



SVdP: St. Francis of Assisi Conference - Steuben Co. Community Update Summer 2024

Who is Our Neighbor in Need

by Elisabeth McHugh

As a relatively new Vincentian (July 2023), I offered to man the phone lines one day a week.

I was in for some eye-opening insights about who our Neighbor in need is.

I have met some neighbors whose main need is food, they are on a very fixed income but often don't qualify for food stamps. One lady in particular comes to mind, she lives in Holiday Woods in a trailer. When I spoke with her about her need, she said that the people in that area often help each other. There are several single people all in similar situations and she takes them to FW to the food bank where they all get food. (We provide food vouchers – it costs us only .19/lb of food) She told me that when they get home that they stock their shelves but often give food to their neighbors. She even recently took in her elderly neighbor who was starting to get very forgetful and just needed someone to help her a little. So, we are always glad to help them with food!

Other neighbors that call us in need often leave us heartbroken as we can't help them. Many of these are the homeless, those that through poor life choices were incarcerated, served their time and are now starting over. Many of these neighbors also find it difficult to find jobs and if they do find a job often they have no transportation to get there. These are all situations that are hard to help with, but those of us that man the help line try to guide people to areas with homeless shelters and places to get a warm meal or some type of food.

My greatest frustration is those neighbors that at times have to be told that we can't help anymore, or their need is too great, beyond our simple means. Even these neighbors are treated with respect and dignity (even when they are rude on the phone) and we try to point them in the direction of other service agencies that can help them.

I see in my "neighbor" Christ himself. I recently helped someone who needed gas for her car that she was living out of. One could see that she has had and is living a very rough life. As I was leaving, I told her to always remember her value as a beloved daughter of Jesus. I said, that makes you God's princess! She had the biggest smile and gave me a hug, when I hugged her and felt all the bones on her back, the image of Christ and Psalm 22:17 "They have numbered all my bones. And they have looked and stared upon me" came to mind. When I got into my car, I realized it was Christ himself whom I was helping. As Vincentians, we try to see Christ in all our Neighbors in Need.

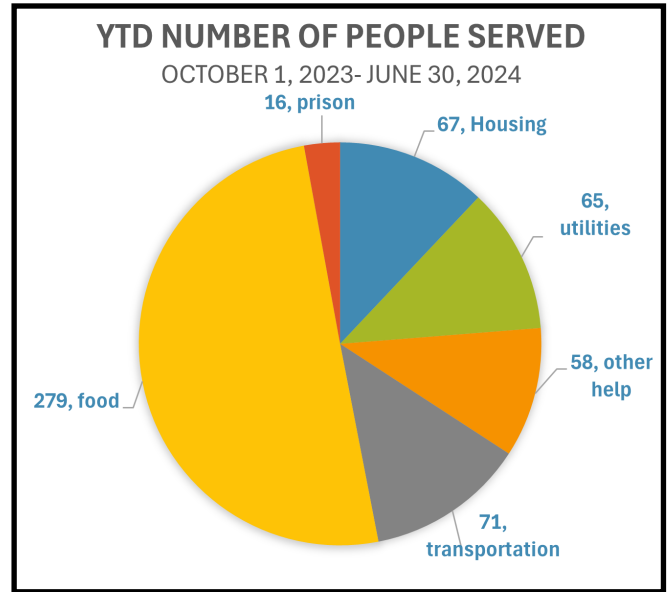
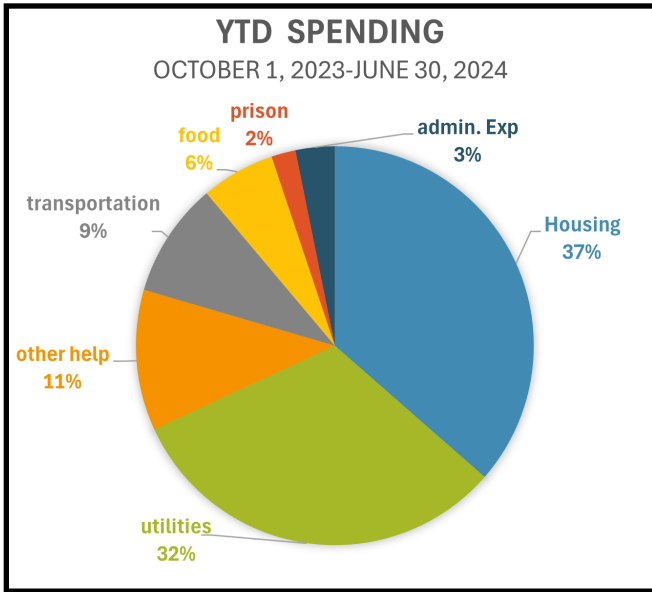


Quotes from St. Vincent de Paul

"We must strive to soften our hearts and make them sensitive to the suffering and worries of the neighbor."

"God accepts the undertakings of one who presents things frankly just as they are."

"To be involved in the service of Jesus is a sacred trust to which we have been invited."



Financial Review Notes

By Annette Calloway

Housing Needs: Sixty-nine percent of the financial assets that are donated to St. Vincent de Paul of Stueben County go to keeping families and individuals in their homes with the power and water on. It is a task that is undertaken in connection with the appropriate trustee and could not be accomplished without your donations. Rents are on the rise, according to CBS news rents have risen over 30% between 2019 and 2023 (www.cbsnews.com/new/rent-cost-us-2024-housing-national/), so this problem is expected to grow.

Prison Ministry: Although a small percent of our budget goes to prison ministry, a new outreach that began in the Summer 2023 serves in other ways. Much of this ministry is made up of weekly visits to the prison by two Vincentians who are journeying with a gentleman who appreciates their concern.

Food: It is impossible to measure the number of people we help with food outreach because so many of our generous parishioners put items in the Blessing Box. We know this quiet ministry makes a difference, we often hear from the neighbors we serve that they are relying on food pantries and church outreaches like our Blessing Box to feed their families.

**The bottom line is that none of this would be possible without our financial and spiritual supporters.
You are the heartbeat of this enterprise. THANK YOU!**



Blessing Box– Hopes for the Garden Year 2

In last Summer’s newsletter we shared that under the leadership of Vincentian Ruth Libey a garden was established in Cameron Hospital Community gardens. This garden is alive and growing for our second year. At this writing, zucchinis, cucumbers and cherry tomatoes have already been harvested and placed in the Blessing Box.

If you find yourself with excess produce from your garden, please consider sharing it with your neighbors in need via this box. Thanks!

