



THE SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT de PAUL OF BROWN COUNTY

P.O. Box 577, 2901 Long Lake Road, Nashville, Indiana 47448 812-988-8821



Back to School Report 2025-A Caring Community Comes Together!

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul of Brown County (SVDP) has served families in need in Brown County since April 1988 — 37 years of continuous service.

Currently located at 2901 Long Lake Road, the distribution center provides a client choice food pantry, warehouse, and home goods building. Together, the buildings offer families an opportunity to select food as well as furniture, clothing, appliances, household goods, cleaning supplies and personal care items. Approximately 500 households have contact with SVDP each year. Although there is post-pandemic recovery, the number of families in Brown County at or below the poverty level remain relatively constant. In the past fiscal year, 170 new households registered for services. The food distribution at St. David's Episcopal Church added in 2023 has remained strong. In the last fiscal year, 247,820 pounds of food were distributed during 3643 household visits. The home goods building has allowed volunteers to visit with families and establish relationships gaining valuable knowledge of how we can be more responsive.

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. Linda Beckman and Barb Tuley were primary drivers of the early days of this effort. In 2004, there were enough funds to provide \$20 vouchers for 49 children—sadly falling short of the identified need. Since 2004, the program has continuously expanded—made possible by never ceasing fundraising, grant writing, and personal donations. For 2025, a voucher valued at \$60.00 which could be redeemed at Walmart in Columbus, IN was provided to the head of the household where the school-age child resided. This may have been the parent, grandparent, foster parent and/or guardian. Each household representative was also offered a \$10 Speedway fuel card. **This year 865 vouchers were redeemed for \$52,193 and \$3000 (we paid \$2854) in fuel cards were distributed.**

In June, all households with school-age children registered with St. Vincent de Paul received a direct mailing informing them of the dates and times of the voucher distribution. Community partners also received postcards to distribute and post cards were also distributed at the Brown County Fair. Starting in early summer, post cards were also distributed at Brown County food distribution sites along with information about “On the Road Again” offered by God’s Grace.

Vouchers were distributed on July 14, 19, 21, & 28 as well as August 2, 4, & 9. Families had until August 10 at 9:00 pm to shop and redeem the voucher at the Walmart Customer Service Desk. 886 vouchers were distributed and only 21 were not redeemed. No family was turned away who asked for help.

Highlights are as follows:

	Description	Cost
886 vouchers	Were picked up by families for their students	
865 vouchers	Were redeemed by 336 different households for	\$51193
303 pairs of	Shoes, boots, sandals & 1 pair ballet slippers were selected	5593
258 students	Purchased 1953 pairs of socks	3411
260 students	Purchased underwear and clothing	15908
87 students	Purchased a backpack or a computer bag	2115
132 students	Purchased ear buds, calculators, usb drives and/or computer mice	1406
300	Households accepted a \$10 fuel card (\$3000 value, we paid \$2854)	2854
653 students	Selected school supplies such as paper, pencils, crayons, markers, notebooks, binders etc.	22,457
Other costs	Expenses associated with postage, mailings, printing	585
	TOTAL PROGRAM EXPENDITURES	\$54631
321	Households received direct mail with dates & times	
1500	Flyers or post cards were distributed to community representatives	
Yield Rate	97.6% of vouchers picked up were redeemed	
Average Value	Average voucher was redeemed for \$59.18	

Sources of Funding

Brown County Community Foundation Grant (including Truemper Fund)	4930
Howard Hughes/Bob Kirlin Memorial Mushroom Sale	1850
Christ Church Cathedral/Episcopal Women/Strawberry Festival	3000
South Central REMC Operation Round Up	5000
Church of the Lakes, Nineveh, Indiana	1400
Community Foundation of St. Joseph County-Anonymous Fund	1500
Lion's Club	1600
Hamblen Township Trustees	500
Jackson Township Trustees	500
Patricia A Blocker Legacy Trust	2221
Tracey & Nicholas Pappas in memory of Barb Tuley	3478
Rotary Club	164
St. John the Evangelist Catholic Church, Indianapolis	771
St. Agnes Catholic Church	11316
Walmart Foundation	1000
Private Donors & St. Vincent de Paul Discretionary Funds	15401
Total Funding from all Sources	54631

Distribution of vouchers redeemed by school for the past 10 years:

School Attending	Number of Children/Youth Served									
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Helmsburg Elementary	30	31	27	27	21	85	96	74	98	98
Sprunica Elementary	46	57	41	42	51	99	103	94	113	107
Van Buren Elementary	37	45	38	34	45	77	74	71	74	77
Brown Cty Middle School	New for 2021					135	116	153	124	132
Brown Cty Intermediate	36	48	59	61	62	Students now attend Brown County Middle School				
Brown County Junior High	41	36	38	42	61					
Brown Cty High School	64	76	84	77	91	110	131	164	167	188
Home School	4	2	3	2	9	10	19	41	90	106
Indian Creek Schools	7	12	10	9	7	22	28	32	29	36
Pre-K	New for 2020					7	7	9	85	51
Schools Outside County	5	0	3	6	3	31	34	42	17	59
TOTAL	270	308	303	300	357	576	610	756	763	865

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
2021	576 children
2022	610 children
2023	756 children
2024	763 children
2025	865 children
Total	6934 children

Back to School 2025 –A Community that Cares

John Aumage and Shirley Boardman coordinate the program, with John identifying the database, preparing and distributing the vouchers and handling the contact with Walmart, purchasing gift cards used for payment, communicating with customer service staff, and reviewing the purchases and keeping a detailed spreadsheet which tracks families as they pick up and redeem each voucher. This meticulous recordkeeping forms the basis for reporting and accountability. It also means many trips to Walmart in Columbus to keep up with the accounting and ensure that all is going as planned. Concurrently, John maintains a data environment for each family including ages of the children and contact information. Many community partners including Kim Robinson, Donna Niednagel, Cori McCabe, Sandy Higgins, Mary Kilgore, Pastors Raymond Dupree and Cory Joy and St. Agnes Members, Becky McCarty, Bonnie Hicks and St. Agnes Guild Members provide invaluable assistance. The Brown County System of Care, especially Centerstone personnel, assist by promoting the program to the families they serve. Church of the Lakes in Nineveh provides support year round and reaches out to those households in their immediate area as do the members of St. David's Episcopal Church. Shirley handles fundraising, promotion of the program, communications via email, phone, and social media inquiries, as well as special needs of families. Reporting is a shared responsibility of John and Shirley, requiring hours of data entry and analysis.

During the voucher distribution period, more than 46,000 pounds of food were provided to families as well as generous amounts of household goods, clothing, personal care items and cleaning supplies. The home goods building is a rich source of material goods. Volunteers are eager to help the parents during voucher distribution period. The home goods building allows families to better see and identify usable items such as mattresses, beds, bed linens, towels, beds, dressers, or a desk. Volunteers in the home goods building and clothing/soft goods areas visit with families and learn more about what each family might find useful, with a goal of relationship building. Many individual requests for household items, clothing, bed linens etc. were received and fulfilled.

A few reflections:

- As noted earlier, providing fuel cards makes a difference. The 300 fuel cards were purchased by a private donor. We were short for about 5 families so will purchase more next year.
- The rate of vouchers distributed to vouchers redeemed was 97.6%. At the end of the program, one family had missed getting vouchers. John worked directly with Sandy Higgins to help that family secure and redeem vouchers for three children.
- An analysis of the cash register receipts showed that families could use more than \$60.00. Many vouchers revealed that families had made selections and then returned items to keep their total expenditure within \$60. Some families did personally pay for additional purchases which totaled \$2672. We have held the value at \$60 for several years.
- The Brown County school administrative team helped us by posting the school supply lists and program availability on Parent Square and Walmart also posted the supply lists.

- Information was provided during food distributions in the County, at churches, at the Brown County Fair, at the “On the Road Again” event as well as the mailing to families in our database. There was also promotion via social media and the Brown County System of Care.
- Once again, we opted to be generous, low barrier, and let families determine if they were in need. We saw no evidence of families “taking advantage” of the program. Many of our families are multi-generational with grandparents, parents, and children all living together in the same household. Tears and gratitude often accompanied our interactions.
- Funding sources were generous again, but it took a great deal of faith and effort to secure the necessary funding. Many private donors contributed, some just \$5.00. Private donors reached out to us and provided generous funding along with the organizations identified earlier.
- This is a high touch program. Communicating with families, donors, community partners and keeping up with the cash flow at Walmart requires countless hours. Record keeping, analysis, and reporting as well as expressing our gratitude to all who make it possible are time consuming but make it possible for this program to thrive.
- St. Vincent de Paul is an all-volunteer organization, and hundreds of hours go into the Back to School. All told, volunteers donated 12,570 hours of service in this past fiscal year to our neighbors in need. We have no paid staff.
- The Customer Service Personnel at Walmart in Columbus remain our heroes as they, also, work one-on-one with each family to ensure that purchases are consistent with the program guidelines.

Once again, artwork cheerfully provided by loving children whose parents had all that was needed for their return to school but wanted to share some artwork for this year's report.



Juniper's Mochi Man who is her best buddy!



Elise loves color!



Weston so enjoys the outdoors and trees.

**Society of St. Vincent de Paul of Brown County
Back to School Program 2025**



The Brown County community came together once again to support the Society of St. Vincent de Paul's Back to School Program. This year marks the 22nd year of the program. The Board and program co-leaders, John Aumage and Shirley Boardman, wish to thank donors and supporters for going the extra mile to make this year's program a success. Through the generosity of many, 865 students from 336 households redeemed vouchers for \$60 each at Walmart in Columbus and purchased shoes, socks, underwear, backpacks, calculators, and school supplies. Families were offered a Speedway fuel card to help with transportation expenses. The total program cost was \$54089.

Volunteers, donors and community members make this possible. The Brown County Food Alliance convened by Donna Niednagel together with members of St. David's Episcopal Church provided outreach. Sandy Higgins, Jackson Township Trustee, personally worked with numerous families and Kim Robinson, YMCA & COAD, also helped identify families in need. Church of the Lakes in Nineveh provides support and outreach throughout the year. The Brown County System of Care promoted the program and representatives of St. Agnes Church and Brown County Schools distributed information at the Brown County Fair. Information was also distributed at On The Road Again, hosted by Mary Kilgore, with whom we collaborate.

Organizations/Churches who donated financial support:

Brown County Community Foundation & Truemper Fund
Brown County Lion's Club
Church of the Lakes, Nineveh
Christ Church Episcopal Church/Strawberry Festival-Indianapolis
Community Foundation of St. Joseph County (Anonymous Fund)-South Bend
Hamblen Township Trustee/Phil Stephens
Howard Hughes/Bob Kirlin Memorial Morel Mushroom Sale
Jackson Township Trustee/Sandy Higgins
Patrica A Blocker Legacy Trust
Rotary Club of Brown County
South Central Indiana REMC Community Fund
St. Agnes Guild/St. Agnes Catholic Church
St. John the Evangelist Church-Indianapolis
Society of St. Vincent de Paul of Brown County
Walmart Foundation

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We also wish to acknowledge many private donors and the parents and grandparents who transported their young scholars to Columbus and helped them to make their selections. And, a special shout to the Customer Service and Accounting personnel at Walmart along with managers who helped families with their purchases. We couldn't do this without them!

This past fiscal year, 247,820 pounds of food were distributed during 13,781 household visits. Volunteers recorded 12,570 hours of service. St. Vincent de Paul food pantry, warehouse and home goods is located at 2901 Long Lake Road. You may call 812-988-8821 or visit our website at <https://stvincentdepaulbrowncounty.com>. Volunteers are always welcome and you can access the volunteer schedule or make a donation from the website. Founded in 1988, SVDP has provided 37 years of continuous service to our neighbors in need.

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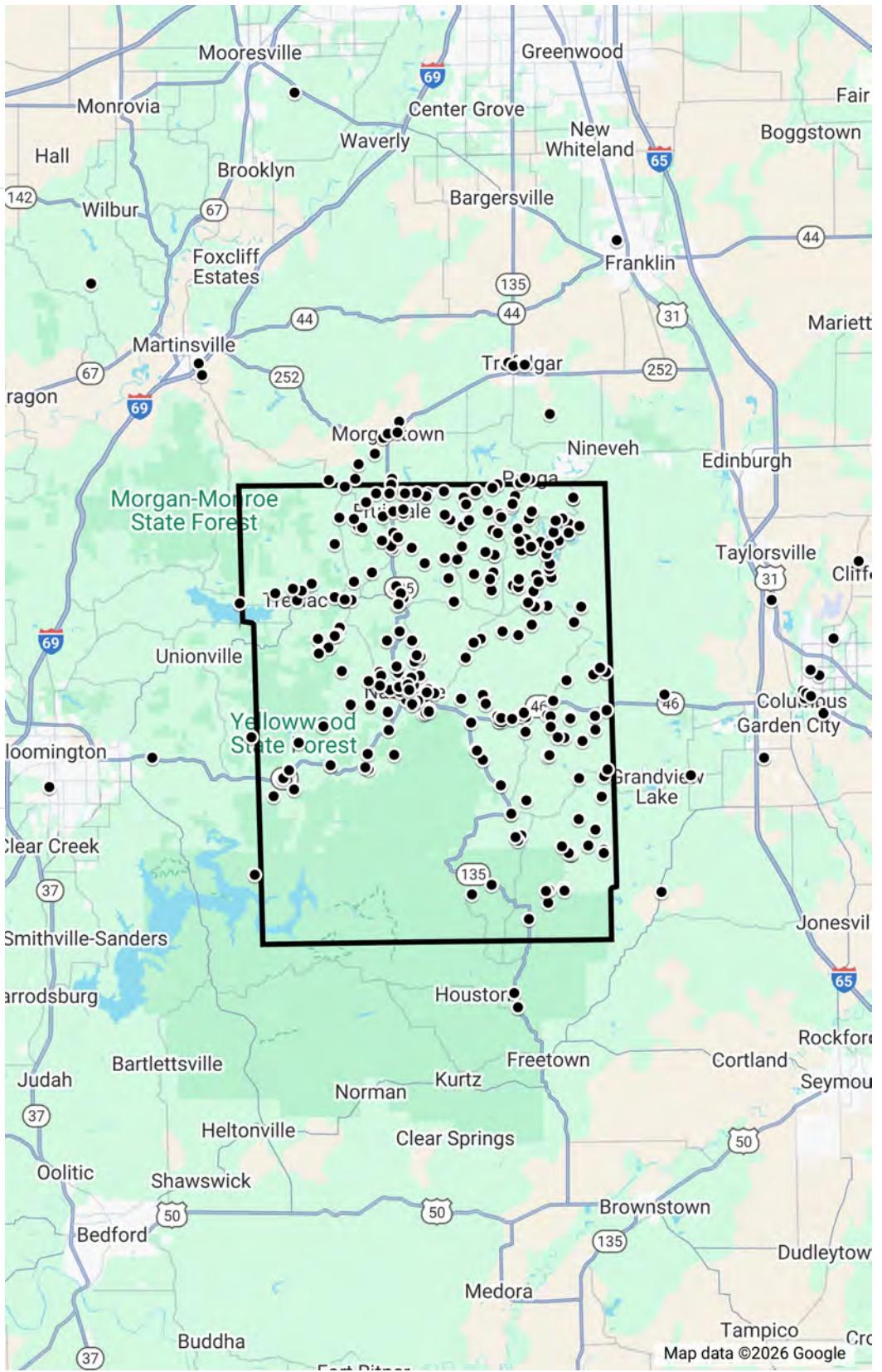
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2025 Back to School Households

Outline shows the borders of Brown County

Zip	City	Households
47448	Nashville	157
46160	Morgantown	57
46164	Nineveh	35
47201	Columbus	32
46181	Trafalgar	24
47235	Freetown	9
46151	Martinsville	3
47401	Bloomington	2
47203	Columbus	2
47435	Helmsburg	2
47403	Bloomington	1
47408	Bloomington	1
47202	Columbus	1
46131	Franklin	1
46158	Mooresville	1
47468	Unionville	1
Total		329

Zip	City	Children
47448	Nashville	423
46160	Morgantown	136
46164	Nineveh	93
47201	Columbus	86
46181	Trafalgar	68
47235	Freetown	21
46151	Martinsville	11
47203	Columbus	7
47401	Bloomington	4
47202	Columbus	4
47435	Helmsburg	3
46158	Mooresville	3
47408	Bloomington	2
47468	Unionville	2
47403	Bloomington	1
46131	Franklin	1
Total		865



Note: Household # of 329 omit seven multi-generational households. Total household # is 336.