

News in Brief

E-news September 2024 | Issue 35

Welcome to our latest e-news, which is filled with stories from around the country from hard-working volunteers and staff who are helping people in a practical way every day. If you have a story you would like us to share, please email it to us at: national@svdp.org.nz

A MESSAGE FROM OUR NATIONAL PRESIDENT

Last week I took part in the Requiem Mass for Gerard Hart, the Area President for Auckland East, and as I listened to the family tributes, I began to realise just how much he and his wife Heather gave to carrying out the work of the Society. Over the past months we have lost many older members like him and as I reflected on Gerard's and their commitment to helping the Poor another question began to bug me.

A very simple question really – Why? Why did they push themselves to do so much for total strangers?

A simple question, really – with a very simple answer. Love!

We all know that if you love someone you will go to enormous lengths to show that love, especially by doing something special for them. And the more your love and knowledge of them grows, the more effort you put into growing that relationship.

Jesus knew that, and his love for his father drove him to help us, so much so, that he gave his own life so that we too could share in that love.

Frederic knew that! And when he founded his Conference of Charity to learn more about our relationship with Jesus, it quickly became a Conference of loving action, modelled on the work of St Vincent de Paul, which in turn was modelled on the work of Jesus; caring and loving those in need – Sharing and showing the love of Jesus for us all.

So, when you give a food parcel or help someone in need you are showing and sharing love. It might take a long time before it has an effect, but we leave that part to God, confident in our belief, "that whatever you do for the least of my brethren, you do it for me".

So, thank you all for your work, your commitment and above all your love; Frederic is proud of you and so am I.

Every blessing,

Gerry Stevens



God never gives someone a gift they are not capable of receiving. If he gives us the gift of Christmas, it is because we all have the ability to understand and receive it.

POPE FRANCIS



Obituaries

Frank Heffernan

RIP July 2024

Faithfully serving the Society for over 40 years in a variety of roles as National Board member, South Auckland Area Council President, Conference President. Singer and entertainer at all National meetings.



A few years back South Auckland Area Council realised that there was a need for a central meeting place where those in the community could go for help, no matter what problems they were facing be it material, food, financial or otherwise. Frank and his team were instrumental in realising the 'dream' for the new Centre and successfully obtained funding for the project from local business people for both the Centre and a new van. The Centre was officially opened on the 18 November 2007 by Bishop Pat Dunn and Cardinal Thomas Williams.

Kevin Mulcahy

RIP August 2024

A long serving Vincentian, Kevin brought organisational skills and a deep concern for the needy to the Society. He was National Vice-President, Auckland North Area Council and Conference President.



Kevin's retail experience allowed him to contribute positively to the operations of the Society shops realising that they are not only fundraisers but are there primarily to service the needy living within the community.

Peter Crawford

RIP July 2024 - Whangarei

Peter was a long serving and committed Vincentian.

Peter set up a men's group to visit men in the area and expanded the group to include younger Vincentians.



Peter and a team of five prepared and delivered 200 school lunches each week to seven schools in Whangarei and outlying areas.

He was awarded the Queen's Service Medal for services to the community and sport in the Queen's Birthday Honours and was awarded a Life Membership of Northland Rugby Referees for many years of refereeing and his dedication to the sport.

His involvement in the Northland community was far-reaching, varying from twilight cricket to helping set up the Marian Heights Residential Village.

Gerard Hart

RIP August 2024

Gerard was extremely generous with his time and talents, an inspiration and example of Vincentian spirituality, touching people's lives along the way. His commitment and dedication to those in need was exceptional.



He served the Society as the Auckland East Area Council President, as Conference President and was a member of Vinnies Tamaki Makaurau Trust.

Gerard and his wife Heather worked selflessly, always as a team, for over 40 years addressing underlying social conditions that cause poverty and deprivation.

Gerard held a number of important positions throughout his career, more recently as asset analyst at Health Alliance.

Bishop Owen Dolan celebrates 70 years' priestly service

The unwavering commitment of 70 years of priestly service by Bishop Owen Dolan was celebrated on Thursday 25th July in Palmerston North.

In 1995, Dolan was appointed Bishop Peter Cullinane's coadjutor bishop but, as he retired before Cullinane, he became one of only a few emeritus coadjutor bishops worldwide.

A LIFE OF SERVICE

At 95 years old, Dolan (in blue shirt) is both the oldest and one of the longest-serving priests in New Zealand.

At the celebration, the current Bishop of Palmerston North, John Adams, referenced the mercy and grace Dolan has extended throughout his priesthood.

"Everyone leaves your presence somehow better for spending their time with you" Bishop John said.

"You have a wonderful gift for friendship and a pastoral genius that makes you a beacon of compassion and grace."

Dolan contributed to various Wellington and Palmerston North Diocese parishes serving in Petone, Wairoa, Patea, Inglewood, New Plymouth, Fielding, Upper Hutt, Waitara, Stokes Valley and Mt Victoria.

In 1973 Dolan served in Peru where he learned the language and embraced the local culture amidst political upheaval.

He later became the National Director of the Pontifical Missions and National Chaplain of the St Vincent de Paul Society. These roles underscored his commitment to social justice and the dignity of all people.

POSITIVE INFLUENCE

Reflecting on his years of service, Dolan said he adopted some advice he received in the seminary—to seek the mind of Christ—as his guiding motto when he was ordained as coadjutor bishop.



He said working within the diocesan office offers a unique dimension in serving others in alignment with Christian values.

He praised the diocesan staff for their dedication and acknowledged the special grace involved in their service to the Diocese of Palmerston North.

"Thank God for us all, because we're carrying out the work that we're called to by Jesus Christ: to serve our sisters and brothers."

Steph Grantham spoke on behalf of the Cathedral parish team.

"You are a pillar in the diocesan community and an essential ingredient in the Catholic Cathedral parish.

"We appreciate and recognise your years of devotion to serving our people and offering support to our priests, both locally and throughout New Zealand" she said.

Grantham says Dolan continues to build the number of Catholics residing at his retirement village.

"We believe that's a testament to your positive influence" she told him.

The Catholic Education Team praised the positive influence of his warmth, humour and servant leadership on Catholic education.

"Your steadfast commitment to our faith and education has been a guiding light for us all."

Bishop John Adams said Dolan's 70 years of priesthood stand as a testament to his enduring faith, dedication and the profound impact he has and continues to have on countless lives.

ST JOSEPH'S CONFERENCE HAWERA

Organisations working together.

The local Assembly of God Church invited for free members of St Vincent de Paul and the public to a showing of the movie 5000 Blankets. Based on a true story about a woman whose husband had had a mental breakdown and disappears. He is presumed to be living on the streets. Along with her young son she sets out to find him providing blankets to rough sleepers.

It was to promote Svdp and draw attention to the homeless and those in need. We provided tea, coffee and sausage rolls to those attending.

If you had a spare blanket or two you were encouraged to bring them along, on the other hand if you required a blanket you were able to take one home.

We considered it to be an outreach, as well as promoting Svdp in our small town.

Annette Orchard, Area President



KĀPITI CONFERENCE

Fantastic support from local businesses for Kāpiti Conference

Many local businesses support our Conference with food but I'd like to feature two that give regularly and generously.

Anzil Hungarian Restaurant partners with L'Arche Kāpiti to produce 120 free meals each week.



Ivett Kerekes of Anzil Hungarian restaurant with Ethan, from L'Arche Kāpiti, prepare dessert for 120 free meals.

They give 50 of these meals to our Conference each week, for us to distribute to our companions. Meals vary each week and are of restaurant quality. Our companions, many of whom are families under stress, are very happy to have a night off cooking without having to pay for take-away meals. Ethan, a core member from L'Arche, works with Marcin, his guide, Ivett and Andras to give back to the community as he works in the commercial kitchen to produce kai for

others, including Vinnies, the Cancer Society and He Tāngata Village. We are very grateful to Ivett and Andras Kerekes for their generosity in paying for all the ingredients, giving their time and their premises, and including Ethan and Marcin in the production of this free food for people in need.

Starfish Kāpiti provide us with 20 - 40kg of frozen, filleted fish each month. We pay nothing. Mal Bird has established Fish for Good and has gathered sponsors who pay cost price to Starfish Kāpiti for the fish - we just collect it and distribute it! Demand has grown among our companions, hence the range in the amount provided - they meet our request each month.

These are just two businesses who are supporting us. As they do this we network with other charities in Kāpiti. Fish for Good also supplies free fish to the Kāpiti Community Food Bank and to Ngati Toa. We also have great support from other local businesses, especially New World Waikanae, Waikanae Butchery and Kāpiti Pak'n'Save.

Peter Ryan



Wayne Pidduck of Starfish Kāpiti hands over free fish to Peter Ryan, President of Vinnies Kāpiti.

Young Vinnies Report

JOHN PAUL COLLEGE - ROTORUA



This is my 15th year co-ordinating the JPC Young Vinnies Group. We have accomplished a lot for the local and global community over the years but here is our most recent report.



In 2023 twenty five students from Year 7 to 12 signed up to participate in Young Vinnies.

This year, in 2024 there are over 60 Young Vinnies who meet weekly on a Thursday in 2 adjoining classrooms, to work on our chosen project to help a group in need, which is to cut out fabric and sew quilts for a children's hospital and attached shelter in Kiev, Ukraine.

The Vinnies are proud to be part of an international voluntary organisation, which was founded in 1833 where its members perform personal services for the poor, wherever there is a need.

Started by Frédéric Ozanam and Emmanuel Bailly and named after Vincent de Paul, our own SVDP Young Vinnies reach out to assist the poor in a wartorn northern hemisphere location, far from Aotearoa, as members of the global Vincentian Family.

Despite being a smaller group in 2023, we achieved a lot!

Our main focus was on providing warm clothing, baby bags and blankets to support "Operation Cover-Up" which is a Taupō based national organisation which fills a 40ft shipping container with hand knitted and crafted toys, blankets and clothing items for people of all ages, which is shipped to parts of Europe where the warm items are needed most. Distribution of these items has, for the past two years, been especially appreciated by places in conflict such as Ukraine, where individuals and families have become homeless, displaced and without income, during the harsh northern winter.

We made polar fleece baby sleep bags which are easy for the families to make patterns from in the future, plus knitted and crocheted blankets, knitted baby clothes and hats.

Warwick Fabrics in Auckland have amazingly and kindly donated to us discontinued samples of lines of (literally) some of the most beautiful fabrics in the world.

We began to create incredible quilts from these (which we are completing alongside the new ones, this year)

At present, in 2024, the Young Vinnies continue to work on "quilts for Kiev", every Thursday at lunchtime.

All clothing and bedding items made by the Young Vinnies at John Paul College have professionally made fabric labels sewn on to them, with our school name, Catholic and Lasallian identity and a short message.

The same labels go on our Christmas cards each year. By now

the people in Kyiv who receive the cards and warm items from our students and staff will know that we have always remembered and prayed for them. We aim to continue to strengthen our connection with them annually, in faith and love.

An admin staff member Mrs Sue Rowles has left JPC now but in 2023 she was an amazing knitter for the group. Two other staff members crocheted elaborate edges around our blankets and blanket squares.

Our school librarian delivered all our crafts to the "Operation Cover-Up" coordination team in Taupo for us in July 2023. Her father and friends have donated a lot of polar fleece for us to make into blankets and for quilt backings for two years.

We are very thankful for these thoughtful donations.

The SVDP Food Bank donations initiative we run each year in Terms 2 and 3 continues and we have been able to send boxes of food and donated fruit to the local SVDP Food Bank at regular intervals during the winter months in 2023. In 2024 donated fruit and groceries have been donated however a school-wide collection is planned at a school assembly in late June.

Each year in Term 3 and 4 a small group of Vinnies meet to create recycled Christmas Cards for sheltering people in Ukraine, specifically more recently, for the Okhmatdyt Children's Hospital in Kiev.

We made and posted 220 cards to shelters via UNICEF in 2022 and 175 last Christmas, to the children's hospital, which all arrived in Kyiv in time for Christmas.

We hope that the creations we make for this year's box of Christmas cards will make it to Kyiv again.

Some brightness, New Zealand Kiwiana and Christmas blessings amidst the last, the lost and the least, in the hospital or a section of a shelter they call theirs.

The Vinnies will take a break during Term 3 this year, while I am on leave for most of that term but in Term 4 we will resume the quilt and card making, ready for the annual mid November postage of our winter parcels.

Nga manaakitanga.

God bless,

Gillian Cook

– SVDP Young Vinnies Teacher
at John Paul College, Rotorua.



Onehunga Vinnies Op Shop Teams Up with Local Students for Furniture Revival Project

The Onehunga Vinnies Op Shop recently benefited from a creative collaboration with Product Design students from One Tree Hill College, who brought new life to old, damaged furniture.

In May 2024, teacher Mr Oliver Rose approached the shop with an innovative proposal. His Year 12 and 13 students would upcycle and restore unwanted wooden furniture from Vinnies as part of their design curriculum. The project allowed students to apply their skills in design and materials, breathing new life into items such as chairs, tables, shelves, and cupboards.



The students unloading the furniture and returning it to Vinnies.



BEFORE



AFTER



BEFORE



AFTER

After weeks of dedicated work sanding, repairing, and rejuvenating the pieces, the students delivered the beautifully restored furniture back to Vinnies. Customers have been interested to learn the story behind the unique items, now proudly displayed in the store.

This initiative has been a resounding success, benefiting both Vinnies and the students. The shop receives beautifully restored furniture for sale, while the students gain valuable hands-on experience. With such positive results, there's hope that next year's class will be equally excited to take on new furniture restoration challenges.



Some of the proud students with their finished furniture in the Vinnies Op Shop.



Mr Oliver Rose, with the Year 12 and 13 students from One Tree Hill College, with some of their finished pieces.

DON'T JUDGE A BOOK BY ITS COVER

Conference member, Steph, was so unwell that the visiting District Nurse sent her to the hospital Emergency Department, advising her to take plenty of snacks and drinks and to be ready for a long wait at the Emergency Department. She went well supplied with snack bars and drinks.

A young man waiting nearby was wearing smart track pants with a gang logo. Steph struck up a conversation with him because everyone else there was steering clear. She introduced herself as Steph from Vinnies.

The man said he had been injured while out working with a group of people who saw a need to help others by shifting mountains of rubbish from behind state houses. Although he'd been wearing heavy gloves he'd cut the knuckles on his right

hand badly and an infection from the injury had travelled to his glands.

After a long wait nurses came to help him. He eventually ended up in a cubicle next to Steph so she offered him snacks and a drink. He told her she was amazing.

She asked him why he didn't have any tattoos if he was in a gang. He said he didn't join to destroy himself, but instead had decided to work alongside other young men in the area to accompany them and build comradery.

He was eventually admitted to a ward and Steph was sent home. On her way out she went to his ward to say goodbye and wish him all the best. He asked her if Vinnies have any openings for volunteers as he would be prepared to assist.

Anonymous

CHRISTMAS CARDS 2024

Fundraising Opportunity!
Onsell Cards for \$5-7 each

Order now to
avoid courier
delays

This year Christmas Cards come in 2 different packs of five different designs with five envelopes or as loose, individual cards with envelopes.

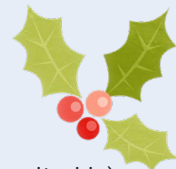
A special price of **\$3.50 per pack (loose cards 80c each)** is available for SVDP conferences and those ordering 50+ packs.

Delivery is additional (\$5-\$13)

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2. Contact name and name of conference (if applicable)
3. Physical address for courier (no P.O. Boxes please)
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We'd love to read your stories:

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