

Serving in Hope

a publication of National Council
of the United States, Society of St. Vincent de Paul, Inc.®



Hurricane Smashed Kelly's Home and Wiped Out Her Livelihood

But Thanks to You, She's Getting Back on Her Feet

"Fort Myers Beach is gone, you know, it's destroyed and it's heartbreaking."

Floridian Kelly Knopf survived September's Hurricane Ian. It was the state's deadliest storm in nearly 90 years.

"It was quite traumatic," she told a reporter about those earliest hours and days. "I don't think our community was quite prepared [because forecasters] said it would go more over Tampa; but it ended up hovering over Fort Myers Beach. It was a save-your-life type of situation."

That change in expected direction was enough to make it too late for some people to evacuate, especially those who lack family, funds, or reliable transportation at a moment's notice. Fear kept others in their homes to ride things out.

But thanks to your generosity, the Disaster Services Corporation of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul sprang into action. DSC delivered truckloads of protein food basics to the front lines. Vincentian volunteers distributed goods to neighbors at the epicenter of destruction. Hygiene kits and gift cards for essentials were given to families who lost everything.

"The Society of St. Vincent de Paul disaster relief people have been incredibly helpful with clothing, food, and whatever else they can," Kelly said. "Getting people shelter and housing is hopefully next."

Media coverage waned. **But the Society's dedication to providing critically needed aid didn't.** Your giving kept us on the ground, helping people even as attention turned away from the disaster zone.

Thanks to prayerful support and generosity from friends like you, Vincentian volunteers continued to serve on the front lines. They delivered food, clothing, and other necessities. They helped survivors complete paperwork necessary to receive FEMA benefits. Councils helped with utility bills, furniture, household, and pantry items. They listened with patience and compassion and offered prayers for healing.

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Thank You for Being a Friend to Those in Need



In 2019, Peggy Veltri joined the Society of St. Vincent de Paul at her St. Catherine of Siena parish Conference in West Dundee, Illinois. She and fellow volunteers struggled through the pandemic as requests for help came from more neighbors in need.

The National Council awarded two Friends of the Poor® Grants to Peggy's Conference over the past two years. That funding helped them provide critical, even life-changing, aid to dozens of area neighbors struggling in the wake of lost wages and rising prices.

Here are two stories of lives that were changed by those Friends of the Poor Grants.

Mary is a mother of two grown sons who both cope with mental health issues that limit their ability to support themselves. The family was evicted after Mary's work hours were cut. The Society's local Conference was able to move the family from an extended stay hotel to a permanent home in a less expensive town nearby. The new residence was also able to accommodate their grandmother. The grateful family of four is now thriving in a financially sustainable living arrangement.

Every call for assistance is different. Peggy's Conference also recently helped a retired couple who became the guardians of their grandkids after their parents, like many Americans, fell into addiction. This husband and wife wanted to provide a better life for their grandkids, but soon after they moved in the grandfather lost his job.

With school about to start and no money for clothes and school supplies they called the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. Thanks to you, they got the kids everything they needed to start the school year. When people find themselves at the end of their rope and have nowhere else to go, they often call the Society of St. Vincent de Paul for help.



"These grants are important in more ways than just helping with their current crisis," Peggy says. "Of equal or greater importance, they provide us a stepping off point for discussions and planning that will have a more lasting impact. It shows the people we serve that SVdP is invested in their progress and success."

Problems don't go away overnight, but thanks to your support, Peggy and 90,000 Vincentians across the country are there to serve their communities. ●



WHY I GIVE:

Newfound Catholic Faith Sparks Investment Professional's Desire to Do More for the Poor

After New Yorker Chris Uga converted to Catholicism a few years ago, he began looking into “good Catholic causes” he could support.

One of the places he went for information was Reddit. This social news forum invites member discussion and opinions on various topics. “I regularly peruse the Catholic community within Reddit,” Chris says. “When I searched there to find a good charity to support, a lot of people called out the Society of St. Vincent de Paul as one of the best.”

Chris investigated on his own and liked what he saw.

“Some important things differentiated the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. It’s not only handouts. The Society offers training for volunteers so they can help individuals with all kinds of struggles. It’s a more personal and multi-pronged approach to helping the needy. They run things in a sophisticated way with strong accountability.

“I also appreciate that all the activities of the Society are driven by faith.”

Chris Uga was born in Japan and moved with his family to the U.S. at age seven. He lives with his wife and two young children in New York City and attends St. Peter’s Church. He is a software engineering manager at an investment management firm in New York City. Chris is finishing a book about Eucharistic miracles entitled “God Under the Microscope.” He hopes to publish the book as a nonprofit endeavor, using science and reason to help others along their faith journey.

You join hands with Chris in this ministry to the poor every time you donate. Together, we are living out our Faith and changing the world! ●



Your Gifts Provide Faith, Friendship, and a Brighter Future

The stories in this issue of *Serving in Hope* point to three important distinctions.

Chris Uga mentions the Society’s unique national network of trained volunteers as being men and women driven by **faith**. The people carrying out the vast majority of the Society’s charitable assistance accept nothing in return for their service. They volunteer their time, and often their own gifts or funds and material goods, as a contribution of their Vincentian Charism.

Florida resident Kelly Knopf speaks of **friendship**. Her hope comes from not just the material help she has received following Hurricane Ian, but from the companionship and generosity of the Vincentians who started out as strangers to her. She calls the Society “a staple in our community.” Vincentian volunteers live, work, and worship in neighborhoods close to those they are serving. Help is delivered in person directly to one’s home.

Conference member Peggy Veltri points to **the future**. Vincentian volunteers are uniquely positioned to provide ongoing follow-up and assistance over months, and even years. They stay in touch by phone calls and personal visits. Neighbors served are always welcome to reach back out to the Society as needed.

Your own faith, friendship, and concern for the future further our mission.

On behalf of all whose lives are changed forever for the better because of your generosity, I offer our deepest thanks.

David Barringer
Chief Executive Officer



One generation plants the tree; another harvests its fruit.

Please prayerfully consider adding the Society in your Will.

You care for people in need. You welcome the homeless. You help the poor build new lives. When you include a charitable gift in your Will you do all that – even after you're gone. Your love reaches into the future and will inspire those who come after us to join in the cause of saying YES to those in need. **It's one of the most life-affirming actions you'll take this year!**

To discuss leaving your legacy, simply contact our expert, Dennis Kempf: (314) 576-3993 ext 222, or email him: dkempf@svdpusa.org

He'd love to talk with you! ●



Help support our mission by *Donating A Vehicle*



The proceeds from your vehicle donation will help support local programs such as housing, utilities, food, disaster relief, job training, and more for neighbors in need.

Call (800) 322-8284 or visit svdpusa.careasy.org for more information.

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"It's starting your whole life all over again. I mean, from nothing," Kelly noted. "St. Vincent de Paul is a staple in our community, and hopefully they continue to help everyone do what's next for them in their path in life ... Having lots of kind people and friends become selfless enough to help you when you literally have nothing for yourself — that's what keeps me hopeful."

Your giving makes all the difference in times like these. Because you respond with love and do what Our Lord calls you to do for those in need, people are surviving and returning to normal in Florida. Thank you! ●



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OUR MISSION

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul is a network of friends, inspired by Gospel values, growing in holiness and building a more just world through personal relationships with and service to people in need.

In the tradition of its founder, Blessed Frédéric Ozanam, and patron, St. Vincent de Paul, we are a Catholic lay organization inspired by Gospel values. The Society leads women and men to join together to grow spiritually by offering person-to-person service to those who are needy and suffering.

The National Council of the United States, Society of St. Vincent de Paul, Inc. is a non-profit organization under section 501(c)(3) of the United States Internal Revenue Code. Donations to the National Council are deductible. The Council's tax identification number is 13-5562362.



To make a gift online, please visit www.svdpusa.org/donate

MY DONATION

YES, I want to help SVdP USA continue serving in hope! Here's my gift to support the Society's volunteer members caring for the poor across the country.

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☐ Please send me information on becoming a Vincentian.

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