Here in Contra Costa County, SVdP is present not only at our 29 conferences but also at our three thrift stores. At our thrift stores, we provide free clothing for the homeless, free clothing, furniture, & household items to our neighbors through our voucher program, and clothes to participants in our collaborative Free Shower program. In addition, shoppers help keep items out of landfills by purchasing gently used clothing and other items – and the proceeds from these sales help fund many other programs and services offered by SVdP.



Come to our Thrift Stores and volunteer to organize inventory, sort donations, help customers and support our community! Contact Linda Bilbay, Volunteer Coordinator, at 925-439-5060 ext. 11 or any of the store managers if you are interested in helping!