



Shout out to St. Paul Men’s Group for partnering with us for Thanksgiving food deliveries to our neighbors in need.



# OUR NEIGHBORS

It is hard to describe what the SVDP Steuben County conference does to help the poor, because it is so diverse. Our rule says, “no work of charity is foreign to the Society.” So, it would not be surprising to find that the people we serve are also unique. So, many different stories with distinctive needs. In our past newsletters we have shared a few of their sagas and we thought you would like to meet a few more of the people you support us in serving (we always change the names when we share these stories).

Mary lives in one of the many trailer parks that can be found in Steuben County. When she calls it is never just for herself, but for others in her community. Frequently she organizes a carpool to the Community Harvest foodbank in Fort Wayne. Our conference has a relationship with Community Harvest which allows us to purchase a food voucher for fifty pounds of food at nineteen cents a pound. This allows our neighbors to go and select the food items they need, often including dairy, protein and produce. Mary usually travels with three to four of her neighbors when she goes.

Ellen is a grandmother who lives in subsidized housing with her granddaughter who has autism. These two usually can get by with the day-to-day things but will need help with unusual items. Over the course of a few years the conference has helped them with things like winter coats, an air purifier, recliners and a bed for when the granddaughter moved in. They have also taken advantage of the rummage sale shopping coupons that the Altar and Rosary Society offer to neighbors in need. (Cont.)



Catechist Joseph Voigt, classroom assistant Sadie Schneider with their 5th grade



class. Their class donated 76 food items, earning them a free pizza hut certificate. Total for all REL. ED. students was 273 food items to be used in the Blessing Box in the parking lot at St. Anthony. Thank you for your generous outreach to our neighbors in need.

## BUILDING FOUNDATIONS

October first of 2024 our conference launched ServWare, a web-based application that is designed to support St. Vincent de Paul Conferences, Districts and Councils by providing a secure application to document activities related to neighbor in need assistance, communication, reporting and member management. This transition away from our previous system of Google Sheets and Docs allows all our conference members more ready access to the information they need when reviewing a request. It also provides strong foundations as we grow and move into the future.

*(Our Neighbors cont.)* Just before Thanksgiving, the call line received an urgent request from Melissa. Melissa, her two boys, and their dog had been living in their truck after fleeing a hazardous home in Tennessee. While delivering for Instacart in NE Indiana, their truck broke down, leaving them stranded in Angola with no money and no place to live. Various area churches, the trustee and our conference helped this family with food and lodging at Travelers Inn, while the truck situation was sorted out. During this time frame, Melissa's aunt offered her a place to stay in central Fort Wayne. More volunteers came forward to transport the family and the unfixable truck to the new home. But the blessings didn't stop there, out of the blue one of our supporters asked us if we knew of someone who could use an older reliable truck. The donation of this truck put Melissa back into a situation where she could sustain her family.

A letter to St. Anthony Parish fifteen months ago was our introduction to Joe. Joe was in the county jail on a misdemeanor preparing for release and seeking help with this transition since he had no parents or siblings still alive. Two of our Vincentians made application and completed background checks so they could make a "home" visit to the jail, with a gift bible in hand. Since that time, the conference has supported Joe with things like a donated bike to be used for transportation to an area restaurant where he found employment after his release. Most recently we made a purchase of steel toed shoes so he could accept employment at a local manufacturer. These items along with regular support conversations with a couple of our male Vincentians seem to have him on a stable path.

Hopefully you see yourself in these stories, because as supporters of your SVDP conference you are the heart of the story. Without the confidence your backing gives us, we would never be able to pick up that call from the helpline. Together we make the mission of St. Vincent de Paul come to life, which is to create a network of friends, inspired by the Gospel, growing in holiness, and building a more just world through personal relationships with a service to people in need. May God bless you!