

# ST. VINCENT DE PAUL SOCIETY OF KINGSTON NEWSLETTER - WINTER 2004

*"Never Doubt that a small group of  
thoughtful committed people  
can change the world:  
indeed it's the only thing that ever has!"  
-Margaret Meade-*

85A STEPHEN STREET, KINGSTON, ONT. K7K 2C5

## ***GREETINGS FROM THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS...***

This past year has certainly been an eventful and wonderful year in the life of our organization. In 2002, the Board made some difficult and necessary decisions which led to a change in staff as well as a reduction in operating days.

A year ago, we hired Deb Greer as our Interim Administrator. We were so pleased with the spirit and energy Deb brought to our organization that we offered her permanent employment in June 2003. Despite the fact that we remain relatively poor from a financial perspective, and dollars and cents remain a constant challenge to our organization, we are overwhelmingly rich in other ways. We enjoy an abundance of Community for, and with, people and are able to continue services that we offer each week. Our numbers have steadily grown these past few months -partially because times continue to remain tough for people who are living on fixed or low incomes and partially because a sense of community - of people sharing and coming together in what often appears to be a celebration - a celebration of life, of belonging and of caring.

There are many people to thank for this generosity of spirit. Our volunteers - the cooks, cleaners, sorters and haulers; Gord - our main driver, an outstanding volunteer and official organizational ambassador; our devoted staff- Nancy and Jenn who remain committed to the people they serve and to the creation of community; our Administrator, Deb, who has become the cornerstone of change and renewed vision for the people who rely on our organization for many things. Deb has given people a place to belong - there is perhaps no greater gift we can offer than this. We owe Deb a tremendous debt of gratitude for her perseverance, her vision and her dedication to the people we serve, and the spirit of our organization.

This past year we received funds from the City of Kingston to develop a formal volunteer program. Jennifer Tibbits was contracted to oversee this program. As a result of Jenn's work and the generosity of the City in providing us with these necessary funds, we have seen an increase in both our number of volunteers and the energy and renewal of our volunteers both old and new. We have now received additional funds from a City of Kingston Grant to develop our community profile and fundraising efforts. We are pleased Jenn has decided to remain on contract with us to assist us for another year with this.

We owe many thanks to each individual and group that continues to support us by donating food, clothing, groceries and funds so that we may continue to provide lunches, emergency food, basic household items and clothing to people free of charge. We are grateful to the Sisters of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul and the F.J. Hennessey Fund for providing essential financial support that allows us to provide monetary assistance to people during times of need.

We look forward to another year of community building at 85 Stephen Street - a place where many good things seem to be happening - a sacred space of caring.

Sincerely,

Corinne Burke, Chair on behalf of the current Board of Directors; Cornelius Wester, Ann MacKenzie, Don Turner, Jennifer Hannah and Dave Turcke.

# **What Does the St. Vincent de Paul Society of Kingston Do?**

We hold a Drop in & Hot Lunch Monday, Wednesday & Friday from 9a.m. to 1p.m.

We provide a Warehouse of clothing and household items the same days & times.

We have a food bank for emergency groceries.

We can help out with rent, utilities, medical costs, transportation, diapers or formula.

We offer referrals & resources upon request.  
All services are provided at no cost!

## ***GREETINGS FROM THE ADMINISTRATOR***

Do you believe in magic? I may have been skeptical in the past but after a year at the St. Vincent de Paul Society in Kingston, I no longer have any doubt. It has been a year chock full of magic and miracles along with struggles and victories.

There have been mistakes and "moments" (my first attempt at macaroni and cheese being *one* that stands out) but folks forgave me and kept coming back in spite of it. Luckily there have been many more terrific times than terrible ones. Our lunch guests are a wonderfully diverse group of people who make it a joy to come to work. They overwhelmingly support each other and the St. Vincent de Paul Society, always helping out when needed; selling tags for the United Way fundraiser, participating in the Mayor's Walk, clearing tables or sharing some of their lives. We celebrate birthdays and anniversaries and good news. We have created a Community together and we are all better for it.

The fabulous volunteers who have chosen to share their talent, experience and hard work with us are invaluable. Jennifer

Tibbits, hired through a Healthy Communities Grant as the Volunteer Coordinator did an amazing job at rejuvenating the Volunteer Program this year and I am thrilled to announce we were successful at securing the funding to keep her for another year! This newsletter will showcase our Volunteer Program and those amazing folks who give so much back to our organization.

Nancy Tidman (the only other permanent staff) has been the "Queen of the Warehouse" for close to 20 years now. She is the one who knows everyone and everything and has been a great resource and support to me. We have "staff meetings" after work, over the phone because we've found it the only way that works! I thank her for her flexibility, sense of humour and common sense.

Every single day there is evidence of the goodness of people and an uncanny anticipation of what we need, desire or wish for. The pragmatic of you would see it as just how things and people are but I prefer to believe that St. Vincent's has a spirit you can feel - it's more than just circumstances or chance, it's also the way things seem to show up "on cue". Like the ham that miraculously appeared on the seat next to Dewey when he picked me up to do the Monday morning bread run when *only* Judith and I knew lunch on Wednesday was going to be ham and scalloped potatoes, or while Nancy and I were commiserating about money (and a lack thereof) one day outside the Warehouse a man pulled in, smiled and handed us a cheque, or the lack of groceries in the Food Bank in early Autumn which was remedied by an unexpected and very generous donation by the DuPont Donation Committee. Coincidence?, maybe. Magic?, definitely!

This year we were committed to rejuvenating the Volunteer Program. In 2004 the focus will be on Publicity and Fundraising. You will be seeing a lot more of the St. Vincent de Paul Society of Kingston and please watch for a very exciting fundraiser early in 2004!

I can't help but think that someone is looking out for us at our humble and well-loved location down on Stephen Street. Come down to see what we're all about if you're in our neighbourhood! Oh and by the way, we're making a pretty fine macaroni and cheese these days too!

Best wishes, Deb Greer

## ***A MESSAGE FROM THE VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR...***

My name is Jenn Tibbits and I am currently managing the volunteers of the St. Vincent de Paul Society of Kingston. The one year anniversary of my position is quickly approaching and it is very hard for me to believe that at this time last year I was not a part of the organization. I was one of the lucky ones who has had and will have the opportunity to grow with an amazing team. I owe this tremendous opportunity to one of my "Idols", Deb Greer. Funding or no funding, you're all stuck with me now!\*

### **What do our volunteers do?**

- ! Celebrity Chefs prepare delicious meals
- ! Kitchen help jump from one job to the next to ensure our kitchen is clean & our folks are fed
- ! Some serve meals
- ! Community Options volunteers help out in the kitchen and Warehouse
- ! Warehouse volunteers sort, organize and display donated clothing
- ! Service volunteers pick up bread, donations & groceries, clean & do odd-jobs
- ! Board members give us direction
- ! Community members and groups donate groceries, clothing & funds
- ! Groups in the community hold fundraisers on our behalf

# VOLUNTEERS

*\* We were thrilled to hear our proposal has been accepted and approved by the Healthy Communities Grant Committee meaning Jenn will carry on as our Volunteer Coordinator while a/so doing Publicity & Fundraising work throughout 2004!*

## VOLUNTEERS

### *THE FUN STUFF...*

Volunteers not only do their jobs, they help me do mine. Here are just a few things they have taught me. And I must say, they definitely range from one extreme to the other.

1. Always wear a hat in the kitchen - the health inspector says so! Our hats are fun. Grab a cowboy hat, toque, ball cap or beret!
2. 3 cans soup:2 cans water. Hank made sure I remembered this one!
3. Serving soup is an art. Wendy serves with grace!
4. You can serve 50 people for \$30 bucks. Who knew? Judith & Joanne sure do!
5. You can always make something sound good. Beans and wieners... I think not. Cowboy Casserole to this crew. Giddy up Rosemary!
6. Only put one roll of toilet paper in the bathroom at a time. Gail solved this one!
7. No matter how miserable someone seems, your smile and good attitude may change their mind. Jean, Sister Mary Ellen, Deb & Debbie make everyone who visits the Warehouse feel good!
8. We can never have too many volunteers. Past faces and new faces are all appreciated. Welcome back to the kitchen Earl! Thank you for joining the team Sandy, Pat & Bess!
9. The coffee pot is half full, not half empty. And when it is empty we know we've had a busy day!
10. People will leave "interesting" items outside the Warehouse when you are closed, including a can full of used diapers, broken mirrors, what we think was a still, broken chairs, golf shoes & their garbage (literally). Just ask Gord & Mike who now receive frequent flyer points at the dump!
11. Be thankful for everything & everyone. You never know when you'll need something or someone. Even if it is simply to untie your apron....

And to the employees (2 hard working women to be exact), volunteers (you make my job easy) and the many men, women and children who use our services (your stories are truly life changing), I leave you with a quote:

*'A' hat is not just a hat. You can change your hat every day but no matter how many times you change that hat, you always come back to the one you love'*

*- Jenn*

***POSTCARDS FROM OUR VOLUNTEERS.***

I wouldn't miss a Wednesday at St. Vincent's, not if I could help it. The former engine repair shop on Stephen Street is the closest thing to a carnival in my humdrum life, and I don't just mean that we have a clown. As a matter of fact we have several clowns, of one sort or another, and the best darn. cast of characters this side of a movie set

From one minute to the next you can't predict what will happen. People go off to the warehouse in one set of clothes and arrive 'back in a ten gallon hat and a new dress, a teddy bear under one arm and a cuckoo clock under the other. I picture Sister Mary Ellen, Jean Jean the Dance Machine and Nancy racing around like the backstage crew at the Grand managing the costume changes between scenes. In The parking lot you will find a crowd of smokers yakking away and Gord and Mike unloading muffins or clothing, groceries or golf shoes from the back of the truck.

Indoors there will be one or two reading the Whig, or doing the crossword puzzle. Jimmy and Linda might be there early for lunch, Or Paul. Or Leslie. Some days the room booms with good humour, some days with loud arguments about landlords or City flail Mostly this is not a shy group. Around ten-thirty the door gets a good workout as the place begins to fill up. About now the toilet paper goes missing or a freezer quits.

In the kitchen you'll find Jenn with her amiable semi-asleep grin, just off an overnight shift at some shelter or other. Judith, the best celebrity Chef in the greater Kingston area, will be rushing around, waving a bread knife and joking with Hank, who is likely trying to nab a slice of something between answering the phone and refilling the coffee. Bob will be ripping into a plastic container of croissants and Joe is making coleslaw. You can always hear Earl coming. His booming "good morning!" precedes him to the kitchen sink. Gail blow's the whistle (literally) on anybody she figures is out of line. That woman is unstoppable and fearless. As is Wendy. Don't ever get between Wendy and her soup. She won't just give you "The Look", She will let you have it in a few crisp well chosen words. Then smile. Thelma will smile too, and nod. She knows when to take a step out of the way and when to offer assistance. In comes Malcolm and Rob and "Souper Dave", and several spare guys to help if and where needed. Derek might drop by. The phone rings. The veggies in the steamer boils over. Somebody discovers that oven number two never got turned on.

It's eleven-fifteen and presiding over the chaos is the indescribable Deb, inventing and inviting, knowing everybody's name and particular sorrow, flying by the seat of her pants as she steers the food to the tables and to the crowd in what passes for organized happiness at the mayhem that is St. Vincent's. You gotta love it!

*Joanne Page is a writer and artist 'and a Wednesday Celebrity Chef at the St. Vincent de Paul Society. Her wry sense humour and keen observations make for many a smile!*

## ***ANOTHER POSTCARD FROM A VOLUNTEER...***

Hi! My name is Gordon Brushette and I am a service volunteer for the St. Vincent de Paul Society of Kingston. I meet a lot of people when driving the white truck picking up goods around the City.

I see many individuals and families living in poverty, homeless or without food to feed themselves or their families. At the St. Vincent de Paul Society the volunteers and staff treat people with compassion and respect. The Society has helped many people, including myself. I consider myself a front line worker. My heart and feelings go out to each and every one of those who use our service. Perhaps in the future things will change.

I would like to thank the St. Vincent de Paul Society for allowing me to serve as a volunteer. I am proud to be associated with the Society. As I see it, we are people helping people in need.

*Gord is a star, an amazing volunteer and ambassador. Some of his tasks include picking up donations, groceries, or other supplies, delivering items, cleaning the Hospitality Centre, cutting the grass, doing "dump runs", while always being cheerful, knowledgeable and supportive. As a member of the United Way Speakers Bureau he represents the St. Vincent de Paul Society as both a participant and a valued worker and is able to address his experiences from both sides. Gord is very generous with his time and volunteers between 70 & 100 hours per month. Frankly J 'm not sure if we could do what we do without him. We are very lucky to have Gord on our team!*

## **GO TEAM**

## ***ACTIVITIES & NEWS FROM THE PAST YEAR.....***

In December of 2002 we held our first Open House and a very successful Christmas Dinner.

In the Spring we held a Community Barbeque and later, a Volunteer Recruitment Barbeque where people who may be interested in volunteering could come down to see what we're all about. Both were very well attended.

In May several of us participated in the Mayor's Walk. The St. Vincent de Paul Society not only received some much needed publicity, but we raised \$329.50 (which the walkers agreed to use to purchase groceries for our Food Bank).

We held our first Volunteer Appreciation lunch in May as well and honoured 37 wonderful people who shared their skills, time and enthusiasm with us over the past year.

Thanks to the generosity of Greg Allen and Ted Wensing at Clancy Motors, our truck took on a new and improved look with a new cap.

We completed our first Evaluation of the programs offered at St. Vincent's. Participants and volunteers were very positive in their comments but wish we could be open more days per week. This is our goal as well and one we are working toward.

In June, in recognition of Margaret Purcell, a 35 year volunteer and 27 year Board Member with our organization we created the Margaret Purcell Student Scholarship to be given annually to a graduating student from Regiopolis-Notre Dame and Holy Cross Catholic High Schools who have demonstrated a commitment to volunteerism and community service.

In September, Sister Mary Ellen Killeen and Jean Komarnisky were presented with Ontario Volunteer Service Awards at the Ambassador Hotel by the Minister of Citizenship. This was a wonderful event and will become something we do every year for our long term volunteers. Jean was unwell in the Fall but we are delighted to have her energy and fun loving spirit back around the Warehouse and Hospitality Centre.

In October the Dupont Donations Committee chose St. Vincent's as the recipient of \$2500 to purchase groceries for the Food Bank! An exciting shopping extravaganza was done by members from Dupont and St. Vincent's early one morning. This money represented over 3000 separate food items and the receipt was over 14 feet long! Update: as of mid November we were running out of some of the groceries already and were transferring groceries from the different Thanksgiving Food Drives. In November 380 people received groceries from our Food Bank.

The staff volunteers and participants purchased and sold "The St. Vincent de Paul Society is Doing Their Thing on a Shoestring - Support the UNITED WAY" tags for the 2003 United Way campaign. United Way continues to be the core funder of our organization.

In November we held our Annual General Meeting and welcomed with pleasure two new Board members; Jennifer Hannah and Dave Turcke.

On December 10th we held our annual Christmas Open House at the Loretta Hospitality Centre and our Christmas meal December 17th.

## ***IN 2003 OUR WONDERFUL VOLUNTEERS ARE THE REASON***

We served 5893 hot lunches over 123 lunch days - an average of 47.9 meals per day at an average cost of 95.1 cents per meal. Our Loretta Hospitality Centre opens at 9 for the newspaper and hot drinks and lunch is at 11:15. We serve a soup, main course, dessert and beverages. The grocery costs also include such non-edible items as cleaning supplies and napkins. Loblaws and Costco continue to donate bread and pastries each week. These are used for the lunch program as well as in the Food Bank. If there is a larger amount than we can use, we share it with other agencies that provide lunches or hold drop-ins.

We met 3380 requests for emergency groceries in our Food Bank. Along with Dupont, many schools, churches and individuals do food drives on our behalf Loblaws at the Kingston Centre has a drop box for groceries.

We were able to provide financial support for participants in the amount of \$17,077.73 (including food vouchers and groceries for the Food Bank when necessary). The majority of it went to rent, utilities, medical costs, infant and children's needs and transportation Funds earmarked to help those in need is generously given by groups and individuals in the community.

**Our Volunteers** generously and enthusiastically gave us 3932 hours of their time. If we paid them even the paltry

minimum wage, it would have cost St. Vincent's \$26,934.20! We certainly could not fulfill our mandate without this committed group of people and so ..... drum roll please!

Many thanks and much appreciation goes to

**GORD\*MIKE  
ROSEMARY \* DEWEY  
JUDITH \*JOANNE \* EARL  
HANK\* SANDY\*WENDY  
SISTER MARY ELLEN \*JEAN \* DEB  
GAIL\*THELMA\*DEBBIE\*BESS  
PAT\* LEAH\*JOE\*LARRY  
CORINNE \* CORNELIUS  
DON \*ANN\* DAVE  
JENNIFER \*JOEL  
& ALICE**