

Society of Saint Vincent de Paul

Greater Toronto Central Council

In the Loop

February 2023

From the Chair...

The Vincentian calling can be a marvellous blessing, providing as it does, the many opportunities to interact with and help poor persons. There is, however, a great temptation to believe that we can be all things to all people; that we can save the world one poor soul at a time. Those of us fortunate enough to work in Conferences with generous donors and full coffers often have no idea how “the other half” lives. By the “other half” I mean Conferences with few members, a surfeit of Neighbours in Need and very modest donations with which to work; Conferences in which it’s a monthly exercise of trying to multiply the few loaves and fishes to feed the multitude.

Over the past few years, the Particular Council Presidents group has engaged in many discussions about the meaning of “equity of service”. There is much more work to do on this important Guiding Principle as it is the essence of our core work as Vincentians. Too often we have tied assistance to dates on a calendar instead of doing the challenging work of assessing true need and real priorities. It’s a difficult thing to ask the hard questions of those who have come to us for help. The hardest question of all, but the one most in need of being asked, is “What’s changed?” If the answer is “nothing”, then is this person a real priority.

We are called to be good stewards of the donations we receive. We’re not a government agency or an ATM machine and we don’t have a secret money tree. Some neighbours are fortunate enough to live in subsidized housing, many are not so lucky. Some need a lot of help once or for a short time until they get on their feet. Some have come to expect they will get assistance because it’s their turn. Some are the second or third generation of a family that has been coming to the Society for years, sometimes as frequently as monthly. We owe a duty to our donors and our neighbours to exercise good judgement and sound stewardship and if that means having a difficult conversation or making a hard choice, well, that too is part of our mission as Vincentians.

Fortunately, we have excellent resources and mentoring available. Our current virtual sessions on home visitation are well worth attending and I highly recommend them to both new and seasoned Vincentians. As we look into the future, recognizing the aging demographic of both members and donors, the dwindling parishioner base and the apparent growing need, we must redouble our efforts to ensure our priorities are sound and our funds are going when and where they are most truly needed. Let us continue to pray to our patron for wisdom, strength and guidance as we strive to fulfill our mission.

Have you heard about ...

➤ Home Visitation Round Tables?

The next session will take place virtually on Thursday, March, 16, 2023, from 6:30 pm until 7:30 pm, the link will be provided. Home Visitation Chapter 2, the second session that was held on February 16th was again well attended; Vincentians are always eager to seek out and share information on Home Visitation. After each session, **Frequently Asked Questions** will be released by chapter. Chapter Two is available by clicking this [link](#); Chapter Three will follow after the March session.

Home Visitation and COVID update

There are no COVID restrictions in place for Home Visitation. We had previously advised Vincentians that the Archdiocesan directives requiring vaccines applied for Conference meetings held in person within parishes. These directives are no longer in place. However, in an effort to protect each other and the persons we serve, general precautions should be observed; stay home if you are ill, wash and sanitize your hands, and Vincentians may certainly wear a mask if they so choose. Vincentians may not make inquiries as to a Neighbour's vaccine status.

➤ Spiritual Facilitator Sessions?

Please join us on Monday, February 27th at 7:00 pm for a virtual interactive workshop on developing and sharing Spiritual Reflections. You do not need to be a Spiritual Facilitator to join, all are welcome to learn more through this interactive workshop. ([click here to join the session](#)). The third session will be Monday, March 27, 2023.

Countdown to Camp!

A sure sign that we are rounding the corner on winter, preparations are underway to run Marygrove Camp and Camp Ozanam this upcoming summer.

Following recommendations from Public Health, there will be **no** requirement for campers to be vaccinated against COVID-19 this summer, unless directives change. We will continue to implement best practice and pandemic protocols to limit the spread of the virus, such as testing, sanitizing and social distancing where possible. Camp packages will be sent to the Conferences for mid-March; campers are signed up on a first come, first served basis.



Both camps are hiring staff. If you know of any young person interested in working with children in a beautiful outdoor setting, please provide this link to our staff applications <https://svdptoronto.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Camp-staff-letter-and-fillable-form.pdf>

May 6th is the annual Marygrove Camp Rake-a-Thon, now that is a sure sign that spring is on the horizon! More information will be included in the camp registration packages.

Let us introduce you to: The Society's West End Emergency Shelter, Elisa House

Elisa House, is a 40 bed emergency shelter funded by the City of Toronto for women who have experienced difficulty maintaining permanent housing or are experiencing homelessness. Women are able to live in this emergency shelter community, accessing self-directed services in a supportive, home-like atmosphere, governed by safety, respect and dignity. The length of stay is dependent on the ability to access appropriate next stage housing, which there is a shocking lack of in the GTA, leaving many women with no choice but to live in the emergency shelter system for months to years.

Elisa House opened in December 2001; it is the fourth shelter in the Society's group of shelters for women. Saint Vincent de Paul staff, Board members, and municipal and federal government officials worked together to open this the first facility of its kind in Etobicoke. The shelter was created by renovating the front portion of the building used by the Society's Stores Division.

Program Objectives:

- To provide safe accommodation, nutritious meals and basic necessities to the women we serve.
- To ensure an environment that is free from bigotry, discrimination, other oppressive behaviour, and all forms of violence.
- To assist women with identifying their individual goals and to ensure they are provided with the support and resources required to meet these goals.
- To encourage each woman to be independent, competent and increase their self-esteem.
- To provide a comfortable living environment, that is self-directed by the residents at Elisa House.
- To ensure each woman has access to, and the option to utilize community resources, that provide financial income, healthcare, emotional support, education and training, spiritual support, social and recreational opportunities and ultimately, personal housing.
- To provide continuity of care for women who have left the program, and who wish to maintain contact and receive ongoing support.



Elisa House is named for Elisa Ozanam, Frederic's older sister who taught him to read and was a second mother to him, while his father Dr. Jean-Antoine, and mother Marie Nantas, travelled to care for the needy and sick in the city of Lyons where they lived. At the time, typhus raged throughout the area, taking many lives. In 1819, when Frederic was 6 years old, 18-year-old Elisa became sick with meningitis, and died suddenly; the shock left him utterly desolate. He always remembered the care and compassion from his older sister Elisa in his formative years, and built his outreach of service to the needy on this compassion. Elisa House carries this tradition forward in our work with women experiencing homelessness.