

NORTHWEST CATHOLIC

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Prayer, fasting and almsgiving

Our Lenten weapons for battle against spiritual evils

SPECIAL SECTION: REMEMBERING ARCHBISHOP EMERITUS ALEXANDER J. BRUNETT

SVdP Celebrating 100 Years in Seattle!

Join us as we celebrate lifting the lives of our neighbors for 100 years! Share your stories and follow us on Facebook for a trip through memory lane.

Enjoy a historical post everyday, along with photos of Catholic school students participating in service learning at our Georgetown Food Bank and Community Resource Center!

Every year SVdP volunteer members visit 15,000 homes to bring hope, prevent evictions and lift hearts. Join us in mission as we take the church to the streets to heal the hurt, serve and comfort the poor, transform our society and be transformed by the love of Christ!

Learn more by visiting
www.svdpsattle.org/centennial



Seattle Catholic
Men's Conference
March 21, 2020

IRON SHARPENS IRON

Archbishop Paul Etienne

Fr. Robert Spitzer S.J.

Paul J. Kim

www.seattlemensconference.org

At home in the community.

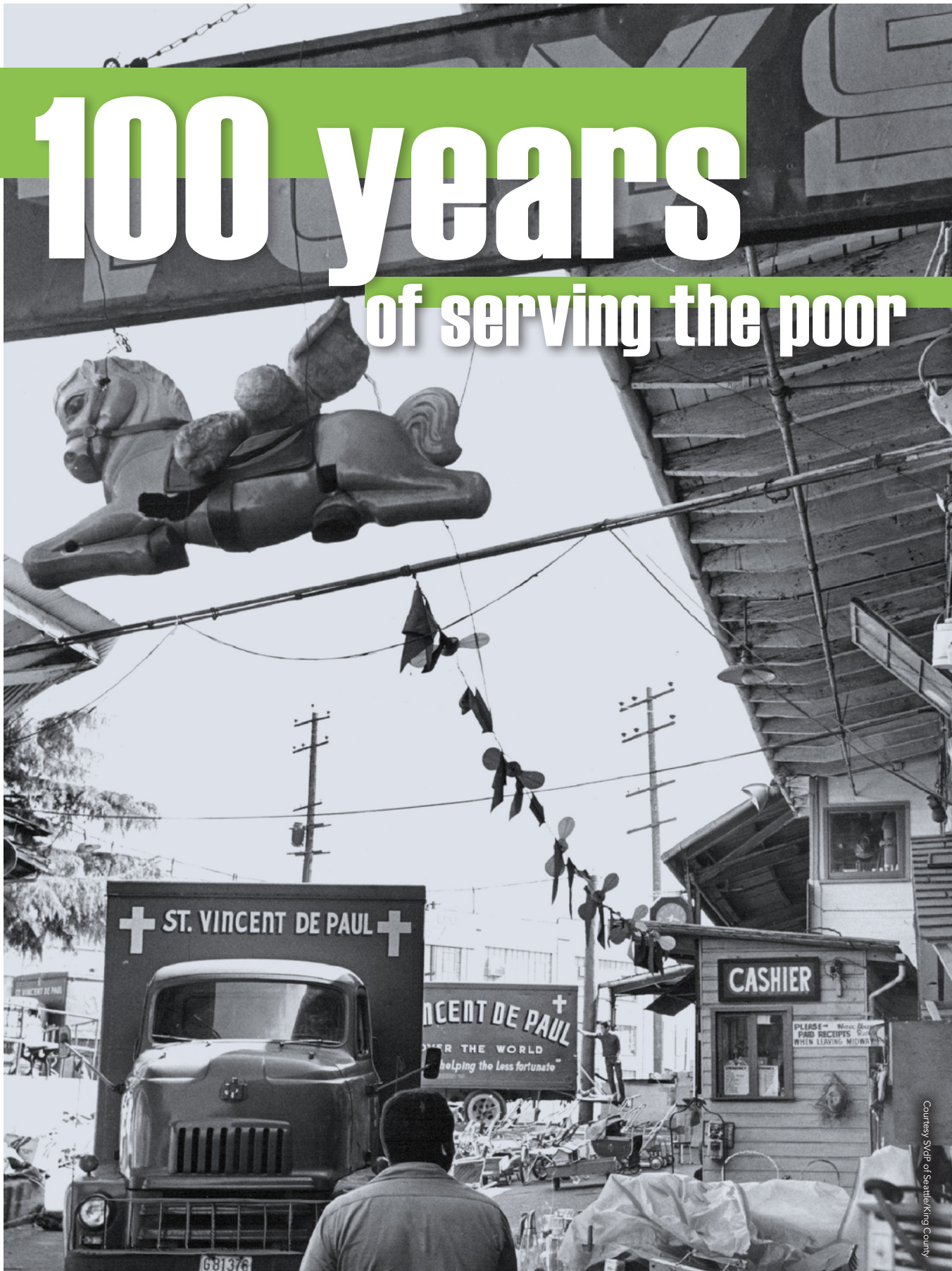
It's more than hospitals and clinics. It's knowing your needs. And your first name. It's getting kids to move, and people involved. Making it easier to live well, and harder to fall through the cracks. During this holy season, it's the sense of renewal we share with you and your family, and a commitment to care that never ends.

psjhealth.org

Providence
St. Joseph Health

100 years

of serving the poor



Courtesy SVDP of Seattle/King County

Society of St. Vincent de Paul feeds the hungry, pays the rent, aids immigrants

By Jean Parietti

When Charlie Albert arrived from Chicago in 1918, the challenges of the poor in Seattle were just as varied as today: the hungry needing to be fed, the sick needing access to medical care, immigrants needing jobs and housing.

Back home, Albert had been active in the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, the Catholic lay organization whose mission is helping neighbors in need. But SVdP didn't exist in Seattle — so Albert formed the first group at St. Benedict Parish in 1920.

A century later, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul of Seattle/King County fields more than 50,000 requests for assistance each year — things like rent, utility bills, furniture and food. More than 1,000 volunteers at 53 parishes visit more than 16,000 individuals and families in their homes each year, helping meet their immediate needs and aiding them on the path to self-sufficiency.

Spirituality is the cornerstone of the society's work, said executive director Mirya Muñoz-Roach, the first woman to lead the local agency. "It comes back to the same thing that St. Vincent de Paul preached in the 1600s," Muñoz-Roach said. Helping those in need is both "coming in contact with Christ and bringing Christ. It's in that encounter that we Vincentians are enriched spiritually," she said. "It's not the doing the work, but the encounter."

Vincentians treat those in need with dignity and compassion, whether it's during a home visit, at the Georgetown Food Bank, through the Centro Rendu Latino outreach program or at the five Seattle-area thrift stores, where people can stretch their budgets while supporting SVdP programs.

SVdP is continually evolving to respond to the needs of the day. As its second century begins, the biggest challenge is meeting the great needs of its communities, Muñoz-Roach said. Doing that means more financial resources, partnerships with more parishes and recruiting more volunteers — especially young people — to join the work and experience faith in action.

"We all need to get more engaged and understand the value of lifting up someone who may need help," said Jim McFarland, SVdP's marketing and communications director. "That's the core of who we are and what we do as an organization. It's the core of who and what we are as a people."

BRINGING TANGIBLE HELP TO NEIGHBORS IN NEED

After taking in her three young grandchildren while caring for her ailing mother, Lydia Rodgers couldn't cover increasing expenses on her fixed income. Unable to qualify for assistance from other



Courtesy SVdP of Seattle/King County

agencies, Rodgers turned to St. Vincent de Paul of Seattle/King County.

It wasn't long before a pair of Vincentians arrived. "These ladies, they showed up at my door, they were smiling. Two minutes into the conversation it was like we were old friends," Rodgers said in an SVdP video. The volunteers came up with a financial assistance plan to help keep Rodgers and her family in their home.

Such home visits are the cornerstone of St. Vincent de Paul's work. "We like to make a visit because people like to give us their story and just talk about what their difficulties are," said Leonard

Andrews, president of the conference (chapter) at St. Benedict Parish in Seattle, where SVdP got its start in Western Washington in 1920.

Conferences in King County typically receive requests for assistance through the helpline in SVdP’s south Seattle office, which funnels them to the appropriate parish so volunteers can contact their neighbors needing help. Most financial assistance at the local level comes directly from donations by parishioners.

Andrews was drawn to SVdP by its social justice aspect, and the ability to provide tangible assistance. Recently, he helped a mother with four children under age 10, who had no furniture in her apartment. The conference provided beds so the kids wouldn’t have to sleep on the floor, plus a store voucher so the mom could buy groceries and school clothing for her first-grader.

“It’s really great to have a window opened up on very personal needs and being able to help in a very nonjudgmental way [that is] nonintrusive, because helped has been requested,” Andrews said.

“I started to live at 33,” Bemis, a native Spanish speaker, said through an interpreter. With Centro Rendu’s help, the mother of two completed her high school education; now she aims to become a legal assistant working on immigration issues.

Centro Rendu has taught Bemis how to help her daughters with their homework, given her confidence about volunteering at their school and even helped her talk with her in-laws, who don’t speak Spanish. While continuing to participate in classes and workshops, Bemis volunteers as a tutor for other adults at Centro Rendu.

“Because it helped me, I want to give back,” she said.

Created in 2013, Centro Rendu helps more than 1,100 members of the Latino community each year, providing education, social services, legal advocacy and leadership development through its locations in Kent and Renton. The center takes its name from Blessed Rosalie Rendu, a Daughter of Charity sister who mentored the founders of St. Vincent de Paul in France.

“I will always say that Centro Rendu was born out of *From Guests to Hosts*,” the Archdiocese of Seattle’s 2007 pastoral plan for Hispanic ministry, said SVdP executive director Mirya Muñoz-Roach, who spearheaded the Centro Rendu program when she first joined the organization.

That document, she said, “is telling us that the Latino community can be [part of] the giving, they don’t just have to be on the receiving.”

Centro Rendu began with a focus on adult literacy in Spanish, helping Latino immigrants complete their education. Today, the center also offers child/parent early learning opportunities, culturally specific case management for families, free immigration legal consultations and youth intervention programs that partner with other agencies to keep kids in school and away from gangs, violence and drugs.

Just as importantly, Centro Rendu builds community while providing a space of trust and respect. “They feel a sense of protection when they’re at Centro Rendu,” said Ned Delmore, SVdP’s senior adviser.

SVDP FOOD BANK NOURISHES BODY AND SOUL

Five days a week, people line up at the Georgetown Food Bank, a modest old building in south Seattle where those in need can find more than food to nourish them.



Stephen Baskhear

“People are very, very grateful for the help. They’re very, very grateful for the conversation.”

CENTRO RENDU EMPOWERS, STRENGTHENS LATINO IMMIGRANTS

Blanca Bemis feels empowered by the education, training and support she receives at Centro Rendu, a Latino outreach program of St. Vincent de Paul of Seattle/King County.



Courtesy SVdP of Seattle/King County

The Georgetown Food Bank offers food and companionship to those in need.

“Our food bank is our church,” said Ned Delmore, senior adviser for the Society of St. Vincent de Paul of Seattle/King County, which manages the program. In some ways, he said, the food bank is a sacred place, where “the wounded and the broken ... can feel a sense of companionship and safety.”

“It’s the encounter of the face of Christ in here,” Delmore said.

Each week, more than 1,000 families and individuals come to the food bank for community services. Bins are filled with nutritious food that clients can choose from according to their needs and preferences. They also can receive complimentary health checkups (100 volunteer nurses rotate through the program), choose from racks of free clothing, get a haircut, and speak with a “community connector” for resource referrals. Fridays are dedicated to serving the homeless population.

Staff and volunteers try to make the experience as respectful, accommodating and nonjudgmental as possible for everyone who comes through the door, Delmore said.

Providing food to the hungry has been a work of the local SVdP organization since its early days in Seattle; in 1931, the organization created a citywide food depot to handle all the food donations coming in to help people during the Depression, according to Jim McFarland, marketing and communications director for the nonprofit.

Today, volunteers at the Georgetown facility include students from the archdiocese’s Catholic schools. For many, it’s their first encounter with poverty and the face of the poor and homeless, Delmore said.

Through their service, Delmore said, they learn “this is our faith.”

“When you are a Catholic, the relationship between your faith and service to the poor is fundamental.” **Ω**

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GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Inspired by Gospel values, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul leads women and men to join together to grow spiritually by offering person-to-person service to those who are needy and suffering.

Members provide any form of help that alleviates suffering or deprivation and promotes human dignity and personal integrity.

Everyone in need is helped, regardless of race, color, creed, ethnic or social background, health, gender or political opinions. Vincentians see the face of Christ in the people they serve.

HISTORY OF THE SOCIETY

Blessed Frederic Ozanam, a law student in Paris, and five friends founded the Society of St. Vincent de Paul in 1833 to help the local poor.

The group received guidance from Blessed Rosalie Rendu, a Daughter of Charity sister. She sent them on home visits and formed them in the spirit of St. Vincent de Paul, the patron saint of the poor, to serve neighbors in need with respect and compassion.

The society came to the U.S. in 1845; today more than 4,600 neighborhood-based conferences operate across the country, including at parishes all around the Archdiocese of Seattle.

VOLUNTEER WITH SVdP

St. Vincent de Paul of Seattle/King County needs volunteers at its food bank and warehouse, thrift stores, Centru Rendu and parish-based conferences. Learn more at svdpseattle.org/get-involved.

Sources:

St. Vincent de Paul of Seattle/King County, svdpusa.org

About St. Vincent de Paul

15,000 home visits each year
1,000 volunteers serving in 53 parish-based groups
50,000+ requests for assistance each year
1,000 people assisted by the Georgetown food bank each week
1,100 Hispanic and Latino people served by Centru Rendu each year

Guiding Principles

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