

2014 Annual Report

Conference Anniversary

Our Saint Vincent de Paul Conference here at St. Charles Garnier had its beginnings in 1989, and was formally recognized by the National Council of the Society in Canada – our Aggregation – on October 10, 1990. This year we are celebrating twenty-five years of service to the poor and needy of southeast Kelowna, and acknowledging the service and commitment of many Vincentians through the years, the generosity of our parishioners, and the commitment of our Pastors to this Ministry to the Poor.

Client Visits:

During 2014 our volunteers made 333 visits to clients in our area. Most of the visits were to distribute food hampers along with vouchers for fresh meat, milk and produce. When needed, we also gave out vouchers for clothing and bedding from the Pro-Life thrift shop. We have given out bus tickets and assisted with a wide variety of other requests. As well, many people phone us for information regarding other community resources or services. We visit our clients as guests in their homes in a spirit of caring and concern – our most important role.

Christmas Hampers:

This is always one of our major activities! Last December we distributed 62 hampers with food, vouchers, and gifts for 35 children on the list. We were helped by many volunteers and want to thank each and everyone who helped in any way to make this possible. Our special thanks to the students of Immaculata Regional High School who donated money raised through their annual “Fast”; the Corporate and individual Parish sponsors; and during the year we received hampers of groceries and toiletry supplies from the students at St. Joseph’s Elementary School. Each and everyone of our parish family put Christ’s message into action. In late December, we delivered an additional 23 emergency-type food hampers to those who were not on the Christmas list.

Good News Bear Campaign:

This year was the final year of this campaign that been run in the community for many years and done much to supplement the fund-raising of many groups, including the Vincentian Conferences in the city, at Christmas. We acknowledge with gratitude the efforts and energy of Mike Roberts, the former CHBC Weatherman, in developing and promoting this campaign through the years.

Kids’ Kapers:

Through this program we were able to offer financial help to children from families in need to take part in a sport or recreational activity such as soccer, art, gymnastics, swimming, etc. Like all our Vincentian activities, these requests are handled in a confidential manner.

Summer Camp:

Last year we were able to send 9 children to summer camp at Camp Owaissi on the west side of Okanagan Lake, an unforgettable summer experience. Last year one of our attendees from previous years was asked to be a camp counselor.

Ozanam House:

We provide ongoing financial support and participate in events for this special Vincentian project that was developed through the co-operation of all the conferences of the Central Okanagan. Ozanam House provides 19 beds for men who are recovering alcoholics, addicts, or those with mental health issues. Ozanam House was founded in 2007 by the Society of Central Okanagan, and in the intervening years has offered professional care, direction, and guidance to more than 350 men. This indeed is one of “the jewels in the crown” of Vincentian activities in the Okanagan.

Snowflake Tea:

In mid-January we hosted a special afternoon tea for the residents and staff at Sutherland Hills Rest Home. We provide a light lunch and musical entertainment and spend the afternoon visiting with the residents. They enjoyed it very much.

Twinning in Peru:

Conferences around the world are often twinned with Vincentian conferences in the Third World for sharing knowledge of each other and solidarity in activities. Our conference is twinned with the Virgen Milagrosa Conference in Lima, Peru. We support them with our prayers and with a financial donation four times a year that assists them in their works of charity. In turn, we are inspired by what they do, and through Facebook, our members get to know their Peruvian counterparts.

Inn from the Cold:

We support this winter shelter program for the homeless in Kelowna by providing groceries during the months when the average temperature drops below -5C. The Inn, which had its beginnings here at St Charles Garnier parish during Fr Gordon Walker's ministry, provides emergency overnight shelter to people who are living on the street during the cold winter months. And new this year, we provide grocery vouchers each month to a further program, Chandler Street Housing, a housing facility for eight individuals also run under the umbrella of Inn from the Cold.

Vegetable Garden:

A group of hardworking volunteers planted and tended a vegetable garden again last spring and summer. Despite competition from marmots, deer and gophers, the harvest yielded an amazing 3400 pounds of produce! This was donated to the Kelowna Food Bank, the Gospel Mission, and our clients.

Our New Facility:

For best use of parish facilities we were asked to move from our former location to the "Tower Room". Thanks to the skills and ability of parish handyman, Walter Lever, this project was done quite seamlessly. The mid-summer temperatures provided some anxious moments but with the co-operation of all we've seen the move through. More changes may come about with building modifications afoot, but we'll see it through - Vincentians have managed since 1833 - 181 years!!

President's Remarks:

I would like to express my sincere thanks to all the members of our Conference and our Associate Members. Our Christmas program would not be possible without those many volunteers who come forward to assist in the true spirit of Christmas. We have always been assisted in our work by our brothers in the Knights of Columbus and our sisters in the Catholic Women's League - many thanks to you all.

We totally depend on the charity and generosity of our parishioners - with you everything is possible. Please consider the work of Ozanam House in future financial planning. See the quote from Matthew 25: 35-40 below.

My final thanks are to Marilee in the Parish Office; no request has ever been turned down, despite the fact I don't always meet deadlines; to the members of the Parish Council for consideration of our needs; and most of all, to Father Pat, our Pastor, friend, and a Vincentian by heritage and practice. Thank you, and I never thought I'd ever put this in writing, "thanks, Pat".

Reg Humphries, President

*"For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink,
I was naked and you clothed me,
.. truly I tell you, just as you did this to the least of these, you did it to Me". Matthew 25:35-40*