

The Vincentimes

Volume 5, Issue 4

Summer 2017

Hamilton Dismas Program

Our Hamilton Dismas program is designed to work with former inmates or we like to call them, returning citizens as they face the many day to day challenges in their efforts to return to a normal life-style. This program includes several elements.

Firstly, we provide small care packages from our thrift store to anyone leaving prison as a sign of our love and desire to provide a welcoming sign as they re-enter society. These packages will contain some very essential needs that also show the person that we care about them.

Secondly, we are setting up teams of two members who will work with one returning citizen as they begin their re-entry period. This relationship will be on-going and be one of listening and helping. The concept of two Vincentians working with one former inmate is certainly one we are familiar with through our home visitation program. The only difference is that the Dismas program is an on-going relationship where we desire to continue to see the recipient regularly rather than hoping our help is not required again.

Finally, we also see the importance of a larger communal setting where our members and several former inmates can meet and exchange comments and share concerns. One such meeting was held in Hamilton on March 27th which included a meal and discussion period. These larger sessions also enable all participants to meet one another while helping to dispel any apprehensions they may have about the program. There are also other ways members can help; one is to simply pray for both prisoners and victims of crime.

We are also collaborating with the St. Leonard's Society in Hamilton which operates a halfway home for men who have recently been released from prison. There would appear to be a great opportunity to

work together in our efforts to address the many and complex issues related to our criminal justice system and restorative justice.

I would encourage any Vincentians that are near a prison or remand centre to consider undertaking a similar program. We can provide further details and resources.

*Jim Paddon
St. Dismas Chair*



“Listen carefully to this: Each of us is capable of doing the same thing that that man or that woman in prison did,” [Pope] Francis said in 2014. “All of us have the capacity to sin and to do the same, to make mistakes in life. They are no worse than you and me!”

*Photo and quote taken from
<http://urbanchristiannews.com/2015/09/pope-francis-and-the-sinners-in-americas-prisons/>*

Social Justice and Systemic Change

Our SSVP work in the Social Justice area is very important; however sometimes our use of words in this area can be confusing. It is important that we understand these terms and the many ways that we can help our neighbours in need.

Social Justice is the Justice we seek in society as Vincentians for those we serve and is summarized best in the "[Ten Foundation Principles in the Social Teachings of the Church](#)". **Systemic Change** is the process we use to make changes to the various things (systems) around us and those in poverty to improve social justice for those we serve. Advocate (used as a verb) is what we do to help or support those in poverty to support their cause. An advocate (used as a noun) is someone who helps support a person's cause. **Advocacy** is the act or process of supporting a cause or proposal.

In 1833 Frederick Ozanam **advocated** for a just society where the fair distribution of wealth, opportunities, and privileges would promote the wellbeing of all people. He promoted "Charity" by helping those in need with food, shelter, and clothing and he also challenged his team to "seek out the **injustices** and to address them". Today we have the same two basic missions in our SSVP organization; to provide the immediate needs (Charity) and to address the Social Injustices. In addressing these injustices we go beyond Charity and look for the barriers that are keeping people in poverty. To remove these barriers we look for ways to "change the system" so as to remove the barrier(s). These systems may be **personal systems** affecting individuals on a daily basis, **common/community systems** affecting many in our community, or systems that are under the con-

trol of our many **Institutions**. Systemic Change is the term we use for seeking out the root causes of these injustices or barriers, formulating solutions, and bringing about change that removes the barriers for those living in poverty. We look for change on three levels; 1) the **individuals** we serve, 2) the **community** we serve, and 3) the **Institutions** that serve us all.

1) At the Individual level we engage those we serve through home visits and dialogue trying to understand the barriers they encounter. We try to understand the root causes of the barriers so that we can work with them to bring about meaningful change. By being aware of their needs and the many resources available in our communities we can often introduce them directly to new resources, or ways they can help themselves remove the barriers. This work requires us as Vincentians to become familiar with the [many resources and the many other social help groups that are available in our communities](#). This quite often requires us to **advocate** on their behalf with various organizations or institutions. An example would be working with an individual to help get training or an education leading to a better job. It may be working with the individual to understand the barriers (looking for root causes) associated with getting the training. There may be more barriers than just money. There may be barriers in simply navigating the various systems to get help. Removing the barriers and finding a way out of poverty leading to a decent job and living is a major change for this person.

2) At the Community level we address common issues that exist creating barriers for those living in the community. We look for solutions in

several ways; by collaborating with other groups such as church groups, community groups, etc. or by coming up with new solutions or projects to make change. Some examples of [projects](#) carried out and sponsored by our ONRC Systemic Change committee include our Ozanam Education Fund, the Vinnie's Wallet project, and the Seeds of Hope project. Again there are a lot of examples of community based Systemic Change projects (large and small) happening at our conferences. We encourage sharing these good news projects with other Vincentians. If on the other hand you would like to discuss getting help (financial or otherwise) from our Systemic Change committee in [starting a new project](#) please contact us.

3) As we address the issues that our friends in need are facing and look for ways to remove barriers we ask ourselves if there are ways that our institutions could change their systems to help remove the barriers. We may be doing things at the individual or community level that brings about change, but there may be ways for institutions to make policy changes to their systems that can help in more effective ways to remove the barriers. Bringing about Systemic Change at the Institutional level (Government or Governing Institutions) we refer to as **Advocacy** for change. Our ONRC [Advocacy / Voice of the Poor committee](#) provide a focal point for addressing these issues. They have been active on issues such as social housing lobbying institutions for more planning and support and lobbying for improvements to minimum wage and basic living wage rates.

Jere Hartnett
Chair Systemic Change Committee
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Two aspects to poverty

There are two elements to poverty: how much income people receive and the inequality they experience. The concept of inequality refers to the gap between what people in poverty have, and what the larger community has to live on. The bigger the gap, the greater the pain and social exclusion of being a “have not”.

The Low-Income Measure (LIM) is the most accepted method of determining whether a person lives in poverty. The LIM takes 50% of the median income of the community and then calculates the poverty rate for various sizes of households using an established formula. People whose income is less than 50% of the median income are considered to live in poverty and the farther that they are from the low-income measure, the more severe the poverty.

All incomes listed below, include applicable Child and Family Benefits disbursed by the federal government to lower income Ontarians: Canadian Child Benefit (CCB), GST rebate, Ontario Trillium Benefit

(OTB) and Working Income Tax Benefit (WITB).

From the table of incomes of various groups, we can see that single people and couples without children are with incomes that are half or less of the poverty line and this is an issue that we need to address immediately.

of 6 and \$5400 for children between the ages of 6 and 17 annually, to the families in greatest need. It brings families closer to the poverty line.

Twenty per cent of youth in Canada live in poverty and social exclusion is a constant and painful experience for them. They see the

opportunities for sports, high speed internet, and cultural experiences that their peers have, which they do not, losing out not only in the ability to be part of the youth culture but also the opportunity to develop essential skills that they need to succeed. If we do not make it a priority to help disadvantaged youth to succeed, the third generation of poverty will become the fourth generation and society will have failed another generation.

~ Corry Wink,
Social Justice Committee
Chair



Image taken from : www.salvationarmychilliwack.ca

The Canada Child Benefit (CCB) is designed to alleviate poverty for children. This program provides \$6400 for children under the age

Table of monthly incomes in 2017 compared to low-income measures 2015

Household size	Ontario Works	ODSP	Minimum Wage	Low income measure
Single adult	\$839.33	\$1179.54	\$1840.33	\$1,744.00
1 parent, 1 child	\$1676.83	\$2255.90	\$2395.91	\$2,467.00
1 parent, 2 children	\$2413.15	\$3002.08	\$3079.16	\$3021.00
Couple	\$1286.65	\$1821.65	\$1840.33	\$2467.00
Couple, 1 child	\$1,885.91	\$2,488.91	\$2405.50	\$3,021.00
Couple, 2 children	\$2632.81	\$3248.81	\$3079.16	\$3,489.00

**SOCIETY OF
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Visit us on the web

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The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul

Mission:

The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul is a lay Catholic organization whose mission is: To live the Gospel message by serving Christ in the poor with love, respect, justice and joy.

Values:

The Mission of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul implies that as Vincentians, we:

See Christ in anyone who suffers;
Come together as a family;
Have personal contact with the poor;
Help in all possible ways.

Upcoming Events

May 26-27, 2017 — Sleep Out for Poverty, London.
Visit www.ssvp.on.ca for more information.

June 21-25, 2017 — National AGM in Quebec. Visit www.ssvp.ca for more information.

July 15, 2017 — Deadline for newsletter submissions
(please note: we cannot guarantee all submissions will make the next issue, but will do our best to include in

upcoming issues)

September 29-30, 2017 — ONRC Fall Meeting, hosted by St. Joseph, Bowmanville, Lakeshore Particular Council. Details tba.

Notice of Passings

We would like to recognize and remember the following Vincentians who have passed.
They blessed so many with their lives.

March 19, 2017: Sister Jean Smith,
Spiritual Advisor, St. Peter's, Peter-
borough

March 21, 2017: Denise Orton, Past
President, Peterborough Particular
Council

April 22, 2017: Earl Laframboise,
President, Sacred Heart Confer-
ence, LaSalle (Windsor-Essex)