



Grace Notes

HELPING OUR NEIGHBORS IN NEED



Always moving forward

Seton House: a place to heal, learn and restore

Debra called Seton House home for four years. The program offered a chance to regroup after life challenges, to learn new skills and to plan for her future.

After a difficult childhood and falling into addiction, Debra needed stability and support. For many years she and her three daughters had been Society of St. Vincent de Paul — Madison clients, utilizing the Food Pantry and clothing vouchers. When mental-health challenges forced Debra to the brink of homelessness, Seton House was there to take her in.

“I loved the Seton House. I kept it clean, took care of my home and learned a lot. It was wonderful. I got clothing vouchers and since Seton House supplied so much it gave me time to figure out my life. I am so very grateful for food and housing, clothing, staff, and the good conversation,” Debra said.

As a program participant, Debra met with

Priscilla Lentini, Seton House Director, for weekly guidance on how to pay bills and become fiscally responsible. During her stay, Debra continued with counseling at Journey Mental Health, while Seton House provided a consistent home base, a spot to unwind and breathe.

“It’s about making small changes one day at a time and fighting every day,” Debra said **“It’s time to change. Change your thinking, change your behavior, change your attitude. Be honest with yourself. It’s okay to ask for help.”**

Following in her mother’s footsteps, Debra is a caregiver with a heart for service. She would regularly bring food to people struggling with homelessness in the neighborhood. Living close to Port St. Vincent, she visited the men living there, sharing in conversation and a meal from time to time.

Debra battles every day to overcome addiction and mental-health challenges. She continues to care for others in her new apartment building and appreciates her landlords taking her under their wing to provide continued encouragement.

Thanks to Seton House, Debra is moving forward, making positive progress each day on her path to healing and restoration. “Thank you, St. Vincent de Paul. Seton House helped me recover,” Debra said.

Since 1989, Seton House has been a home to dozens of women and mothers with minor children. Located across four houses in the Williamson- Marquette neighborhood the program has helped residents transition to permanent housing and learn solid life skills.

See Page 2 for our latest update on Seton House and new programming to come in 2022.



Change and growth in 2022

Over the past 30 years, donors have supported success for dozens of Seton House residents: young mothers, women finding permanent housing, residents gaining full-time employment. **Now, Seton House is beginning a transition to a successor St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Program. Changing community needs and aging housing stock precipitated re-evaluation, then renewal.** Current Seton House residents will complete their stays over the next year or so.

Simultaneously, we will launch the new Seton Program to address the wider challenges of poverty faced by single custodial parents with minor children. Your support of the new Seton Program can help families find or avoid losing stable housing. This program also plans to add services to meet the challenges that can trap families in poverty. Transportation assistance, support for quality childcare and mental healthcare access are all prospects.

Alongside the Seton Program, we anticipate the launch of two companion efforts to support Seton clients and other neighbors in need: Mentoring and Microlending. Under development, a mentoring program will provide training for Society of St. Vincent de Paul members and other volunteers to accompany individuals to provide longer-term tangible personal support tailored to each individual's needs. Also in planning, a microlending program will partner with local lenders to offer small low- or no-interest loans (likely \$2,000 or less) to individuals to help them avoid predatory loans from payday or auto-title lenders. Predatory lending is a key driver of housing loss that we can mitigate with your help.



Your support has made a difference in so many lives, will you consider helping us continue to support the dreams of hundreds more? Thank you!



"Give however you can do it," Sue advises. "Food, time, money, yourself. You'll find that when you give, you have more, and you can then give more. It's a blessing that returns to you."
Sue, Conference President and St. Vincent de Paul donor

Giving: A blessing that returns

Sue McMahon understands life challenges. Growing up in a family that struggled with childhood disabilities, medical bills and early death, she learned that sometimes it takes a neighbor to help and sometimes it takes the whole village. **Neighbors helped make up the family's financial gaps, sometimes with food or time or even money.**

As an adult, McMahon gravitated toward the teaching of her Catholic faith to care for the widows, orphans and strangers. She helped found the St. Vincent de Paul conference member group at St. Maria Goretti Catholic Church and served two terms as its president. She also volunteered in the Society's Charitable Pharmacy.

Now a member of St. Dennis Parish, Sue serves as conference president and is an active home visitor. "Home visits are where people share their story and we have the chance to help, and not just with money or material things," Sue explained. "Listening to their stories lessens their pain because now it's shared."

Sue and her husband, Joe, are also Sustaining Samaritans, monthly donors to St. Vincent de Paul. "Giving has become a way of life for us," she said. "We are working toward sacrificial giving from the top of our paycheck, not the leftovers. I have so many things to be thankful for. It amplifies my gratitude to give. We find we can always do a little more."

Port St. Vincent de Paul provides a supportive environment for pursuing life's next steps

This winter Greg is celebrating being at home. As a Port St. Vincent de Paul (The Port) resident, Greg enjoys living in community and appreciates the quality of care he has received in the program. "It's good socially, and it's good to be around other people," Greg said.

Our men's housing program, regularly at capacity, was home to 45 men this year. As the longest-serving men's housing program in Madison, The Port supports men through transitional and emergency housing, providing meals, shelter and case management.

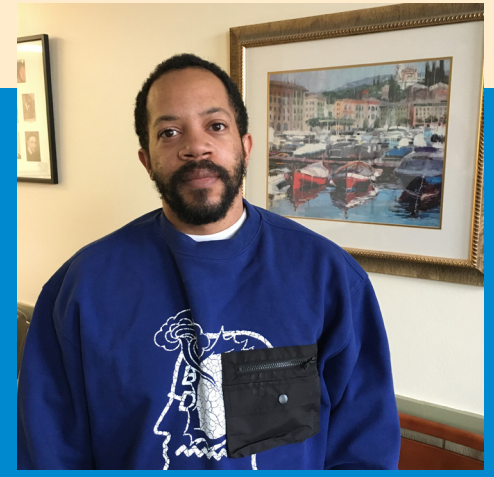
Greg was referred to the program by a case manager at Journey Mental Health. He frequents the libraries in town, visiting the two closest to The Port. He is an avid biker, traveling routes east and west of his home at The Port.

Like Greg, many residents find The Port through social-service agency case managers. For each resident, finding and learning to maintain permanent housing is a key goal. Peter Lewandowski, Port Director, meets with men individually to talk about their needs and to make a solid plan to achieve their goals. Staff members work with residents to pinpoint and overcome barriers in finding housing, obtaining a job or navigating their next steps in life.

"Port St. Vincent de Paul provides residents with the opportunity in a safe and caring environment to get the help they need to find stability and achieve a quality of life," Peter said.

Living in community is what initially drew Greg to the program. Staff maintain a high level of stability, ensuring the home and program offer a safe and encouraging environment. "All of the staff do a great job," said Greg "The Port is a great place to be. Oh, and the food is good!"

Will you consider supporting men at Port St. Vincent and their future?



Our corporate sponsors are truly amazing!

In November, **Portillo's** chose us as the charitable partner for their Sneak Peek opening days! We met with new donors, shared about our programs and ate hot dogs! **Aprilaire** continues their wonderful partnership with us and provided a generous donation for Our Giving Tuesday, as well as two air purifiers for our Charitable Pharmacy! **Does your employer match your charitable giving, or will your business become a corporate sponsor?**



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Thank you for your continued support of our programs providing food, medicine, housing, clothing, household goods and more to our neighbors in need across Dane County!

As 2022 brings a new start, **will you consider making a New Year's resolution to financially support St. Vincent de Paul — Madison?** Choose one of many ways to give!

FreeWill: As a gift of thanks for your support, we have partnered with FreeWill. Start your legacy planning online today! *(Information on FreeWill's website is intended as general guidance and does not constitute legal advice for any specific individual. Please consult your attorney for legal advice.)*



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