

## Long Island Volunteer Hall of Fame Archive Project

### *Inception to Induction*

#### Society of St. Vincent de Paul in the Diocese of Rockville Centre

#### “We Help People”

**Year of Founding:** Society of St. Vincent de Paul founded in 1833, Society of St. Vincent de Paul in the Diocese of Rockville Centre was incorporated in 1948

**Issues Addressed:** Poverty and hunger on a local, national and global level

**Induction Category & Year:** Family Support, 2006

**Founders:** Frédéric Ozanam founded the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, Luke Smith founded the Society of St. Vincent de Paul in the Diocese of Rockville Centre

**Personal Quote:**

“For us this is not social work; for us this is spirituality. This is the way Vincentians try to live the Gospel, by finding Christ in the faces of the poor.” James Claffey, Director of Conferences

“Knowledge of the poor and needy is not gained by pouring over books or in discussion with politicians, but by visiting the homes where they live, sitting by the bedside of the dying, feeling the cold they feel, and learning from their lips the causes of their woes.” Founder Blessed Frédéric Ozanam (1813-1853)

**History:** Frédéric Ozanam left his home in Lyon, France in 1831, to attend college at the Sorbonne, University of Paris. A mere two years later, Frédéric Ozanam founded an association called "The Conference of History," later to be known as the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, Frédéric Ozanam was beatified 145 years after his death by Pope John Paul II. The patron of the Vincentians is St. Vincent de Paul who is known as the “Father of the Poor.” In his life, St. Vincent de Paul founded the following charities: Daughters of Charity, Confraternities of Charity, Ladies of Charity, and Congregation of the Mission.

Spreading across the Atlantic twelve short years after its founding, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul arrived in the United States in 1845 with its national headquarters in St. Louis, Missouri. Then the Society of St. Vincent de Paul continued to spread across the country and the rest of the world. The Rockville Centre Council was founded by Luke Smith. After Luke Smith died the Council was then headed by Robert Ellis. Currently the Executive Director is James Dilts.

**Agency Mission:** Inspired by Gospel values, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, a Catholic lay organization, leads women and men to join together to grow spiritually by offering person-to-person service to those who are needy and suffering. This is in the tradition of its founder, Blessed Frédéric Ozanam, and patron, St. Vincent de Paul. As a reflection of the whole family of

God, members, who are known as Vincentians, are drawn from every ethnic and cultural background, age group, and economic level. Vincentians are united in an international society of charity by their spirit of poverty, humility and sharing, which is nourished by prayer and reflection, mutually supportive gatherings and adherence to a basic Rule.

Organized locally, Vincentians witness God's love by embracing all works of charity and justice. The Society collaborates with other people of good will in relieving need and addressing its causes, making no distinction in those served because, in them, Vincentians see the face of Christ. From <http://www.svdpusa.org/AboutUs/MissionandValues.aspx>

**Population Served:** The Society of St. Vincent de Paul aids all people who are poor, hungry or needy. In the last fiscal year, which ended on September 30, 2010, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul aided 228,508 people. In the same fiscal year, \$10,750,772.00 was spent helping those in need.

**Scope of Activities:** Last year from October 2009 to September 2010, some 53 conferences were active in helping those in need. Conferences are the local member groups of the society; it is where a neighbor helps a neighbor in time of need. Events that the Society of St. Vincent de Paul host to raise funds include an annual golf outing and an annual "Walk for the Poor". One of the founding principles of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul is home visits. Home visits are when volunteers (Vincentians) go to the homes of the poor to assess their needs. This is important because, "When you visit them, you find out some kids are sleeping on the floor and they need beds." Home visits provide information to better help those in need who may be reluctant to ask for assistance.

**Volunteer Involvement:** Volunteers handle all of the necessities of the organization: conferences, home visits, walks and just about everything else that involves the organization. There is almost no turnover for volunteers, with some remaining involved for over 40 years. The primary recruitment goal of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul is getting the next generation involved; instilling the idea of service into the youth, so that once they have finished their careers they will get involved. This is paramount.

**Special Works Programs:** One of the more prominent programs is Anthony House, a half-way house for homeless men. The goal of Anthony House is to help single men develop a healthy, sober lifestyle and go out on their own.  
<http://www.theanthonyhouse.com/>.

Another is Dismas House: Dismas House received its name from Dismas, the good thief in the Christian gospel. Dismas House is a half-way house for formerly incarcerated men who need time or help to get back on their feet after being released from prison. Dismas House's primary goal is to aid men working towards healthy reintegration into society.  
<http://www.dismashouse.org/company.php>

**Funding Sources:** The funding of the Society is from the sales at its thrift shops. People donate items which are then sold, and the resulting profit is used to buy food, furnishing or even pay the bills of those in need. The Society of St. Vincent de Paul also receives funding from donations

from the community, bequests (items that are willed to them) and grants. Events are also held to raise funds that range from golf outings to walks for the poor.

**Contact Information:**

Society of St. Vincent de Paul in the Diocese of Rockville Centre

249 Broadway

Bethpage, NY 11714

Web page-[www.svdprvc.org](http://www.svdprvc.org)

Contact name: James Dilts, Executive Director

James Claffey, Director of Conferences - [jclaffey@svdprvc.org](mailto:jclaffey@svdprvc.org)

**Submitted by:**  
**Braxton R Wells**  
**4/14/2011**

*Disclaimer: The Long Island Volunteer Hall of Fame has created the Archive Project to record the histories of Long Island not-for-profit organizations. The entries are for informational purposes only with no intention of endorsement of any service or organization. We are not responsible for inaccuracies or omissions. The user assumes all risks related to any misinformation.*