

# VINCENTIAN

CONNECTION

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THE  
SOCIETY  
OF  
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VINCENT  
DE PAUL



FEED. CLOTHE.  
HOUSE. HEAL.



## RELIEF IN HAND

Keeping food on tables, bills paid and hope in sight during COVID-19

# LIGHT OF THE WORLD



Many years ago, in a small antique shop, I found a copy of C. Bosseron Chambers “Light of the World” painting; a beautiful depiction of Jesus as a young child. During our 40 years of marriage, my wife Kathy and I have lived in ten different homes. Many pictures that adorned the walls of our homes have come and gone, but “Light of the World” has always been prominently displayed.

The word “light” appears in the bible more than 200 times. By contrasting it with darkness, scripture writers use it metaphorically to represent goodness, wisdom, holiness, even God himself. Jesus said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness.”

Prior to this year, I’ve always understood darkness to be primarily a personal phenomenon, experienced by those going through a divorce, the death of a loved one or a terminal illness. I was born after the end of World War II. My only exposure to national tragedy was the immediate aftermath of 9/11, the terrorist attacks that plunged our country into darkness, but from which we quickly emerged, united in our determination to confront the source of evil.

But for the better part of this year, the COVID-19 pandemic has brought darkness across the face of the earth and fundamentally changed our world. I’m guessing previously most Americans would have thought of a pandemic much like we do the plague — something from the Dark Ages, long ago eradicated, and if it were to raise its ugly head, it would only happen in third-world countries with inadequate health care. Who would have thought, not only were we not immune to the virus, but it would bring our country to its knees.

In the Gospel of Matthew, we read: “The people living in darkness have seen a great light.” Yet, when we watch the evening news, witness the politicization of the pandemic and the physical and emotional suffering of so many people, it’s easy to find ourselves asking, “Where is the light in this darkness?”

I’ve owned the “Light of the World” painting for almost four decades, but only recently did I learn the artist used the four-year-old son of a Catholic Church maintenance man as the model for the Christ child. Now, when I look into the child’s eyes, I’m reminded that we are the hands, feet and face of Jesus. We are called to be a light to those around us experiencing darkness.

May our light outshine despair, and may we recognize and embrace the beautiful light in one another, so that together we cover the world in rays of hope.

Steve Attwood, President, Phoenix Diocesan Council

# VINCENTIAN CONNECTION

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The Society of St. Vincent de Paul is an international nonprofit organization dedicated to serving people in need and providing others with the opportunity to serve. SVdP has been assisting central and northern Arizona families since 1946 and has more than 80 parish satellite locations. It offers services for the homeless, medical and dental care for the uninsured, charity dining rooms, transitional housing and homelessness prevention assistance.

Vincentian Connection magazine shares the stories, successes and impact SVdP has on the community. The magazine has a circulation of 87,000.



## ON THE COVER

A guest experiencing food insecurity hugs the grocery bags SVdP delivered to his home one early Saturday morning. Getting food to doorsteps is one of the many ways SVdP kept critical services flowing throughout the pandemic.

## DEPARTMENTS

- 4 In brief
- 17 Helping from afar
- 19 Thousand thanks



# FEATURES

## 12 A Mortgage on the Brink

Thousands of families found themselves in economic crisis because of COVID-19. Discover how SVdP helped and meet one family saved from losing their home after losing their father.



## 6 From Day One

Follow the SVdP response to COVID-19 and learn how the nonprofit nimbly pivoted its entire service mission to practice social distancing and increase health safety without closing a single day.



## 15 Together in Hope

We couldn't gather for our traditional Restoring Hope Breakfast, but that didn't keep us apart. Catch up on this year's Reflecting Hope virtual gathering and the notes of hope that filled the air that morning before filling mailboxes too.

# IN BRIEF



## First Bike Drive

with ABC15 and Earnhardt Auto Centers a huge success

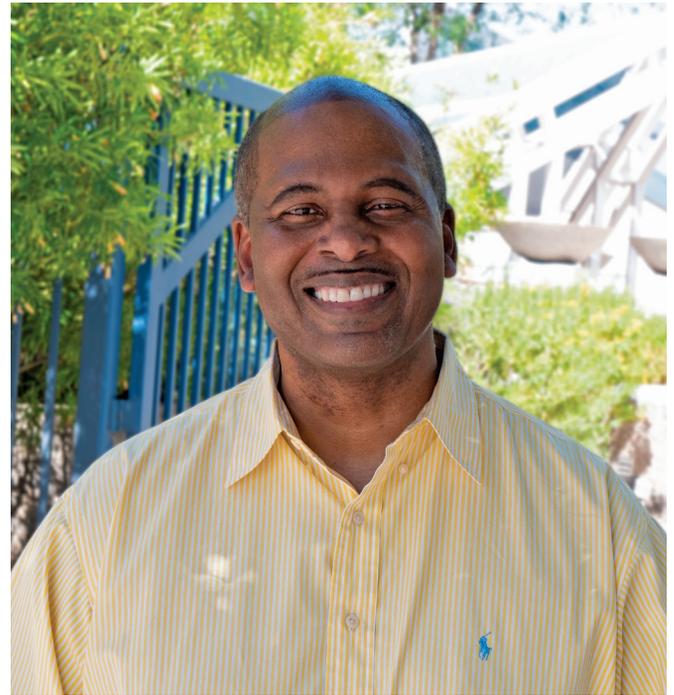
St. Vincent de Paul began the fall season with a warehouse packed full of bicycles thanks to the Second Chance Bike Drive held by ABC15 and Earnhardt Auto Centers. In its inaugural year, the bike drive brought in 1,207 bikes — all in a single day! — thanks to Arizonans who dropped off new and used bikes at Earnhardt dealerships across

the Valley on Sept. 26. The SVdP Bike Shop, which repairs the used bicycles to support people in need and programming, has worked all season to help get the bikes to adults and children in need of reliable transportation. Now they can get to work, school and have more freedom. SVdP will also gift bikes to children in need this Christmas.

## Bruce Cooper joins the SVdP family

This fall saw a much-beloved addition to the St. Vincent de Paul family with the hiring of Bruce Cooper. The former 12 News sports anchor retired from the station in August after 34 years. But it didn't take "Coop" — as he's lovingly called — long before he found a new and different way to continue his presence in the community. Coop started a part-time role working in community outreach for SVdP in September. You may have seen him on campus or on screen again for Turkey Tuesday, the annual one-day turkey drive Coop had a 25-year history helping support with 12 News and Bashas'. Now he wears the SVdP jersey. You'll see more of Coop representing SVdP out in the community or on air in the coming months as he aims to engage as many people as possible in the nonprofit's work to feed, clothe, house and heal.

"I'm just so thrilled Bruce Cooper has joined our team," CEO Steve Zabilski said. "Bruce is a legend not only for his work in the sports world, but also for his heart and the joy he brings out in us all. I have known and worked with Bruce for more than 20 years and I couldn't think of a better person to represent us and to help connect more people to our mission."



## SVdP opens new Hope Chest thrift store in North Phoenix

With impeccable store displays and sanitized shopping carts, St. Vincent de Paul's newest Hope Chest thrift store, located in North Phoenix at 4857 E. Greenway Rd. Suite B, welcomed in the community and shoppers for its grand opening on Nov. 11. The day, which coincided with Veterans Day, started off with a blessing ceremony and a verse of 'God Bless America' before attendees shopped the furniture, clothing, artwork, appliances and home décor sold there. Veterans received a 25 percent discount on all items.

Hope Chest is one of six SVdP thrift stores which help generate funding for the nonprofit's charity work. Every purchase supports food pantries, dining rooms, shelter services, resources for the homeless, and charity medical and dental care.

"St. Vincent de Paul's goal through the thrift stores is to take care of our customers, donors, volunteers, staff and ultimately the people we serve, with kindness and dignity," Director of Retail Operations Mike McClanahan said. "We're so glad to welcome new customers into our store and into supporting our mission."

## Telemundo broadcasts news hour from SVdP for Día de los Muertos

St. Vincent de Paul's Family Dining Room drive-thru celebration of Dia de los Muertos made quite the backdrop to a whole hour of Telemundo's evening news on Oct. 30. The station broadcast right from the drive-thru in front of family cars picking up to-go meals. Mariachis Pasion, an all-female Mariachi group, provided live music. Impressive décor brought visual appeal, including a 15-foot traditional Catrina sculpture made by volunteer Randy Voigt and an altar for photos of loved ones who've passed. Several staff and a family gave interviews during the spectacular evening and exceptional media event.





# SAME MISSION. DONE DIFFERENTLY.

An overview of St. Vincent de Paul's response to COVID-19 from the pandemic's earliest days in Arizona to now

By Marisol Saldivar



Dream Center Supervisor Cindy Bernardo, offers to-go meals to families through a drive-thru window that was always part of the structure, but never activated like this until the Family Dining Room and supplemental education Dream Center needed a safe and efficient way to continue meal service and take-home activity kits for children.

It felt surreal how quickly **COVID-19** (the novel coronavirus) went from a faraway threat to a tangible risk at St. Vincent de Paul. The pandemic would change everything, but one thing remained certain — commitment to continuing critical services to the Valley's most vulnerable and those who would find themselves in need like never before.

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#### **A sudden and necessary shift**

March 16 marked the official pivot of SVdP's in-person service model to one that followed social distancing and COVID-19 health safety guidelines set by local and federal governments.

Just days prior, volunteers arrived for kitchen meal prep, guests filled every chair of the Resource Center for people experiencing homelessness, hundreds ate breakfast together around tables at the Phoenix Dining Room and patients checked in for appointments at SVdP's Virginia G. Piper Medical & Dental Clinic.

But within 48 hours all of that changed as public health officials confirmed community spread in Maricopa County. SVdP leadership took quick action and an extremely nimble staff implemented all-new pandemic procedures.

"It's a challenge because our entire model is built upon being close to people," CEO Steve Zabalski told the Arizona Republic for a column that week. "We bring in hundreds of volunteers every day... we do just the opposite of what is being asked — we do social embracing — but we had to go from social embracing to social distancing in a matter of hours."

*Continued on next page...*

**O**n-site staff was greatly limited, with some staff members shifting to remote work where possible. All volunteers were asked to remain home for their safety and to help limit possible exposure or spread. Daily sanitization, frequent hand washing and maintaining social distance became policy.

**Services looked drastically different:**

- SVdP's five dining rooms shifted to grab-and-go meals
- The Medical Clinic practiced telehealth
- The Dental Clinic took emergency cases only and had staff redeployed to the kitchen
- Ozanam Manor (the transitional shelter) isolated as much as possible
- The Resource Center offered to-go hygiene kits, food and water for people experiencing homelessness
- Rent and utility assistance happened remotely over the phone
- Home visits took place outside with food boxes delivered to doorsteps
- The Dream Center provided take-home activity kits for children
- The Urban Farm harvested and packed fresh produce to accompany to-go meals

Every day saw new challenges and additional shifting as the community at large learned more about the virus. By March 30, SVdP required masks and shortly thereafter had mandatory temperature checks before entering any location.

*Continued on next page...*



Main image: Karen McAlister (at right), a Vincentian volunteer based out of Most Holy Trinity Catholic Parish, delivers a food box to a grandmother out of work because of the pandemic and in need of food for her grandchildren she helps raise.

Bottom left: Maintenance staff member Rosa Lugo helps pack thousands of sack lunches in some of SVdP's earliest days of the response.

Bottom center: Resource Center Support Specialist Ronnie Smith sanitizes the hands of every guest experiencing homelessness who enters the center, which now also offers masks to guests.

Bottom right: Dental Clinic staff like Betty Contreras were redeployed to help make 4,000 peanut butter sandwiches every day. The Dental Clinic saw emergency cases only for two months until reopening to existing patients later in the year.





## SVDP PARTNERS WITH 19 VALLEY RESTAURANTS TO FEED THE HUNGRY WHILE SUPPORTING LOCAL BUSINESS DURING THE SHUTDOWN

### Restaurant partners across the Valley included:

1. Ajo Al's Mexican Café
2. Barro's Pizza
3. Chick-fil-A
4. Chompies
5. Original ChopShop
6. Detroit Coney Grill
7. El Portal Mexican Restaurant
8. Ginger Monkey
9. La Ristra New Mexican Kitchen
10. Little Caesars
11. R. T. O'Sullivan's
12. Raising Cane's
13. Salad & Go
14. Serrano's Mexican Restaurants
15. Spokes on Southern
16. Straight to the Plate Catering
17. Streets of New York
18. Subway
19. Wildflower Bread Company

The COVID-19 pandemic presented St. Vincent de Paul with a unique opportunity to connect people who need food with those who had food but needed customers. That's what brought SVdP together with 19 local food businesses.

By partnering with local food businesses, SVdP continued to provide more than 4,000 to-go meals every day without volunteers and with limited staff, while also supporting local business during a time when they needed a way to keep their staff employed. The nonprofit served those meals to-go at each of its five charity dining rooms across the Valley. At one point, almost 100 percent of SVdP meals came from its restaurant partnerships. Partnerships slowly subsided as restaurants re-opened or switched to take-out service.

"We'll forever be grateful to our restaurant partners," SVdP Food Services Director Danielle McMahon said. "Together, we saw each other through tough times and transitions none of us ever expected. And we've come out a stronger community for it. We hope this won't be the end of our work together and look forward to future opportunities (hopefully in happier times) to serve our community together again."

As of September, SVdP has almost entirely shifted to cooking its own meals again and packaging them in to-go containers except for a few partnerships continued at individual dining rooms.

"We're enjoying our new moment," Danielle said. "It's great to see our kitchen staff back in their groove, doing what they love and serving up some delicious food."



## Finding silver linings all around

The daily unpredictability felt taxing, but along with the challenges came creativity and resilience.

The Help from Home program was born, offering volunteers projects they could complete for SVdP from the comfort and safety of home. *(Meet virtual volunteers. See pages 17-18.)*

An outpouring of love, donations and unique opportunities came from the community resulting in the launch of multiple restaurant partnerships and the joining of forces with CVS Health to offer COVID-19 testing in SVdP's Medical Clinic.

The #AllinThisTogether movement at SVdP took off and challenged people to #MakeKindnessViral. Stories of donated stimulus checks circulated. Notes of positivity poured in for shelter residents, who remained

mostly isolated. Homemade masks in all patterns and colors arrived in the mail.

“In the midst of chaos and fear, we came together from afar to offer up the best of ourselves — the kindest, most compassionate parts — that we all needed in the face of this crisis,”

Associate CEO  
Shannon Clancy said.

## A daily reality and the flood to come

By summer, SVdP settled into a “new normal” with social distancing procedures becoming routine. Response became less about addressing the on-going virus and more about tackling challenges — like a summer of record-breaking heat — atop the daily COVID-19 lifestyle.

Then, the COVID-19 response took a new form as thousands of families, who lost jobs in the pandemic, suddenly found themselves unable to pay bills and at risk of eviction. Hundreds of calls poured into SVdP's rent and utility assistance line, almost all facing months without an income and a pile of unpaid bills.

An extended state and federal eviction moratorium, along with generous funding from both the community and government, is helping keep families in their homes... at least until the end of 2020.



Top left: Inside SVdP's transitional shelter, Ozanam Manor, residents isolated as much as possible and successfully went without any COVID-19 cases for seven months. | Top center Water relief and donations were more critical than ever this year, as SVdP tackled two crises at once (summer heat and COVID-19). Unable to bring as many people inside, SVdP erected outdoor heat relief and water stations with shade structures and swamp coolers. | Bottom left: Phoenix Dining Room Manager Bobby Plattner uses a high-tech sanitizing backpack to disinfect chairs and spaces after a night of hosting a weather relief shelter for 80 guests experiencing homelessness. Social distancing limits the typically 250-person temporary shelter inside the dining room. | Bottom center: A donation of fresh oranges from a local grocer helped bring some vitamin C to guests relying on SVdP's grab-and-go meal services at all five dining rooms across the Valley, including the downtown Phoenix Dining Room pictured here.

But as the pandemic wears on and many jobs remain on hold or lost all together, more and more families find themselves caught in the economic fallout and slipping into crushing debt.

“We foresee a very challenging situation ahead,” Shannon said. “One where we don’t have a sufficient safety net even with recent extensions and funding to help all the families already turning to us for assistance.”

Here is where SVdP finds itself in its COVID-19 response, caught in the eye of the storm yet still moving forward, eyes fixed ahead. Like it did in the spring, SVdP will commit again to supporting and embracing those who seek help and hope.

*Read more about bill assistance during COVID-19 and meet a family SVdP helped remain in their home. See page 12.*



Above: The Family Dining Room drive-thru became a site of creativity and many positive messages as staff continued meal service with the same enthusiasm, care and dignity offered before to families and children.



## MEDICAL CLINIC PARTNERS WITH CVS HEALTH TO BRING FREE COVID-19 TESTING TO SOUTH PHOENIX

In June, St. Vincent de Paul launched rapid COVID-19 testing, together with CVS Health, at the nonprofit’s Virginia G. Piper Medical & Dental Clinic. Licensed health care providers from MinuteClinic, the retail medical clinic of CVS Health, and CVS Pharmacy colleagues staffed the testing operation. All tests were free, by appointment only and open to the public, including insured and uninsured individuals.

“This site brought testing to an area and population that had little access to this vital health resource during a pandemic,” SVdP Associate CEO Shannon Clancy said. “We’re so grateful to CVS Health for helping make that happen for the uninsured patients we serve and for members of the public that needed this rapid testing option.”

In total, the testing clinic completed 5,500 tests. Along with the spike in Arizona cases, the clinic saw high demand and peak positivity rates in June and July. Within hours, a week of appointments would book even with appointments offered every 15 minutes. The rate of new cases began to drop in August. With this decline, the CVS Health testing clinic at SVdP closed at the end of September.



# PREVENTING HOMELESSNESS AFTER COVID-19 A FAMILY'S STORY OF MORTGAGE ASSISTANCE

**Amid loss and economic strife, St. Vincent de Paul kept the Vera family in their home**

By Alejandra Bucon

**F**irst came handwashing, social distancing, masks and temperature checks — the initial impact everyone felt as COVID-19 (the novel coronavirus) spread across the Valley community. People feared for their health and lives. Little did they think they would soon fear for their homes too.

The long-term economic impact from the pandemic's shutdowns, quarantines, layoffs and unreturned jobs has sent thousands of Arizona families into financial crisis and unable to pay bills.

Even before its pandemic response, St. Vincent de Paul's Homelessness Prevention Program provided rent and utility assistance to families to help keep them in their homes. Generous

funding from the community, including the Virginia G. Piper Charitable Trust, and more than \$2 million in Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) monies from the State has expanded SVdP's program to help more families during the pandemic.

**Here is just one family's story from the 1,971 households SVdP has helped so far.**

## The Vera Family

When Maria and Jose Vera received the keys to their new home 25 years ago, there were no words to describe the level of happiness they felt. For the first time, they had their very own home.

“We just couldn’t believe it,” said Maria, who is now 66. “Our dream of providing our kids a home came true.”

Jose, 72, was proud of his beautiful lawn — bright green grass, flowers and a colorful “Mi casa es su casa” sign that welcomed guests who visited the Veras in their South Phoenix neighborhood, where they raised their 10 children. One daughter and two grandchildren continue to live there with Maria.

“Do you remember when you used to make me a delicious salsa and we would have it with beef?” Maria remembered Jose asking her.

“We didn’t have a lot then. We would cut the meat into little pieces, so all my 10 kids had something to eat,” Maria said. “Remembering is like living again. We were so happy, we are happy, but everything ends.”

When the pandemic came to Arizona, Jose had already been battling myasthenia gravis, a chronic disease that causes severe muscle

weakness. He’d been diagnosed in 2015. The condition made it difficult for him to move, talk and keep his head up. Incapacitated, Jose could no longer work his factory job. Their daughter, Marisol, paid the family bills with her cooking job at the nearby elementary school.

But when COVID-19 closed the school, Marisol had to go temporarily without a paycheck. That left the Vera family without means to pay their mortgage and utility bills. A friend from St. Edward the Confessor Church recommended they seek help from St. Vincent de Paul’s Homelessness Prevention Program. They submitted their assistance application, which made its way to Gaby Montes, a SVdP support specialist.

Gaby noticed the Vera’s application was missing some documents. When she called, Maria promised to send the additional documents. A week later, Gaby still hadn’t received anything.

“I thought they might have written down my email wrong,” Gaby said, “so I called again but it sent me to voicemail several times.”

Gaby didn’t know the full tragedy unfolding in the Veras’ lives.

Not only had the pandemic caused a gap in income, but the virus had made its way to the

family. After two surgeries Jose received in the spring, he had complications that took him back to the hospital in July. He felt his time was coming.



**“We are supposed to leave together holding hands,” Maria remembered saying to her husband as their children got him in the car to go to the hospital. “I’ll be here waiting for you.”**



Top left: One of the pride and joys of home ownership for Jose Vera was his garden in the front of his home. Before passing he asked his daughter to continue caring for two things — his wife and his plants. | Bottom left: Maria Vera proudly displays the family tree of portraits just inside the foyer. Here is where she reflects on the years and family she and Jose had together. | Right: SVdP staff member Gaby Montes (at right) finally meets in person the family she couldn’t give up on helping. Marisol, the daughter, graciously accepts the flowers Gaby gifts the family. Maria awaits her chance to thank the woman that helped save her home.

It was the last thing Maria said to her husband of 48 years. Jose didn't have enough energy to answer. While at the hospital, he contracted COVID-19. Jose was asymptomatic, but it complicated his condition nonetheless. Because hospitals didn't allow visitors, his family couldn't be with him.

"Every day he gave his best," said Maria, who noted he weighed just 70 pounds in the end, "but this illness was too much for him."

Maria herself would test positive for COVID-19 and be hospitalized the day Jose passed away.

During this time, Gaby called the Vera family every other day for a month with no luck of reaching them. She'd never met them in person, but Gaby worried and felt compelled to get them assistance.

"I had a gut feeling that the Vera family still needed help," Gaby said.

She called once more, and Marisol answered the phone. Gaby had been right. With Jose's death, Maria's hospitalization and a family on

the edge of losing their home, the Veras needed help now more than ever.

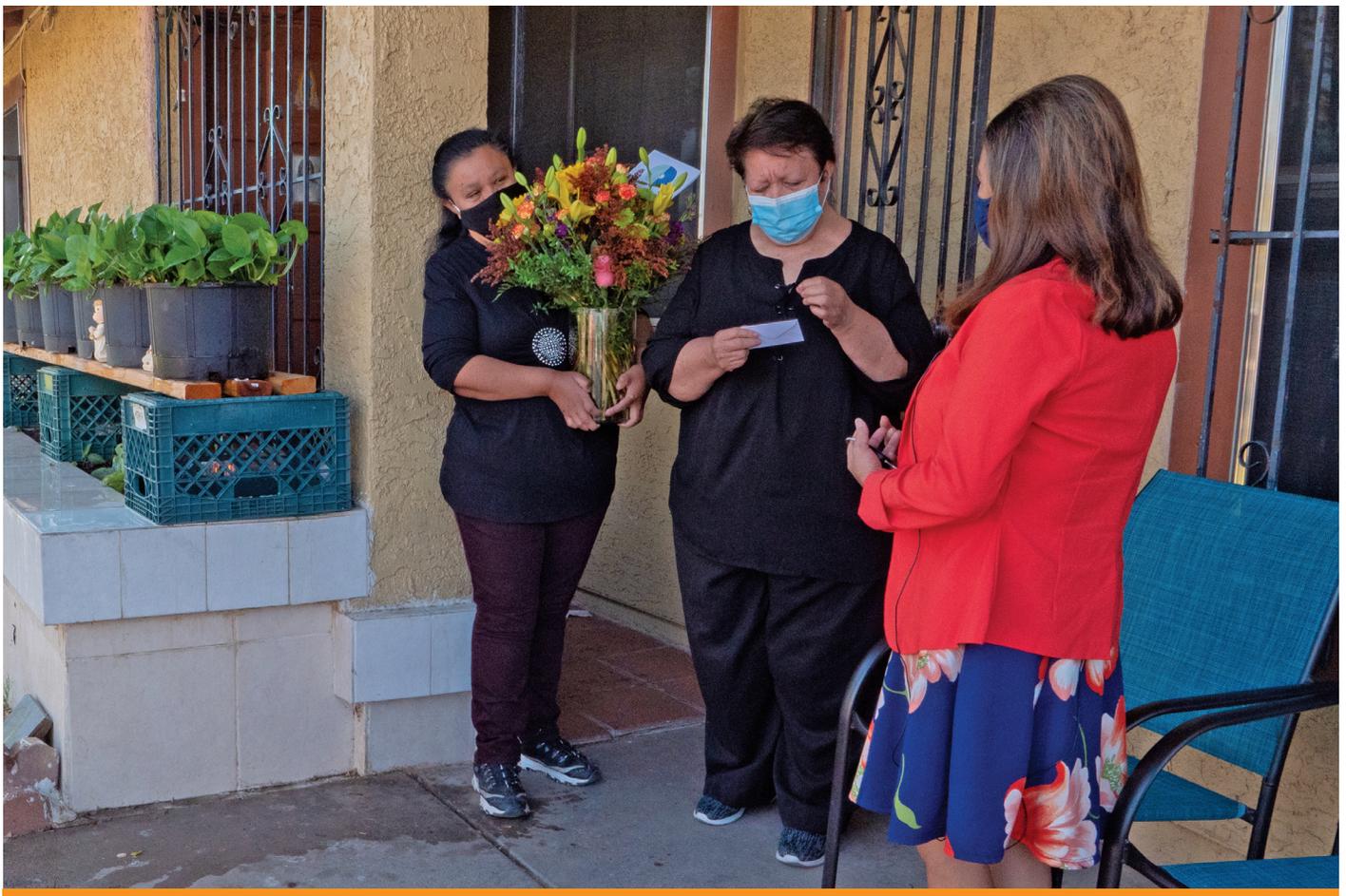
SVdP approved their application for three months of mortgage payments and utility bills, which came to \$4,200. The assistance saw them through the summer and into the school year, when Marisol returned to work. No longer does the Vera family have to worry about unpaid bills leading to the loss of their family home.

Maria is recovering from COVID-19 and has since returned home. It feels different without her husband.

**"He's going to be missed, but I'm grateful to God for those beautiful 48 years of marriage he allowed me to spend with Jose and for all the kids we had together," Maria said. "And thank you, God, for not abandoning us during these hard times, for sending St. Vincent de Paul."**

*Thousands of families continue to live in fear of losing their homes because of past due rent, mortgage payments or utility bills. Multiple extensions of state and federal emergency moratoriums on evictions for people experiencing a COVID-related crisis have kept families in their homes until at least the end of 2020. But many remain at risk of eviction once the moratoriums lift. Even those who've returned to work face debts beyond their current wages. SVdP will be there to help prevent homelessness for as many families as possible, but at these staggering rates of need, not all families' stories will end with a place to call home.*

**You can help. Donate today to SVdP's COVID-19 Family Relief Fund at:**  
**[stvincentdepaul.net/familyrelief](https://stvincentdepaul.net/familyrelief)**





Inside SVdP's Food Reclamation Center, the Reflecting Hope team films 12News Anchor Mark Curtis interviewing CEO Steve Zabalski and Resource Center Director Cheryl Strong for the Q&A portion of the virtual event

# HOPE IS A MORNING SPENT TOGETHER.

## Reflecting Hope gathers SVdP family virtually to celebrate community

In the morning hours of Nov. 20 nearly 1,000 people from scattered distances logged into their devices to start their day with hope — specifically, Reflecting Hope, the virtual community gathering St. Vincent de Paul held this year.

The virtual event continued SVdP's longstanding tradition of gathering its community the Friday before Thanksgiving, despite the challenges presented by the pandemic. While people couldn't share breakfast at the Phoenician for the nonprofit's usual Restoring Hope fundraiser, human connection was abundant.

The program, hosted by 12News Anchor Mark Curtis, showcased community and the tremendous compassion and love at work in Arizona, especially through SVdP's response to the pandemic. It also went in-depth into one family's assistance story. (Read about the Veras on page 12).

Even through a virtual platform, the air crackled with love and connection, infused by a strong belief in humanity's goodness, especially during the planned shared experience — a Hope Box — mailed to every person who registered. Together at distance, the SVdP family carefully opened their Hope Boxes to learn of the special gift inside — a single note card with

paid postage to be sent with gratitude to someone who gave hope OR as an expression of love and encouragement to someone in need of hope.



**“In our world of electronic communications, perhaps there is no more powerful way to express our deepest sentiments than in a handwritten note,”**

Associate CEO Shannon Clancy said. “When you send that note out in the world, you are adding your reflections of hope to all the members of the SVdP family who are doing this alongside you.”

The event all transpired in 30 minutes, but the spirit of hope felt afire afterward and lived on in the weeks following each time a person opened their mailbox to an unexpected note of hope, encouragement and great love.

**Missed the event?** Experience the Reflecting Hope virtual community gathering at: [youtu.be/hZ30QRSBFFw](https://youtu.be/hZ30QRSBFFw)

**Need a Hope Box or have a story to share?**  
Email us at [ReflectingHope@svdpaz.org](mailto:ReflectingHope@svdpaz.org)



**“Somebody’s life can be changed by what you do.”**

– Pete and Cathy Bergmann

# YOU are the difference.

Pete and Cathy Bergmann know that joining hands with St. Vincent de Paul has real results. That's why they choose to not only give to the mission annually, but also volunteer sorting donations.

So whether it's their dollar that helps someone remain in their home tonight or the canned goods they sorted so that a mother could feed her children, the Bergmanns know that their efforts made all the difference.

What we each do matters. Take action however you can to help someone today.

**Make a gift. Volunteer. Be the difference.**

**[stvincentdepaul.net/give](https://stvincentdepaul.net/give)**  
**[stvincentdepaul.net/volunteer](https://stvincentdepaul.net/volunteer)**

Read the Bergmann's story at:  
**[stvincentdepaul.net/svdp-blog/bergmanns](https://stvincentdepaul.net/svdp-blog/bergmanns)**



# VOLUNTEERING STARTED RIGHT AT MATTHEW ROUHANI'S KITCHEN TABLE

By Marisol Saldivar

**Matthew Rouhani pulled out his grandmother's sewing machine and set up shop at home. The family's kitchen table became his service station, where he would make 54 face masks and 181 blessing cards for St. Vincent de Paul.**

The 16-year-old never imagined learning to sew. But then, he also never imagined the COVID-19 pandemic and the changes it would bring, including how people volunteer for SVdP. Social distancing limited in-person volunteering opportunities and sparked the creation of the nonprofit's Help from Home initiative, where volunteers could complete service projects remotely. That's what got Matthew started.

"Beyond being a convenient and safer option, I just thought it was a really good idea," Matthew says.

Usually the Brophy College Preparatory junior would have come to serve dinner restaurant-style inside the Family Dining Room or helped a student with homework in the Dream Center. He's been a regular volunteer with his family for years. Those opportunities helped him complete mandatory service hours for school, but also expanded his love of giving back to his community — something Matthew didn't want to end because of the pandemic.

"It's always important, but during COVID-19, lots of people are struggling while apart," Matthew says. "It's important to find these ways to come together as a community, so that we all feel welcome and surrounded by people who love and care for us during these times."

Love and care are what Matthew put into his masks and blessing cards for SVdP.

He had all kinds of supplies and fabrics — from basketball to unicorn prints — delivered to his home. After watching a YouTube tutorial and taking some tips from his mother, Matthew became quite the master of the accordion-style mask with loops to go around the ears. He even taught himself the upgraded design with adjustable straps for sizing. Now, he can make a mask in 30 minutes or less.

And the blessing cards — filled with words of affirmation — have been a tremendous support for residents staying isolated much as possible inside SVdP's transitional shelter.

Each card offers uplifting messages like, "Stay positive," "Dream big" and "You are loved."

"I wanted them to stay motivated and continue pursuing happiness," Matthew says.

After completing a good batch of masks and cards, Matthew mails them to SVdP's main campus for distribution to staff and guests. Volunteering from home has revealed to him a different perspective.

"Maybe I'm not right there in the moment to directly see the impact," Matthew says, "but when I was making the masks, I felt like I was adding to something bigger. Even if I didn't see the end result, I knew my effort would be added to all the others, and together we would offer people a lot of help and connection."

To learn more about how to volunteer from home, visit: [stvincendepaul.net/get-involved/helping-from-home](https://stvincendepaul.net/get-involved/helping-from-home)

# National Charity League mothers, daughters make FIRST-EVER DRIVEWAY DRIVE A SUCCESS

By Marisol Saldivar



Lauren Hart, daughter to Anne, pauses for a moment while packing their trunk to display their neighborhood's generosity and some of the many donations they received for NCL Sonoran Centennial's driveway drive.

This past summer, a group of mothers and daughters from the Sonoran Centennial Chapter of the National Charity League threw open their garage doors, popped their trucks and held a St. Vincent de Paul food, clothing and goods drive from the comfort and safety of their driveways during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In total, the charity group that focuses on service, leadership development and cultural experiences had 15 driveways participate in the first-ever driveway drive for SVdP.

Anne Hart and her daughter Lauren, who live in north Scottsdale, were among the mother/daughter duos to open their driveway for the cause.

"Sometimes with our schedules it can be so hard to find time together," says Anne, who works as a human resources talent acquisition director for Cadence Education and whose daughter just started high school. "Opportunities to do things remotely from home now just make it so much easier and still allow us to help."

That exact thinking originally prompted the driveway drive idea for SVdP Volunteer Engagement Liaison Shawn Donnelly, who got the nonprofit's Help from Home program off the ground since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in Arizona.

"The basic principle came from showing you can help those in need by creating a drive without leaving your own driveway," Shawn says.

The first to try the idea, the NCL Sonoran Centennial Chapter got to work, promoting the drive through their networks and displaying poster boards in their neighborhoods calling for donations. Then, they camped out and collected donations on the day of the drive.



## In total, they collected:

- 592 pounds of food
- 238 books
- 53 toys and board games
- 26 new pairs of men's socks
- 15 men's T-shirts
- 3 packs of adult diapers

With so many office and company springtime drives understandably canceled because of COVID-19, every item and every pound of food counted in helping SVdP continue its service to the most vulnerable in the community.

NCL Sonoran's drive donations made their way to SVdP's Dream Center children, who receive to-go meals and activity kits through the Family Dining Room drive-thru. The donations also went to the Resource Center for those experiencing or at risk of homelessness and into food boxes delivered to families' doorsteps.

*"We feel fortunate that we can help and enjoy doing it," Anne says. "Especially now, for people needing connection and really missing that in-person interaction, this gives them that opportunity."*

Interested in hosting your own driveway drive? Sign up at [stvincentdepaul.net/give/organize-drive](https://stvincentdepaul.net/give/organize-drive)

# THE SOCIETY OF A THOUSAND THANKS

The year 2020 presented us with great uncertainty and many challenges, but it also amplified the tremendous generosity practiced every day in our community.

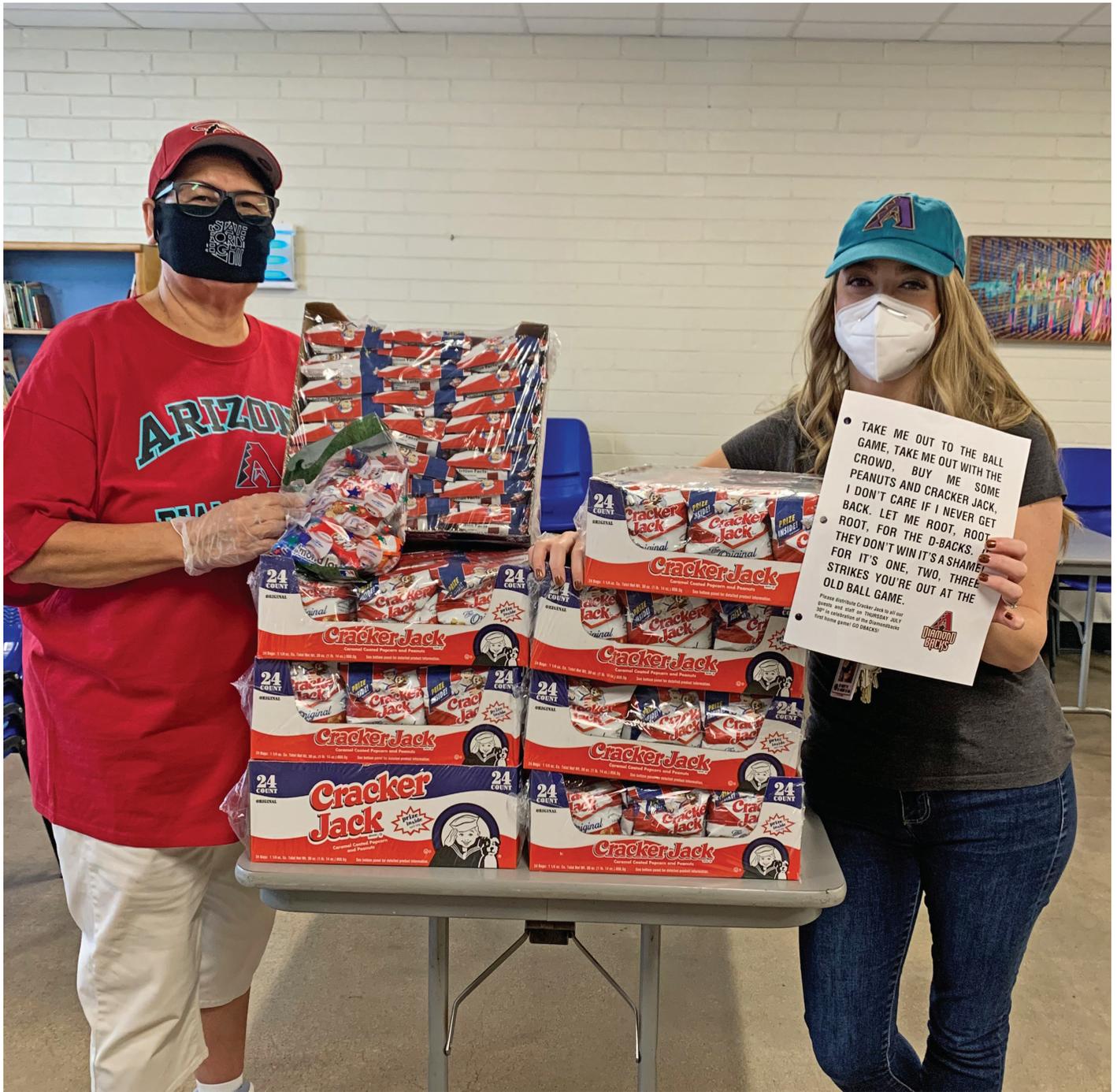
St. Vincent de Paul was not only able to continue serving Arizona, but also expand its reach because of the unparalleled kindness, care and generosity demonstrated this year. THANK YOU to all those who stood by us and supported our work in ways big and small throughout the pandemic.



**We extend a special thanks to our corporate and foundation donors below, who made generous gifts to our COVID-19 Relief Fund.**

- |  |                                |                                     |                                      |
|--|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Albertsons Companies Foundation          | Cigna Foundation               | Kemper & Ethel Markey Foundation    | Sagicor Life Insurance Company       |
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| Arizona Diamondbacks Foundation          | Diane & Bruce Halle Foundation | Mercy Care                          | Union Pacific Foundation             |
| Arizona Together Coronavirus Relief Fund | Fiesta Bowl Charities          | Nina Mason Pulliam Charitable Trust | USAA                                 |
| Bank of America, N.A.                    | Fry's Food Stores (Kroger)     | Opus Foundation                     | Valley of the Sun United Way         |
| Bashas'                                  | Garcia Family Foundation       | The Pakis Family Foundation         | Virginia G. Piper Charitable Trust   |
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# THE SOCIETY OF A THOUSAND THANKS



Mesa Dining Room Manager Carol Reed (at left) and Food Services Director Danielle McMahon got East Valley guests in the baseball spirit with some Cracker Jack and a little verse of "Take Me Out To The Ball Game."

## Arizona Diamondbacks step up to the plate for SVdP

Within the first weeks of SVdP's COVID-19 response, the Arizona Diamondbacks stepped up with \$100,000 to support food operations during the pandemic. The team's substantial and early support not only helped connect SVdP with some of its restaurant partners, but also spurred the restaurant partnership model that would carry the nonprofit through the summer. In a show of gratitude and love for the team that gave so much, SVdP had a D-Backs day across all sites for the team's home opener. Staff wore team apparel and celebrated with Cracker Jack while root root rooting from afar.



### Valley of the Sun United Way repeats kindness again and again

Thank you to Valley of the Sun United Way, who gave an initial \$10,000 to SVdP's overall COVID-19 response and then followed up that kindness with another \$12,875 to support the nonprofit's dining rooms, with a special focus on helping the Sunnyslope Dining Room. The repeated generosity provided thousands of meals over months to those experiencing food insecurity, and in many cases, homelessness.



Residents of SVdP's transitional shelter Ozanam Manor make their way through a socially distanced grab-and-go meal service inside one of the shelter's TV rooms that's been transformed into a meal pick-up station. The operation helped decrease residents venturing out for food as frequently and risking possible exposure.

### USAA among first to help, offers additional support to Ozanam Manor

As SVdP faced drastic shifts in services, USAA was among the first in line to ask how they could help. Thanks to the \$50,000 they gave for COVID-19 relief, SVdP was able to further support its restaurant partnerships and afford more pre-packaged meals to be handed out at its five charity dining rooms and inside Ozanam Manor, SVdP's transitional shelter for seniors, veterans and adults with disabilities. USAA gave an additional \$25,000 to support Ozanam Manor, which remained open to continue safely sheltering this vulnerable population during the pandemic.



Inside the Hall of Banners, which was transformed into a space for pandemic response, the U.S. National Guard members help package food and snacks for grab-and-go sack lunches for people experiencing homelessness.

### Arizona Together Coronavirus Relief Fund brings helping hands

Thank you to the Arizona Together Coronavirus Relief Fund, which gave SVdP \$50,000 to aid in the nonprofit's pandemic response and helped bring the U.S. National Guard to campus. Not only was SVdP able to get back to cooking in its kitchen with this funding, but it also had the helping hands it needed. Thank you, Arizona Together and National Guard, for helping SVdP keep its usual volunteers — many of whom are high risk — healthy and safe at home.

### Fry's Food Stores keeps food boxes full for families during pandemic

Cancelled springtime food drives resulted in tight food supply for SVdP, especially when more and more families started turning to the nonprofit for food assistance during COVID-19. Together, Fry's Food Stores and The Kroger Co. Zero Hunger \ Zero Waste Foundation gave a crucial \$50,000 to help SVdP fill in some of the food donation gaps and round out food boxes delivered to doorsteps.



# THE SOCIETY OF A THOUSAND THANKS



## Union Pacific Foundation boosts rent assistance

As weeks turned into months of pandemic response, Union Pacific Foundation was one of the first to give toward rent assistance in the wake of lost jobs, missed paychecks and eviction fears. Thank you, Union Pacific Foundation, for the \$10,000 given to SVdP's Homelessness Prevention Program, which helped families avoid accumulating overwhelming past due bills and late fees.



## Tim Tebow donates 50 pairs of shoes to SVdP guests experiencing homelessness

In October, Heisman Trophy winner Tim Tebow, along with a group from Kindli, came to visit guests living in SVdP's transitional shelter as well as those living on the street who seek care at the nonprofit's neighboring Resource Center. In addition to words of encouragement and support, Tim brought with him 50 pairs of new shoes, which quickly ran out. When Tim realized there were no shoes left and still many people in need, he removed his own tennis shoes and gave them to a homeless guest needing a similar size. Two days later, additional shoes were delivered to all those who were left without. A warm thank you goes out to Tim and Kindli for the enormous gesture of generosity and for a memorable and touching visit.

## Incoming! 1,500 pounds of Starbucks food every day thanks to Waste Not

St. Vincent de Paul is happy to be the top recipient of local food rescue nonprofit Waste Not's new and impressive partnership with the Starbucks FoodShare program. In September, Waste Not started daily deliveries of up to 1,500 pounds of rescued Starbucks food from locations throughout the Valley. SVdP serves as the primary end destination among 60 other nonprofit recipients with which Waste Not partners. Now the guests of SVdP's five charity dining rooms can enjoy some of the fresh, unsold Bistro Boxes, breakfast sandwiches, paninis, salads, yogurts and baked goods that everyone loves.



## Bank of America kept compassion flowing during shutdown

Bank of America couldn't be with SVdP in person as they usually would for volunteer days with dozens of Bank of America employees, but they were with SVdP in compassion this spring. Just as businesses closed and families started to go without enough money for food and rent, Bank of America gave \$70,000 to SVdP's COVID-19 relief efforts to help keep meals and assistance flowing to families in need. Thank you, Bank of America!

# FROM NEWS TO STORE TO PEOPLE IN NEED

Along with continuing their essential services, local news media and grocers also continued to team up for community drives benefiting St. Vincent de Paul. Despite unique and challenging circumstances, they held their annual drives because they knew Arizonans would be especially counting on them this year. Thank you!

## Million Meal Crusade with 102.5 KNIX, Safeway and Albertson's

Turkey and all the trimmings came packed together for families this Thanksgiving thanks to the Million Meal Crusade, which helped SVdP bring the holiday food and tradition to the families they serve.



abc 15 | CW61

## ABC15 Water Drive with Bashas' and Food City

1.3 million bottles of water collected to help SVdP keep people hydrated and alive on the streets and at its dining room heat relief sites this past summer. Water also went to the community and was distributed through food pantries.



## 12 News Turkey Tuesday with Bashas', Food City and AJ's Fine Foods

Thousands and thousands of turkeys made their way to families' homes in SVdP food boxes this Thanksgiving holiday thanks to Turkey Tuesday, the nation's largest one-day turkey drive that happens right here in Arizona!



## End Hunger Now with Arizona's Family (3TV/CBS 5), Safeway and Albertson's

Over \$200,000 in food assistance during the pandemic helped SVdP provide nonperishables and proteins to help families keep food on the table for their children during these challenging times.

## Fox 10 Holiday Food Drive with Safeway and Albertson's

No family served by SVdP went without food this holiday season thanks to this drive, which provided the holiday meals that help families make memories to cherish.



# VINCENTIAN CONNECTION

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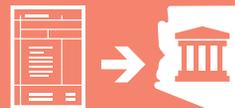
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## Step 1

Donate to St. Vincent de Paul to support needy families in Arizona.



## Step 2

File your taxes and claim the credit by using AZDOR Form 321.



## Step 3

Receive your tax credit!  
(up to \$800)