

VINCENTIAN CONNECTION

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SOCIETY
OF
ST.
VINCENT
DE PAUL



FEED. CLOTHE.
HOUSE. HEAL.

THE VOLUNTEER RETURN

YOU GET EVEN MORE
THAN YOU GIVE

3 stories of service to
inspire your return



GOOD HABITS



In the early days of the pandemic, before vaccinations were available, most Catholic and Protestant churches discontinued in-person services to protect the health of their members. Sadly, though most churches reopened several months ago, and everyone has had the opportunity to be vaccinated, church attendance is still well behind pre-pandemic levels. Too many of us became comfortable trading the pew for the couch, and reprioritizing how we spend our time in a way that makes church attendance less important.

At St. Vincent de Paul we also had to limit personal contact by offering fewer volunteer opportunities during the crisis. And now unfortunately, at a time when volunteers are badly needed, we're struggling to recruit new volunteers and to reengage those who used to serve on a regular basis.

It's hard to build good habits, and much easier to slip into less desirable ones. Yet, we all know there's a price we pay when we abandon good habits, like regularly attending the dentist or changing the oil in our cars. Most public opinion polls reflect a growing level of discontent in our country. Certainly, much of it can be attributed to our political climate, and global crises like the Russian invasion of the Ukraine. But I would argue there is something more fundamental at the root of our discontent. When our faith shifts from being a communal response to God to some sort of nebulous personal expression of piety, and when we no longer prioritize serving others as an important part of our everyday lives, our sense of well-being suffers.

Fortunately, there are still those who recognize the importance of coming together in our brokenness to celebrate our Christian faith, seek forgiveness, and humbly and reverently receive the precious Eucharist, and who have also never fallen out of the habit of making the welfare of others a priority in their lives. **In the following pages you will meet volunteers from different walks of life who, by their love and service, make St. Vincent de Paul the very special place it is.**

If you, for any reason have fallen out of the habit of attending church, or having your life enriched by serving others, I would encourage you to recommit yourself to the good habits that served you so well in the past.

S Attwood

Steve Attwood, President, Phoenix Diocesan Council

VINCENTIAN CONNECTION

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The Society of St. Vincent de Paul is an international nonprofit organization dedicated to serving people in need and providing others with the opportunity to serve. SVdP has been assisting central and northern Arizona families since 1946 and has a network of more than 80 parish neighborhood pantries. SVdP offers services for the homeless, medical and dental care for the uninsured, charity dining rooms, transitional housing and homelessness prevention assistance.

Vincentian Connection magazine shares the stories of compassion, hope, healing and impact SVdP has in building a better community. The magazine has a circulation of 90,000.



ON THE COVER

Volunteer Debby Suárez, 16, helps a SVdP Dream Center student decorate a jar with self-affirmations, building creative skill and self-esteem all at once. For Debby, who aspires to teach one day, it's a powerful moment found while serving the community — a joy that SVdP hopes others will find while volunteering.

DEPARTMENTS

- 4 In brief
- 16 Profiles
- 19 Thousand thanks



FEATURES

6 United in service

Meet a few of the dedicated volunteers who have stepped up in a great time of need to serve their community on-site at SVdP. They share their stories and commitment with the hope others will return to volunteer too.



12 One year later

Get the field report from first-year medical students as SVdP marks one year of partnership between its Virginia G. Piper Medical Clinic and Creighton University. Thanks to the Virginia G. Piper Charitable Trust, the partnership vision has come to life.





When lives depend on you

A volunteer takes a moment to look out at the street at St. Vincent de Paul's Mesa Dining Room. It's a chance to rest before the next guest walks up looking for refreshment, but also a moment of reflection on the need and vast effort it takes to help people in vulnerable situations. Like so many instances during the pandemic, the day's distribution of

meals rested squarely on her shoulders. It can be heavy work, especially without additional helping hands. Still, she holds hope in her eyes, and rightfully so. Better days have come as on-site volunteer opportunities return. Will you help share the responsibility we have to our neighbors in need? stvincentdepaul.net/volunteer

Dream Center marks 10 years of changing kids' lives

A learning resource inside the Family Dining Room at St. Vincent de Paul, the Dream Center celebrated its 10th anniversary on Dec. 27. With a reading library, tutoring stations, computers and science projects, the Dream Center is designed to help kids achieve their dreams. Special thanks to Mike Parker and his family, NextPhase Enterprises & FoodStory Brands for their support throughout the years to make the Dream Center programs possible for children and families.

"I saw what St. Vincent de Paul does daily to help those who struggle to find a way out of poverty and help themselves," Mike said. "Kids throughout the United States are some of the most capable young people in the world. All they need is a spark and someone to help them believe that something is possible. The Dream Center is so kids can have one moment, one glimmer of hope to set them on the right path."



MLK Day sees steak dinners for dining room guests thanks to Jimmy Walker and chefs

Martin Luther King Jr. Day started bright and early at St. Vincent de Paul with high-profile chefs, including Marc Lupino, Vincent Guerithault, Mark Tarbell and Chris Bianco, firing up the grills to cook a massive steak dinner for hundreds of Phoenix Dining Room guests experiencing homelessness. The event was made possible by Celebrity Fight Night founder Jimmy Walker to celebrate the holiday and remember what would have been Muhammad Ali's 80th birthday. The Champ was no stranger to the dining room, where he frequently volunteered to give back to the community. SVdP's kitchen complimented the meal with potatoes, rolls and vegetables followed by cake and ice cream for all.



A Super Bowl to remember at PDR

Hundreds of men and women experiencing homelessness kicked back inside St. Vincent de Paul's Phoenix Dining Room on Feb. 13 to watch Super Bowl LVI in Los Angeles. Along with the millions of other folks watching the Super Bowl, were the hundreds of men and women experiencing homelessness who came inside for the evening to enjoy the game. Everyone enjoyed snacks and some fun football camaraderie! There to watch with them was SVdP CEO Steve Zabilski.

"It was great fun," Steve says, "and for one day, for a little while, there was no one homeless, no one was worried about their circumstances, and everyone was relaxing and just watching their team like the other 112 million people around the world."



Steve Zabilski celebrates 25 years of leading SVdP

On Jan. 6, CEO Steve Zabilski marked 25 years of serving as St. Vincent de Paul's executive leader. In his usual, humble way, Steve chose to celebrate the anniversary quietly despite staff wishing to gather in his honor. Steve first came to SVdP through a job listing, which — out of modesty — he jokes no other person must have answered. He previously worked as a Senior Vice President with Transamerica Insurance Group and as an Audit Manager with accounting firm KPMG Peat Marwick.

"I know there are years of growth ahead that I feel blessed to witness," Steve says. "I hope to be a part of the St. Vincent de Paul family for as long as they'll have me."



Renewing our **SERVANT HEART**

BE INSPIRED BY THREE STORIES
OF RETURNING VOLUNTEERS.
WON'T YOU JOIN THEM?

By Sarah Farrell and Marisol Saldivar

For so many, the first part of St. Vincent de Paul's mission — to serve people in need — is easily observed. It's the second part that often escapes people — that the Society equally exists to provide the opportunity to serve. Therein lies the true magic of SVdP's culture. Feeding the souls of those serving is just as important as feeding the souls being served.

Yet during the pandemic, it's the second half of SVdP's mission that has taken a

toll. SVdP saw about 15,000 volunteers come through its campuses every year prior to the pandemic. Today, the nonprofit is nowhere near that number. Yet service not only continues, it expands as the need has expanded in the community.

As in-person volunteer opportunities return, SVdP hopes so too will its volunteers. In the stories to follow, meet a few of the volunteers already back on-site.



MAUREEN and DENNIS GORDIA

FAITH-FILLED COUPLE, DEDICATED VOLUNTEERS, THERE WHEN THE KITCHEN NEEDS THEM MOST

Early mornings in the St. Vincent de Paul central kitchen are filled with the smell of food cooking for the day, the sounds of laughter and music wafting through the air. There are many familiar faces of the regular volunteers that come to the kitchen to serve. Two of those volunteers are Maureen and Dennis Gordia.

“We do whatever we’re told,” Maureen jokes. “We do a lot of chopping. We open the cans. We’ve come in on Fridays and helped with Pizza Nights. And we pack a lot of lunches. We make a lot of peanut butter sandwiches, and a lot of deli sandwiches.”

They’ve done almost every task in the kitchen Dennis adds, even bringing their own knives for chopping vegetables.

Maureen and Dennis retired and relocated to Arizona in 2015. They were looking for a way to continue the service that Maureen especially had witnessed as a teenager in St. Louis, where her father started their local parish’s SVdP chapter. They found a home as parish

“We missed coming here.
We missed doing everything.”

volunteers at St. Maria Goretti Catholic Church in Scottsdale and went out on bi-weekly home deliveries to families in need in their community but felt there was more they had to give.

“It didn’t seem like enough,” Maureen remarks. “That’s when we read something about coming down here, and maybe working in the warehouse.”

But when they arrived, they helped meet an urgent need in the kitchen. That was in 2015, and the Gordias have served in the SVdP kitchen every week since. They’ve found a strong community — a family they say — in the staff and volunteers in the kitchen.

The Gordias stopped coming briefly when the pandemic first struck but jumped at the opportunity to return in April 2021 as soon as

they could, because they missed the kitchen staff and their fellow volunteers.

“We called them up, and said ‘When can we come back?’” Dennis remembers. “We came back in April once we got our shots, and boy nobody was here, but we came back.”

“We missed coming here,” Maureen adds. “We missed doing everything.” The two aren’t afraid to step in and help wherever they may be needed, especially on the days when they know volunteers are needed the most.

“We come down for the holidays,” Maureen says. “We don’t come for the holiday itself, because they have a lot of volunteers, but we’ll come the day before or the day after. The day after they don’t have many volunteers, so we jump in on days like that.”

For the Gordias, serving as regular kitchen volunteers for the past seven years has been a way to share and live out their faith. They serve, Maureen adds, with open and caring hearts for their neighbors.



DEBBY SUÁREZ

HIGH SCHOOL TEEN, FUTURE EDUCATOR, INSPIRED TO TEACH THROUGH SERVICE IN THE DREAM CENTER

"I remember clocking in for eight hours sometimes in the summer, because I wasn't old enough to get a job, but I loved coming here."

For Debby Suárez, 16, volunteering in St. Vincent de Paul's Dream Center is about more than just giving back to her community. It is an opportunity for her to grow the skills she will need in a future career as a teacher.

"I'm in an early childhood [education] program at my high school," Debby says. "I definitely want to pursue that as a career and as a job. I love working with toddlers and infants but teaching in general is kind of a passion of mine. And that's why I love coming here."

The junior from Metrotech High School in Phoenix first started volunteering three times a week with SVdP in 2018 after her older

brother came to volunteer. She started working in the Dream Center, which provides educational enrichment alongside the Family Dining Room's weeknight meals, and immediately she fell in love with the work.

Debby enjoys working through homework assignments with older students but is really drawn to help the younger kids. Oftentimes, she can be found teaching counting or reading to kids in the Dream Center library.

Even after March 2020, when the dining room and center transitioned to SVdP's drive-thru, Debby continued coming to volunteer.

“I got to know the families more, one-on-one, rather than just the kids,” Debby says. “So, I got to meet the families and talk to them and just listen to them.”

There were times, Debby recalls, when she would be the only volunteer working the drive-thru with SVdP staff members. It was an experience that helped her grow and feel comfortable taking on more responsibilities even as a teenager.

“I remember clocking in for eight hours sometimes in the summer,” Debby says, “because I wasn’t old enough to get a job, but I loved coming here.”

When the Family Dining Room reopened for in-person service in October 2021, Debby returned to a familiar role assisting in the Dream Center, now with the added responsibilities of helping teach other volunteers – both younger and older – how the Family Dining Room operates.

“The connections I’ve made here have lasted through the pandemic,” Debby says about why she loves volunteering at SVdP, “so just emotional attachment to this place. I’ve grown up here. I’ve learned a lot of things here.”



ROB MARUSTER

RETIRED EXECUTIVE, SERVANT LEADER,
UNAFRAID TO DIG IN THE FARM OR SERVE
DINNER AT FAMILIES’ TABLES

Rob Maruster, 50, knows what it means to be the man at the center. After completing his undergraduate degree at Auburn University and earning his MBA at Emory University in Atlanta, he started working for Delta Airlines.

“I went all the way from a part-time agent to the world’s biggest airport,” says Rob, who spent 12 years with the airline and climbed the ladder to eventually run the Atlanta hub. “It was awesome. I had 6,000 people working for me, 725 mainline flights and 350 commuter flights every day.”

He took that experience to JetBlue for 13 years, eight of which he served as chief operations officer until Republic Services in Phoenix tapped him for the same position. After recovering from a hemorrhagic stroke, Rob found himself lucky to be alive, but re-evaluating being in the workforce.

Now he’s the man quietly behind the scenes volunteering to help St. Vincent de Paul bring services to the community.



"I like it because you actually see the people that you're helping to feed. I never want to forget what that feels like every time I come in here."

"If I can't go back, then I can do things like this," he says. "I'm a huge glass-half-full guy, and I still have my energy. I just had to redirect it a bit."

Rob started his SVdP volunteer career in the early days of the Rob & Melani Walton Urban Farm, where he was one of the first to serve. He remembers weed whacking and learning the soil.

"The five years I've been here, it's been tremendous progress. We really got the farm producing now," he says. "When you start thinking that 15-17 percent of all the food that comes to the kitchen came from the farm, that's really impressive."

That satisfaction from helping drove Rob to try his hand volunteering in other areas of the SVdP mission as well. As a self-proclaimed "culture guy," Rob particularly appreciates the Family Dining Room's restaurant-style service and taking orders at each family's table.

"I've always wanted to be in that category of the 15 percent of executives who do things for other people, especially people in need," he says. "I don't think there's anything more important than feeding, clothing, healing and giving hope to the less fortunate. There's no more direct method that I can give other than my time and treasure."

On his list next is to serve in SVdP's transitional housing at Ozanam Manor. But for now, he takes time each week to devote some love and energy to serving families out of the kitchen and in the dining room.

"I like it because you actually see the people that you're helping to feed," he says. "I never want to forget what that feels like every time I come in here."

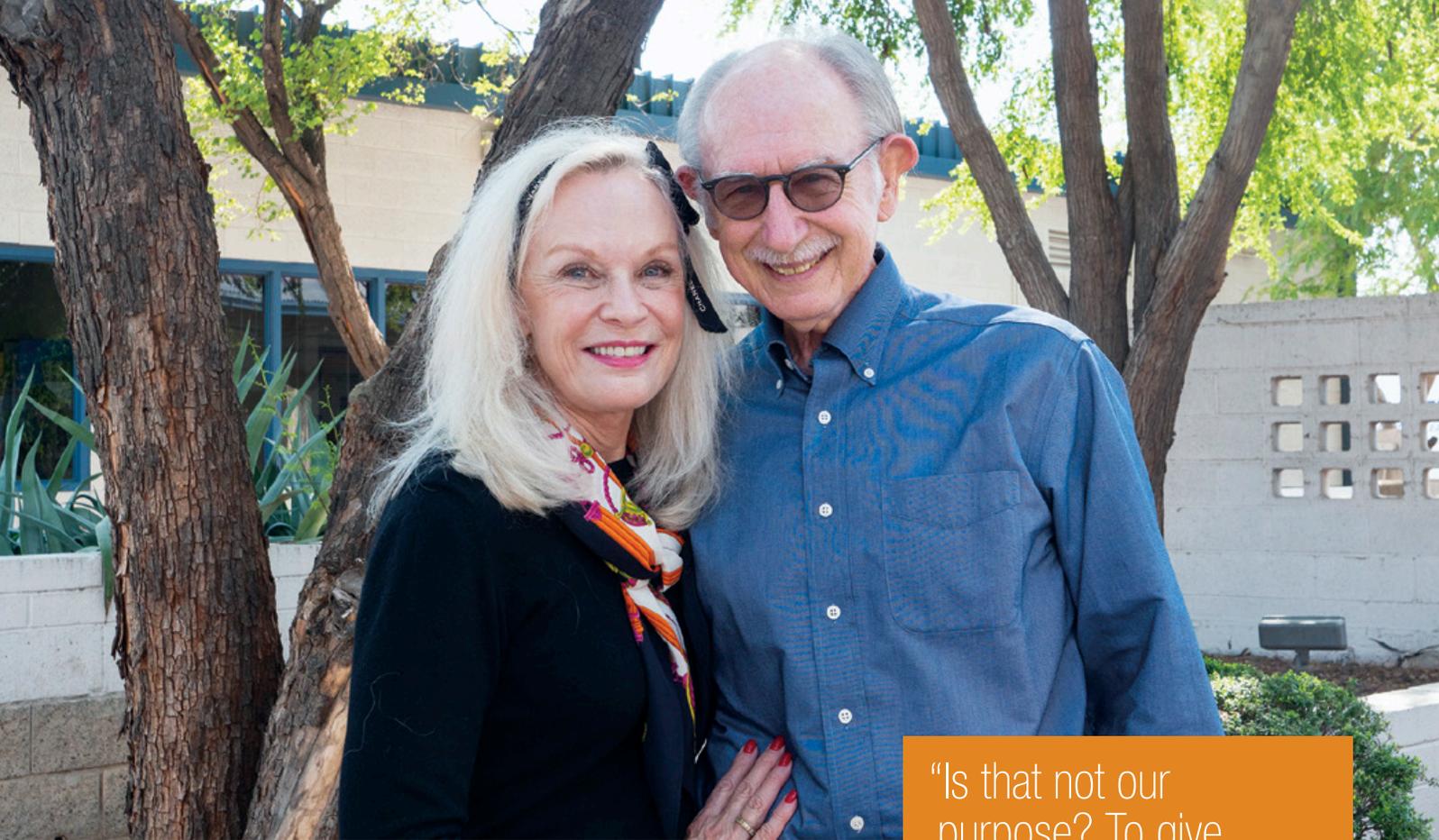


READY TO VOLUNTEER?

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MORE THAN A FOOD BOX, A COMMUNITY OF WARMTH AND EMBRACE

For the Warrens, St. Vincent de Paul is about more than simply giving someone food when they're hungry. SVdP's service is based on developing a comprehensive understanding of an individual's needs followed by wrap-around services and dignified care to help that individual thrive.

It's a holistic approach to service that really creates a sense of family amongst the SVdP community, from staff to supporters to guests. "A call of fellowship to serve those of us in need," Richard says.

"Is that not our purpose? To give people hope in whichever way we can through St. Vincent de Paul."

— Linda and Richard Warren

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Make a gift. Volunteer.
Experience hope.**

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Read the Warren's story at:
<https://www.stvincentdepaul.net/svdp-blog>

ONE YEAR LATER THROUGH MEDICAL STUDENT EYES

As Creighton University and SVdP's Virginia G. Piper Medical Clinic celebrate one year of partnership, first-year medical students share their clinical experiences serving uninsured patients.

By Marisol Saldivar

In the last year...

162

Creighton health science students gained clinic experience while volunteering

2,000+

volunteer hours completed by Creighton students and medical professionals

20

Creighton medical professionals volunteered to expand patient access to specialty care

642

patient visits provided through Creighton partnership





At 12 years old Nadia Khan learned she had Type 1 diabetes, which meant a whole new lifestyle to maintain her health. It was a life-changing diagnosis in more ways than one.

“I was shaking, really terrified, and a medical student grabbed my hand and stabilized it while he was checking my blood glucose,” Nadia recalls, “and from that moment forward, I saw health care workers as more than just providing health but also providing compassionate care. That was the moment I knew what I wanted to do.”

Now, Nadia is 23 and a first-year medical student in Creighton University’s School of Medicine in Phoenix. She’s among the initial cohort of students to benefit from the school’s first year of partnership with St. Vincent de Paul’s Virginia G. Piper Medical Clinic after Virginia G. Piper Charitable Trust made the collaboration possible.

Creighton faculty and third- and fourth-year medical students have long volunteered at SVdP’s medical clinic. Thanks to Piper Trust’s gift, the clinic now serves as the primary teaching facility for first- and second-year medical students, as well. Such early clinical

“I think one of the things that has amazed me that I didn’t necessarily expect was the kindness and the resilience of the patients that we see.”

— Nadia Khan



experience is rare for medical students. That aspect of the partnership is something that attracted first-year student Aurora Rodriguez, 24.

“It just exposes you to medical diagnoses and problems within health care that you wouldn’t be able to get exposed to until you’re in the field later on, possibly as a resident, even as an attending,” Aurora says. “It’s a really amazing opportunity that we get to see those things right now just as first-year medical students here at Creighton.”

The Creighton University Health Sciences Campus – Phoenix brought a four-year

medical school and programs in nursing, occupational therapy and pharmacy in the fall of 2021, with programs coming in physician assistant studies and physical therapy to the comprehensive health sciences campus. With the opening of the Phoenix health sciences campus, Creighton University is the largest Catholic health professions educator in the nation.

Currently Creighton medical, nursing and pharmacy students volunteer together to serve patients at SVdP’s Virginia G. Piper Medical Clinic. Soon Creighton physician assistant, occupational therapy and physical therapy students will serve at the clinic as well.



“It was a very eye-opening experience to see the types of challenges people face in health care when they lack certain resources,”

— Aurora Rodriguez

While students gain early clinical experience, they also offer medical help to uninsured patients who might otherwise go without care if it weren't for the charity clinic and medical professionals who volunteer there. Having access to care relieves some of the burden that too often falls on emergency rooms when patients delay or forgo treatment out of financial constraint. That unfortunate but understandable decision strains the healthcare system and the pockets of uninsured patients who already struggle to afford health care in the first place, let alone emergency room bills. The clinic partnership helps prevent this strain while offering earlier, more preventative care.

Better education, better system of care, better patient outcomes.

The original vision of the partnership has already come to life. Since Creighton's partnership, hospital readmission for uninsured patients treated at SVdP's Virginia G. Piper Medical Clinic is just 3.4 percent, far lower than the national average of 11.5 percent.

“I think one of the things that has amazed me that I didn't necessarily expect was the kindness and the resilience of the patients that we see,” Nadia says. “They work so hard, and they don't have the same opportunities that maybe I have, or my peers have. And still,

somehow, they manage to survive, and they still manage to open their hearts and be so kind and understanding even of the fact that we're learning, and we don't necessarily know everything.”

“I knew we'd be able to serve people and be able to learn from wonderful physicians,” Aurora says. “But just in my short time rotating here and volunteering here, I have learned a lot of insight just from the patients and the type of holistic care that we want to give in communities.”

On Aurora's first day volunteering in the clinic, a patient needed an organ transplant but did not qualify for the donor list because of their undocumented immigration status. Aurora learned that day of the difficult but necessary conversations physicians must have with patients and how to approach such moments with compassion.

“It was a very eye-opening experience to see the types of challenges people face in health care when they lack certain resources,” she says.

Since that day she's spent many clinic hours shadowing Dr. Tina Younger, MD, Creighton



University School of Medicine clinical science director.

“It’s not just about giving a diagnosis or refilling their pills,” Aurora says. “[Dr. Younger] really goes above and beyond to see, ‘Ok does this patient have enough to pay for medications. Let’s look at this website and see which pharmacy offers them the cheapest.’ She goes above and beyond for the little details like: Is it close to home? Do they have transportation to go to the lab or the X-ray? That has been such a wonderful opportunity to learn from that because it really is so much more than just giving a medical service. It’s really taking care of the patient in a special way.”

At the heart of the operations is Dr. John Anwar, MD, who has served at the helm of the partnership this past year and was recently named the inaugural Virginia G. Piper Chair of Medicine at Creighton University and Chief Medical Officer at SVdP’s Virginia G. Piper Medical Clinic.

“When these students graduate, they will be far ahead of their peers at other institutions, getting a very unique clinical experience years before many medical students are even out of the classroom,” Dr. Anwar says. “These graduates will become ambassadors for the community, as they have already done so much to care for the people in it.”

Nadia, who serves as the clinical coordinator for the first-year class, has already felt that community connection to her patients, especially as she shares personal understanding of what it’s like to live with diabetes — a condition prevalent among the uninsured, low-income, and predominantly Hispanic patients seen at the clinic.

“I had an experience where there was a woman with Type 2 diabetes, and she was nervous because her blood glucose was very high,” Nadia shares. “I had the opportunity to check her blood glucose and her hand was shaking just like mine back when I was 12.

“To me, I thought, ‘I finally did it,’” Nadia continues. “I finally managed to reach this point where I can hold somebody’s hand and I can provide comfort while checking their blood glucose.”

Coming full circle is beyond fulfilling for Nadia. It’s a passion and a career that she hopes to carry forward in her community much like Dr. Anwar does.

“As soon as I met him, I thought ‘I want to be him one day,’” Nadia says. “That’s my dream — to come back to this clinic and hopefully one day be able to direct it and work here.”

And that’s the bigger goal and real change the partnership visionaries hope for as well — a next generation of compassionate physicians for the Valley, who will improve access to care and grow a network of medical professionals transforming the health care landscape and lives of thousands of uninsured patients in Arizona.



Watch video story online.

DR. JOHN ANWAR NAMED INAUGURAL VIRGINIA G. PIPER CHAIR OF MEDICINE & CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER



Photos by Adrian Baird of Phoenix

It’s been a year of determination, resourcefulness and innovation for Dr. John Anwar, MD, as he led St. Vincent de Paul’s Virginia G. Piper Medical Clinic through the first year of its formal partnership with Creighton University’s School of Medicine in Phoenix. The partnership, funded by Virginia G. Piper Charitable Trust, marked its one-year anniversary on March 4.

Recognizing this progress, all three institutions came together for a medal conferral ceremony on Feb. 18 to officially name Dr. Anwar as the inaugural Virginia G. Piper Chair of Medicine at Creighton University and Chief Medical Officer at SVdP’s Virginia G. Piper Medical Clinic.

“Dr. John Anwar’s leadership in the clinic has helped guide this partnership and the vital work of the clinic during a season of challenge this past year, offering hope to the community and to many underserved and uninsured patients in Arizona,” Piper Trust President and CEO Mary Jane Rynd said.

Previously, Dr. Anwar served as SVdP’s medical director and as an assistant professor at Creighton. The Virginia G. Piper Chair of Medicine is Creighton’s 45th endowed chair and the second at the Creighton University Health Sciences Campus — Phoenix, which opened last year.

A BRIGHT LIGHT IN THE DARKEST MOMENTS

SVdP's wrap around services give Diana and her family a safe space to recover.

By Sarah Farrell



Diana Juarez experienced some of the darkest, most uncertain moments of her life in 2021. Just weeks after his 17th birthday, her oldest son was killed outside the family's home in a gun violence incident.

"I was pretty out of it," Diana remembers of that time. "Had no faith, nothing."

Scared for the safety of her five younger children and grandson, Diana tried to move the family out of their one-bedroom apartment. She had always made enough to support her family with her job at a grocery store, but with sky-high rent prices around the Valley, she couldn't afford to move.

The family briefly stayed in a motel before moving in with Diana's ailing grandmother.

"They lived in a really small apartment," Ronnie Smith, a case manager in St. Vincent de Paul's Social Work Services program, remembers of his first-time meeting Diana and her kids.

"There were two families living in there actually, about 15 people all together."

When Diana's grandmother passed a few months later, the families faced eviction because the apartment had been leased in the grandmother's name.

In between these two devastating losses; Diana met Ronnie. He prayed with the family



DIANA CHERISHES THIS PICTURE OF HER ELDEST SON HOLDING HIS BABY BOY.

and talked Diana through the grief of losing her son.

"I found a lot of comfort in him [Ronnie] while I was trying to understand the whole situation," Diana remembers. "I tell him he's my angel sent to me. He just came at the right time... I'm just so thankful for him and St. Vincent de Paul."

Ronnie helped the family get connected with services from Valley organizations like UMOM Family Housing Hub. They moved into a three-bedroom house in a safe neighborhood in South Phoenix, and SVdP's Social Work

"I REALLY DIDN'T SEE A WAY OUT, AND TO GET THIS CALL FROM RONNIE, 'HEY, WE'RE GOING TO BE ABLE TO HELP.' IT WAS A GODSEND."

Services program helped cover move-in costs and utility bills. Additionally, SVdP's Bringing Hope Home program, in conjunction with the thrift stores, helped Diana furnish the new house with beds for her kids, a couch, a kitchen table and much more.

"Coming from nothing — like I mentioned I was in a one-bedroom home, not having any furniture then — having this help, it is really heartwarming to know that there are still individuals that like to help people in need like us, single mothers," Diana says.

"I see a process of healing going on now," Ronnie notes. "Obviously they're still going through the grieving process, and it can be difficult for her at times, but we keep in touch and communicate and encourage and provide any type of assistance that we can."

The wrap around services and support through SVdP's Social Work Services program has given the family a safe space to grieve, heal and regain a sense of normalcy.

"It showed me that besides all of the horrific stuff that my family is going through, that there's still a light," Diana says of the experience, "and that there are still good people out there. They came into the darkest moment of my life. I really didn't see a way out, and to get this call from Ronnie, 'Hey, we're going to be able to help.' It was a godsend."



FROM SVdP SCHOLARSHIP TO THE ARIZONA STATE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Marcelino Quiñonez succeeded in SVdP's One At A Time scholarship program. Now he represents AZ District 27.

By Marisol Saldivar

When Marcelino Quiñonez was in sixth grade, he would help his mom clean houses. One day, as they pulled up to a spotlight, Marcelino's mom asked him a pointed question in Spanish — “¿A dónde vas a ir al colegio?” (“Where are you going to college?”)

That question set him on the higher education path and professional advancement that has now led Marcelino to the Arizona State House of Representatives. In

December, he was appointed to District 27's vacant seat — his home district — after Democrat Diego Rodriguez resigned to run for state attorney general.

It's a journey in which St. Vincent de Paul played a small, but significant role. The nonprofit's One At A Time scholarship program helped support Marcelino financially as he studied at Arizona State University, earning both bachelor's and master's degrees in theater.

“It was a big deal for me,” says Marcelino, whose family immigrated to the States from Mexico to offer him and his siblings a chance at the American Dream. “I wrote Mr. Terry Wilson a letter thanking him for having started the scholarship program, and

I concluded the letter by saying, ‘Some day, some way, I will repay the generosity that has been given to me today.’”

Marcelino is more than paying back that opportunity. He

became a playwright, starred in multiple roles on stage, returned to SVdP and ASU to do youth and education outreach, and currently serves as a SVdP board member. Now he adds Arizona State House Representative to the list.

“I'm grateful and honored by it,” says Marcelino, who made a run at the same seat in 2014 but fell short in the election. “Growing up in my district I saw a lot of hardworking individuals doing their best to have a

chance at better lives. I paid attention to their sacrifices and the things that they were trying to do for their children. I carry that with me when I come here.”

He's making his shot count. Marcelino quickly introduced his first bill in February to improve Arizona's student to counselor ratio— education support being one of his top priorities.

“Life has been very kind to me,” Marcelino says, “so I've always felt that I need to give those opportunities that have been given to me to others.”

This spring he launched his campaign to maintain his seat, which is up for grabs this election cycle.



Marcelino also continues his connection with SVdP's One At A Time scholarship program. Every week, he sends his mentees a Monday morning message of inspiration and firmly believes in the transformational power of the program. Since its founding, One At A Time has celebrated more than 100 graduates.

“That's 100 lives being changed directly and then the lives that those 100 students will touch,” Marcelino says. “It continues to do what Robert Kennedy talked about, which is serving as a ripple of hope.”

Thanks to Marcelino, that ripple has made its way to the Arizona State House of Representatives, where he can further its reach even more.



New Companion Animal Program Offers Hope for Renee Acejo and Dog Brownie

BY JENNA CURAN

As Renee Acejo, 49, and her 10-year-old boxer mix, Brownie, checked in at the Spring Wellness Clinic hosted by St. Vincent de Paul's Companion Animal Program (CAP), Renee had tears in her eyes. Finally, she had hope for getting Brownie help with his recent seizures.

The pair had been living out of Renee's car, and before learning about SVdP's CAP services, she didn't know where to turn for help for pets of owners experiencing homelessness.

Among the first to arrive that morning, Renee and Brownie anxiously awaited as the mobile clinic set up in a small SVdP parking lot off 3rd Drive. Partners like the Arizona Humane Society and Maricopa County Animal Care and Control formed a horseshoe of stations for pets and their owners to visit. SVdP also offered an outdoor pet pantry with sweaters, booties, collars, leashes and harnesses in addition to the

welcome bag that all guests received with collapsible bowls, toys, treats and food.

At the pantry, Renee picked out a bright orange, heavy-duty leash and a new dog bed.

"I'm just super happy to be here," Renee said. "Look at all these goodies he's got."

The treats are an added bonus to the free access to veterinary services and care. Brownie's vaccination records and licensing status were updated, and the CAP team scheduled him for a follow-up appointment with Northwestern University's veterinary center for a more intensive treatment plan.

That meant everything to Renee, who relies on Brownie for comfort and emotional support after losing her mother and son. Their deaths and a domestic situation spiraled Renee into homelessness.

“BROWNIE'S THE ONLY ONE THAT I HAVE REALLY TO TALK TO,” Renee said. "And he's always happy to see me. I can't see life without him. But he's been getting sicker. I don't know what to do, and I'm just really happy that you guys are even able to see him."

Renee's newfound hope brings great joy to Marion Auray, the longtime volunteer and donor who helped found CAP at SVdP in order to connect vulnerable populations with existing veterinary organizations.

"I've worked in animal rescue for a number of years," Marion said, "and it became apparent to me that there were no programs in all of Phoenix that cared for the pets of the homeless — not so much because they're overlooked but because other wonderful pet organizations don't have access to the people to get to the pets."

CAP aims to bring that connection and has a mission of keeping pet owners safe, together and sheltered with their pets. To do so, the program unites a diverse network of partners to host quarterly wellness clinics and maintains pet pantries at each of SVdP's five charity dining rooms.

That's where Renee first encountered the program and got dog food for Brownie while getting a meal for herself. It's also where she learned about the Spring Wellness Clinic. Now she's hopeful that Brownie will regain his health so that she'll have her companion for years to come.

"We're growing old together," Renee teased. "It's unconditional love, that's the thing you know."

VOLUNTEER with SVdP's Companion Animal Program by emailing CAP@svdpaz.org or visit stvincentdepaul.net/CAP to donate.

THE SOCIETY OF A THOUSAND THANKS

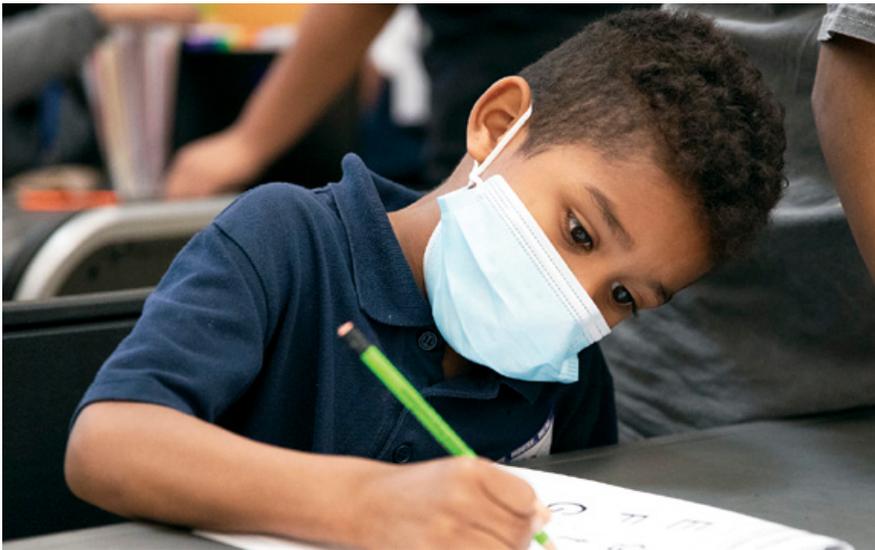
One of the greatest privileges of serving in Arizona is being able to work with a generous community of people who care about the well-being of our state. We are filled with hope and gratitude as we see our community rally and unify through a shared commitment to serve and to care about one another.



LDS church surpasses 150K pounds of food donations to SVdP

In February, another 20,000+ pounds of raspberry jam, beef stew, beans, pancake mix, syrup, peanut butter and more were donated to SVdP by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. That brings their total to 150,000+ pounds of food donated in the last year to SVdP's Food Reclamation Center for food boxes. It's a blessing that SVdP's food services team relies on during tough seasons beyond the holidays, especially since each delivery is so thoughtful in creating a balanced food box with just the right amount of proteins, grains and specialty treats for families in need. From the bottom of our hearts, thank you to our fellow Christians in the LDS church!

THE SOCIETY OF A THOUSAND THANKS



Cox Charities provides educational enrichment for Dream Center students

The Dream Center at St. Vincent de Paul provides a safe space for kids to receive help with homework, mentorship, and educational enrichment. Thanks to a \$7,500 grant from Cox Charities more students can explore topics through hands-on activities focusing on the Pillars of Education including STEAM, literacy, and career readiness. The Dream Center provides the tools, resources, and empowerment to help kids build and sustain bright futures.

Vitalyst Health Foundation makes eye health possible in SVdP medical clinic

For the past two years, the Vitalyst Health Foundation has been an important partner in providing eye health for patients at the Virginia G. Piper Medical Clinic. The foundation's gift of \$30,000 through medical assistance grants funds direct services such as screening and training, program development related to direct services and client-related equipment. This support provides vital eye care for the uninsured patients who visit our medical clinic.

Three Desert Winds Foundation expands access to women's health care

Thanks to a \$30,000 gift from Three Desert Winds Foundation, providers at the Virginia G. Piper Medical Clinic now have essential equipment to help support uninsured women and improve access to women's health. This includes access to diagnostic equipment to detect cancer more quickly for immediate treatment, as well as high-quality maternity care for pregnant mothers to ensure mom and baby stay healthy through and beyond delivery. Thank you, Three Desert Winds Foundation, for supporting underserved women in the Valley community!



Del E. Webb Foundation brings digital imaging technology to uninsured patients

The Virginia G. Piper Medical Clinic continues to provide wrap around support and services to uninsured patients in the Valley, and thanks to a \$250,000 gift from the Del E. Webb Foundation those services will include a Digital X-ray Machine and an OPTOS Ultra-Widefield Visual Imaging Device. These two machines will give providers in the clinic the ability to do advanced imaging including ocular imaging of the retinas with the OPTOS device, and significantly enhance the care provided in the clinic by offering services for free in one location allowing for faster, more effective treatment. Thank you, Del E. Webb Foundation, for allowing us to continue to provide high-quality health care for those in need in Arizona.

Pulte Family Charitable Foundation funds additional bilingual medical personnel

Thanks to the Pulte Family Charitable Foundation for a generous \$260,000 contribution that supports the expansion of SVdP's Virginia G. Piper Medical Clinic team, with a focus on hiring bilingual staff. These new staff positions directly benefit the uninsured, low-income, and predominately Hispanic patients seen every day at the clinic, providing expanded access to care for patients, while also creating a comfortable environment and reducing barriers they face in maintaining health.



Arizona Coyotes provide educational outreach for students at SVdP's Family Dining Room

Through a \$5,000 grant from the Arizona Coyotes Foundation, SVdP can provide more supplies for the Dream Center to support educational enrichment activities as well as offer the food and supplies necessary for daily meals in the Family Dining Room. Both services provide wrap around support for families to spend time together, learn and grow in a safe environment.



Blue Cross Blue Shield of Arizona supports diabetes care and prevention

St. Vincent de Paul's Family Wellness Center was one of many Valley organizations to receive grant money from Blue Cross Blue Shield of Arizona to help address diabetes control and prevention in Arizona. The \$75,000 grant provides support and resources for the Family Wellness Center to help those affected by Type 2 diabetes while also offering others preventative wellness care and education to reduce the growing number of Arizonans at risk of developing the chronic condition. This program does so with diabetes management through nutrition, physical activity, and overall wellness.

THE SOCIETY OF A THOUSAND THANKS

PetSmart improves access to care for companion animals

For many people experiencing homelessness, an animal may be their only source of companionship, and access to veterinary care can be difficult. Thanks to a \$50,000 gift from PetSmart, SVdP is helping those around the Valley care for their furry companions through the nonprofit's Companion Animal Program (CAP). CAP care is offered through a variety of SVdP programs — including charity dining rooms, a Resource Center, transitional housing, and quarterly pet clinics — where SVdP and Valley partners provide everything from food and supplies to vaccines and medical care. The CAP program fulfills a missing link in the Valley: It brings the people and pets in need together with the people who can give the care.



Will your cup of coffee change a dental patient's life?



The St. Vincent de Paul dental team restores so much more than smiles for the underserved and uninsured patients of the Virginia G. Piper Dental Clinic, which houses the Delta Dental of Arizona Oral Health Center.

With more than 14,000 visits each year, the dental clinic offers patients care that gives them not only a beautiful smile, but also relieves them of pain, improves self-esteem and restores confidence—helping patients to be their best selves at school, on the job hunt and in the community.

You can continue this important work all for the price of a cup of coffee.

Donate just \$5 a month to help change a dental patient's life. When you donate, you become an official member of the Coffee Crusade and receive a special gift of an exclusive SVdP Coffee Crusade mug.

Donate today at stvincentspaul.net/dental-clinic-coffee-crusade



Scan to donate and join the Coffee Crusade.



Sovereign Military Order of Malta Western Association funds clinic and shelter operations

Thanks to a generous \$75,000 contribution from the Sovereign Military Order of Malta Western Association SVdP's medical and dental clinic will now house a pharmacy and new dental treatment room, respectively. The new pharmacy corresponds with the expanded access to specialty care and volunteer providers brought to SVdP's Virginia G. Piper Medical Clinic through a partnership with Creighton University's School of Medicine in Phoenix.



Additionally, the Order of Malta gifted SVdP \$10,000 to support the daily operations of Ozanam Manor, the nonprofit's transitional shelter offering housing to 60 men and women at a time and serving approximately

155 people annually. The funding helps with meals, staffing, utilities, maintenance, security and case management at the shelter, which supports residents as they find more permanent, long-term housing.



Raskob Foundation gives support to Ozanam Manor case managers

Thank you, Raskob Foundation, for your gift of \$7,000 to help support case management at Ozanam Manor. Residents receive professional, compassionate, goal-oriented case management sessions throughout the year to develop personalized strategies to help them end their homelessness. Case managers help residents maintain links with community resources, monitor progress and intervene to remove barriers and delays. As residents transition to independent housing, case management continues for three to six months after to ensure stability. Thanks for making such level of care possible!

Help us make sure we HAVE ENOUGH WATER TO SAVE LIVES.

During St. Vincent de Paul's **100 Days of Summer** campaign, support the ABC15 Water Drive with Bashas' and Food City to get water to people during the hot summer months.

Each day SVdP hands out more than 5,000 bottles of water through its heat relief sites, dining rooms, Resource Center and water truck, which delivers water on the streets. Help us keep people hydrated and alive.

From June 1-30 donate at any Bashas' or Food City when you check out or give online at stvincentdepaul.net/water.





VINCENTIAN CONNECTION

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100 DAYS OF SUMMER

Shine by sharing.

100 DAYS Countless Ways to Shine by Sharing

Help St. Vincent de Paul **Feed**, **Clothe**, **House** and **Heal** for **100 Days of Summer**. Each summer month focuses on a different high-need item to combat the effects of extreme heat, summer food insecurity, and exposure to the elements.

June = Water
July = Food
August = Shelter

When you volunteer, donate or host a drive, you **Shine by Sharing** and become a ray of hope for vulnerable Arizonans.

100days.stvincentdepaul.net



Scan to get involved.