

## 2020—A Year of Milestones for Brown County and St. Vincent de Paul

In 2020, St. Vincent de Paul of Brown County celebrated 32 years of service to our neighbors in need in Brown County. It was a year worth remembering, both for its challenges but also for the blessings we received.

**March, 2020:** As the pandemic closed in on us, we had to shift from allowing families to choose their food inside the pantry to curbside service, practicing social distancing, wearing masks, and following CDC guidelines. Kevin Preuss, a retired cardiologist, helped us sort through health and safety issues and implemented an on-line scheduling system to ensure that we had volunteers each week. Pictured in the front row: John Aumage, Angie Aumage, and Sandy Ackerman. In the back row, Maggie Linscott, Ray Hulse, Jim Page, Kevin Preuss and Ed McGarrell. Our effort was also recognized by the Archdiocese in the Criterion: <https://archindy.org/criterion/local/2020/05-22/hunger.html>



**April, 2020:** Brown County Community Organized Against Disaster (COAD) initiated the concept of providing pop-up food distributions. Early pop-ups were hosted at the YMCA, Hard Truth Hills, and the parking lot at St. Vincent de Paul. Joining forces with community partners, food was also distributed to various locations in the County using the Head Start bus, the St. Vincent de Paul trailer, Brown County Access Bus and privately owned vehicles. Kim Robinson, Executive Director of the YMCA and member of COAD began to be a daily contributor to our response.

**May, 2020:** A formal agreement was reached with the Brown County IGA to allow St. Vincent de Paul to use the garden shop adjacent to the store as a resale shop. Theresa and John Zimnawoda took the lead on this project to offer collectibles, antiques and furniture for sale. Under the shadows of the pandemic, Theresa bravely opened the shop on Memorial Day Weekend and continued until October. Under Theresa's leadership, several thousands of dollars in funds were generated to use for the purchase of food.



**Summer, 2020:** By summer, Jonathan Bolte, our SVDP food coordinator, and Shirley Boardman, SVDP secretary, were meeting weekly via Zoom with the Northern Brown County Food Alliance whose initial focus was on food insecurity in what is considered a "food desert." These weekly meetings hosted by St. David's Episcopal Church, and chaired by Donna Niednagel expanded our ability to respond. SVDP Indianapolis took note of our challenges and offered to send their refrigerated truck, driven by Larry Heil, filled with food once a month from Indianapolis. Pictured here Bob Olinger and Larry Heil unload food boxes with the help of volunteers Yvonne Olinger, Cheryl Spurlock, Sandy Ackerman, and Jennifer Heller at Fruitdale Fire Department. Approximately 3000 pounds of food was distributed to 85 households at this pop-up. Becky McCarty began to provide routine notice of these distributions on Facebook. Notice also was provided via Facebook by Sean

Hilldreth, Brown County Community Foundation and by COAD. An emerging challenge was how to safely store large quantities of food in preparation for the pop-ups. A grant request was submitted to the Brown County Community Foundation and Hoosier Hills Food Bank to gain funds to install a walk-in cooler/freezer at the Warehouse. In the end a total of \$25000 in funding was secured.

**August, 2020.** After three months of strategic planning spearheaded by Jonathan Bolte, SVDP installed the walk-in cooler/freezer at the food pantry. The work involved obtaining building permits, getting quotes on equipment, architectural support from Michael Chamblee, electrical work done by Jim Page & Bob Olinger and carpentry work done by Scott Mills & Bill Bardes from Habitat for Humanity. Countless hours of hands-on effort by friends and family of Jonathan Bolte completed the project. Prior to this, SVDP had used more than 18 residential sized refrigerators and freezers to store food. A walk-in cooler/freezer allowed SVDP to eliminate 75% of the residential units and store multiple pallets of food in the freezer and in the cooler. Total cost of the project approached \$30,000. Pictured here is Angie Aumage arranging food inside the unit.



**BACK TO SCHOOL 2020:** Concurrently, John Aumage and Shirley Boardman, co-coordinators, organized and administered the 2020 Back to School Program. A total of 357 students from 155 families received \$60 vouchers to be redeemed at Walmart in Columbus, Indiana. More than a dozen organizations provided funding towards the program. Given that elementary teachers were facing extraordinary stress including the need to sanitize shared classroom materials, the SVDP board authorized \$500 VISA gift cards to each of the County's three elementary schools. Total program cost was \$22,124.43.

**September, 2020:** With encouragement from Maddison Miller, CEO of the Brown County Community Foundation, and Kim Robinson a grant was submitted to the Foundation to purchase a used refrigerator truck. On September 30, after a nation-wide search, Shirley Boardman completed a transaction at Stoops Freightliner in Indianapolis to purchase a 2011 26 foot Freightliner refrigerated truck. Warren Schade, TRIAD, Kim Robinson and Jonathan Bolte made the trip to Indianapolis to evaluate the vehicle prior to finalizing the purchase. As a community resource, authorized drivers representing SVDP, COAD, TRIAD and Mother's Cupboard are currently approved. Kim Robinson provided us with a photo of one of the truck's trips to Midwest Food in mid-October. Pictured here Bill Robinson, YMCA, and Warren Schade wait to load the truck at Midwest Food. Total cost for purchase of the truck, pallet jacks and other accessories was \$36,000. We call the truck "Mary Jane."



**November, 2020:** In support of Brown County's effort, SVDP Indianapolis offered SVDP Brown County a box truck which Jonathan Bolte picked up on Thanksgiving Eve. Pictured here is the 2008 Freightliner which is also equipped with a lift and can handle pallets of food that do not require refrigeration. We call this truck, "Millie" in memory and honor of Sr. Mildred Wannemuehler, who founded St. Vincent de Paul in Brown County. Since the pandemic started, SVDP in collaboration with

community partners has distributed more than 100 tons of food to our Brown County neighbors. Typically two pop-up distributions are hosted each month along with the regular food distributions provided on Saturday and Monday at the food pantry on Long Lake Road.



**Christmas, 2020:** In December, Theresa Zimnawoda coordinated the annual SVDP Christmas Celebration. This program made it possible for 507 children from 136 different households to receive gifts, toiletries, toys, candy, books, hats and gloves and stocking stuffers. More than 80 different individuals and organizations helped support the event offered on the afternoons of December 5, 12, and 19. Pictured here Theresa, her daughter, Sarah, and grandson, Nate stand ready to greet parents and grandparents.

St. Vincent de Paul of Brown County is located at 2901 Long Lake Road, Nashville, IN 47448. Mail may be directed to P. O. Box 577, Nashville IN 47448. Phone number at the pantry is 812-988-8821. For additional information: Shirley Boardman, Secretary, [sboardma@indiana.edu](mailto:sboardma@indiana.edu) or by phone at 812-322-8605.