



THE SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT de PAUL OF BROWN COUNTY

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Back to School Report 2020 - Resilience in the Midst of a Pandemic

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul of Brown County has served families in need in Brown County continuously since April, 1988 — 32 years of continuous service.

Currently located at 2901 Long Lake Road, the distribution center provides a client choice food pantry and warehouse which also offers furniture, clothing, appliances, household goods, toiletry and personal care items. Between 12 and 15% of the Brown County population have contact with SVDP each year. More than half of this past fiscal year, we operated under the COVID-19 challenges having to revisit virtually every aspect of our operation. We are still in the process of completing our Annual Report for our fiscal year which is October 1 to September 30 but preliminary data documents that we provided 142,001 pounds of food during the fiscal year to our Brown County neighbors!

The Back to School program began operation in 2004. It was initially started with a request from the Brown County Community Foundation to facilitate the intentions of the Truemper Family who created an endowment designated for shoes and clothing for children. Since 2004, the program has continuously grown through fundraising, grant writing, and personal donations. For 2020 a voucher valued at \$60.00 which could be redeemed at Walmart in Columbus, IN was provided to the parents, grandparents, foster parents and/or guardians for each school-age child.

Although the pandemic forced adjustments in 2020 (described later in this report), a general description of our usual process follows. Fundraising efforts begin in January. In May, we review the food pantry records to identify those families with school age children. Reminder postcards are prepared and distributed during the month of June providing families with the dates for the program. Vouchers are prepared for each school-age child and families pick up the vouchers during regular food distribution times during July and early August. Families are given a specific date on which the program closes based on our agreement with the Walmart accounting and customer service department. Once the voucher distribution period starts, there is daily/weekly monitoring of the program including the amount on deposit at Walmart, which families have picked up their voucher and whether or not they have redeemed the voucher. Reminders by text, telephone, and by mail are sent to ensure families do not lose track of their opportunity to participate in the program. Families are also assisted with any questions or problems that might arise. John Aumage and Shirley Boardman serve as the co-coordinators of the program.

From our files, we identified 471 potential eligible school-age children. This number was expanded due to the pandemic/special pop-up distributions. Ultimately vouchers were distributed for 373 students. A total of 357 vouchers representing 155 families were redeemed.

Unfortunately, 98 vouchers were not picked up and 16 of those picked up were not redeemed. The average amount for the redeemed vouchers was \$57.77. The total amount for all vouchers was \$20,624.43. An additional \$1,500 was distributed to the three Brown County elementary schools, each receiving \$500 in VISA gift cards which were then used to purchase necessary classroom materials. These funds effectively offset shortfalls we were aware of based on contacts with the Brown County School administration. This brought the total program cost to \$22,124.43.

Fundraising and grant writing for the program begins early in the year with local and regional granting organizations. St. Vincent de Paul allocates some of its general funds toward the program and solicits additional donations from private individuals. All funds received by the organization come from donations, grants, and fundraisers.

Summary of Funds for 2020 Back to School Program

Description	Amount
Church of the Lakes, Nineveh, IN	\$1400.00
Community Closet-Brown County	250.00
St. Agnes Guild, Nashville, IN	400.00
Hamblen Township Trustee, Brown County, IN	500.00
Jackson Township Trustee, Brown County, IN	500.00
South Central Indiana REMC Community Fund, Martinsville, IN	3000.00
Christ Church Cathedral Women, Indianapolis, IN	3000.00
Walmart Community Grant, Columbus, IN	2500.00
Brown County Community Foundation & Truemper Fund	4300.69
Brown County Lion's Club, Nashville, IN	1000.00
Rotary Club of Brown County	90.00
Southern District of SVDP	400.00
St. Vincent de Paul Funds & Private Donations	4783.74
Total Funds Distributed	22,124.43
Anthem donated 320 sets of earbuds which would translate into approximately an additional program value of \$1280	\$23,404.43

Overall Program Capacity for 2020

Potential number of vouchers available for distribution	471
Number of vouchers picked up	373
Number of vouchers redeemed, representing 155 families	357
Number of vouchers not redeemed	16
Number of vouchers not picked up	98
Average days between picking up voucher and redemption	10.2
Average value of voucher redeemed	\$58.71

Summary of Purchases Made by Students

Number/Quantity	Description of what was purchased	Amount expended
357 students purchased	397 Pairs of Shoes	5663.66
214 students purchased	1704 Pairs of Socks	1746.65
98 students purchased	Backpacks	1532.62
37 students purchased	Ear buds	\$499.00
16 students purchased	Water bottles	172.42
13 students purchased	Calculators	128.42
4 students purchased	USB	50.22
14 students purchased	Packages of underwear	256.87
6 students purchased	Lunchboxes	52.78
2 students purchased	Art supply boxes	24.68
3 students purchased	Pencil sharpeners	23.21
357 students purchased	Pencils, pens, notebooks, binders, crayons, makers, pencil boxes, etc.	10,473.90
	Total purchases made by students	\$20,624.43
3 \$500 VISA Cards	Distributed to Sprunica, Van Buren and Helmsburg Elementary Schools	\$1500.00
	TOTAL PROGRAM EXPENDITURES	\$22,124.43

Distribution of vouchers redeemed by school for the past 5 years:

School Attending	Number of Children/Youth Served				
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Helmsburg Elementary	30	31	27	27	21
Sprunica Elementary	46	57	41	42	51
Van Buren Elementary	37	45	38	34	45
Brown County Intermediate	36	48	59	61	62
Brown County Junior High	41	36	38	42	61
Brown County High School	64	76	84	77	91
Home School	4	2	3	2	9
Indian Creek Schools	7	12	10	9	7
Head Start, Lori's Tons of Fun	New for 2020				7
Other Schools Outside County	5	0	3	6	3
TOTAL	270	308	303	300	357

2020 Back to School Participants by School and Grade Level

School	Grade	#	School	Grade	#
Brown County High School	9	21	Brown County Jr. High	7	38
	10	17		8	33
	11	21	Brown County Intermediate	5	35
	12	32		6	27
Helmsburg Elementary	Pre-K	1	Sprunica Elementary	Pre-K	3
	K	5		K	10
	1	4		1	8
	2	3		2	7
	3	5		3	12
	4	3		4	13
Van Buren Elementary	Pre-K	3	Indian Creek Middle School	6	1
	K	11	Indian Creek Intermediate	3	1
	1	8		4	1
	2	10		5	1
	3	7		6	1
	4	6	Indian Creek Elementary	K	1
				1	1
Center Grove Middle School	8	1	Head Start	Pre-K	5
Home School	Pre-K	1	Lori's Tons of Fun	Pre-K	2
	K	1			
	1	1	Needham Elementary	3	1
	2	1		4	1
	3	1			
	4	2			
	5	1			
	6	1			

The following summarizes the number served each year since the program began:

Year	Number Served
2004	49 children
2005	87 children
2006	97 children
2007	112 children
2008	184 children
2009	187 children
2010	183 children
2011	183 children
2012	224 children
2013	228 children
2014	289 children
2015	294 children
2016	270 children
2017	308 children
2018	303 children
2019	300 children
2020	357 children
Total	3655 children

Back to School 2020 - Pivoting During a Pandemic—An Overview of Our Response

In the summer of 2020, St. Vincent de Paul of Brown County celebrated 16 years of administering a back-to-school program. We always recall at this time, the courageous effort of Linda Beckman and Barb Tuley when they answered a call from the Brown County Community Foundation to help implement a program made possible by a gift from the Charles Truemper Fund. The intent of the donor was to provide shoes, socks, and other clothing to Brown County school children in need. In that first year, there were only enough funds to provide \$20 vouchers for 49 children from one-half of the alphabet. It broke Barb and Linda's heart once they realized the enormity of the need.

Over subsequent years, grant writing, personal donations and begging made it possible to expand the program greatly. At the end of 2019, a total of 3,298 vouchers had been redeemed by needy students during the history of the effort. This year an additional 357 students received vouchers for \$60.00 each which were redeemed for a total cost of \$20,624.43. This brings the total for the program to 3,655 vouchers over 16 years.

John Aumage and Shirley Boardman coordinate the program, with John handling the contact with Walmart, purchasing gift cards used for distribution, and keeping a detailed spreadsheet

which tracks families as they pick up and redeem their voucher. This meticulous recordkeeping helps identify outstanding vouchers and allows us to make reminder calls etc. It also means many trips to Walmart to keep up with the accounting and ensuring that all was going as planned with Walmart. Concurrently, John maintains an enormous data environment that has family profiles, ages of children, contact information, and also some background history on when SVDP last had contact with the family.

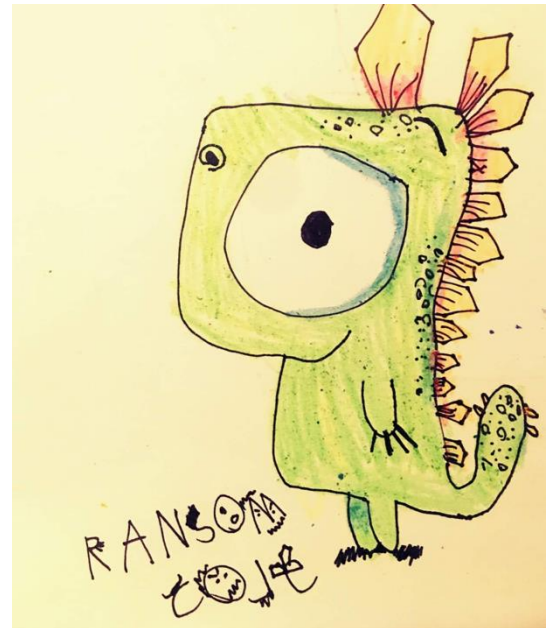
So, having run this program for 15 years, what was different in 2020 during a pandemic? These are just some of the highlights of delivering a program during a pandemic:

- John and Shirley consulted by conference call, email, and personal communications with Dr. Laura Hammack, Superintendent of Brown County School Corporation, who helped us know the status of school re-opening, what students might need, helped us know how to answer parents' questions, and provided the Back to School supply lists. We learned what the bus drivers would be doing, how the classroom instruction was being adapted, how social distancing would be accomplished, what supplies were already readily available such as masks and hand sanitizers, and helped us to be confident that we could represent the back-to-school process as questions from families arose.
- Reaching families was unusually difficult. Customarily, we rely on the parents visiting the pantry for food distribution and that, in turn, being an important point of contact to facilitate updating household information, number of children in school, and ages of each child. Postal and email addresses as well as phone numbers are normally updated during the spring in anticipation of the program starting in July. Since our pantry has gone to drive-up (limited contact) and pop-up food distributions, we lost the chance to update our files as usual. As such some of our household information was stale. Beyond that, the pandemic had already taken its toll and we found phones disconnected, cars broken down, and families with insufficient resources to arrange transportation to the pantry or to Walmart. These obstacles were overlaid on a background of incredible stress and worries about the pandemic, wearing masks, social distancing, and how to decide what to do about returning to school. Some families were behind on their bills and therefore reluctant to answer their phones. Nonetheless, using our database and information from other volunteers, Shirley sent reminder cards, notes in the mail, texted families, and reached out by phone during July and August. Every few days, John would update a shared data base alerting Shirley as to who had picked up their vouchers, who had redeemed their vouchers, and who we were still missing.
- Facebook, the County emergency response team (COAD), Brown County School personnel, Northern Brown County Food Alliance, Sandy Higgins, Jackson Township Trustee, the Brown County YMCA, Head Start teachers, and even property managers of

the some of the housing complexes all contributed to our effort to reach eligible families. John Aumage made individual arrangements with some parents. For example, one mother in the advanced stages of a difficult pregnancy could not tolerate the heat or any waiting at the pantry and John met her at a time during the week when she could be provided with vouchers and information to allow her to be safe and comfortable. Other similar unique accommodations were made including some volunteers going to parents' homes to sort out a way for them to make use of their vouchers.

- With all the various ways we and families were challenged, John Aumage requested and received agreement from the Walmart Customer Service and Accounting Department to extend the redemption period to August 15, allowing a total of 41 days as a window for families to make arrangements to get to Walmart. This was an increase of 11 days over previous years to allow for unusual circumstances.
- As the program was closing, the Board realized that we still had potentially another 98 children that we knew were eligible but had not been reached. Concurrently, we heard from Sandy Higgins, Jackson Township Trustee, who was substitute teaching about the challenges classroom teachers, especially those at the elementary level, were facing. Keeping up with COVID protocols, when students did not each have their own supplies such as colored pencils, crayons, pencil boxes, etc. was adding an overlay of stress to the daily classroom routines. Recognizing this, the SVDP Board voted to provide each of the elementary schools with five-\$100 gift cards for a total of \$1,500 to be used to purchase classroom materials at the discretion of each school. This brought the total program expenditure to \$22,124.43.
- Originally, the program anticipated serving 300 children for a total program cost of \$18,000. To cover the total program cost of \$24,124.43, funding from the community and even visitors to Brown County gave us the extra boost so we could be generous.
- The Brown County Community Foundation Grants Committee & Board of Trustees encouraged us to collaborate with On the Road Again, another program in Brown County which usually sponsors a one-day program for Back to School - offering clothing, night clothes, shoes, socks, and underwear. Unfortunately, due to the pandemic, this program was unable to schedule their event until late October. We offered the program coordinator, Mary Kilgore, an opportunity to shop at our distribution center for any items she might need but she was already "overloaded" with generous donations and declined. In addition, we had a collection of hats, gloves, and coats which could have been used but, again, Mary had already purchased more than she expected to distribute and so declined our offer. We did, however, distribute information about On the Road Again during our pop-up food distributions in October.

Artwork cheerfully provided by Ransom Cole whose parents had all that was needed for his return to school but wanted to share some artwork for this report.



Program report prepared by John Aumage, Treasurer and Back to School Coordinator, and Shirley Boardman, Secretary & Development Coordinator. Questions may be directed to Shirley Boardman at sboardma@indiana.edu or 812-322-8605.