

# Society of Saint Vincent de Paul Toronto Central Council

## *Annual report on the Special Works of the Incorporated Entity*

Time and time again we hear, “we had no idea how much work your organization does”. The greatest strength of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul Toronto Central Council is our ability to provide a wide range of services, care and compassion to those who turn to us in their time of need. Our advent into supportive and emergency housing began over thirty years ago with the Board of Directors relying on a combination of faith, courage and determination establishing programs that addressed persistent poverty and related issues. Through valued relationships with our funders and donors, the Society continues to provide a level of care and service that respects the dignity of all individuals seeking comfort and security in housing and our other outreach programs.

## **Supportive Housing:**

**DePaul, Vincent and Martineau Homes** funded by the Ministry of Community and Social Services provides a comfortable home and full time care to 18 adults with developmental disabilities. Serving men and women some of whom lived in institutions, this program emphasizes the experience of living in a family like environment in three single family type dwellings in Scarborough, Ontario. One of our first residents Lionel, turned 95 years of age this past May. We are grateful that for the past thirty years of his life, he has lived with the Society and is truly valued as a member of our family. The Society successfully passed the rigorous compliance inspection in February which ensures all policies and procedures are current and up to date, that health and safety practices are developed and implemented and that resident well-being is all carefully identified and monitored. Additionally, the Society participated in an extensive annual Risk Assessment program which provides for an understanding of the agencies capabilities to manage risk and liability.

The Society also operates **St. Francis Residence** providing permanent housing to 24 men and women who live with mental health challenges. This program was not an easy one for the Society to take on; perhaps due to the stigma of mental health there was long and considered debate 30 years ago as to whether we could provide the necessary service. Thankfully, the decision makers of the time agreed to this venture and the result is a home that has provided a family like environment to persons who may otherwise be living in shelters or in substandard housing. Funded in part by Habitat Services of the City of Toronto, **St. Francis Residence** receives \$258,762 in funding on an annual basis. This amount of funding combined with rent contributions from residents allows for 24 hour support to the residents, most whom rely on the Society to ensure that they can live semi-independently in a calm and secure environment.

## **Recovery Housing:**

It was Vincentians who raised the concern that so many families whom they met through home visitations were affected by the devastations of alcohol and drug addictions. The network of pre-treatment and post treatment homes was established to provide persons from all walks of life with the opportunity to regain confidence, life skills and relationship repair in a clean and sober environment. **Ozanam House** provides safe housing to 11 men awaiting entry into a treatment facility. For many, **Ozanam House** is the first step into re-integration to a world not clouded by the devastating impact of substance abuse. Like our other supportive housing opportunities, **Ozanam House** has been provided this much need service for thirty years. Once residents receive treatment from a recognized facility, they may choose to live in one of our thirteen recovery homes located throughout the GTA. Most of the homes are available to the Society through the

Toronto Community Housing Scattered Housing initiative, each home accommodating between four and seven residents who may stay for up to six months providing they maintain a sober lifestyle. Originally funded as a men's shelter, **Ozanam House** now receives annual funding of \$ 426,624 from the Ministry of Health annually as part of the local LIHN's. Funding for the **VincenPaul Community Homes** is provided through resident rent contributions with a small grant to offset the one full time management salary. The current focus of the relationship with Toronto Community Housing (TCHC) is ensuring that all aspects of life safety, primarily fire safety regulations are implemented in each of the homes in partnership with TCHC and Toronto Fire Services.

## **Emergency Housing:**

Meeting the needs of the homeless in Toronto, especially the gap in services for women, became a priority of the Board of Directors in the mid 1980's. Working with the City of Toronto, Hostel Services, the Society established four women's shelters over the past thirty years, **Mary's Home, Elisa House, St. Clare's Residence** and **Amelie House**. Over the past year, the Society has implemented the new Shelter Standards which included the renewal of all policy and procedures, as well as additional intensive training on several new initiatives including customer services, case management and health and safety. The shelters serve a clientele who find themselves at times chronically under housed, challenged by substance abuse, mental and physical health concerns, and facing a profound lack of services and safe, affordable housing. Residents of our shelters range in age from 18 to 88 years of age; women from all walks of life: mothers, grandmothers, sisters, daughters, aunts, nieces all whom are disenfranchised, disconnected and for some, entirely alone. The Society receives \$2,964,945 annually to operate these 132 shelter beds which are virtually at capacity 365 days a year.

## **Additional Programs and Services:**

### **Summer Camps: Marygrove Camp and Camp Ozanam**

**Marygrove Camp** continues to provide girls from disadvantaged families with an 8 day residential camp experience on Georgian Bay in Tiny Township. Over 1,100 girls aged 5 – 13 attend each summer to enjoy a full range of traditional camping experiences. While **Marygrove** continued its good work, time and energy was spent in developing a camping program for **Camp Ozanam** on its new site in South River. The Board authorized the purchase of a thirty acre site in 2016 and the first abridged camping season took place in August 2016 offering 400 boys all the joys of summer camp. With improvements to the infrastructure, **Camp Ozanam** will work towards an increased capacity, eventually serving 1,000 boys. **Marygrove Camp** is funded through an annual Archdiocesan of Toronto parish collection, and **Camp Ozanam** is funded through a Catholic Charities grant from ShareLife. All capital improvements are made possible through generous donations to the Society from persons who appreciate the impact of a positive summer camping experience for children. The success of both these camps is an interesting partnership between donors, funders, alumnae, interactions between two camp staff teams, and ongoing support from the head office staff, warehouse staff and program managers all working towards the common goal of ensuring children have a safe and positive experience. Both camps are accredited by the Ontario Camps Association and adhere to all applicable operating regulations and legislation.

## **Stores Division:**

With a heavy emphasis on partnering, the Stores Division is able to serve families and individuals in need through the provision of material goods and beds throughout the GTA. Persons pass on used clothing and household goods to the Society. We in turn supply our network of three stores as well as our Homes and Camps with needed items, and surplus items are given to Salvation Army in exchange for vouchers. Additionally, surplus material is sold by the pound with the proceeds of the sales used to support the good works of the Society. With over 1,200 beds provided this past year, the need to assist families and individuals has increased significantly over the past five years. The Stores Division is indebted to the Vincentian community for their ongoing support of the Bundle Up collection program which we hope to expand to workplaces and schools to maximize our collection abilities.

## **The Next Five Years:**

The Society continues to be challenged by the pressures of sustainable funding, changing legislation and increased reporting demands by funders. Thankfully we have been able to manage these issues while maintaining our primary goal which is to alleviate need and to provide service that is reflective of the key element of Vincentian outreach - person to person service. We have a talented group of Vincentians who serve on the Board of Directors, and many other Vincentians who serve on committees and assist the senior management with financial management, governance, health and safety, membership development and special projects. This past year, we revisited and updated all operating policies and procedures, negotiated insurance coverage from a new experienced provider, implemented a revised employee benefit package with a different carrier and experienced our first audit with a newly selected auditing firm.

We continue to stay true to our mission and Frederic Ozanam's challenge to address the issues which lie at the root of poverty. The amazingly talented and dedicated program managers, head office staff and front line staff remain the heart of the programs. They are committed to the work of this wonderful organization, willing to share their talents and support each other, working diligently always with the needs of their residents, campers and customers first and foremost in their efforts. As we move into the next decade of service, we will be faced with increasingly complex issues including effective governance, sustainable funding, growing need for service and increased demands on our organization to maintain our high level of excellence and transparency. The combination of competent, dedicated staff and committed volunteers will ensure our continued success in all we do. Please consider ways you can assist the continued success of Toronto Central Council.

Please refer to the secretarial report for an update on Vincentian activities across Toronto Central Council.

Respectfully Submitted,

Louise Coutu  
Executive Director