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St. Vincent de Paul – La Pine, OR

Submitted by **Stephen D. Aloia, Ph.D.**,
Vice President - La Pine St. Vincent de Paul

We are the Society of St. Vincent de Paul located in the little community of La Pine, Oregon, about thirty miles south of Bend. Our zeal to be of service to those in need is empowered and guided by the original works of St. Vincent de Paul as put into effect in Paris in 1833 by a 20-year-old university student named Frederic Ozanam.

We see ourselves as *“The Heart of Oregon.”* And we view ourselves as being on *“A Mission from God.”* And, with the spirit of the Gospels of St. Matthew we know that indeed, *“God Is Our Co-Pilot.”*

With that being said we want to express our appreciation for the opportunity to share our adventure in charity – more specifically, a serious Catholic Charity.

Everything we do begins with a focus on the inherent dignity of people: our clients and customers – our staff, managers, and Board of Directors – ultimately, it is the dignity of those who so generously give to those in need.

Yes, we have a Thrift Store that is open six days a week. Yes, we have a Social Services Program that is open four days a week. And, yes, we will give some statistics about our impact to the people and the community of La Pine later in this article.

First, however, we need to share some of the underlying values that engender our Catholic *“Spirit of Service”* within the context of both giving and receiving charity.

Our story begins with people. First, the staff, currently a combination of 44 volunteers and 20 employees who are united by their desire to help and their willingness to share, give, and support the oblation ideals of St. Vincent de Paul – Catholic charity. Second, is our seven-member volunteer Board of Directors, also united by a desire to give back to their community. Third, the extensive number of related charitable organizations, merchants, and agencies with whom we coordinate our efforts and share in a common goal of helping our neighbors in need. Fourth, the generosity of those who donate items and money, and fifth, the very friendly community and people of La Pine. It is indeed an exemplary small American community nestled in the majesty of central Oregon.

Our Five Inspirational Values

The every-day routines of running the thrift store and the social services outreach programs are empowered by six core principles reflected best in the following quotes *on charity*,

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St. Vincent de Paul, *continued*

"Those in need must always be reassured that they are loved and that can only come about via the human touch. Government welfare is mechanical, cold, and disconnected from love and never accompanied by the message." (Alexis de Tocqueville's 1835) "It is in giving that we receive" (St. Francis' of Assisi); "For I was hungry, and you gave me to eat: I was thirsty, and you gave me to drink: I was a stranger, and you took me in" (Matthew 25:35-36); "Mankind is our business... The common welfare of mankind is our business... Charity, mercy, forbearance, and benevolence is our business" (Charles Dickens); "Unless we love and are loved, each of us is alone, each of us is deeply lonely" (Mortimer Adler), and "You cannot feel loved unless you feel lovable" (Dorothy Briggs).

The Serious Relationship Between Giving and Receiving

"One must be poor to know the luxury of giving." (George Eliot) Until you have been on the receiving end of charity, it is near impossible to comprehend the psychological state of "being in need of others" to help you get by. It is always rewarding and gratifying to give. On the other hand, it is always difficult to receive. The corrosive effect of poverty on one's sense of personal significance often results in emotional distress, a loss of agency, and a serious erosion of one's self-worth. And, for parents, this process can be especially devastating. With this "giving-receiving" dynamic in mind, we are reminded that St. Vincent De Paul himself cautioned his disciples to "deport themselves so that the poor will forgive them the bread you give them."

Being on the receiving end of charity makes it almost impossible to feel lovable, thus we accompany our interactions with the human touch – a friendly smile. We must always remember that our charity is the giving of our time and talents to help those in need. We are only the dispensers of goods and services and in that capacity, we are the vicars of Christ carrying out his message ... *"Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden."*

And therein lies the essence of our Spirit of Service – the human touch of a friendly smile. (We actually have a poster about the virtue and importance of smiling. If you would like an e-copy of our poster, feel free to contact our General Manager, Ed Croker at - gmlapinesvdp@gmail.com).

The Reciprocity Process – One Way to Enhance the Dynamics of Charity

In addition to our reflections and prayers on being of service to others, there is one very specific technique that is a win-win. The best way to attenuate the negative feelings of being on the receiving end of charity is to ask the recipient of our charity to "Pass It On" – to join us in our efforts of helping others. Everyone receiving charity should be invited to share in the process of helping others, basically, help us help others. For example, "Will



you please give this **15% discount coupon**, for our St. Vincent de Paul store, to someone you know who could use it? Thanks." The very act of inviting someone else to "give" a gift and be in the charity-giving role for a brief moment can be an extremely powerful source of good. (It doesn't matter if the person uses the discount pass for themselves or friends as it has, nevertheless, a positive effect.)

"Lucky Day Discounts" – A Way to Make Our Store a Great Place to Be

If you want to "make a person's day," simply invent a **Lucky Day Discount** accompanied by a smile – the most powerful of our positive expressive emotions. Here's how it works: select a customer who is alone at the check-out register and pretend that you are looking at something on the cash-register and say something like this: "Wait a minute." Look at your watch or a nearby clock and say "Wow - this is your lucky day – you are the 15th person checking out today and every Tuesday we give a \$10 discount to the 15th person buying something. Congratulations! You are today's Lucky Shopper! You get a \$10 discount." Use your imagination – put your heart and soul into this process as it pays emotional dividends. You can make up any story you want as long as you give the person a discount accompanied by a smile.



You can do this type of Lucky Day surprise for any reason – just be sure to make it look real and always smile when you do it. Oh – and be certain to run this by your manager and make sure you don’t do it too many times.

Our Success – Our Staff

We can attribute our success to our staff – both volunteers and paid employees, because they are the ones who meet our neighbors face-to-face every day. They are the ones who make it all happen. And they are the ones who share the love so necessary to evidence the value of human dignity and worth.

Our Management Team

Our management team consists of four professional officers: Ed, our General Manager, Heather, Manager of our retail store, Ethel, Manager of our social services programs, and Shirley our professional bookkeeper and ex-officio Treasurer to the Board of Directors.

With a wealth of managerial experience and a wife who has been involved in the operations of our La Pine St. Vincent de Paul for many years, Ed functions as the Chief Executive Officer, the Chief Operations Officer, and as Director of Transportation coordinating our St. Vincent’s trucking and donations coordination issues. His wealth of professional management skills and his omnibus abilities specific to a Catholic Charity render his services exemplary and comprehensive.

Our Retail Store

We are not simply a retail store. Ask Heather, our Store Manager. We are a Catholic charity, all-purpose retail store with a spiritual foundation that serves as a catalyst for all our activities. Seeing our mission through the lens of charity, we aim to transform every visitor’s experience into a spiritual blessing. Our goal is to let every patron know they are loved and appreciated.

Although our St. Vincent’s Retail Store has a quasi-boutique ambiance, it sells all sorts of items always at bargain prices. The aesthetic beauty of our store appears reflects luxury, fashion, and entertainment. It is, without doubt, an exemplary source of pride in retail marketing and a testament to the respect for our patrons.

It is obvious that our staff takes great pride in making it the friendliest store in La Pine – and it is. Even our restrooms are designer icons with a country-western thematic aura – since it is the little things that often make a difference. The funds generated by the St. Vincent de Paul thrift store are used for Social Services outreach. Thus, we spend a great deal of time making our store the “Go-To-Place” for quality items.

We believe that visiting our St. Vincent de Paul Store is not by accident! We would never suggest that a visit to a St. Vincent de Paul store is like entering a land of enchantment...or like visiting The Vatican; however, perhaps we should... after all... our staff is on a Mission from God; our store is filled with a menagerie of quality goods, and our profits help those in our local community who are in need.

Our store has 20 volunteers and 19 employees. On an annual basis, payroll is approximately \$270,000 – a significant contribution to the overall La Pine economy. Our annual store gross income is approximately \$470,000 with a net income of \$50,740. Our annual Grants and Donations Income are approximately \$43,000, and our volunteers save us approximately \$145,000 in annually payroll expenses.

Our Social Services Outreach

Our Social Services Manager, Ethel, goes by many names: “The Big E,” “The Commander,” “El Jefe,” “The Persuader” and sometimes simply “Ethel” (always spoken with reverence and respect). She leads, directs, and coordinates any number of critical services with more than 15 different agencies and her own staff of 24 volunteers who provide for food, clothing, utility bills, propane, showers, household items, prescription vouchers, emergency shelters, and personal hygiene so much in demand. How busy is she? In the month of July alone, she oversaw the provision of services to 1,027 individuals and families and the administration and distribution of 54,635 pounds of food while providing clothing to 20 individuals.

Our Website – lapinesvdp.org

Our user-friendly website provides a plethora of additional insights and images that will reinforce everything we mentioned above. In addition, we have a link to Amazon Smiles that is unique to us. By clicking on an item in our list of “Most Needed Items,” the Amazon website will take over. Here, a donor can place an order that will be automatically delivered to our Social Services office in La Pine. So, anyone can help with one click on the Amazon website! Our website also lists all the community agencies with whom we coordinate our efforts to serve those in need.

Volunteers Needed

We always need volunteers. Working at a St. Vincent de Paul Store is a “Spiritual Win-Win.” People who are involved in a charity such as the St. Vincent de Paul society are happy people. They take to heart Aesop’s adage “No Act of Kindness, however small, Is Ever Wasted!” Why? Because it is always rewarding to give to others. Acts of kindness are always innately fulfilling.

*Top: Mitch Parker, Bishop Cary,
and Fr. Jose Mudakodiyil, St.
Francis of Assisi, Bend*

*Middle: Ray Kujawski and
Bishop Cary, Holy Trinity,
Sunriver*

*Bottom: Frank De Luca and
Bishop Cary, Holy Redeemer,
LaPine*



Bishop Cary Installs New Acolytes in Bend and La Pine

Saturday, July 2nd, Bishop Cary instituted Mitch Parker as a new acolyte at St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church in Bend. "This ministry gives me an excellent way to deepen my faith," said Mitch, "and to serve the Lord who has been so good to me."

On Sunday July 3rd, Bishop Cary blessed Holy Redeemer in La Pine with two new Acolytes. Ray Kujawski was installed an Acolyte at the 8:00 a.m. Mass at Holy Trinity Church, Sunriver and Frank De Luca was installed an Acolyte at the 10:00 a.m. Mass at Holy Redeemer Church, La Pine.

May God continue to bless each for their generosity and faith and inspire many more to serve Him with gladness!

Bishop Cary's Schedule

September 24

5:00 p.m. Mass in Juntura (MST)

6:00 p.m. Mass in Drewsey (MST)

September 25

10:00 a.m. Mass, Burns

2:00 p.m. Mass, Crane

