

The Wirral Vincentian

November 2022

Welcome from Jeannette!

Welcome to November's newsletter for St Vincent's Wirral Support Centre. A big 'welcome' to our new centre volunteer, who has joined us since the last newsletter, Ted.

October was a very busy month at the Centre, with an increase of **188 beneficiaries** and **27 referrals** on last month. The clothes bank has seen a big increase in beneficiaries looking for support, with a lot of people attending for warm, winter clothing and bedding.

Working closely with some of our Conference colleagues, we will be starting our 'Places of Warmth' on **Wednesday 23rd November**. We are so pleased to be offering a warm, safe place for the Wirral Community at the Centre, along with several Parish centres too. Please find below a timetable.

We will provide a warm space for people to attend, reducing some of the worries about how to stay warm this winter and offer a range of support. This will include warm drinks and food, fresh fruit, the opportunity to play games such as scrabble and chess, access to duvets and blankets, access to budgeting information and advice, recipes and 'low cost' meals advice.

Centre 'Places of Warmth' Timetable– Starting Wednesday 23rd November

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Weekends
3pm to 6pm		2pm to 4pm	10:30am to 3pm		Centre Closed

Our first 'coffee morning' was held on October 13th and it was a wonderful occasion. It was enjoyed by centre staff and volunteers, along with Foodbank volunteers and many Conference members. A raffle was drawn that raised **£109.86**.

Our 'Knit and Natter' group will start on **Wednesday 23rd November, 2pm to 3pm**. We would love this group to reach out to as many of our communities as possible, so if you are a knitter in Knutsford, Birkenhead or Chester, you can still join us.

The idea is that people can attend the Centre each Wednesday afternoon to knit, share a cuppa, natter and make friends. For those who are not able to join us in person, you can still get involved! We will set up a virtual Teams meeting, so for those who can join us online to say hi, they can. Otherwise, we will share a pattern for a blanket that we would like to knit. The finished blanket will then have the SVP logo sewn onto it and given as a gift to one of our beneficiaries. Of course, you can knit other items, you may be working on a new jumper for yourself or an outfit for a family member. The main thing is we come together to share a love of knitting... or develop it, whilst making new friends.

Christmas at the Centre!

We have now finalised the plans for our Christmas celebrations, as below. Further information by way of poster will be shared over the next week too.

The grotto will take place at the Centre and there will be an opportunity for children to meet Father Christmas, see the nativity scene and receive a gift. We will be advertising this and will be asking for details of children who will be attending. This will allow us to ensure we have enough suitable presents for all age groups. Further details on how to book a place will be shared on our Facebook page and via posters. If you plan to attend, please contact the Centre to book a place at one of the following times;

Saturday 10th December, 10am to 2pm

Monday 12th December 9:30am to 11am

Wednesday 14th December 9:30am to 11am.

The Christmas party will take place at the Centre on ***Thursday 8th December, 3:30pm to 5pm.*** We would love to see as many staff and volunteers from the Centre, our partners and conferences to join us for this festive celebration. There will be festive food and drink, singing from two local primary schools and a raffle. Please let us know if you plan to join us, by contacting the centre.

We will also be making Christmas gift boxes/hampers for males and females who may not otherwise receive a gift this Christmas. We will gather a list of beneficiaries to receive a gift and ask for our Conference colleagues to pass on details of beneficiaries who you are working with and would like to nominate for a gift. Gifts will be collected from the Centre or delivered by the Conference member during the week of December 19th. Please pass on names and details to the Centre.

The Centre has developed a great partnership with a local community theatre, ***'The Little Theatre'*** and exciting discussions have begun! The theatre has kindly offered to allow the Centre to sell tickets for the dress rehearsal. All funds from the sales will be donated to the Centre. This is such a wonderful offer and should be a fun night! The panto takes place on ***Wednesday 14th December*** with doors opening at 7pm and the show starting at 7:30pm. Tickets are £5 each. We will share a poster with you all soon, but in the meantime put the date in your diary and contact the Centre too book your place!

We hope to see you all over the next few weeks!

Jeannette



New referrals	Total Beneficiaries	Donations In	Cash in via donations, sales	Total Items Given Out
515 An increase from 488	1177 An increase from 989	2166 An increase from 518 items	£126.86 £109.86 was from the coffee morning	545 An increase in items from 475

Client Quotes

“Feel very humbled and don’t feel judged”

“Absolutely amazing, wonderful and brilliant. Lifesaving”

“The staff are amazing, I love it!”

“You’re doing an amazing job!”

Case Study

The Centre team were recently invited to join a group of parents at a local primary school. We gave a talk about the Centre and all the services and activities that we provide. It was a well-attended meeting and lots of information was offered.

At the meeting, there was a parent who is an asylum seeker who spoke of the difficulties of affording warm clothing for his children. We gave him our address and more details about the clothes bank.

Later that day, we were delighted to see him at the Centre! He spent time with the clothes bank volunteers, receiving bags of clothes for his four children. We were also able to help him with household items, such as duvets, blankets and bedding. During his visit, we gave him leaflets outlining our other services that he could engage with for support. He thanked the team for all their help.

The following day, he returned to the Centre with a friend, who was also an asylum seeker. We were able to help his friend in the same way with clothing and household items. They both enjoyed a cuppa, biscuits and a chat in the café area and told us they were so appreciative of the support and kindness they have received.

John's Fred Talk

Students of the genre of Christmas films may have noted the difficulties inhabitants from the North Pole have in adjusting to the ordinary world of human experience. I watched the film 'Annie Claus is coming to Town' last month and there is a scene which illustrates this well. On her first day in a human town Annie, the daughter of Santa Claus, greets everyone with a smile and starts conversations with complete strangers. The reaction she gets is a mixture of confusion and hostility reflecting the fact that grown-ups aren't expected to behave in such an odd way. In a quite related way sociologists over the years have written about the phenomena of riding on the London Tube when people talk to or look at anyone they don't know. The response such people receive is that they will be completely ignored. So in real life and in film we can see certain sociological codes at work in relation to how we encounter other people.

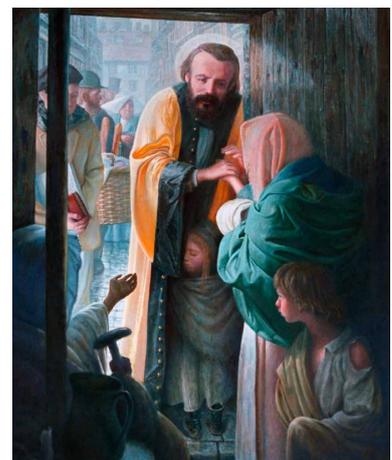


A few days after watching the film I read an account on a Vincentian website in which the writer noted how his young niece used to approach other children and say, 'Can I be your friend?' Insightfully the article compared this to the Vincentian charism: we too, as members of the SVP, should approach strangers with a child-like offer of friendship.



Frederic Ozanam was concerned with capturing the right balance of simplicity and open-ness when he organised the first conferences of visitation that became the SVP. He wanted to preserve the Christian spirit of friendship so that those being helped didn't see the people visiting them as 'experts' or of a superior social ranking. In times of turbulence and uncertainty seeking to nurture an element

of child-like friendship within all layers of the SVP's work will be a challenging but essential part of our ongoing activities.



By John Ellison

Service Spotlight



Energy Projects Plus (EPP) is an independent non-profit organisation and a registered environmental charity that has been providing free advice and support since 1996. Their mission is to reduce residential energy consumption and to mitigate the impact of climate change across Merseyside and Cheshire. This is done by helping the community reduce their household energy bills and working with partners to deliver services that reduce fuel poverty. Understanding what is currently happening across the country and Europe, helps put into perspective how vital a service Energy Projects Plus is to the Wirral community.

Fuel poverty is the condition of being unable to keep your home heated. Fuel poverty exists wherever the property is inefficient, for example EPC rating D or worse, or the household would be pushed below the official UK poverty line if they heated the property to adequate levels. The poverty line is defined as being 60% of the median income in the UK. Currently, this means that any household earning £17,640 per year are living below the poverty line. Presently, 13.4 million people live in households below the poverty line. According to the government's 2022 Annual Fuel Poverty Report, 3.03 million households are projected to be in fuel poverty this winter. The current gas crisis is a knock-on effect from last winter and the increasing supplier costs.

Many countries had cold winters in 2021, so more gas than usual was burned. This reduced availability and drove the costs up. At the same time, supplier costs quadrupled. Thankfully, our suppliers cannot pass on the full cost to us as our energy bills have a price cap. The price cap is the maximum energy suppliers are allowed to charge us per kWh for the energy we use on the standard variable tariff. For an 'average' household, this is around 12,000kWh for gas and 3,000kWh for electricity. This usually costs around £1,971 per year combined. However, from October 1st it is rising by 82%, which increases energy bills to £3,582. Ofgem may announce a further 19% increase for January 2023, which will take the average bill to £4,268.

Energy Projects Plus has identified steps we can take to reduce our bills. Firstly, read your bill and understand your usage. Taking regular meter readings will ensure your bills are accurate, rather than estimated by the supplier. If you cannot read your meters, suppliers have priority services for vulnerable customers. Secondly, make changes to reduce your usage. For example, by not overfilling your kettle or making sure the thermostat is not set too high. Thirdly, if you have not got a smart meter, request one from your supplier. This will show you how much energy you are using.

Energy Projects Plus have friendly, expert energy advisors who can answer questions over the phone. In some cases, they may be able to offer home visits. During these home visits, some practical assistance can be given, such as LED bulbs and reviewing your energy bills and meters. Current advice topics include gas, water and electricity debt, draught proofing, tariff checks and much more!

Here at St Vincent's, we have a great EPP advisor, Heather, to help those who come through our door. Over time, we have seen an increasing demand for help with energy for our clients. EPP are in the centre every Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday between 1pm and 3pm. It is great having Heather at the centre and we believe she is providing our clients with outstanding support.

Cook with Philly

Continental Apple Cake

Ingredients

Topping

- 1oz butter
- 3ozs self raising flour
- 1oz caster sugar
- 1 tablespoon water

Base

- 2oz margarine
- 2ozs caster sugar
- 1 large egg
- 4ozs self raising flour
- 3 large cooking apples

Price Comparison

Aldi: £5.94

Asda: £7.57

Tesco: £9.00

Method

1. Preheat oven to gas mark 4/180°C.
2. Grease cake tin.
3. Cream all base ingredients together and put in the cake tin
4. Peel and slice the apples, placing them on top of the mixture.
5. Make the topping by rubbing the ingredients together and stirring in the water.
6. Put topping mixture on top of the apples.
7. Cook in the oven for 1 hour.

We are delighted to announce our latest partner... ***The Little Theatre!***

The Little Theatre is the last surviving theatre in Birkenhead and is home to the Carlton Players. The Theatre was converted from a church in the 1950s and has housed many productions over the decades.

We will be selling tickets for the Christmas Panto which will take place on **Wednesday 14th December at 7:30pm**. Doors open at 7pm and it is the final dress rehearsal. There are only 100 tickets available and are **£5 each**. The panto is called "*Humpty Dumpty The Eggs Factor*".

The Theatre would like to appeal for props for shows, particularly bakelite radios. They are also looking for volunteers to work backstage.

