

## Vincentian Young Adult Center

The Saint Vincent DePaul Youth and Young Adult Center began in the year 2000, enabling participants to work alongside Vincentians, Daughters, other members of the Vincentian Family and our collaborators who are working directly with people who are materially poor.

The operative program model for the Center has three components: Service, Community, and Reflection

The **principal and normative** program offered by the Center is a one week plunge where young people come to live in the Center, go out twice a day to various service sites, and come together in the evening to share meals, housekeeping, reflection and recreation. Using this model we have a flexibility that allows groups to come for a day, a weekend or a week.

During the academic year, the Center serves **collage age young adults** coming from colleges and universities across the United States and Canada. In the summertime, the Center hosts **high school age teenagers** from a variety of high schools and parish youth groups.

At the present time, in the fifty-two weeks of any given calendar year, the Center hosts an average of **thirty five groups**. Some groups are a week or longer; a lesser number of groups stay for three or four days based on the demands of their academic schedules.

The projected outcome of a week of service, community and reflection is person who has some new relationships with people who are poor, with people in their own group of participants and with the Vincentian Family and our explicit story. A way of saying this is that the program participant has been “vaccinated” with the Vincentian charism.

Evidence of this “vaccination” grows in the individuals and the group as the week proceeds. The daily reflective process helps to deepen the experience and provides a context in which to witness and celebrate the insights and transformation of the participants. Encountering the living Vincentian Family, as well as direct input about our tradition, helps to inform the daily experiences of service of the poor and marginalized, being together in a community and sharing reflection. After a one week stay at the Center, our young people return to their families, communities, schools or parishes with something new in their heart and soul - - a little bit of spirit and vision of Saints Vincent and Louise.

Another one of the many ways of looking at the impact of our program is to witness all the work and play that gets accomplished time and again using the generosity and availability of our program participants:

***Inn Dwelling***, a housing ministry of St. Vincent’s Parish, uses our volunteers to rehabilitate houses for homeless families;

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The **St Vincent De Paul Society** and the **Whosoever Gospel Mission** both use our volunteers to do thrift store cleaning and sorting;

**Mercy Neighborhood Ministries** use our participants in accompanying mentally challenged older adults;

The **De Paul House** at Immaculate Conception Parish makes use of our people to sort clothing, garden, paint and clean;

The **DePaul Catholic School** pairs our students with theirs for tutoring as well as using our volunteers to clean, paint and do other manual tasks around the school;

**St Francis of Assisi Parish** uses our young people for endless cleaning and grounds keeping projects in a community of very limited financial resources;

**Dawn's Place**, a shelter for abused women directed by a Daughter of Charity, regularly uses our participants for grounds keeping work and other large manual labor projects involved in improving their property;

**Guiding Star Ministries**, a shelter for young mothers and their small children run by the St. Vincent De Paul Society, uses our young people for painting, grounds keeping and other manual labor projects.

Each one of our groups spends an afternoon touring **Mary's Central Shrine**, learning about the story of the Miraculous Medal and visiting with our confreres in **St. Catherine's Infirmary** – a highlight for both confreres and participants.

The **Beacon Afterschool Program** at the De Paul Catholic School and the Afterschool Program at Mercy Neighborhood Ministries utilize our program participants to accompany their children. These two daily programs also run Summer Camps for at-risk youth using our volunteers.

Our **Neighborhood Block Associations** find regular support in our participants for their major day long block cleaning events;

Our neighborhood children and our school children find in our program participants an endless supply of playmates for sports and other games played in our school yard;

Even beyond the labor, the People of St. Francis of Assisi Parish find great joy in sharing worship, reflection and potluck suppers throughout the year with our various groups.