



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 2024-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 — 36 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, 155 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, 238,515 pounds of food were distributed during 3536 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 2024, 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 763 vouchers were redeemed for \$44,963 and \$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 which they could distribute and post cards were 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 13, 15, 20, 22, 27 & 29 as well as August 3, 5, 10 & 12. Families had until August 12 at 9:00 pm to shop and redeem the voucher at the Walmart Customer Service Desk. 792 vouchers were distributed and only 29 were not redeemed. No family was turned away who asked for help.

Highlights are as follows:

	Description	Cost
792 vouchers	Were picked up by families for their students	
763 vouchers	Were redeemed by 307 different households for	\$44963
389 pairs of	Shoes, boots and/or sandals were selected	6447
272 students	Purchased socks	2780
331 students	Purchased underwear and clothing (31 spent entire voucher on clothing)	9660
164 students	Purchased a backpack or a computer bag	3245
112 students	Purchased one or more sets of ear buds or headsets	892
8 students	Purchased calculators, USB drives, &/or a mouse	88
290 household	\$10 fuel cards were distributed (Speedway offers a charity discount)	2854
732 students	Selected school supplies such as paper, pencils, crayons, markers, notebooks, binders etc.	21851
Other costs	Expenses associated with postage, mailings, printing	663
	TOTAL PROGRAM EXPENDITURES	\$48491
349	Households received direct mail with dates & times	
1500	Flyers or post cards were distributed to community representatives	
Yield Rate	96.3% of vouchers picked up were redeemed	
Average Value	Average voucher was redeemed for \$58.93	

Sources of Funding

Brown County Community Foundation Grant	5000
Howard Hughes/Bob Kirlin Memorial Mushroom Sale	1625
Christ Church Cathedral/Episcopal Women/Strawberry Festival	3000
South Central REMC Operation Round Up	4000
Church of the Lakes, Nineveh, Indiana	1400
Lion's Club	1000
Hamblen Township Trustees	500
Jackson Township Trustees	500
Mary Perez	14895
Patricia A Blocker Legacy Trust	2014
Tracey & Nicholas Pappas in memory of Tracey's mother, Barb Tuley, co-founder of the program in 2004	3000
Rotary Club	129
Nashville United Methodist Church	500
St. John the Evangelist Catholic Church, Indianapolis	1265
St. Agnes Catholic Church	2000
St. Vincent de Paul Indianapolis Council	800
Memorials for James Huff	465
Private Donors & St. Vincent de Paul Discretionary Funds	6398
Total Funding from all Sources	\$48491

Distribution of vouchers redeemed by school for the past 9 years:

School Attending	Number of Children/Youth Served								
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Helmsburg Elementary	30	31	27	27	21	85	96	74	98
Sprunica Elementary	46	57	41	42	51	99	103	94	113
Van Buren Elementary	37	45	38	34	45	77	74	71	74
Brown County Middle School	New for 2021					135	116	153	124
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	110	131	164	167
Home School	4	2	3	2	9	10	19	41	90**
Indian Creek Schools	7	12	10	9	7	22	28	32	29
Pre-K	New for 2020				7	7	9	85	51*
Other Schools Outside County	5	0	3	6	3	31	34	42	17
TOTAL	270	308	303	300	357	576	610	756	763
<p>* Note that 33 of the 51 were identified as enrolling at Helmsburg, Sprunica or Van Buren Pre-K or Brown County Early Education Center</p> <p>**19 of the Home School children are Pre-K or K in households primarily with other older children who are also home schooled</p>									

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
Total	6069 children

Back to School 2024 –A Community that Cares

John Aumage and Shirley Boardman coordinate the program, with John 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 ensuring 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 Margie Brandon provide invaluable assistance. The Brown County System of Care members, especially Centerstone personnel, assist by promoting the program to the families they serve. Church of the Lakes in Nineveh provides support year around and reaches out to those households in their immediate area. 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.

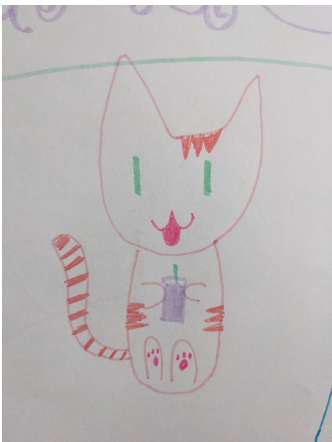
During the voucher distribution period, more than 35,000 pounds of food were provided to families as well as generous amounts of household goods, clothing, personal care items and cleaning supplies.. The newly constructed home goods building is a rich source of material goods but also volunteers who are eager to help the parents during voucher distribution period. This building allows families to better see and identify usable items such as mattresses, bed linens, towels, beds, dressers, or a desk. Volunteers who worked in the home goods building visited with families and learned more about what each family might find useful, with a goal of relationship building.

A few reflections:

- As noted earlier, providing fuel cards makes a difference. As we were at the end of the South Central Community Action donated cards, SVDP purchased \$10 cards.
- The rate of vouchers distributed to vouchers redeemed was 96.3%, slightly lower than the 98% for the previous year. Of those, not redeemed no families requested special accommodations.
- 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 \$1210.
- The Brown County school administrative team helped us by posting the school supply lists in time for the program's start 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. A special donation from Mary Perez as an early estate distribution was of great help.
- 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 11,337 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 Smiling Kitty



Weston loves summer & Grandma’s flowers

Report prepared by John Aumage & Shirley Boardman. Ad acknowledging donors published in the Brown County Democrat on January 21, 2025 is provided below.

Society of St. Vincent de Paul of Brown County Back to School Program 2024



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 21st 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, 763 students from 307 households redeemed vouchers for \$60 each at Walmart in Columbus and purchased shoes, socks, underwear, backpacks, calculators, and school supplies. Families were provided a Speedway Fuel Card to help with transportation expenses due to the generosity of South Central Community Action. The total program cost was \$48,481.

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, 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 network promoted the program. Invitations to participate were distributed by social service agencies, area churches and at community events including On The Road Again, hosted by Mary Kilgore.

Organizations/Churches who donated financial support:

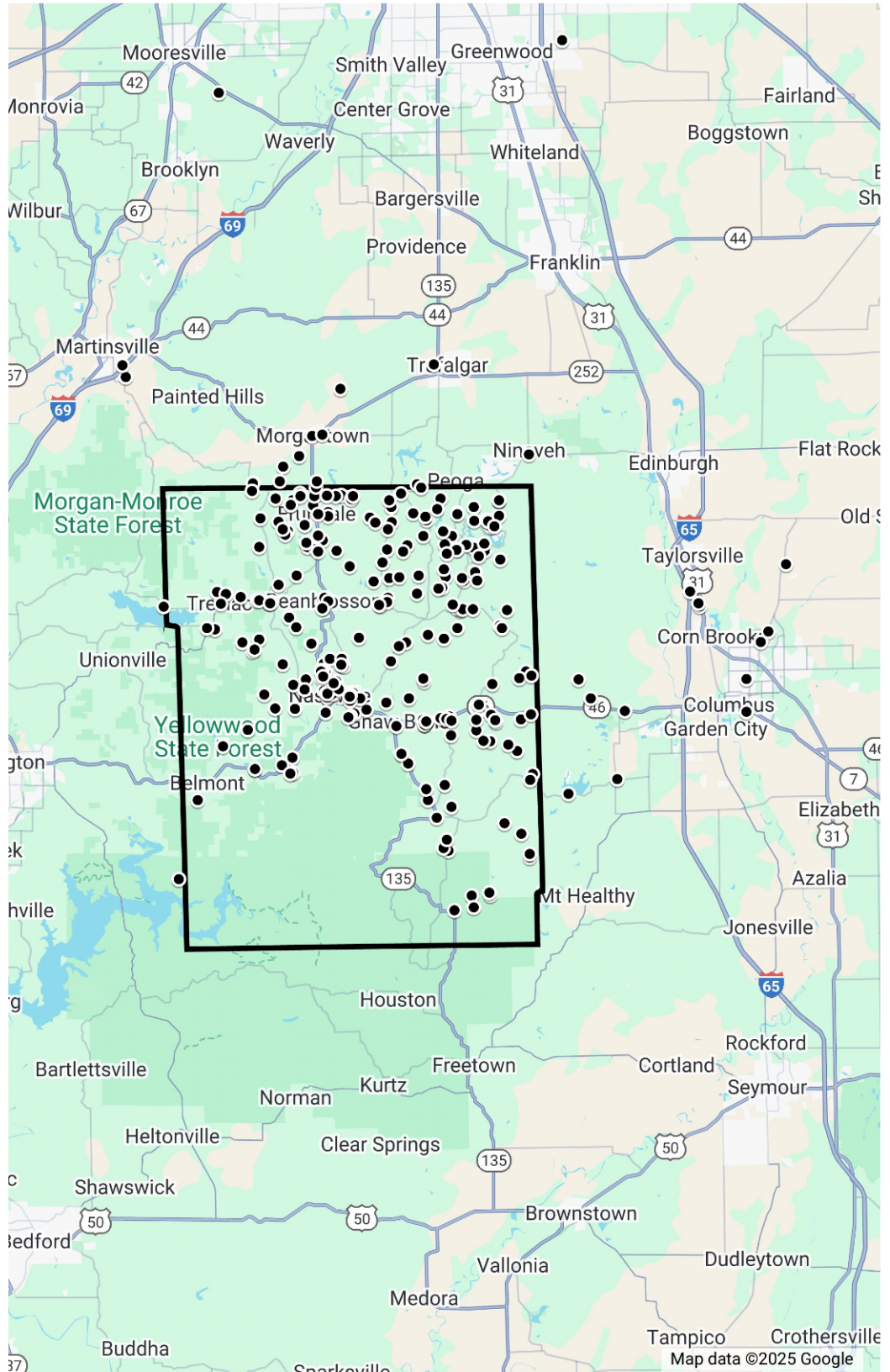
- Brown County Community Foundation & Truemper Fund**
- Brown County Lion's Club**
- Church of the Lakes, Nineveh**
- Christ Church Episcopal Church/Strawberry Festival-Indianapolis**
- Howard Hughes/Bob Kirlin Memorial Morel Mushroom Sale**
- Hamblen Township Trustee/Phil Stephens**
- Jackson Township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

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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 out to the Customer Service and Accounting personnel at Walmart in Columbus who worked with the families to make their purchases. We couldn't do this without them!

This past fiscal year, 238,515 pounds of food were distributed during 13,494 household visits. Volunteers recorded 11,337 hours of service. St. Vincent de Paul Food Pantry and Warehouse 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 from the website. Founded in 1988, SVDP has provided 36 years of continuous service to our neighbors in need.

2024 Back to School Households

Outline shows the borders of Brown County



Zip	City	Households
47448	Nashville	161
46160	Morgantown	56
46164	Nineveh	36
47201	Columbus	23
46181	Trafalgar	14
47235	Freetown	5
47203	Columbus	4
47435	Helmsburg	2
46151	Martinsville	2
47468	Unionville	1
47401	Bloomington	1
46158	Mooresville	1
46143	Greenwood	1
	Total	307

Zip	City	Children
47448	Nashville	402
46160	Morgantown	135
46164	Nineveh	84
47201	Columbus	59
46181	Trafalgar	39
47235	Freetown	14
47203	Columbus	10
46151	Martinsville	8
46158	Mooresville	4
47468	Unionville	2
47435	Helmsburg	2
47401	Bloomington	2
46143	Greenwood	2
	Total	763