



SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL
VINCENT'S LEGACY FURNITURE OUTREACH CONFERENCE
"Helping to Turn Our Neighbor's House into a Home"

HISTORY:

In 2010, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul (SVdP)/St. Rose Conference in Belmar began a furniture and household goods outreach ministry providing, delivering, and setting up – for free – quality donated necessities to families in need who lived in the geographical area of this conference.

Due to the abundance of donations received, in 2011 this furniture ministry reached out to other SVdP conferences surrounding the Belmar area about the availability of quality donated furniture and home goods for families in need within their own conference boundaries, and the number of families served increased exponentially.

By 2016, it became too large an endeavor for one conference and small band of volunteers to handle with pickups of donated goods and deliveries to families occurring throughout Monmouth and Ocean Counties. The SVdP Trenton Diocesan Council was approached and agreed to take on this project in order to (1) obtain a larger warehouse space and thus be able to serve more families, and (2) recruit volunteers for this furniture ministry throughout the two counties through the relationship with the SVdP conferences contained therein. Vincent's Legacy became the official title of this Special Works Project of the SVdP Trenton Diocesan Council.

Since the Council does not have a revenue stream outside of the monies it receives from conferences' solidarity dues, grant awards, individual donations, and/or limited fundraisers, it was decided in April, 2020, that the Council could no longer financially support the efforts of this project by assuming the \$2,400/month rental payment.

The core team members of Vincent's Legacy voted not to close up shop and instead, to pursue organizing this furniture ministry as a stand-alone SVdP Special Works Conference. Although this was truly a leap of faith in making this decision at that time, it turns out that establishing the furniture ministry as a conference was a key financial solution needed to keep this vital ministry operating at its current level. "One of the activities most cherished by the Society is conferences helping others in need. This direct link between two conferences, consisting of sharing prayer, a profound friendship, and material resources is called "twinning." Twinning promotes spirituality, deep friendship, solidarity, and mutual help. Funds and other material resources can be provided to enable a conference to help local families."¹

¹Excerpt from Part I: Rule of the International Confederation of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, Section 4.1 Twinning, <https://www.svdpusa.org/members/documents/council-conference>

DESCRIPTION OF MINISTRY:

The newly commissioned Society of St. Vincent de Paul (SVdP) Vincent's Legacy Furniture Outreach Conference has over 150 volunteers (from high school students through retired executives) that assist with everything from visiting homes of potential furniture/household donations to assess whether or not it meets our criteria (our motto: we do not put anything into the home of a family in need that we wouldn't put into our own homes), picking up the accepted donated items and loading them into the warehouse – to logging the donated furniture into our database system – to sorting donated household goods such as kitchenware, linens, small appliances, cleaning and personal hygiene products (everything a person needs on a daily basis to function at the basic level) – to cleaning furniture before it leaves the warehouse for the new family – to loading, hauling, and then setting up the rooms w/the contents from the truck, all pre-selected based on first walking with the family member throughout their home and soliciting their preferences on items in stock. All this provided at no cost to the family in need.

In addition to the benefits of assisting families in need, Vincent's Legacy is doing its small part to help save Mother Earth by keeping these donated items out of New Jersey's landfills.

FUNDING OF ORGANIZATION:

Since June, 2020, twinning with other conferences and asking that a financial donation be considered from homeowners requesting their donations be picked up have become a steady cash flow, which we feel can be maintained as we move forward as a conference.

- We have sent a quarterly status report to all conferences that were solicited to twin with us thus far, whether they were able to contribute or not. Our goal is to keep the information about the furniture ministry flowing directly to the conferences to allay any fears of how their donation is being managed by Vincent's Legacy.
- The financial donations received from homeowner's whose goods we have picked up has resulted in homeowner's donating anywhere between \$50 to \$1,000 per visit. Based on our research on what organizations such as 1-800-GOT-JUNK charge to pick up, the donation amounts received are far below what for-profit organizations charge. More importantly, we find those who reach out to Vincent's Legacy for their furniture/home goods donations do so because of our affiliation with the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, an organization well respected in local communities.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT & EXPECTED OUTCOME:

Vincent's Legacy is a Special Works Conference and relies heavily on the collaboration efforts of parish-based conferences throughout the Diocese of Trenton, presently primarily in the Monmouth and Ocean Counties with the hope of expanding into Burlington and Mercer Counties during our next decade of service. After SVdP home visitors from a parish-based conference meets with the family in need, and the conference has approved to move forward with helping the family following strict guidelines established at the National level of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, it is the home visitor that reaches out to Vincent's Legacy.

This is where the "magic" begins to help transform the life of a struggling family. Psychologists suggest that for many people, home is part of their self-definition. We believe ensuring our neighbors have functioning, comfortable homes will provide them with a sense of dignity and enable them to focus on

other more important tasks leading to self-sufficiency (such as health, employment, and education), especially during a time of such turbulence throughout the world.

RESULTS TO DATE:

Now in its 11th year, Vincent's Legacy can boast the following:

- 1,200+ Families Members Served
- \$700,000+ Worth of Quality Donated Furniture and Household Goods Provided
- \$400,000+ in Value of Volunteer Giveback to Local Community

IMMEDIATE CONCERN:

Ability to respond to the anticipated uptick in requests – similar to those that Vincent's Legacy experienced 6-9 months following Superstorm Sandy – for gently used furniture and household goods to those who are struggling financially due to COVID-19 related job losses and forced evictions. According to NJ.com², 1.86 million New Jersey residents filed unemployment claims from March, 2020, through mid-December, 2020. Furthermore, more than 317,000 New Jersey households are in arrears on rent payments, according to a U.S. Census Bureau survey over a two-week period covering late November to early December³. Sadly, as people are forced from their homes, they oftentimes lose their home furnishings because they cannot afford rental units to store their belongings. As conferences throughout the diocese work to help people secure new housing arrangements, we anticipate increased requests for furnishings to replace what was lost.

HOW YOU CAN HELP:

We need volunteers to join the ranks of this vital furniture ministry to assist in all facets of its successful operation – it is not just about moving furniture!

Just as important, we seek donations to help us cover our expenses: \$2,400/month rent and operation of a donated, used box truck. Your donation of:

- \$50 provides bathroom linens, shower curtain, personal hygiene products, and cleaning supplies
- \$75 will put gas in the truck for a week's worth of pickups and/or deliveries
- \$100 helps stock a kitchen with everything from silverware to small appliances
- \$150 supplies one mattress and box spring set, bedframe, pillow, linens, and one dresser
- \$250 can fill a living room with a couch, chair or loveseat, coffee/end tables, TV and TV stand

CONTACT US:

- Visit our website: <https://vincentslegacy.wixsite.com/furniture>
- Email: vincentslegacyfurniture@gmail.com
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- Telephone: 609-557-7837

² <https://www.nj.com/business/2020/12/nj-is-one-step-away-from-extending-unemployment-benefits-through-february-2021.html>

³ <https://www.northjersey.com/story/news/2020/12/23/federal-eviction-moratorium-ends-soon-what-protections-does-nj-have/3989536001/>