



## SOLID NONPROFIT BACKGROUND a plus for new SVdP Executive Director Keith Kondrich



Keith Kondrich is no stranger to nonprofit management. He has held a number of executive positions in Pittsburgh and Erie before accepting the position of executive director of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, Pittsburgh District. Keith follows Fred Just, who retired in December, but continues to be involved with SVdP as conference coordinator on a part-time basis. (See story page 4.)

Before joining SVdP, Keith was the executive director of Beginning with Books – Center for Early Literacy, an organization that focuses on the early

literacy needs of low-income children in southwestern Pennsylvania. His grant writing, corporate sponsorship and development skills supported the strategic direction for early literacy programming.

Keith credits an effective Web presence for some of this success. “I am not one to use technology for technology’s sake,” he explains, “but within a carefully orchestrated strategy today’s boom of social media may provide a powerful tool for reaching out to the community to spread the word that we are here to meet basic human needs.”

He’s comfortable managing adult programs based on experience with Elderhostel, Inc.’s eastern regional field office, overseeing lifelong learning for adults age 55+ in 28 states and the District of Columbia. A natural at building partnerships, he brought groups as diverse as the Pittsburgh Opera and The Allegheny County Coroners Office to the mix of programming coordinated with 150 local organizations.

Keith was director of volunteer services for United Way of Allegheny County and vice president of volunteer services for United Way of Erie County, creating the “Hometown Hero of the Week” award and more than doubling the number of volunteers for the Day of Caring.

“I want to find ways to engage volunteers as a family,” Keith says of one of his 2010 goals. “SVdP is uniquely positioned in parishes to build cross-generational teams of volunteers to support the ever-increasing need for our services.” He adds, “In these challenging economic times there are even more opportunities for us to truly be ‘neighbors serving neighbors.’”

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### “Neighbors Serving Neighbors” in Haiti

#### Cash contributions the immediate need

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul has received many calls inquiring about ways to assist victims of the January 12 earthquake in Haiti. National President of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul USA Joseph D. Flannigan has issued a call to the 120,000 volunteer members of the Society in the United States, as well as to the general public, to help. The immediate need is for cash contributions.

The SVdP has a permanent presence in Haiti. Society of St. Vincent de Paul volunteers are at the scene of disasters long after many other service organizations have left. Society volunteers live and work in, and are primarily native to, the communities in which they serve. In the aftermath of natural disasters, this permanent presence is particularly important. SVdP volunteers already know and understand the people.

“The Society of St. Vincent de Paul makes no distinctions in service to the victims of disaster. We address their needs, whatever they may be, and we keep on addressing them,” says Roger Playwin, SVdP National Executive Director.

Contributions for Haiti Disaster Relief and Recovery can be made via the Society’s Web site [www.svdppitt.org](http://www.svdppitt.org) or mailed to:

#### Haiti Earthquake

Society of St. Vincent de Paul  
1243 N. Franklin St.  
Pittsburgh, PA 15233

Locally, the Beaver County Council’s annual golf outing benefits Maison Fortune’ Orphanage in Haiti. For an earthquake update go to [www.maisonfortune.org](http://www.maisonfortune.org) and click on News.

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Submit ideas for newsletter  
articles and photos to  
darlenecollier@svdppitt.org.  
Please include names of persons  
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## A NOTE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Saint Vincent de Paul said “Give me persons of prayer and they will be capable of anything.”

Indeed, as Vincentians our work is rooted in and flows from a life of prayer with a life of intimacy with Jesus Christ. And yet, how often do we become so caught up in the works of justice and mercy that we fail to find time for prayer? Let’s face it, we are all busy! The demand of our Vincentian service to others needs to be juggled amidst personal and family needs, job and career responsibilities, and other church and community volunteer commitments. In my own life, when I become “too busy” to pray, I often fall into the trap of rationalizing that “my work” is “my prayer.” After all, I already know a lot about Jesus and I am doing His work....right?

It is very easy to blur the distinction between knowing a lot about Jesus and actually knowing Him. We hear about Jesus all the time. We hear about him at Mass on Sunday. We read about him in scripture or in countless devotionals and periodicals. We can rent DVDs ranging from “The Greatest Story Ever Told” to “The Passion of the Christ” to help us visualize about Jesus. It seems that everybody from street corner evangelists to rock-and-roll stars has something to say about Jesus.

Information about Jesus is as easy to come by as the statistics on our favorite sports hero or movie star. For example, I can know all about Pittsburgh Steeler Hines Ward ... where he was born, his most memorable moment, his longest receptions, his total yards, career touchdowns, charities he donates to, and even what he keeps in his refrigerator. However, I can never know Hines Ward in the way that his family and closest friends know him. I can know a great deal about a person without really knowing that person.

So it is with our relationship to Jesus. To be effective Vincentians, we need to cultivate the kind of relationship with Jesus that is as familiar as that between the closest of friends or a husband and wife. We are not naïve do-gooders. We are not glorified social workers. We are first and foremost people of faith. The good work that we do, the gifts and resources that we share come from *knowing* (rather than *knowing about*) Jesus.

As we approach the season of Easter, let us recommit ourselves to spending some time each day in quiet prayer, getting to know Jesus a little better. Reflecting on the words of Saint Vincent de Paul, we are confident that as persons of prayer, we are capable of anything.

### Keith Kondrich (continued from page 1)

Keith was the first full-time director of Gannon University’s Center for Social Concerns. His model experiential learning programs took students to Harlem and the Cheyenne River Reservation in South Dakota. Campus work also included program director for the Collegiate YMCA based at the University of Pittsburgh. Keith placed more than 500 volunteers annually at 20 different community-based organizations. A “Youth Day of Caring” may be in the offing for SVdP, he says.

On any given evening or weekend you might find him with Boy Scout Troop 23 in Edgewood or Swissvale’s Cub Scout Pack 52 or serving as instructor for the Boys Scouts’ Ad Altare Dei Religious Medal. On Sunday he’s a lector at Word of God Parish in Swissvale and a member of the School Development Committee. Keith is a candidate in the Permanent Diaconate Class of 2011 for the Diocese of Pittsburgh. He and his wife, Helen Laffey, have four children, Wilson, 16, Lily, 12, Teddy, 10, and Tommy, 7.

# Deal that dreams are made of found at Golden Mile Thrift Store



One lucky size 4 bride-to-be recently found the deal of a lifetime at SDdP! Among the priceless items donated at the Golden Mile Thrift Store (Rt. 286) was a stunning cream-colored silk shantung wedding gown with the original price tag of \$1,900 still on it! It survived multiple sales and mark-downs until it was attractively priced at \$74.99!

Carolyn Kintzing, store manager, reports, "Our most popular seller continues to be the upscale clothing, consistently accounting for 45 - 55% of weekly clothing sales at this store." That's probably why Thursday is among the store's busiest days. Thursday is "upscale day" with all brand name labels 50% off the regularly low prices.

But as Carolyn likes to say, "Every day something is half off at St. Vincent de Paul – Monday, seniors day; Tuesday, children; Wednesday,



*You just never know what surprises you'll find in our Thrift Stores! SVdP staff play many roles. Jessica Van Horn becomes "bride-for-the-day" modeling the donated silk shantung gown. Chuck Manuccia stands in as "father of the bride." And yes, the flowers and Chuck's jacket are for sale, too!*

ladies; Friday, men." Saturdays are even better – one third of the clothes are an amazing 99 cents. No wonder Saturdays are typically the busiest day of the week. Even more popular is the Quarterly Sale (the last Friday and Saturday in March, June, September and December) when everything in the store is half off for two days. (All five SVdP Thrift Stores offer these bargains.)

"These are fun days to work," Carolyn says. The customer wins by getting to stock up on great merchandise – from housewares to clothing and everything in between – at half of SVdP's "already great prices." And the Society wins – the increased sales directly translate into more dollars to help those in need. Plus the sale cleans out the store giving staff an opportunity to restock, refresh and reenergize the store. Maintenance is ongoing. At Golden Mile this past year safety upgrades were made both inside and out. New outdoor lighting makes the parking lot brighter.

Curbs were highlighted a bright yellow to make them more visible.

Carolyn explains, "We strive to keep our stock fresh and our racks full for the customers. There is the growing challenge of meeting the increasing needs of the folks for whom the economy has become overwhelming," she adds.

But in the 14 years Carolyn has worked with SVdP one thing has never changed.

"We have the best customers in the world," Carolyn proclaims. "Our customers are loyal shoppers and more. They are part of our family of friends. Regular customers share their life stories and care about the personal lives of the staff. They even bake us cookies and bring us fresh coffee," she adds with a smile. "I spent 10 years in commercial retail work and I can tell you what we have at our SVdP stores is vastly different. We have a very special opportunity to touch the lives of our customers. But they give that back doubly."

*For directions to any of the five SVdP Thrift stores – Golden Mile/Monroeville, South Hills, Coraopolis, Penn Hills and Sharpsburg – go to [www.svdppitt.org](http://www.svdppitt.org). Store hours are 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday – Saturday, except Sharpsburg, which closes at 6 p.m.*

*Drop off donations at the stores during those hours or call 412-321-1071, Ext. 501, to arrange a pick up for larger donations.*

## Utility funds provide essential services to 147 clients

Utility bills pose particular challenges for St. Vincent de Paul clients. In 2009 twenty-nine of the 114 conferences requested funds. For the second consecutive year, SVdP clients have benefited from the Samuel and Katherine McKee Coal Trust of The Pittsburgh Foundation. Forty-seven clients received assistance with heating and electric bills totaling \$7,237. SVdP supplemented those funds with \$15,000 more. SVdP funds assisted more than 100 clients with heating, electricity and water bills.

## Retired executive director Fred Just takes on new role as Conference Coordinator

Fred Just, who stepped down as Executive Director of the Council of Pittsburgh at the end of December, began his new role as Conference Coordinator in early January. Working part-time, he will provide assistance to the 111 Conferences and their 1,300 members.

“These Vincentian volunteers are the backbone of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul and our central office will do whatever we can to make their work easier,” Fred said. This help will consist of supplying the Conference with promotional materials such as flyers, orientation packets, audio visuals, prayer services; assisting them with their annual reports; updating the Conference Directory; and working with them to resolve any issues.

Another aspect of Fred’s work will be meeting with parishes in the hope of establishing new Conferences or helping existing Conferences to recruit new members. During the past year the national SVdP office published a list of seventeen *Standards of Excellence* that the national leadership would like to see Conferences throughout the country adopt. The Council of Pittsburgh will incorporate this effort into the strategic plan being developed this year – all geared to making the Society more proficient in serving the poor.



Keith Kondrich, new SVdP executive director, and Fred Just, retired executive director and now SVdP’s conference coordinator, plan a course of re-energizing the SVdP mission for challenging times.

### St. Philip Conference finds there are Steelers fans everywhere!

Members of the St. Philip Conference, Crafton, organized an “indoor tailgater” for residents at Little Sisters of the Poor. The event was complete with hot dogs and the fixin’s, lots of black and gold, and a “nail biter” of a game the Steelers won in the last second against Green Bay on December 20. “Our pastor Father Walter Dworak has encouraged us to find new ways to reach out to our community,” said Al Bannon, a conference member. “A Steelers party seemed logical!”

### Pittsburgh District hosts SVdP Annual Eastern Region Meeting

Father Scott Seethaler, nationally renowned motivational speaker and Pittsburgh District spiritual advisor, will be among the featured speakers when The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul/ Pittsburgh District hosts the SVdP Annual Eastern Region Meeting May 21-23 at the Greentree Radisson Hotel.

More than 100 Vincentian volunteers and leaders from the Eastern Region, comprised of Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia and Washington. D.C., are expected to gather for the conference that includes opportunities for professional development, sharing best practices, spiritual renewal and fellowship.

Other guests and speakers will be Joseph Flannigan, SVdP National President; Roger Playwin, SVdP National Executive Director; and Father Larry Snyder, President of Catholic Charities USA.

For registration information, contact Fred Just at 412-321-1071, Ext. 207, or fredjust@svdpitt.org.



Pictured, left to right, are residents Esther King, Margaret Harvey and Mary Hartung, and conference members Gabe Gemma, Ron Ramolt, Bob Williams, Don Wolbert and Al Bannon. Not pictured: Bishop Zubick’s father Walter also participated along with other Conference members Joe Hoover, Con McGregor and Art Bannon.

## Appliance Access Program helps at-risk families remain in their homes

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul and North Hills Community Outreach are partnering to provide an Appliance Access Program to assist northern Allegheny County communities with demographics that include high numbers of people who are low –income, unemployed, single parents or senior citizens. The program focuses on those seeking first-time assistance and homeowners who are struggling to meet mortgage payments to enable them to remain in their homes. It is funded by The Pittsburgh Foundation Neighbor-Aid Initiative.

Qualified households will be able to access new, safe, reliable and energy-efficient appliances – refrigerators, ranges and water heaters. Washers and dryers may be considered on an exception basis.

Criteria include household income of 150% of the federal poverty level or income up to 200% of federal poverty level for those experiencing hardship situations, e.g., catastrophic illness, fire or other disastrous circumstances. Appliance need must be verified by a home visit. Participants are expected to contribute between \$20-60 toward the appliance cost and make selections from approved new appliances at designated appliance stores. There is no delivery and installation charge.

Applications will be accepted at North Hills Community Outreach sites in Allison Park, Millvale and North Boroughs for residents of the north boroughs, particularly Millvale, Etna, Sharpsburg, Bellevue, Avalon and Emsworth. SVdP will accept applications at its Manchester office for those in the 15212, 15214 and 15233 areas. Both agencies will accept applications from the Allegheny County Department of Human Services – Children, Youth and Family Services.

For additional information, contact NHCO, 412-487-6316, Ext. 3140, or SVdP, 412-321-1071, Ext. 205.

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