



Connecting Communities

News from Marillac St. Vincent Family Services



In 2013, Marillac St. Vincent Family Services will begin construction on a new Community Center at Marillac Social Center, converting the Jackson building into a multi-purpose space complete with a full-sized gym. Our programs have grown and evolved to include a wide range of services for children and their families, and a major component of our programmatic capacity and positive impact relies on our physical presence as a refuge from violence and a provider of support and resources.

The former “Nifty Thrifty” building, across the street from the Center, was originally created to house our thrift store and food pantry. However, the original layout of the structure limited our ability to fully maximize the space and continue to expand our programs without renovations. Our vision of repurposing the building began to take shape when we received financial

support from the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, the Daughters of Charity, and other generous friends of the Center. Fundraising for the project, slated to break ground in the spring and completed by late 2013, is ongoing.

We are particularly excited about the full-sized gym, which will allow us to broaden the scope of our services and further engage our community.

Not only does a gym provide new opportunities for children and young adults to participate in positive, healthy activities, it also serves as a tool to attract new people to the Center and our programs. The gym includes a raised stage, complete with curtains, sound

system, and lighting, from which our kids and young adults can showcase their theatrical and musical talents.

The campus expansion will also double the space of our food pantry, enhancing our ability to serve food to insecure families, as well as offer additional services such as employment resources, skills training and government assistance application processing, all in the same building. The new program will not only serve as a food pantry, but a wrap-around support system for families in the community.

The additional renovated portions of the building will be used to cultivate the emotional and intellectual well-being of our families and young people in Hope Junior and Project Hope and provide them with opportunities to develop specific technical skills. Our families will have access to a computer lab, an arts and crafts room,

continued on page 2

“Do as much good for the poor as you can.”

– St. Louise de Marillac



Dear Friends,

St. Louise de Marillac and St. Vincent de Paul possessed a great love for those who were poor and forgotten by society. They both found God in those who are poor and together they established the Daughters of Charity, who sponsor Marillac Social Center and St. Vincent de Paul Center. Throughout the decades, Marillac St. Vincent Family Services has responded to the needs of the community by expanding its programs and facilities. As we reflect on the past successes of the Centers and look toward building a better future for all whom we serve, we do so in the spirit of St. Louise de Marillac and St. Vincent de Paul.

In this edition, you will find stories that highlight how the legacy of the Daughters of Charity guides the work of our community and how we commit ourselves to fulfill our mission to strengthen and empower those most in need to reach their greatest potential.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bart Winters".

Bart Winters

President/CEO

Marillac St. Vincent Family Services

Safe Spaces (continued from front page)

and multi-purpose space that can be converted on an as-needed basis. The facility will also have developmentally-appropriate activity areas for children and spaces for smaller groups for mental health services, mentoring, and tutoring.



We are truly honored to be a resource for the needs of underserved children and families of the West Side. Feel free to contact us to learn more about the new building. And, be on the lookout for future updates regarding this project.

In this issue:

Safe Spaces	1
Letter from Bart Winters	2
Making the Holidays a Little Brighter	3
A Day at the Circus.....	4
35 Years and Counting	4
Providing a Beacon for Those in Need	5
Ride to Somewhere Out of the Country	6
Showering Mom with Kindness .	6
Hitting a High Note	7
A Whole New Look	7

We are social!



Find us on Facebook!

Marillac Social Center
St. Vincent de Paul Center
Nearly New Thrift Store



Follow us on Twitter!

MSCChicago
SVDPCChicago
NearlyNewThrift



r e s p e c t

Making the Holidays a Little Brighter

This year, St. Vincent de Paul Center celebrated the 42nd year of Santa Mike's holiday series. Named after Mike Sturch, "Santa Mike" and Friends host an annual children's Christmas party followed by a senior party, as well as provide funding for the annual Homeless Outreach Thanksgiving Event that was held on November 10th.

The origins of the "Santa Mike" series have become legend at St. Vincent de Paul Center. The tradition began over 40 years ago when Mike Sturch made a momentous decision to help the children of St. Vincent's one Christmas. After driving past the Center en route to work, Sturch realized that a number of the children had no coats.

Mike sprang to action, contacting

Sister Andrea Vaughn, head of the Center at the time, about ways to help. Sister Andrea invited him to visit the Center. Mike took her up on her offer, and thus the "Santa Mike" series was born. That year, Mike and his friends and family ensured that every child at St. Vincent's had a gift at Christmas. Since then, Santa Mike and Friends have donated over 16,000 gifts to children at St. Vincent's.

From this single action, the holiday series has transformed the face of the Center and the lives of its clients. "The good will and feeling you get from being here is like nothing else you will ever experience. Here I have learned many of life's lessons and want to do everything we can to help the working poor in Chicago," said Mike

Sturch. This year, over 400 children, from three months to 13 years, received toys from Santa on December 14th.

For over 35 years, Santa Mike and Friends have also hosted a holiday party for 300 low-income and isolated seniors in the community. They enjoy music, delicious food, prizes, and the cheerful company of others. In addition, the Homeless Outreach Event and Resource Fair provided over 600 local underserved individuals with a traditional Thanksgiving meal, winter coats and clothing, and services from local area social service providers.

Through the generosity of Santa Mike and Friends, all of our clients, the children, families and seniors we serve had the opportunity for a happier holiday season.

A Day at the Circus!



Lions, tigers, and bears! Oh my! These are exactly the animals that children from both Centers took in during a recent trip to the circus. Thanks to the generosity of an anonymous donor, the Pre-Kindergarten programs at Marillac St. Vincent Family Services enjoyed a trip to the Ringling Brothers & Barnum and Bailey Circus Dragon Show at the United Center.

In the show, performers, representing different corners of the globe, competed in a circus tournament of champions. Using their breathtaking skills and death-defying stunts, groups tried to prove they possess the qualities necessary to arouse the Mythic Dragon. Audience members enjoyed mind-blowing acrobatics, rigorous displays of athletic prowess, and other entertaining performances.

Highlights included a motorcyclist on a high-wire, acrobats on horseback, and trapeze artists 40 feet in the air, as well as appearances by favorite farm and zoo animals. Classrooms relished the opportunity to take in the sights and sounds

of the circus. The children loved the special day, taking home program books as souvenirs.

In addition to this fun treat, children at Marillac, as well as Learn Charter School students, enjoyed a special performance from the circus clowns, as well as a visit from elephants from the show. Ringling Brothers & Barnum and Bailey Circus gathered food donations for the Marillac Food Pantry to give to clients for Thanksgiving. The elephants delivered the collected items with the help of their clown friends. Walking down Francisco Avenue, the elephants brought a basket of groceries and displayed them for all to see before giving them to Executive Director, Maureen Hallagan.

We would like to express our gratitude towards our anonymous donor for providing this wonderful opportunity for the children at Marillac and St. Vincent's. We would also like to thank Ringling Brothers & Barnum and Bailey Circus and their cast members for a memorable performance, as well as their generosity.

35 Years and Counting!

Every year, Marillac St. Vincent Family Services holds an in-service day to start off the new school year. On that day, the Centers recognize staff members who have reached milestone anniversaries. This year, we celebrated three staff members celebrating 35 years of service to the organizations.

Edith Morton is a teacher in the Birth-Three program. Edith indicated that she has been inspired to stay at St. Vincent's due to her love for the children and the sense of community. One of her fondest memories is the opportunity to meet Mayor Harold Washington. She keeps in touch with former students and teaches the son of a former student.

Ora Lomack began her career as a pre-school teacher, but now works in the School-Age Program. Ora has stayed so long due to dedication, but also because she truly loves working with children. She has seen many children grow up and return to Marillac with their children and grandchildren.

Diane Prince, a supervisor of the Birth-Three program at St. Vincent's, is responsible for 17 teachers in the Early Childhood Development Program. Diane is recognized as a Child Development Associate by the Council for Professional Recognition and completed her degree in Early Childhood Education from Kendall College. She also holds an Infant/Toddler Credential.

Marillac St. Vincent Family Services prides itself on developing and cultivating deep and long-term relationships with employees. We would like to honor staff members who help us provide a welcoming atmosphere with opportunities for personal growth.

Thank you to Edith, Ora, and Diane for their commitment to strengthen and empower those most in need to reach their greatest potential through quality care, excellence and hard work.

On Friday, October 19, 2012, over 350 guests gathered for the fifth annual Beacon of Hope event, to benefit Marillac St. Vincent Family Services. This year's event was held at the Union League Club of Chicago and marked the first year that the event was hosted jointly by the two Centers. Guests enjoyed a sit-down lunch, a new format this year, followed by our keynote speaker, Alex Kotlowitz, and an awards presentation for the honorees. In addition, guests participated in a paddleraiser, raising much-needed funds for children's tuition assistance, ensuring children will continue to receive high-quality, low-cost child care through Marillac St. Vincent Family Services.

Providing a Beacon for Those in Need



We were pleased to honor Barbara Bowman, recently retired Chief of Chicago Public Schools' Early Childhood program, along with Board member Doug Hewitt, and Bessie Houston, former Director of Early Childhood and School Age programs at Marillac. Doug and Bessie together founded the mentoring program for boys at Marillac years ago.

Barbara Bowman, recipient of the Outstanding Partner Award, has been a life-long early childhood education advocate, professor and author. She has served on numerous boards and was the co-founder of the Erik-

son Institute, where she pioneered the teaching of early childhood education and administration.

Doug Hewitt, recipient of the Outstanding Volunteer Award, has been a long-time member of the Board of Trustees. Over 20 years ago, Doug came to Marillac with an interest in developing a mentoring program for young males.

Bessie Houston, recipient of the Louise de Marillac Award, worked in Marillac's Child Development Program for over 35 years, where she positively impacted thousands of children's lives.

Together, Doug Hewitt, Bessie Houston and Hubert Thompson developed and implemented a mentoring program for at-risk male youth who participate in Marillac's programs. The consistency of the program and the influence of positive role models have made it possible for many of these young men to graduate from high school and attend college.

Our keynote speaker was renowned author, speaker and producer, Alex Kotlowitz. He is best known for the bestselling *There Are No Children Here: The Story of Two Boys Growing Up in the Other America*. Kotlowitz, along with Steve James, also produced a documentary on violence in Chicago and the fight against it, called "The Interrupters" which premiered at Sundance in 2011.

This year's Beacon of Hope was one of the key fundraising events for Marillac St. Vincent Family Services. We would like to acknowledge the hard work of our committee members, led by co-chairs Aileen Brooks and Jack Raba, as well as the generosity of our sponsors, including DePaul University, The Private Bank, Ernst & Young, Judy Dorini Glassberg Foundation, Verit Advisors, and Kubasiak, Fylstra, Thorpe & Rotunno, P.C.

Please join us in thanking everyone for their continued support of the work of Marillac St. Vincent Family Services and helping us make a difference in our community.



Ride to Somewhere Out of the Country

In our last edition, we shared the news of Bill and Jeff Kunkel's bicycle ride on behalf of Marillac St. Vincent Family Services. They completed their cross-country journey on November 17th, traveling over 2,700

miles through ten states in nine weeks. Throughout the course of their trip, the pair raised over \$50,000 for the children, families, seniors and homeless served by Marillac St. Vincent Family Services.

Bill, a long-time supporter of Marillac St. Vincent Family Services retired from his law practice this past summer. As a celebration, Bill decided to ride his bicycle cross country with his son, Jeff. The pair started in Ocean Beach, California in mid-September, where they dipped their back tires into the Pacific Ocean. Along the way, the pair followed the Southern Tier route, riding to Florida, before making their way to their house in Hilton Head, known as Somewhere Out of The Country, hence the title for their ride and blog. They ended their trip by dipping their front tires into the Atlantic Ocean, with close friends and family to celebrate their success.

Bill and Jeff documented their travels on a blog, as well as the websites for

both Centers. In addition, classrooms tracked their progress on large maps. Bill and Jeff shared their adventures on their blog, highlighting the different types of geography, foods, and locations they experienced. Classrooms followed along, enjoying such treats as chili, beignets, and enchiladas to celebrate the different cultures of the southern states. Bill and Jeff interacted with the children through blog posts, informational lessons, and comments on their webpage.

Along the way, Bill and Jeff Kunkel demonstrated their tremendous strength of character and fortitude, battling drastic weather conditions, high altitudes, and even a collision. Above and beyond that, Bill and Jeff also helped raise awareness and funds for Marillac St. Vincent Family Services. We are eternally grateful to have such wonderful supporters and friends. We are also thankful for the safe travels and blessings that came their way. Thank you Bill and Jeff!

Showering Moms with Kindness

Twenty-six years ago, Leanne McGrath first visited Marillac, bringing along donations for Project Hope. After meeting some of the teen parents, Leanne came up with an idea: host a baby shower for the young mothers in Project Hope and their families. Thus started the Hope Baby Shower.

For over 25 years, over 50 volunteers have put together baby showers twice a year. On average, 25 young families are invited to attend to celebrate the births or impending births of their babies. The volunteers work for six months preparing for each shower. Mary Nanek and

her sister Liz Westrick oversee the volunteers, with many now bringing their own children to help out.

The volunteers spend months prior to each shower collecting items for the baskets. They also provide each young woman with a special gift and beautiful books for their children.

These showers are an opportunity to celebrate life, make our young parents feel special and connect the volunteers to the families they help.

The baby showers prove to be a special day for the families, an opportunity to celebrate their happiness and to receive much-needed items. The day starts with ice break-

ers and shower games. Families and volunteers then share a wonderful meal, and a photographer is on hand to take family portraits.

The young parents are asked to share something special about themselves and their children. Fathers of the babies and other relatives who attend also share something about themselves. Each mom receives a basket with newborn clothes, toys and a beautiful blanket made especially for their child.

We are so grateful for the volunteers involved, people who act out of love, commitment and the belief that one person can make a difference in someone's life.

Hitting a High Note

This September, Marillac St. Vincent Family Services introduced Opera For All, a year-long instructional program for children between 3rd and 7th grades at Marillac Social Center and St. Vincent de Paul Center. Opera For All is a program presented by the Chicago Opera Theater that introduces opera to young people who would otherwise not have the means or opportunity for exposure to the genre or cultural arts in general.



Thanks to a grant from a generous donor, students from each Center meet once a week to learn all about the world of opera, including lyric writing, vocal technique, musical composition, acting, performing, and dancing. In the spring, the students will perform their own original opera, which they will write, choreograph and design. As part of the program, the children are immersed in the world of Mozart, meet professional musicians, and attend special performances. The program allows children the opportunity to grow and develop by exploring the arts and improving their creativity and communication skills.

Thus far, the groups have worked with the teaching artists from the Chicago Opera Theatre, participating in acting exercises, learning rehearsal techniques, and writing reflection journals on their experiences. Participants attended a dress rehearsal of The Magic Flute, visited the Planetarium, and

received a special adaptation of Little Red Riding Hood from the Knightly News, performers from the Chicago Opera Theatre. The students at each Center finished the fall session with a Winter Preview, a showcase of the progress made on their own operas to be performed in the spring.

Marillac Social Center and St. Vincent de Paul Center offer before- and after-school programs, as well as a full-time summer camp, for children between 5 and 13 years of age. It remains a critical mission of the Centers to offer children safe and educational opportunities during out-of-school time. The Hope Junior program at Marillac offers children and teens who do not qualify for the School-Age program high-quality after-school program activities and opportunities during non-school hours. Opera for All helps the Centers fulfill their goal to provide youth with positive experiences at a young age that will show them opportunities avail-

able to them in the future.

The program is brought to Marillac and St. Vincent's in honor of Mrs. Sue SanGiacomo, who was an elementary music teacher before recently retiring as Principal of Pleasant Lake Elementary School in Indiana. During her long career, she stressed the importance of music and supporting organizations that help with the development of children.

Marillac and St. Vincent's would like to thank our generous donor and the Chicago Opera Theater for this amazing opportunity. We cannot wait to see what the children learn and develop as their creative juices flow.



a d v o c a c y

A Whole New Look

In the past year, Marillac Social Center and St. Vincent de Paul Center have undergone some changes, including the unveiling of a new logo and the introduction of a new name: Marillac St. Vincent Family Services. As we continue in the collaborative process, we are proud to introduce the new look on our websites.

Drawing inspiration from the new logo, the updated look reflects our goal to provide transparent messaging and communication to our stakeholders. While the websites maintain each Center's name, visitors will find more information on both Centers, as well as a more user-friendly interface and navigation. The introduction of upgraded websites further promotes our aim to better serve the community efficiently and effectively.

We hope to have some more exciting developments to share with you regarding Marillac St. Vincent Family Services in the upcoming year. We encourage you to check out both websites:

www.marillachouse.org | www.svdpc.org

save the date



Fleur de Lis Ball

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY TWENTY-THIRD
TWO-THOUSAND AND THIRTEEN

Navy Pier Grand Ballroom

HONORING

JoAnn & Bill Kunkel

AND

Ken O'Keefe and Beecken Petty O'Keefe & Company

COCKTAILS • DINNER • DANCING • RAFFLE • SILENT & LIVE AUCTIONS
MUSICAL GUESTS THE GENTLEMEN OF LEISURE

**Purchase
your tickets now!**
svdpc.org
or
marillachouse.org

312.278.4218

Event Tickets:
\$350 per person
Tables of 10
start at \$3,500

**Sponsorship
opportunities
are available**

MARILLAC
St VINCENT
Family Services



P.O. Box 14699
Chicago, IL 60614