



CONNECTING
COMMUNITIES

SUMMER 2017

THE MARILLAC ST. VINCENT MAGAZINE

Jump Into
SUMMER

Empowered families. Strengthened communities. Brighter futures.
marillacstvincent.org



12

Making an Impact

Two pages of change-makers! We highlight our volunteers and community partners and the incredible impact they're having on their neighbors in Chicago who need it most



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Embracing the Good

Dear Friends,

As I approach the completion of my first year at Marillac St. Vincent Family Services and as I reflect on the experiences I have had during this time, I am struck by the degree to which my expectations have been exceeded. It is gratifying to be a part of an organization that is so dedicated to the betterment of the lives of those we serve. It is also fulfilling to be part of a legacy of hope and optimism. While our families face many challenges in their day-to-day lives, they, and our staff, never lose their commitment to change and to embracing the good that surrounds them.

I'm often asked in my travels and inner circles about Marillac St. Vincent (MSV). You know, those typical questions: what do you do? what programs do you provide and to whom? where are you located? I have found that answering these questions, alone, does not necessarily demonstrate the full impact of our ministry, particularly at a time when there is so much civil unrest around us caused by the stressors of poverty, violence, and political uncertainty. People need to know more than the fact that we are two agencies fulfilling a single mission through aligned programs on the west and north sides of the city of Chicago. And, that we offer senior services, early childhood education, after-school programs, and outreach to individuals and families in crisis. They also need to know that while the challenges facing our clients are very real, our long term presence in some of our city's most poverty stricken neighborhoods reveals to us another side of the story. That is, our participants are working for a better life for themselves, their families, and their communities as they face deep poverty, disparities in access to employment, nutrition, education, housing, and health resources.

For over 100 years, Marillac St. Vincent has grown a sense of connectedness between people, within families, through networks, and across community. Consider the MSV difference:

- On average, 92% of our Pre-Kindergarten children meet or exceed literacy, math, and social-emotional expectations
- 100% of our school-age youth avoid risky behaviors, including gang activity and drug use
- Over 600,000 pounds of food are distributed from our food pantries – making Marillac St. Vincent one of the largest food pantry distributors in Cook County
- 90% of seniors we support are able to safely age in place
- 82 homebound seniors on the West Side were provided with socialization, support, stability and made more secure through regular phone calls, food and meal deliveries, and in-home podiatry care in FY '17
- The moms in our Doula Program have not birthed any low-weight babies in seven years-this in a community with high infant mortality rates and insufficient prenatal and neonatal care

I can continue with the statistics but I encourage you to read the stories in this issue to learn more. What I believe you will find is that Marillac St. Vincent genuinely represents what is good and just. Our greatest honor is to work with families as they navigate the complex issues of our day, and ultimately help them move on to the next stage of life in a better position than they were before.

Embracing the good these days is likened to taking the road less travelled. Ours is a two-part challenge: Change the narrative from one of acquiescence to the status quo of conflict and trouble in the world; and encompass the compassion and strength to help move disadvantaged families, their communities, and our world positively forward. I am proud to be part of the journey that our staff and families travel together each and every day toward a place in which the “good” outweighs the “bad” in their lives. I invite you to join us on this journey.

And so, the next time someone from your travels or inner circle asks you about Marillac St. Vincent, how will you respond?

Respectfully yours,



Anthony C. Chimera
President & CEO





Major Gifts Allow MSV to Respond to Needs Through Growth, Expansion, and Improvements

New Classroom at St. Vincent

Waiting lists for the Birth-to-Three classrooms at St. Vincent de Paul Center have always been very long. In February of this year, MSV began looking at ways to expand access to parents on the waitlist at St. Vincent for this age group.

Thanks to weeks of planning and hard work from the Early Childhood and Operations staff, St. Vincent opened a new toddler classroom on the preschool floor in March, offering 12 new spots to families with children in the 36-47 month range. These are children who miss the Chicago Public Schools birthday cutoff for preschool.

Director of Early Childhood Education, Joanna Burke said, "It has been wonderful to open a 'birthday room' on the same floor with the preschool. We are bridging the gap between the toddler and Pre-K sections with more interactions among the age groups, and it will hopefully help parents become more comfortable with the transition to Pre-K."

Birth to Three expansion at MSC

A recent community needs assessment on Chicago's west side revealed that there are very few infant care slots available to families. Thanks to the generosity of the recently closed North Avenue Day Nursery and its Board of Directors, Marillac is expanding the Birth-to-Three Early Childhood program to add five additional classrooms, with the inclusion of infants beginning at 6 weeks old.

This expansion will have a direct impact on Project Hope, the MSV program for pregnant and parenting teens, as it is so essential to their success in graduating high school and securing stable employment, to have reliable, quality care for their infants.

The expansion will roll out in two phases. During phase one, a pilot room for eight infants will be opened in September 2017. For phase two, a section of the ground floor in the Marillac building will be remodeled to create four new classrooms with a total capacity for 52 more children in the Birth-to-Three program, set to open in September 2018.

Capital Improvements

Safety is MSV's number one concern for families. Recognizing the need for improved security practices, Sammons Financial Group is investing in a remodeled St. Vincent de Paul Center lobby, with construction beginning in July.

The key feature of the remodeled lobby will be the 360° view of the entryway from the reception desk. The main corridors to the classrooms will be closed off to outside foot traffic as well. In addition to a more secure lobby, families will also have easier access to the services they need through the relocation of the Child Development Business Office to the ground floor.

We are grateful to our supporters who partner with us on these major upgrades to address our clients' evolving needs.



Art Expressions!

Art plays such an important role in a child's development. Creative activities are some of the building blocks of the discipline. Learning to create and appreciate visual aesthetics is very important in the development of children as they grow.

Marillac St. Vincent Family Services has been offering our Pre-k and school-age children the opportunity to participate in Art Therapy for over 25 years, thanks to the generosity of a very special couple who have been funding this program.

Eden Stern provides art and art therapy at Marillac Social Center and Jill Jeffrey is at St. Vincent de Paul Center. They work with small groups of children exposing them to the wonders of art and the experiences of learning to express themselves through the art they are creating. These opportunities can be healing and life enhancing for our children. Both Ms. Eden and Ms. Jill share their talent and creativity with our children. Our programs reinforce what research has shown that art has many developmental benefits. These benefits include:

- **Motor Skills:** Many of the motions involved in

art are essential to growth of fine motor skills in young children.

- **Language Development:** Opportunities to learn words for colors, shapes and actions.
- **Decision Making:** Strengthens problem-solving and critical-thinking skills.
- **Visual Learning:** Helps develop visual-spatial skills.
- **Inventiveness:** Art encourages children to express themselves and take risks in creating art.
- **Cultural Awareness:** Children are exposed to the different cultures through art.
- **Improved Academic Performance:** Studies show that there is a correlation between art and academic achievement.

In June 2017, both centers presented Art Fairs for our children and families. The theme of the Marillac fair was the 1960's and St. Vincent was a circus theme. The rooms at both centers were turned into art galleries for several days. The art was amazing, and the children and families were very proud of their work. Thank you so much to Ms. Eden, Ms. Jill and to our wonderful donor for giving our children the gift of art.

Art Therapist, Eden Stern, working with school-age children on paper mache doll-making.





AmeriCorps Volunteer, Holly Yacoumakis with a school-age child at the start of summer break

Technology Access & Education

MSV's long-standing partnership with Notre Dame AmeriCorps Mission Volunteers has taken a turn toward technology since the opening of a new state-of-the-art computer lab at Marillac House in 2014. AmeriCorps volunteer, Holly Yacoumakis, has applied her Masters of Library and Information Science to developing innovative programming for children, families and seniors in the lab during her two-year commitment to the organization.

The Computer Lab serves job seekers, seniors, and all adults who require digital access and enhanced computer competencies in their day-to-day lives. For many of our clients, the knowledge they gain is transformational.

Holly has worked with hundreds of clients and has stories of growth to prove it. Here are some of her favorites:

"It's been exciting to see how access to state of the art technology has had a positive effect on the community. People are feeling empowered now that they've been given opportunities to develop these skills that are so critical in the 21st Century." AmeriCorps Volunteer, Holly Yacoumakis



"Erma is my mascot of the computer class and she is an inspiration to her classmates. She diligently practices and studies the material I give her. Her favorite activities are using Microsoft Word to create flyers, emailing old classmates, and using the Paint application."

"I've spent a lot of time in the last year working with Dorothy, an abuse survivor who, at age 60, has been working on her personal memoirs. She was sexually abused several times as a child and as a young adult. As a result, she suffered from severe depression and suicidal thoughts for decades. Learning to use the computer to type her memoirs has helped her recover emotionally. She hopes that sharing her story will help other abuse survivors cope and come forward."

"We've been working on improving our resources for adults who want to earn their GEDs or High School Equivalency degrees. Gretta would come to use the internet to improve her vocabulary. Despite struggling with learning disabilities, she's dedicated to getting the education she didn't receive when she was younger."

See more of Holly's lab stories at marillacstvincent.org





New Mentoring Program for Boys

In September of 2016, Mayor Rahm Emanuel announced a massive new mentoring initiative to serve at-risk youth from all over the city. In phases 1 and 2 of this project, the city worked with schools to establish the program, and now the project is moving into phase 3, with an expansion to community organizations.

Marillac St. Vincent and our friends and partners at Breakthrough Urban Ministries are leading the way in East Garfield Park, having been awarded grant money to support project activities, supplies, and cover other operational expenses.

We are in the process of recruiting male volunteers, ages 21+ who are willing to commit to a year of monthly one-on-one and group mentoring. This is an excellent opportunity for college students, young professionals and retirees.

If you or someone you know would like to participate in the mentoring program as a volunteer, visit marillacstvincent.org/volunteer to fill out our quick and easy volunteer application.

“By focusing on mentorships for boys in the 8th through 10th grade range, we’re really honing in on a critical moment in a young man’s life as the pressures of poverty and violence intensify.” - Albert Richardson, Director of Youth Services



DEDICATED *to* CHANGE

A LIFE SHAPED BY THE MSV MISSION



“This is my family. This is all I know. How could I not want to give back and help others walk my walk and learn from my experiences?” - Domonique Jones, pictured here (left of podium) with Cardinal Blasé Cupich



“I don’t remember much, but I remember it was fun!” Domonique Jones was trying to recall her earliest memories at Marillac St. Vincent. She started as a toddler in the Early Childhood Education Program, before her childhood memories started to become cemented in her mind. “I remember graduating from preschool and I remember Ms. Janae – so much love.”

From diapers to diploma, Domonique’s life has been shaped by her experiences on Chicago’s west side, and her involvement in the programs at Marillac House, “It’s really a hub for people in my community,” shared Domonique. Marillac’s partnership with After School Matters performing arts-focused program for teens helped Domonique grow from a shy and guarded teen into an outspoken leader in her school and community.

Domonique said, “I think it’s really hard for girls, especially, to come out of their shells, make friends, and find their voices.” After graduating from high school, Domonique was hired as a Youth Mentor in the Hope Junior program while she works on her Associates Degree in Business Administration at Harold Washington College. Working with girls in the program has been Domonique’s passion. “I try to help the girls get out of their comfort zone in the same way my mentors did for me. To put down their phones and get out of the social media haze and really interact with each other and form positive relationships.”

In April, Domonique was invited by the Archdiocese to speak at a Good Friday March for Peace in Englewood (event pictured left, with Domonique standing left of the podium), a kickoff to Cardinal Blasé Cupich’s new anti-violence initiative. She read names of individuals who have lost their lives to gun violence in the last year. Domonique lost her 17-year-old cousin, Steven Jefferson, in January. “I’m still working through it but being here and working with the kids every day makes it easier. I look at them, and it makes me want to work that much harder to protect them and keep them on the path of empowerment.”

After Domonique gets her degree in December of this year, she plans to go for her bachelors in Early Childhood Education. “I’d love to develop a mini Marillac House someday in another area that needs it!” Domonique is among many program participants at Marillac St. Vincent who have gone through the full cycle of our continuity of care model, starting at the earliest stages of life into adulthood. “This is my family. This is all I know. How could I not want to give back and help others walk my walk and learn from my experiences?”

To learn more about our Early Childhood, Hope Junior, After School Matters, and Youth Mentorship Programs, visit marillacstvincent.org where you can also watch a video of Domonique’s speech at the Good Friday Peace March alongside Cardinal Blasé Cupich.



MSV Leads New West Side Collaboration

In 2014, MSV, Breakthrough Urban Ministries, and 5 other west side organizations came together to celebrate the achievements of young people in the first annual East Garfield Park Community Youth Awards. It was out of this growing need to recognize youth and out of a commitment to their social and emotional development, that the East Garfield Park Youth Coalition was formed.

Four years later, the MSV Youth Services team meets regularly with coalition members to problem solve, share ideas, and organize around issues that affect young people on the west side.

Earlier in May, MSV proudly hosted the 4th Annual Community Youth Awards, for outstanding achievements in academics, athletics, visual arts, volunteerism, performing arts, and peer leadership. In 2017,

two of MSV's very own Hope Junior program participants, Takiya (Sky) Lambert and DJ Ross, won awards in the Visual Arts category.

The collaborative organized its first-ever peace walk on Saturday, June, 11. During the 30-minute walk, 200+ youth of all ages and adult supporters marched through the streets of East Garfield Park carrying signs and sharing the message of anti-violence, "Peace Begins With Us."

MSV will continue to work with our partners in this collaboration, particularly in the coming months as we develop a Youth Summit to be held in October, funded through a \$5,000 grant awarded to Marillac St. Vincent by the Chicago Community Trust's Fund for Safe and Peaceful Communities.

Hope Junior Boosted by Big Gift

Dance Marathon District 219 is an annual fundraiser from Niles North High School and Niles West High School. Students who sign up commit to raising \$100 over the course of the school year, leading up to an 8-hour long "dance marathon" each May.

These inspiring students **raised an astounding \$81,480.12 this school year for Hope Junior**, Marillac St. Vincent's neighborhood after school and summer program.

We are in awe of these students and their community, and we commend District 219 for modeling a culture of giving among their students.

"What really stands out to me about [Hope Junior] is how close it is to home. Since it's based in Chicago, unlike last year or the year before, we've had much more opportunity to volunteer with this great organization, and we're able to see firsthand the great work they are doing for these kids in Chicago." Jake, Niles North Senior.



Social Service Symposium

On Tuesday, May 23rd, MSV's Community Outreach Services Department hosted a half-day Social Service Symposium at our St. Vincent de Paul Center location. Community partners Ezra Multi-Services, Lakeview Food Pantry, and St. Joseph Services joined Outreach Program staff in planning this event.

The Social Service Symposium provided the opportunity to learn about best practices and essential programs focused on employment, housing, and adult education, to empower Social Services staff to be advocates in their work and workplace for their clients, services, and programs.

Presenters and Panelists included individuals from CARA, Jewish Vocational Services, Austin Coming Together, Chicago Jobs Council, Growing Home, Literacy Works Chicago, Association House, Wilbur Wright College, St. Joseph Services, Jane Addams Resource Corporation, Howard Area Community Center, Wilbur Wright College, Northside Housing & Supportive Services, Metropolitan Family Services, Northside Community Resources, Inspiration Corporation, and Mercy Housing.

"The Social Service Symposium empowered me as a provider of social services to be a better advocate for my clients. Speaking with other providers helped me build a network with those working in a wide variety of programs. Every agency can only provide so many services, but with a strong network with other agencies, there never comes a point in which I have to say "sorry we can't help you." I can now say "I think I know someone else who can help." (Laura Oakley, MSV Admissions and Administrative Services Manager.)

The day also presented participants with opportunities to network and strengthen ties with a host of fellow community agencies during each of the breakout sessions and at resource tables hosted by 27 organizations.

115 individuals representing 60 different organizations participated in the Social Service Symposium. Post-Symposium survey feedback has been quite positive, affirming the need for ongoing opportunities for community organizations to network and share knowledge. MSV Community Outreach Services department looks forward to the opportunity to continue to strengthen, empower, and give voice to those in need through integral collaborations and partnerships that are the result of the Social Service Symposium.

MSV Community Partners during a panel discussion at St. Vincent de Paul Center this past May



MAKING AN IMPACT

Marillac St. Vincent depends on the time and talents of volunteers and on the connections we've built with our community partners to address the needs of those we serve. We could not reach as many families and individuals as we do without your support.



Students, parents, and faculty from **Loyola Academy** spent a whole week volunteering in the Marillac House food pantry.



We welcomed **Ziegler**, sponsors of the Willie Morris 3-on-3 Basketball Tournament, to volunteer as referees and run activities.

Deloitte Impact Day

On Friday June 9th, a group of 25 volunteers joined Deloitte's Impact Day at Marillac House. Impact Day is an annual day of service for Deloitte employees to spend a day volunteering at one of hundreds of non-profit organizations throughout Chicago and across the country. Deloitte volunteers heard from Deanna Hallagan, Director of Hope Junior who shared more about the programs at Marillac House. Hope Junior Teen Counselors explained why Marillac House is such an important piece of their life.

Throughout the day, Deloitte volunteers met with each Pre-K classroom individually. Volunteers read stories with the children, followed by a craft project creating visors for summer. Each child brought home a brand-new book, thanks to Deloitte's generous support.

Deloitte's participation was especially meaningful to the children, teachers and counselors at Marillac since it was organized by our relatively-new Associate Board member Marie Davidson. Marie has gone above and beyond, not only serving on the Associate Board but also organizing this opportunity to volunteer with her co-workers.





We recognize **Distinguished Programs**, who brought six people to volunteer at our Nearly New Resale Shop. The group assisted Nearly New staff with stock maintenance, performing register transactions, and providing excellent customer service.



Weber Grill has been sponsoring exciting activity days for MSV kids for decades. This year's Summer Block Party brought out dozens of Weber employees who painted faces, played basketball, danced and, of course, cooked hamburgers and hot dogs on the grill!



The Outreach program at St. Vincent partners with PACE (Path to Academics, Community and Employment) at National Louis University and they pair disabled adults with internship opportunities in Outreach. Case Manager Amber Duerwaechter, is pictured here with one such intern after PACE's Employment Partner Appreciation Breakfast.



The Marillac House food pantry runs on the power of our dedicated volunteers who mostly live in the neighborhood and faithfully come week after week to distribute food.





1. Larry & Sheila Marshall, Ken O'Keefe, Beth & Dan Hermann
2. From left to right: Bob & Leslie Denvir, Peter & Sue Smith, Kristine Voelker & Jeffrey Wagner, Anne & Michael Maschmeyer, Tom & Kathy Luetkemeyer, Mike & Annette Vitek
3. Condron family & guests
4. Jack & Dorothy Jiganti
5. JoAnn Kunkel
6. Brian Richards bids and wins a live auction package





- 1. Williams Family & Guests
- 2. Jim Ipema and the Funkcrusaders
- 3. Denise & Kevin Cureton
- 4. Associate Board members including Brittney McDermott (Center) and Jessica Gitney (Right)
- 5. Aaron & Katie Stout, & Katie Geant
- 6. Associate Board members from left to right: Meredith Tler, Kristine Brown, Marie Davidson, Kristen Rolfe, Brittney Cato, Cassie Braun, Kelsey Bennett





**MARILLAC
St.VINCENT**

— Family Services —

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**BEACON
OF HOPE**

LUNCHEON

Save the date for this important event presented by
Marillac St. Vincent Family Services

**EMPOWERED FAMILIES STRONGER COMMUNITIES
BRIGHTER FUTURES**

Friday, October 13, 2017

The Union League Club of Chicago

11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.

Honoring

Jackie Langas

and **Kimberly Walters**

Keynote Speaker

Steve Bogira, former Senior Writer at

Chicago Reader, and author of *Courtroom 302*

Followed by a discussion on the impact of violence on children and families in poor neighborhoods, & what Marillac St. Vincent is doing about it