

Addicted and Homeless to Thriving and Successful

You were there for Zach at just the right moment.



You can see the grace of God in the transformation that happens when one person's desperate need intersects with the right support at just the right moment.

Zach was a high school honor-roll student and a gifted artist. But he also suffered from low self-esteem, constant anxiety, and a pervasive feeling of fear.

"I always felt that things weren't OK in my core. I started using drugs at 16 and by the time I was 18 I was pretty much a full-blown heroin addict. The first drug I ever used was Oxycontin. After that I started smoking a lot of pot and drinking, but I'd keep drifting back to the pain pills. Living clean and without drugs felt counterintuitive to me since I felt amazing on the drugs."

Zach managed to graduate from high school. Both he and his mom thought that he could go away to college, leave his drug usage behind, and begin anew.

After two years of college, overdosing several times, and numerous stints in rehab, he dropped out. Coming home to a family who no longer trusted him, he lived on the street from ages 22–24. He slept under bridges, in abandoned houses, and at the St. Vincent Shelter for Men.

After a series of petty thefts, he was arrested. He shares, "I spent two months in jail until a bed opened up at a residential treatment facility. By then, I had been in and out of rehab at least 30 times, but that's when everything began as far as my recovery."

When asked why that moment worked when prior attempts hadn't, Zach says, "I don't know. It was so painful to live that way. But that on its own is not enough. The pain and defeat coupled with the right community and the right support is what I needed."

When he dropped out of college, he gave up his dream of ever being an artist. However, in 2016 after being clean for over a year a tattoo shop owner saw his work. Later that year, the owner offered him an apprenticeship.

Clean since August 2015, Zach is thriving. He is an in-demand tattoo artist with a soft-spoken manner, a focused determination, and a generous spirit.

It is impossible to know that moment when your gift will be the catalyst for that transformational intersection of need, of support, and of the undeniable grace of God.



From the Executive Director

Dear Friend of St. Vincent de Paul,

We felt it – the joy in May of emerging from so many months of weariness and isolation, and the exquisite release from masking mandates and shuttered spaces where we took community for granted.

Now, amid rising infections and vaccine hesitancy, we are in this pandemic limbo of half in and half out: Do I mask or not? Do I go or not? Do I get a vaccine or not? The subtle threat of recriminations from family, friends, and coworkers seemingly hangs over every decision.

For many of us, this understandable anxiety about others' expectations provides a glimpse of homelessness. These extra stressors layer on top of life's ordinary challenges. For those of us with already fragile family and community bonds, any additional hurdle frustrates the path away from loneliness, chemical dependency, and homelessness.

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul is built upon a radical faith in Love itself – God who dwells among us, who teaches us to tenderly accompany each other through every pain and suffering. We were made for Love, and our neighbors in need help us grow our faith in Love – even more so through the added challenges of the pandemic.

In this issue you will read stories of addiction and severe mental illness, and how your support of our mission helps love persevere through it all.

Thanks for your prayers, financial support, material support, volunteering, and by sharing the good news of St. Vincent de Paul Society with your family and friends!

Yours in Christ,

Michael

Michael E. Vanderburgh,
Executive Director



Through our ministries of St. Vincent de Paul, our very humanity is celebrated every time we reach out to a hurting neighbor, a stranger with nowhere else to turn, or a child without clothing, food, or safe shelter. Together we show God's love through our care and accompaniment of over 100,000 people in the Miami Valley each year.

100,000 Miles and Still Plenty of Hope to Give

Jerry and Jennifer's old car supported St. Vincent's mission.

Jerry and Jennifer have been St. Vincent donors for the past six years. While some of their support has come in the form of a check, when the time came for them to get a new car they donated their old one to St. Vincent.

“Our vehicle was getting over the 100,000-mile range but it still had life in it. We wanted to use it for charitable purposes. A vehicle that had served us so well can very easily be turned into something that can serve a multitude through giving.”

The process to donate your vehicle couldn't be easier!

In three simple steps, your old vehicle could be picked up at no cost to you, and put to a very good use!

“The steps were listed in a way that made the process effortless. All I had to do was clean the car out, make sure the title was appropriately signed, and then it was picked up on time by a representative at no expense to me. After that it is turned into several thousand dollars that St. Vincent can use to help people in need.”

Interested in learning more? Ready to donate your car, boat, RV or motorcycle? Submit a pick-up request form on our website or call 937-222-5555 Option 3!



An Undercurrent of Determination Turned Despair to Triumph

You gave Laneda the care and compassion she needed to heal.



Laneda Williams is petite and wiry with a bright smile, twinkling eyes, and an undercurrent of fierce self-determination.

She is 49 – the mother of six successful children and the grandmother of 10. She had her first child at age 14. Barely out of high school herself as she was sending her own kids off to school, “I remember my living room on a school day – six pairs of pants, six shirts, six pairs of underwear, six pairs of shoes, six pairs of socks, six lunches. It was crazy.”

By the time she was in her late 20’s, the trauma of her childhood was increasingly too much to bear. Laneda left her children and their father and moved to the South.

The next 20 years were a series of ups and downs. “For years I was on and off the street. I felt desperate and hopeless. When the streets get dark at night it gets scary. I was always checking my surroundings. I learned to find little cubby holes to sleep in. Those were some lonely nights. That is a dark side of life.”

Laneda came back to Dayton in October 2020 when several people close to her – including her grandmother, her parents, and the father of her children – all died within a short span of time. With no place to live, and not wanting to burden her children, Laneda came straight to the St. Vincent Shelter for Women and Families with one thought in mind, “I’m going to have to get it together”.

She shares, “St. Vincent has an open-door policy. In the south you have to call everyday – and if they don’t have a bed then you just have to figure it out.”

In January 2021, life dealt Laneda another heartbreaking blow. Her youngest son, 25-year-old Dion, died of carbon monoxide poisoning.

“Since the loss of my son, God has given me a different outlook on life. I can’t really explain it. One minute you are here and the next you are not. I have been diagnosed with PTSD, depression, anxiety, and schizophrenia with psychotic features. Medication helps – some days more than others. Today I feel good. Today, I am responsible, reliable, and dependable.”

One by one, she has ticked off her to-do list to get physically and mentally healthier, find stable housing, and get approved for disability. She shares, “At the shelter I went to the chapel every day at 9 a.m. They helped me get my birth certificate and ID. I see my doctor once a month. I see my therapist twice a week. And every day I say a prayer, ‘Thank you God for Your grace, Your mercy and Your favor’. St. Vincent has given me stability and structure back in my life.”

In July, shepherded by her case manager and supported by St. Vincent donors, Laneda moved into her own supportive housing apartment.

With obvious relief and just the right amount of pride, she shares, “As long as I follow the rules, I can stay here for the rest of my life.”



St. Vincent de Paul
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DRIVE DAYTON FORWARD

The Vincentian Newsletter - Summer 2021



WHAT HAPPENS TO YOUR GIFT OF GOODS?

We regularly use the household items you donate to help the people we serve. Shelter guests receive donated clothes and toiletries, and families moving into their new homes need furniture and appliances. Would you please make sure your furniture, appliances and household items are in clean and usable condition before donating? Thank you!

DONATION DROP-OFF

Donation of goods can be made any time to our 24/7 donations dock at 120 W. Apple Street. If you or your organization would like to host a collection drive, please visit stvincentdayton.org

FURNITURE PICK UP

Please call 937.425.0592.



Please remember St. Vincent de Paul in your will.

Please call Michael Vanderburgh at (513) 257-6266 if you need assistance.

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MISSION OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL, DAYTON DISTRICT COUNCIL

The Dayton District Council of St. Vincent de Paul, growing in spirituality and friendship, provides Christ inspired, person-to-person support in an empowering effort to improve the lives of those in personal, spiritual, or material need.

