

Lent 2023

Hope in Action

Your compassion to help neighbors in need

You give
them health
and security



Helping Our Neighbors In Need
Society of St. Vincent de Paul — Madison

Julie's Journal



Dearest friends,
Lent is upon us. For Catholics and many other Christian denominations, Lent is a time for self-examination. Am I living up to the purpose to which I have been called. Are you? Whatever our faith beliefs, most of us want to believe we are on this earth for a purpose. And most of us want to make the world a better place for ourselves and others. **Through your generosity, you have shown that is the world you want.**

In the Christian tradition, Lent is a time to use the spiritual practices of prayer, fasting and almsgiving to grow in holiness. These practices, followed intentionally, should also grow our capacity to love one another. Lately, I've been reflecting on fasting.

Isaiah 6-8 tells us:
"Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter — when you see the naked, to clothe them, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood? Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the Lord will be your rear guard."

It occurs to me that fasting is largely the privilege of those with means. You can't fast from what you don't

have. I'm reminded of a prayer that my mother-in-law taught our children when they were very young.

Thank you Lord for enough and some to share.

The concept of "enough" seems contradictory to our culture. Rather, accumulation and materialism reign supreme. **But if we are to think about justice for our neighbors in need, we must grapple with what is enough.** Intentional fasting helps us recall the difference between wants and needs. It softens our hearts towards those who can only choose between need and need without the option to choose a want.

This Lent, whether or not you are a person of faith:

- Will you join me in fasting?
- Will you spend time contemplating the concept of enough?
- Will you share with those in need?

I'd love to hear about your experience with fasting and how - or if - you grew in goodness through it. Please stay in touch.

You remain in my prayers of gratitude,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Julie".

Julie Bennett
CEO & Executive Director

Thank you for...

Recycling the Warmth!

Thank you for your contributions and generosity during the 31st annual Recycle the Warmth Blanket Drive! **In total, 3,800+ blankets, bedding and sheet sets were collected.** All of the items will be distributed to families in need throughout the year. *A special thanks to all of our conference members, conference churches and thrift stores for hosting the drive!*



A global perspective inspires future giving

Growing up, Nicholas moved often: Canada, Montana, Portugal, Japan. The son of an Air Force pilot, he went into military service himself after high school and settled down in Georgia later in life to raise his daughter. Through childhood, he grew to love the beach, the mountains and winter. But, it wasn't until a recent trip that he decided to change his life.

"I was planning a trip and had been wanting to make a will for several years," Nicholas said. "I knew I needed to have something ready and available, especially because I have kids."

Wanting to know where his assets were going after death and feeling comfortable in his current financial state, he decided to finally write his will. He recalls looking at almost a dozen will-writing services online. The one he finally settled on was Freewill.

Freewill is a no-cost online estate planning tool that simplifies the creation of a will or trust. They partner with charities such as St. Vincent de Paul to encourage more people to document their wishes for those they love and the causes that are meaningful to them.

"I wanted something that was easy to find and go through; was simple and legit," Nicholas said. "It was a very simple process. It was self-explanatory with easy steps to go through. I completed the will myself, printed the paperwork and got it notarized. That was it."

Life experiences move him to care

Nicholas credits his time abroad and parent's guidance for his philanthropic outlook and passion for giving back.

"When I was in the military, we were stationed in Haiti. It's split into the tourist side and the local side where most people live in poverty. Guerillas were stationed in the mountains to keep local people away from the resorts. When you see things like that, you're reminded how lucky you are. If you don't look, you forget how lucky you really are," Nicholas said.

Since he's passionate about helping people when they need it, especially with basic life essentials: food, clothing, clean water, Nicholas included a bequest to St. Vincent de Paul — Madison in his will. Another charity close to his heart provides plumbing and clean water for families living in remote Guatemala.

"You must look at immediate needs first," Nicholas said. "A lot of people are living month to month and need help. It's so important that people have a place they can go for support and help; nobody likes to ask for charity. If you can get people the help they need without complications, that's the way it should be."

No matter what you have to offer, sometimes the smallest act of kindness can have a big impact, Nicholas affirmed.

"Don't assume someone else will step in to help," Nicholas continued. "Take the extra effort. Do something extra for somebody. If everybody did something one time for someone else, look how much help that would be around the world!"

Taking care of what's important

Nicholas first heard about the Society of St. Vincent de Paul from his church.

There were several active service programs at his church and one day a representative from the local St. Vincent de Paul Thrift Store spoke to the congregation. Nicholas recalls spending weekends shopping and helping sort goods at the store; always looking for a way to help. Since that initial encounter, he's always been involved in some capacity with the organization and a proud supporter.

"I didn't know that when you make a will, you have options to donate," Nicholas added. "Until I did my own will, I had no idea. Freewill gave me a few options of places to donate, but it was an easy decision."

"I know I'll leave enough money for my kids to be okay," Nicholas continued. "Since I was in the military my funeral will be covered. I shouldn't have debt when I die, so why not donate it? It was very simple and easy to do."

Learn more about Freewill at <https://tinyurl.com/svdpmadisonfreewill>. Or, contact Eric Fleming: (608) 442-7220 x34 or efleming@svdpmadison.org.



Nicholas in Mexico.

A lifeline when there are no other options

Have you ever been in a stressful time full of things beyond your control?

For Mr. and Mrs. Thao* that stressful time occurred when they were both admitted to the hospital. Neither had health insurance. They were worried. Worried about what was wrong with each of them and what it would mean - What would it cost? Where would they go? Who could help them?

Once diagnosed, they received treatment plans and prescriptions for multiple medications. Yet the costs for a reduced rate prescription program was financially beyond their means.

A hand outstretched to help

At a follow-up appointment, a glimmer of hope appeared. Their nurse recommended the St. Vincent de Paul Charitable Pharmacy.

The Thaos now make monthly visits to the pharmacy to pick up their prescriptions - at no cost to them. They also receive support and encouragement from pharmacy staff and volunteers.

In its ten years of operation the St. Vincent de Paul Charitable Pharmacy staff have filled over 50,000 prescriptions for more than 1,500 uninsured adult patients.

Mr. and Mrs. Thao live healthier lives because of your care and commitment to our neighbors in need. Without you,

each of these individuals would suffer from untreated effects of heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, and mental health conditions, and be susceptible to the flu and COVID-19 variants.

The pharmacy is often the last lifeline for patients who have nowhere else to turn. Many patients are initially referred from hospitals, emergency departments, and local clinics.

The importance of good communication

Even as the couple started on a stable regime, there was one more hurdle to overcome.

Both Mr. and Mrs. Thao are native Hmong speakers with limited English. Thanks to Ricky, a St. Vincent de Paul Charitable Pharmacy volunteer fluent in the Hmong language, the couple can fully understand how to properly manage their conditions and medications.

Hmong is the third most common language spoken in Wisconsin. It's primarily an oral language with a relatively short written history. For older Hmong adults who cannot read the language or speak English fluently, navigating life, including a detailed pharmacy visit can be difficult.

During each pharmacy visit, the couple sit down with Managing Pharmacist, Yolanda Tolson-Eveans, RPh, where she provides a pill organizer, schedule and calendar. The calendar shows images of the pills they'll receive so they know what to expect (*at right*). Ricky is on hand to translate and explain her instructions.

"Ever since we've been here it's been so helpful to have a schedule and calendar," Mrs. Thao affirms. "We're very thankful to the donors and everybody. Even as cold as it gets, the pharmacy staff is helping (outside for the curbside delivery). We're grateful for the pharmacy and volunteers."



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"We're grateful for the
pharmacy and volunteers."
- Mrs. Thao

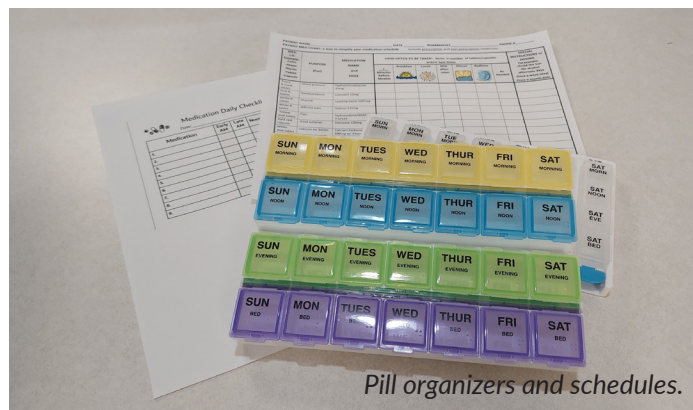
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Recalling their first meeting, Ricky immediately noticed Mr. Thao's face relax when they were introduced.

"Bridging the gap of understanding and ensuring access to care is so important," Ricky commented. "When you have someone that is of your culture and community, you have trust in the healthcare system. Trust in the pharmacists and trust in the pharmacy."

Today, the world is a little brighter because of your dedication. Today, the Thaos and hundreds of neighbors like them can thrive.

**Using last names only to protect the neighbors' privacy.
Photos are representational.*



Pill organizers and schedules.



How you can help pharmacy patients right now

In December 2022, Congress passed the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023. There are several health-related policies in the document. One of the most notable for the pharmacy relates to changes in Medicare coverage. During the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency, states were "prohibited from terminating or reducing benefits for most Medicaid enrollees." During this time, Medicaid enrollment increased by nearly 30%. **This "continuous coverage" will end this month, March 2023.** States have three months to plan for a return to regular eligibility and enrollment but experts expect it could take up to a year for people to receive renewed coverage.

For neighbors relying on prescription medicine everyday, doing without them puts them at risk for declining health, job loss, and expensive emergency department visits. **As patients are dropped from Medicaid coverage, it is anticipated that neighbors in need of free medication will drastically increase.** To serve more patients, the pharmacy will expand operating hours. Additional hours will also allow UW-Madison School of Pharmacy students to provide patient care and earn valuable practical experience.

Here are three ways to help:

- **Share a gift.** Give a one-time gift or become a monthly Sustaining Samaritan pharmacy donor. See <https://svdpmadison.org/why-be-a-sustaining-samaritan/>. Even with donations and discounts, the average cost of each prescription is over \$90.
- **Share why you care about improving healthcare access.** Spread the word about the St. Vincent de Paul Charitable Pharmacy. We often hear that people don't know about our service. The more we can get our word out, the more people we can help.
- **Share your time.** Do you have a free afternoon each week? There is no prior healthcare experience needed to volunteer.

Sources: Princeton University, *Unwinding Provisions in the 2023 Consolidated Appropriations Act*
Georgetown University Health Policy Institute, *Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023: Medicaid and CHIP Provisions Explained*



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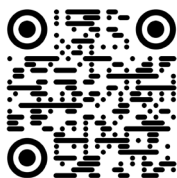
Our mission

We are a Catholic lay organization in which members join together in friendship to grow spiritually by providing person-to-person services to our neighbors in need.

Your crucial support

Your compassion and generosity changes the lives of thousands of people each year in Dane County. Donate online now by scanning the below QR code or call (608) 442-7200 x34.

Contact Eric Fleming at efleming@svdpmadison.org or (608) 442-7200 x34 to leave a bequest in your will or estate to care for future needs of our community.



Save the Date



Mark your calendar for the Society of St. Vincent de Paul — Madison's 8th Annual Fundraising Breakfast for our neighbors in need. *Back live and in-person!*

With You ... Lives Change.

Wednesday, May 24, 2023

7:30 am– 8:30 am

Alliant Energy Center, Madison

With you ... we can meet our goal of raising \$200,000 to feed the hungry, care for the sick, give dignity and lend comfort to our neighbors in need. Registration is complimentary and will open on April 12th.

Multitiered sponsorships are available!

For information, contact Eric Fleming at (608) 442-7220 x34 or efleming@svdpmadison.org.
Or, visit <https://svdpmadison.org/care-cafe/>.

Thank you to our current sponsors!



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