Spring 2013

Marketing Plan for St. Vincent de Paul Society

Angela Hall

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Marketing Plan for St. Vincent de Paul Society

Angela Hall

HONORS PROJECT

Submitted to the University Honors Program
at Bowling Green State University in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for graduation with

UNIVERSITY HONORS

4/25/2013

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1. Market Definition

**Market:** The philanthropy market is comprised of individuals, corporations, and foundations who donate to various charities, non-profits, and other organizations. In 2011, Americans donated $350 billion to charities. Of these donations, 17% came from foundations, while individual gifts accounted for 83% (Lundquist). There are about 1.8 million nonprofit organizations in the U.S., of which food pantries and food banks number of 63,000 (Directory of Charities and Nonprofit Organizations, Feeding America's Hungry: The Facts). There are three main food pantries in Bowling Green: Martha’s Kitchen, St. Vincent de Paul Food Pantry, and BG Christian Food Pantry.

**Customers:** Food pantries look for philanthropists to support their efforts. Ohioans give 4.1% of their disposable income, to charity every year, which is on average $1,953. In Bowling Green, Ohio, citizens give more to nonprofits than the state average. This amounts to 5.2% of their disposable income, or $2,607 (How America Gives). The food pantry’s current donors are parishioners of St. Thomas More University Parish and students of BGSU.

**Demographics:** In the city of Bowling Green, 48% of the population is male, while 52% is female. The median age is 23.2 years old (Bowling Green, Ohio). BGSU has about 20,000 total and is predominantly Caucasian with minorities make up about 18% of the campus (BGSU At A Glance). A majority of students on campus are 18-24 years old, and 55% of the campus is female while 45% is male (Headcount Enrollment by Gender).

2. Market Dynamics

**Market Size:** The philanthropic market will be looked at in terms of money that is donated to food pantries in general, as well as money donated to nonprofits as the food pantry fits both categories. In 2012, Americans gave an estimated $78.8 million to food banks and food pantries through Feeding America, which is the largest nonprofit geared towards ending hunger in the U.S. (Feeding America 2012 Annual Report 2). On a local scale, the amount of contributions made to nonprofits in Bowling Green totaled $14.4 million in 2012 (How America Gives).

**Market Growth Rate:** According to a survey conducted by Feeding America, there has been a 28.6% - 37.7% increase in demand for emergency food assistance nationwide. Food banks and food pantries receive new clients every year. About 48% organizations surveyed noticed an increase in the number of children needing food, with 74% served more of the unemployed (Feeding America's Hungry: The Facts). Because of an increase in clients, there will need to be an increase in funding to support the organizations. According to a study conducted by Balckbaud, a nonprofit software company, donations to nonprofits grew by 2% in 2012 and online donations increased by 11%. However, if not for the donations made after Hurricane
Sandy, overall donations would have been flat in 2012. On a yearly basis, nonprofits that 
fundraise less than $1 million a year saw an increase in donations by 7.3% (Charitable Giving 

**Factors Influencing Demand:** The economy and government support of nonprofits are major 
factors that drive market demand. The recession has increased demand for nonprofits services, so 
much so that these organizations cannot keep up. For example, according to the *Nonprofit 
Finance Fund 2012 Survey*, 58% of nonprofits weren't able to meet demand in 2011, and this 
number increased to 60% in 2012 (McKenna). Local food pantries get some of their food from 
food banks, which receive a portion of their funding from the state government. In 2011, 
Governor Kasich signed an executive order that gave $2 million to the Ohio Association of 
Second Harvest Foodbanks, who were in need of emergency funding (Candisky). The Toledo 
Northwestern Ohio Food Bank is a member of this organization, and the St. Vincent de Paul 
Food Pantry purchases food from this bank. However, the government does not provide 
complete funding for food pantries, so these organizations must have increased donor support to 
fill the gap and to meet the demand for services.

**Assumptions:** By relying on surveys conducted by Feeding America, Blackbaud, and Nonprofit 
Finance Fund, it is assumed that the surveys are free from response bias or questionnaire bias. 
Another assumption is that the national findings are still applicable to a food pantry in Bowling 
Green. By using growth rate data from 2012, it is assumed that growth rates will be similar in 
2013.

3. **Buyer Behavior**

**Customer Psychographics:** Customers say that an obstacle that keeps them from donating to an 
organization is not having enough money. Therefore, customers need to know that even a 
donation as small as $5 will make a difference for the food pantry. A latent need of customers is 
having the knowledge that even a $1 donation can purchase 5.5 pounds of from a food bank. See 
Appendix A for customer empathy maps.

**Purchase Process:** According to a study conducted by Bekkers and Wiefking, there are eight 
drivers of philanthropic giving: awareness of need, solicitation, costs and benefits, altruism, 
reputation, psychological benefits, values, and efficacy (927). First of all, donors need to know 
about the monetary material, or psychological needs of an organization (929). Awareness is 
spread by the mass media, whether it is by TV or the Internet (930). Social media is one of the 
cheapest forms of creating awareness for an organization. However, it can be difficult and time 
consuming to find followers and maintain their interest.

The next trigger is solicitation, which can come in a variety of forms- from letters asking for 
donations to fundraising events. About 85% of donations come after an organization has solicited
another organization (931). It is relatively easy to solicit donations at the parish. They are allowed to place advertisements in the parish bulletin and make announcements after Mass. However, the organization is only allowed to ask for donations in the parish collection basket once a year.

Third, donors factor in how much it “costs” them to make a donation (932). For example, if someone attends a fundraising event, they are not only giving up their money, but also their time. Many of the potential donors who were surveyed stated that not having enough money prevents them from donating. Donors also consider what benefits they received for donating to a certain organization. People who donate to a university may receive special seating at sporting events or concerts (934). Donors that support the food pantry receive focus on the internal benefits-like feeling good about themselves. There is a potential to provide more incentives for donors, like having a banquet in their honor.

Next, people donate because they have a sense of altruism, meaning that they care about the mission of the organization and who benefits from the services (936). One respondent experienced a death in the family, so she supports organizations that help people who have family members with cancer. Philanthropists choose to donate to specific organizations because they care about their own reputations. They want to donate to a charity that will make themselves look good in the eyes of others. People also donate if they know that others may be watching them, like when a donation basket is being passed around at a church service (937). This step comes into play when parishioners see people placing food in the donation baskets before Mass.

The study also found that philanthropists give in order to receive psychological benefits such as feeling good about themselves or showing gratitude (938). Respondents felt good about themselves because they knew that they were making a difference in others lives. Participating in philanthropy helps people express their values, and the people donate to charities that espouse their own values as well (941). Many people donate to the food pantry because it allows them to exercise the Christian value of serving the poor. People will choose not to donate to specific charities that go against their values. Finally, efficacy plays a role in whether some donates to a certain charity. Donors want to know that their money is making a difference and effectively helping the beneficiaries of the organization (942). The food pantry can work on communicating to donors that their money is truly helping the hungry in Bowling Green by providing annual reports of how many people are served, and how many pounds of food are purchased with their donations.

**Major Buyer:** In the university student segment, it is the student who makes the decision his or herself about whether or not to donate to a nonprofit. However, university students may talk about the charity with friends, who will influence the decision. Their friends come from classes and organizations in which they are participants. For example, the values of a sorority, fraternity, or religious organization might influence their behavior. Single parishioners are influenced by
family members, but they are the ultimate decision maker. For example, one respondent's mother was both a volunteer and donor at a specific organization. He decided to donate to the charity his mother supported. Couples make joint decisions about what charities they will support. One respondent's husband is on the board of the Bowling Green Pregnancy, so they both support that organization. Respondents who go to a church generally support organizations that follow their church’s values.

**Media:** University students best hear about charities and fundraisers through Facebook, Twitter, and email. Students also learn about new charities by going to presentations at a campus organization’s meeting. Adults find out about charities through email and the mail. They receive occasional phone calls from charities as well.

**Customer Interviews:** See Appendix B for customer surveys. Customers in general need an organization that supports their values. They want to know that their money is going directly to people in need. Some would like to receive phone calls from the organization thanking them for their donation. Others would like an occasional email or even a printed newsletter in the mail.

4. **Segmentation**

**Market Segmentation:** The philanthropy market in Bowling Green can be broken down into three specific segments. There is the university student segment, student parishioners of St. Thomas More, year-round parishioners, and non-parishioners.

University students are generally 18-24 years old, with 32% of students living on campus $35,000 in debt (ASC Meeting Minutes). College students at BGSU value philanthropy. They raise money for Dance Marathon every year, and all Greek organizations are required to perform a certain number of volunteer hours. The campus offers service learning classes that allow students to apply what they have learned in the classroom to volunteer experiences. College students have an easier time donating to organizations where they can see the people they serve. For example, at Dance Marathon, the miracle families (recipients of the donations) are present at the event. Students seek to feel good about themselves by donating and also looking good in the eyes of their peers.

Parishioners at St. Thomas More consist of both college students as well as adults and families. There are about 500 students and 330 year-round parishioners. Parishioners donate to a cause that aligns with their religious values. Parishioners generally support pro-life organizations, missionary organizations, and organization run by Catholic churches or are affiliated with the Catholic Church. In return for donating their money, parishioners expect that their money will be used to support Catholic values. They want to raise their sense of self esteem by donating. The main difference between student parishioners and year round parishioners is that students are more likely to donate items to a cause than money. Students have less discretionary income than year-round parishioners, so giving canned food for example is a more affordable donation option than writing a check for $25. Student parishioners are more likely to
donate if there is an event involved. For example, Veritas, the Catholic student group on campus, raised over $200 for the food pantry by hosting a dinner and dance.

The median age of a resident in Bowling Green is 32.1 and their average income is $39,900 (Bowling Green City Data). About 35% of residents have a high school diploma, 17% have a Bachelor’s degree, and 9.9% have a Master’s degree (43402 City Data). Bowling Green residents value the arts and learning, as seen by local support of the Wood County Public Library and the Black Swamp Arts Festival. They donate to both secular and faith based organizations, such as BG Christian Food Pantry, or the Cocoon Shelter.

**Customer Segments:** Year-round parishioners focus slightly more on donating to national organization than local organizations. They are slightly more likely to donate money to a charity than items, and they generally donate to charities that support their religious values. Year-round parishioners donate more money per charity than student parishioners and university students. Student parishioners are more likely to donate items to local charities that support their religious values. University students generally support national secular charities with small monetary contributions. Bowling Green residents support local secular charities with monetary contributions.

**Target Segment(s):** Target segments are university students, student parishioners and year-round parishioners. Year-round parishioners will have the highest priority because they
have the most money available to donate. They also have the highest sense of awareness of the food pantry. Next is student parishioners. They have less of an awareness of the food pantry because they have been members of the parish for a short amount of time. Student parishioners have the potential to become “evangelists” for the food pantry by talking to their friends about their volunteer experiences. When given the opportunity to do a service learning project or philanthropic centered activity for a student organization, student parishioners can influence university students to choose a project that benefits the food pantry.

5. **Competition**

   **Competitors**
   - **Direct:** Bowling Green Christian Food Pantry, Martha’s Soup Kitchen, The Common Good
   - **Indirect:** Food for Thought, Feed Your Neighbor Ministries

   **Competitive Profile**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>St. Vincent de Paul</th>
<th>Food for Thought</th>
<th>Feed Your Neighbor Toledo</th>
<th>Bowling Green Christian Food Pantry</th>
<th>Martha’s Soup Kitchen</th>
<th>The Common Good</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Amount of Food</strong></td>
<td><img src="star.png" alt="" /></td>
<td><img src="star.png" alt="" /></td>
<td><img src="star.png" alt="" /></td>
<td><img src="star.png" alt="" /></td>
<td><img src="star.png" alt="" /></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Variety of Food</strong></td>
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<td><img src="star.png" alt="" /></td>
<td><img src="star.png" alt="" /></td>
<td><img src="star.png" alt="" /></td>
<td><img src="star.png" alt="" /></td>
<td><img src="star.png" alt="" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Frequency of Service</strong></td>
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<td><img src="star.png" alt="" /></td>
<td><img src="star.png" alt="" /></td>
<td><img src="star.png" alt="" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hours Open</strong></td>
<td><img src="star.png" alt="" /></td>
<td><img src="star.png" alt="" /></td>
<td><img src="star.png" alt="" /></td>
<td><img src="star.png" alt="" /></td>
<td><img src="star.png" alt="" /></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Marketing</strong></td>
<td><img src="star.png" alt="" /></td>
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<td><img src="star.png" alt="" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Amount of food: Star=More than one meal
Variety of food: Star=Perishable and nonperishable food
Frequency of service: Star=Once a week or more
Hours Open=Star: Service available more than one day a week
Marketing: Star= Has a website and Facebook page

6. **SWOT Analysis and Competitive Trends**

   See Appendix C for SWOT charts.

**Food for Thought Toledo**

*Advantages:* Food for Thought Toledo allows donors to build personal relationships with the clients through eating lunch with them. Donors can buy items like coffee and t-shirts, with the proceeds going to Food for Thought. Donors wearing the t-shirt advertise for the organization,
and have something that reminds them of the organization. It can also spark conversation with others about Food for Thought. The t-shirt provides both a material and psychological benefit for donors. The donor feels good about herself for donating, and others may think more highly of her because they know that she donates to Food for Thought (Free Lunches, Support).

Disadvantages: Food for thought has a blog, but it hasn’t been updated since November 2012. Donors do not have the chance to read stories about recent events.

Bowling Green Christian Food Pantry
Advantages: Clients can go “grocery shopping” and fill a cart with food. Donors have the ability to support an organization that aligns with their religious values. People can volunteer and work with the clients at the pantry.

Disadvantages: This organization does not use social media or have a website. Potential new donors have a difficult time becoming exposed to the food pantry. Donors do not have the opportunity to receive news from the pantry online. People who want to donate must mail in their donations or do so in person because there is no online option. (Area Resources-Contact Information)

Martha’s Soup Kitchen
Advantages: Volunteers are responsible for donating a majority of the meal for the clients. Donors can sit down and eat dinner with those they are serving. This allows them to build relationships with the clients, and also boost their self esteem because they know they are helping other people.

Disadvantages: The organization does not have a Facebook page, Twitter account, or a website. People browsing the Internet will have a hard time becoming aware of the organization. If someone wants more information about the organization, they must contact Martha’s Soup Kitchen directly or one of the member churches that regularly volunteers there (Martha's Kitchen Serving Free Dinners in BG).

The Common Good
Advantages: Clients can have a hot meal twice a week and breakfast once a week. Donors are able to eat the meals and have a focused, intellectual discussion on Thursday nights. There is a Facebook page and website, so donors can stay up to date on what is going on at the organization.

Disadvantages: The Common Good offers a variety of programs- from yoga to talking circle discussions. They also support a service learning trip to the Bronx, NY and a Navajo reservation. Donors who want to support all the ministries will donate less to each individual program (Common Good).

Feed Your Neighbor Ministries
Advantages: Clients have access to several food pantries across Toledo that are open on every day of the week. Donors can deliver food or volunteer at the pantry, and even apply to be
on the Board of Directors. The organization has a website and Facebook page, so people can interact with the organization online.

*Disadvantages:* The organization does not have any merchandise that people can buy to support the ministry. Feed Your Neighbor Ministries has a “news” tab on their website, but not a blog. Blogs give donors insight into what is going on in the organization “Feed Your Neighbor Ministry”.

**Competitive Trends:** There has been an expansion in the food pantry marketplace. Organizations must work harder and smarter to receive more donations from individuals because government assistance is decreasing. In 2011 the government purchased 421 million pounds of food to supplement pantries, and in 2012 the amount decreased to 129 million pounds of food. Meanwhile, nationwide demand for services has increased 122% (Bello). To increase donations, food pantries are looking to increase awareness of their organization. They do this by engaging donors with social media, as seen by Food for Thought, the Common Good and Feed Your Neighbor Ministries. Organizations are blogging about events in order to reach donors emotionally through stories. Other trends include organizations have people purchase items and the profits go to the organization. Food for Thought sells t-shirts and coffee.

**Market Leaders:** The market leader in social media usage Food for Thought. The organization has over 1500 Facebook likes and 992 followers on Twitter. The Common Good falls in second with 402 likes, and over 360 people like Toledo Area Ministries. Food for Thought is also the service leader. The organization offers a free meal of peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, as well as giving clients the opportunity to use their pantry. This is the only organization that provided a weekly meal in addition to allowing clients to use the pantry. Martha’s Kitchen and Food for Thought are tied with volunteer-client interaction. Volunteers have the opportunity to eat a meal with those they are serving and build meaningful relationships. Food for thought also offers the best value for the donor. Donors can purchase a t-shirt for $15.00, which allows the organization to by 84 pounds of food (Store).

The St. Vincent de Paul Food Pantry has the opportunity to respond to competitors in the marketplace. The organization will have an advantage over BG Christian Food Pantry and Martha’s Kitchen because of its Facebook, Twitter, and blog. Food for Thought is the only competitor that sells items for a fundraiser. The food pantry currently sells Pisanellos coupons to raise money for the organization, however it should sell more merchandise in order to stay competitive with Food for Thought. The pantry could sell its own t-shirts or maybe other items that are popular with college students- like sunglasses or bracelets. To compete on volunteer-client relationships, the food pantry could start having meals for clients in the gym attached to their current facilities.
7. Market Share

**Competitive Advantage:** The St. Vincent de Paul food pantry’s main competitive advantage is that it gives volunteers the opportunity to serve in a faith based, Catholic environment. Part of the mission of the St. Vincent de Paul Society is to “lead women and men to join together to grow spiritually by offering person-to-person service to those who are needy and suffering in the tradition of its founder, Blessed Frédéric Ozanam, and patron, St. Vincent de Paul.” (The Mission of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul). People who serve and donate to this organization are able to grow in their faith in a supportive environment. The organization has committee meetings where members can share their experiences with each other. The pantry is connected to St. Thomas More University Parish, which gives volunteers a vehicle to explore other ministries such as alternative spring break and Saturday service events.

**Customer Lifecycle:** First, the customer will donate money or a canned good to the pantry. Some customers will make a one time donation for special events. During Christmas there is a giving tree where people can take an ornament that lists items they can donate, and during Lent there is a Feed the 5000 campaign. Other customers will donate food every Sunday during the offertory part of the Mass. People are more likely to be influenced by their peers to donate because they see other people bringing food to the baskets during Mass. With regards to monetary donations, customers have the opportunity to make a monthly contribution online. To keep customers, the food pantry should encourage donors to make a monthly online contribution. For food donations, the pantry could have a special event for each month that encourages people to bring food. For the summer time they could challenge people to fill a kiddy pool with food, or in the fall have people donate food for a Thanksgiving dinner.

**Market Share:** Of all charitable organizations in Bowling Green, the food pantry has a market share of less than a thousandth of a percent. Residents gave $14.4 million in donations last year, and the food pantry received $20,554. Food for Thought Toledo received $432,456 in donations last year (Food for Thought Toledo Inc.) Toledo area ministries received $1,595,502 last year, however Feeding Your Neighbor is one of 8 ministries (Toledo Area Ministries). Estimating that money is spent equally among the various ministries, Feeding Your Neighbor could receive about $200,000 a year in donations. Financial data was not available for the other organizations. Assuming that the Common Good, Martha’s Kitchen, and BG Christian Food Pantry receive about $50,000 a year each in donations, the estimated total revenue in donations for these six organizations is $803,010. The St. Vincent de Paul Food Pantry’s estimated market share is about 2.5%.

**Sales Forecast:** The food pantry had an increase in clients from 2,428 in 2010 to 3,695 in 2012. Donations increased from $8,280 in 2009 to $20,554 in 2012. This is a 140% increase in donations over a three year period. In keeping with this trend, over the next three years, there
will be almost $50,000 in donations per year by 2016.

**Market Evaluation:** Surveys will be used to continue to evaluate current customer needs. These surveys will ask customers about what blog articles topics they are interested in reading, and if they continue to use social media outlets. Donor interviews will be conducted twice a year to gage customer interest in the new Facebook page, Twitter account, and blog. Data from Facebook and Twitter will also be analyzed to determine what the most popular posts are. This information will be used to cater marketing materials to consumer preferences. The data will also help determine if certain social media outlets should be used at all. For example, if the Twitter account only has 25 followers, then maybe it will be time to explore other media channels.

8. **Promotional Strategy**

**Media Approach:** The pantry will use various forms of media to reach donors. According to the customer surveys, potential donors currently receive information about charities from Facebook, email, and the mail. Therefore, the organization will create a Facebook page to reach out to both potential and current donors. To spark interest on Facebook, the pantry can take advantage of various platforms and create videos to inform people about the pantry’s services. A newsletter will be created that can be sent electronically as well as in the mail.

**Advertising:** To capture the university student market, the pantry will advertise in the BG news and BG news online. To draw the attention of Bowling Green residents, the organization will advertise in the Sentinel Tribune, and BG Chamber of Commerce website. And finally, to target people in the wider Northwestern Ohio area, the pantry will advertise in the Toledo Blade, Perrysburg Messenger Journal, and the Mirror Newspaper. Because this is a local food pantry, advertising efforts are based on regional publications.

**Public Relations:** The St. Vincent de Paul Food Pantry will help sponsor the Black Swamp Arts Festival. This will show that they are supportive members of the local community. This will also give volunteers the chance to network with businesses and other people in the Bowling Green area. The Pantry could partner with Veritas and sponsor a guest lecture or conference on campus dealing with nonprofits or the issue of hunger in the area. This could get some free press in the BG News or the local television station, BG 24. The pantry could also sponsor a crop walk or 5K to end hunger. Another special event could be a 24 hour famine, where people do not eat for 24 hours and donate the money they would have spent on food. In the surveys, people mentioned that they talk about charities with family or friends. If people participate in these events, it will hopefully spark conversation with family, friends, and coworkers about the pantry.

**Sales Promotions:** The food pantry currently sells Pisanello’s coupons to raise money. The pantry could follow the lead of its competitor Food for Thought, and sell t-shirts to raise money. One of the respondents to the customer survey indicated that she is
passionate about Falling Whistles. This organization sells necklaces with a whistle on it. The pantry could sell bracelets or necklaces with a food related pendant to raise money. The jewelry could also be used as a conversation starter to build awareness about the pantry.

11. Cost Schedule

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Type of Ad</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Total Cost</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BG News</td>
<td>3&quot;-16&quot; column</td>
<td>$37.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BG News Online</td>
<td>Breaking News</td>
<td>$1.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breaking Streamer</td>
<td>Entire month</td>
<td>$110.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sentinel Tribune</td>
<td>Entire month</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BG Chamber of Commerce website</td>
<td>Online directory listing</td>
<td>140 yearly rate, $11 a month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pisanello’s coupons</td>
<td>Pizza Coupon Community Benefit</td>
<td>25 coupons $18.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toledo Blade</td>
<td>Advertisement</td>
<td>$39.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mirror Newspaper</td>
<td>3&quot; column</td>
<td>$114.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total cost</td>
<td></td>
<td>$455.27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The pantry would spend about $495 a month on advertisements. When customers make donations, the pantry should ask them how they heard about the pantry. After each month, the pantry should evaluate each marketing channel and determine if there is a positive ROI. The pantry should then keep or no longer continue using certain channels depending on the analysis.

**Selling Cycle**: The first step in the buying process is creating awareness. Donors stated in the survey that they hear about new charities through presentations on the charity, and through media channels like Facebook and email. People will donate if they feel an emotional connection to the charity, or if it aligns with their religious values. Certain survey respondents said they might donate right away if they are at a fundraiser, and other said it may take a month or two to consider whether they should donate. After a person makes a donation, they receive a thank you note along with a copy of a newsletter. 

In order to transition donors from a one-time gift to a monthly donation, the pantry will make follow up calls with donors, as well as sending them monthly emails with news about the pantry. The pantry also has a yearly banquet that thanks those involved with the pantry.

**Create Awareness:**

*At the Parish*

A brochure located in the church will let parishioners know about the pantry. Parishioners can also pick up a newsletter about current happenings with the food pantry. To improve the awareness of the services at the food pantry, there will also be an advertisement in the parish bulletin that gives the information for the Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Blogger Pages. The pantry could also have a representative at Veritas meetings promoting the need for volunteers and donations.
On Campus
The food pantry can advertise their services and volunteer opportunities in the *BG News*. They could partner with dining services to encourage students to buy canned goods with their extra meal plan at the end of the year, and then donate them to the pantry. The organization could partner with the service learning department to create service opportunities for students to learn about poverty while giving them a chance to volunteer.

In Bowling Green
The food pantry could advertise in the *Sentinel Tribune*. The organization could participate in local BG events like the Christmas and Thanksgiving parades and even the Black Swamp Arts Festival. Someone on the board could join the Bowling Green Chamber of Commerce in order to network with people in the business community and subtly promote the pantry. The pantry could consider organizing a conference with the leaders of all the nonprofits in Bowling Green and hold it at Seton Hall at the church. The organization could organize a crop walk or 5K run to end hunger. Airing ads on Annunciation Radio, a local Catholic station, is another marketing option.

Generate Understanding and Interest: Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and a blog will be used to generate interest about the food pantry. Facebook will be used to post upcoming events about the pantry, as well as photos and videos. Twitter will be used to post quotes, Bible verses, nonprofit news, as well as links to the blog. The LinkedIn group will promote discussions about the pantry and issues like hunger. The purpose of the blog is to share stories and comment on social issues that readers care about. Some issues that survey responders care about are pro-life issues, the welfare of children and families, and the work of the Church. Donors decide to support an organization because they have an emotional connection. These media channels will provide stories of volunteer experiences and facts about hunger in the area. There will be videos posted about the issue of poverty. These posts will tug at the donor’s heart strings, and motivate them to make a donation.

Close the Sale: To close the sale, the blog will include a call to action for reader to donate to the pantry or volunteer. On the Facebook page, there will also be links to the St. Thomas More website where people can donate online.

Build the Relationship: After someone makes a donation, they will receive a thank you note in the mail, as well as a newsletter. They will be asked if they want to join our email list. If they are not already on the various social media sites, we will send them an invite. Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn will be used to create an online community of people who support the food pantry. These sites will pose discussion questions for donors to answer, and donors will interact with the pantry and other members. If members are engaged with the pantry, they will be more likely to donate again. The pantry will also call donors periodically to let them know about upcoming fundraising events. Donors will be invited to volunteer so that they can see firsthand how their money is being used.
10. Implementation

Facebook

With over 845 million users, Facebook is one of the most popular social networking sites. Facebook can be used to engage customers and influences customers to purchase a product. About 62% of companies have generated customers by using Facebook (Vaughan). The St. Vincent de Paul Food Pantry has created a Facebook page in hopes of acquiring new donors and encouraging repeat donations.

URL: https://www.facebook.com/pages/St-Thomas-More-University-Parish-St-Vincent-De-Paul-Food-Pantry/250198638450432?ref=hl

The Facebook page currently has 77 likes, and 18 posts in a one month period, from March 18th to April 18th, 2013. A Facebook like is one way to measure how many people are both aware of your organization and are interested in the cause. In the nonprofit industry, for every 1000 like a page has the number of unique users who interacted with content as a result of the Facebook page (New Facebook Benchmarks: An Extra eNonprofit Benchmarks Report from NTEN and M+R). Another advantage to having people like you page, is that users friends can see what posts they comment on or like. The combined number of people who like or comment on posts per day and their and their friends who see the content is known as reach.

Total Daily Reach

![Graph showing total daily reach](image)

According to the chart above, the number of friends of fans who viewed posts ranged from 500 to almost 3500. Marketers can use this data to determine which posts are the most effective, and then generate similar content to engage customers. On March 28, the post was about a religious holiday, Holy Thursday. There were 69 people who saw the post, 6 people clicked on the post, and 2 liked it. Another popular post was on March 31. “Christ is risen. Wishing you a blessed Easter from everyone at the SVDP food pantry! The post was viewed by 70 people, 7 people
clicked on the post, and 4 liked it. This data indicates that the most popular posts relate to a religious holiday. Of the blog posts posted to the Facebook page, the one that generated the most engagement was on the history of the organization, with 155 page views, 6 people who clicked on the post, and 3 likes.

Another important metric is daily page consumption. This tracks the daily number of clicks per post. Clicks range from 0-19 a day with 4 being the number of average daily clicks. April 3 had the most amount of clicks at 19. The post was a Bible verse. Coming in second at 15 clicks was a blog post about the history of the St. Vincent de Paul Society.

However, a majority of users will like the page and then never post or comment on content. According to Dr. Michael Wu, the 90-9-1 rule explains the level of fan involvement with a Facebook page. About 90% of users view the page but do not post content, 9% occasionally comment, and 1% are hyper-contributors who post most of the comments and content (The 90-9-1 Rule in Reality). The Facebook page has one user who has commented on posts, another who has shared content, and a handful who have liked various posts.

**Improvements**

To improve engagement, I should most more content with pictures. Three out of 18 posts had pictures. According to a study conducted by Hubspot, posts that included photos had 53% more likes, and photos and photo albums generated 104% more comments (Corliss). I would also use polls and ask questions to followers to see what type of content they want to see or to just get their opinion on a social justice issue. Another component the Facebook page is lacking is creating a platform where users can dialog about issues such as poverty and hunger. The posts are mostly advertisements for the blog or quotes from famous people. The Facebook is currently being treated as a sales page as opposed to a relationship building page. This could be remedied by posing questions for fans to discuss on the page. To get more followers, there should be a link
to the Facebook page on the blog. The food pantry should also like more organization’s pages in hopes that they will like the food pantry’s page in turn.

**Twitter: @BGsvdp**

Twitter is becoming a more prominent method for marketing. Around 42% of consumers who use Twitter follow businesses (Leaning). The Twitter account has 11 followers, follows 20 people and has 19 tweets. The food pantry’s followers are mostly St. Thomas More Parishioners, along with one organization, the Cherry Street Mission. As a rule of thumb, it is generally a good idea to have more people following you than you are following. However, this is not the case with the food pantry’s Twitter account. Because the page was started in March, it will take a while for the organization to create a large user base. Tweets have been mostly about blog posts and Bible quotes.

To improve the quality of the Twitter account, I should be more interactive with my tweets, by posting pictures and tweeting at other people/organizations. I should follow more people in general in hopes that they will follow me back. An ad should be put in the church bulletin advertising the Twitter page. Instead of tweeting once or twice a day, the pantry should increase this to 25-25 tweets. Future tweets should also include hashtags. Another idea is to follow trending hashtags and incorporate them into tweets when necessary. Twitter also has an inbound chat feature where people can have conversations using tweets. The pantry could also start using Vine, a new Twitter app that lets users post videos that are 6 seconds or less (Hussain). Possible Vine updates could include purchasing food at the food bank, stocking the pantry shelves, and filling the bags with food.

**Blog: bgsvdp.blogspot.com**

Blogging is an important tool for driving traffic to a company’s website and creating leads. Organizations that blog can increase website traffic by 55% (Georgevia). Blogs were written with certain keywords in mind in order to increase the likelihood of being found in a Google search. New blog posts are posted to Twitter and Facebook. The food pantry blog currently has seven blog posts with seven more that will be posted throughout the summer. The blog has had 87 page views since it was created. The first blog post on April 6th had 23 page views, while the second most popular post at 14 page views occurred on April 13th and was about Pope Francis. In order to increase page views, I shared posts on my personal Facebook page. See Appendix D for blog posts.
**Blog Page Views**

![Blog Page Views Graph](image)

**Improvements**

Photos could be added to posts to make them more visually appealing to readers. The blog should also have an editorial schedule that outlines content themes for each month. Right now the blog focuses on people and saints related to the St. Vincent de Paul Society, as well as social justice issues like the lack of clean water and a person’s ability to support themselves financially. The blog could focus on current news relating to funding for food pantries or other events happening in the nonprofit world. In addition, the blog should ideally have 16-20 posts a month. The blog should also find blog directories to join, such as Bloglisting.net and Bloghints.com. This would increase traffic and improve rankings within Google searches (Georgieva).

**LinkedIn**

This social media tool for developing a professional network has over 175 million users. The pantry created a LinkedIn group page as opposed to a company page, because it did not have its own unique website and email address. The page was created recently, so there is currently no data to analyze. In order to improve the group page, key words will be used in the group description to increase visibility within searches. Some keywords include “food pantry” and “St. Vincent de Paul.” Whomever administers the page could utilize “LinkedIn Answers” to learn more about the nonprofit industry and social media marketing. Just like Facebook, there should be frequent status updates featuring news and links to the latest blog posts. The food pantry could also create a video and upload it to the group page. To better learn about what is happen in the nonprofit industry, the new administrator can sign up for LinkedIn Today news (Vaughn).

**Financials**

One of the goals of this project was to help the pantry increase donations by 10%. From the chart below, the pantry raised quarterly donations by 97% from 2012 to 2013. However, it is hard to determine if the Facebook, Blogger, and Twitter posts have directly caused donations to rise by
this amount. Other factors could include someone making a donation in the name of a deceased family member, the economy picking up, and the pressure to donate during the season of Lent.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>St. Vincent de Paul Donations</th>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Donations from members</td>
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<td>Church/Poor Box Collections</td>
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<td>Fund Raising</td>
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<td>Other</td>
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<td>Total</td>
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<td>Percentage of donation increase</td>
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<tr>
<td>Estimated 1st quarter donations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Percentage of quarterly donation increase</td>
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</tbody>
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Works Cited


“Toledo Area Ministries.” Charitynavigator.org. 08 Apr. 2013.


Appendix A: Customer Empathy Maps
Male- mid 30s

Think and Feel
* Values the corporal works of mercy—feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless, visiting those in prison
* Values evangelization to college students, pro-life issues, and theology of the body
* Does not feel comfortable sharing with friends all the charities he supports, does not want to brag about donating to charity
* Is driven by compassion towards others

Say and Do
* Donates to St. Paul’s Outreach, Knights of Columbus, Foundation for Life, Bowling Green Pregnancy Center
* Attends fundraiser such as the gala for life, annual banquet for the St. Vincent de Paul Society
* Although he supports FOCUS, he does not attend their events because they are too far away
* Occasionally speaks to friends about various issues

Hear
* Mother influences him about donating to charities that she supports
* Learns about charities from the mail, Catholic radio, National Catholic Register and Facebook
* Receives emails and mail from charities he supports, as well as an occasional text message

See
* Lives in an apartment by himself in BG
* Friends from church and work
* Works at a factory
* Has a problem with spreading himself too thin by donating to too many organizations

Gain
* Feels good about donating to a charity
* Likes knowing the money is going to a good cause
* Helping to alleviates pain and suffering
* Contributing to the greater good
* Helping people who may be on the wrong track in life get back on their feet

Pain
* Will not donate to charities that support Planned Parenthood, Like Susan G. Koman Race for the Cure
* Does not have enough money to support every charity he cares about
* Wants more calls from organizations to know that his money is actually helping people
Female, 19, BGSU student

Think and Feel
* Issues of children suffering always touches her heart.
* Issues such as helping families that have cancer or people experiencing extreme trauma like hurricanes or earthquakes that result in mass destruction really matter to her.
* She empathizes with others who suffer because of the death of people close to her.
* Motivated to donate when she feels sad or sympathetic.
* Kept up at night by the issue of child soldiers.

Say and Do
* Donates to Falling Whistles and Invisible Children.
* Talks about international issues with friends or local issues with sorority sisters while volunteering.
* Is bringing a speaker to campus for her favorite charity-Falling Whistles.

Hear
* People who give presentations about the charity they represent.
* Receives emails from charities.

See
* Lives in a residence hall with a friend from back home.
* She is surrounded by her sorority sisters.
* Friends with girls from her sorority as well as classmates.
* Busy with activities at BG.

Gain
* Makes her more grateful for what she has.
* Feels good about helping other people.
* Allows her to be involved in issues she cares about.

Pain
* Too busy with school and organizational activities to attend events for a charity.
* Doesn’t have enough money to donate.
* The charity does not seem like it needs the money.
Female, Mid 50s, Parishioner

**Think and Feel**
- Cares strongly about pro-life issues and helping pregnant women
- Feels compassion and sadness when thinking about those in need
- Feels good after donating to a charity
- Hopes it provides a tangible benefit to the recipients

**Say and Do**
- Talks about charities with friends, co-workers, and people from church
- Goes to fundraising events for the BG Pregnancy Center
- Her husband is on the board for the BG Pregnancy Center
- Attends the March for Life

**Hear**
- Influenced by her husband and the Church.
- Receives information about charities through mail and email
- After hearing about a new charity from someone, she takes time to think about the charity and whether she should donate

**See**
- Lives in Bowling Green with her husband
- Her grown children live in California and Bowling Green
- Sees pregnant women and wants to help them

**Gain**
- Knows that she is pleasing God
- Feels good about herself
- Knows her money is going to a cause that she cares about

**Pain**
- Wants to receive more digital communications and less snail mail
- Unsure if money is actually making a difference
Appendix B: Customer Surveys

Demographics: Male
Age: 22
Non-parishioner

1. Do you donate to any charities, and if so, which ones?

None at the moment

2. What types of communications do you receive from each charity you donate to? (Facebook, email, etc) NA

3. Is there any type of communication you wished you received? NA

4. Who influences your decision to donate to a nonprofit? parents/family/friends

5. Do you ever have conversations with your friends about charities, and if so which ones? Rarely

6. What media channels inform you about new charities (Facebook, Twitter, other websites, email)? Facebook/email

7. What issues are important to you? What are the most important things in your life right now?

Traditional marriage, church/faith, graduation, career, house, relationships

8. What emotions motivate you to donate to an organization? Empathy, understanding, compassion

9. Are there any issues that keep you up at night? No issues currently. Does this make me a shallow person?

10. Do you tell other people about causes you care about? Yes

11. Do you go to events that support the cause? If applicable

12. What prevents you from donating to a charity? Not being employed
Demographics: Female
Age: 19
Non-parishioner

1. Do you donate to any charities, and if so, which ones?

Falling Whistles

2. What types of communications do you receive from each charity you donate to? (Facebook, email, etc) Facebook, email

3. Is there any type of communication you wished you received? I like what they do

4. Who influences your decision to donate to a nonprofit? I say the presenter of the non-profit (whoever I hear about it from) impacts my decision the most if I’ll donate or not

5. Do you ever have conversations with your friends about charities, and if so which ones? I talk about it a lot with Friends. I talk about international issues and what is going on with things like Invisible Children or Falling Whistles, but sometimes my sisters and I will talk about local issues when we are doing service hours.

6. What media channels inform you about new charities (Facebook, Twitter, other websites, email)? I say email is the biggest communication device that informs me on charity events

7. What issues are important to you? What are the most important things in your life right now?

I think issues of children suffering always touches my heart. I also have experience lots of death with close loved ones so I think things like that to help families such as cancer issues or extreme trauma like hurricanes or earthquakes that result in mass destruction really matter to me.

8. What emotions motivate you to donate to an organization? I’d say when I am feeling sympathetic or sad I am more likely to donate. If I see what I should be grateful for having.

9. Are there any issues that keep you up at night? No issues that make me lose sleep except for the child soldiers, my favorite organization that I am actually bringing a speaker to campus for is falling whistles!

10. Do you tell other people about causes you care about? I always talk to friends about things that bother me.

11. Do you go to events that support the cause? Yes, I am going to a Falling Whistles event later this semester
12. What prevents you from donating to a charity? Sometimes I don't have money on me or I don't think that charity really needs it.

Demographics: Male
Age: 33
Parishioner

1. Do you donate to any charities, and if so, which ones?

St. Thomas More University Parish, FOCUS, Knights of Columbus, BG Pregnancy Center

2. What types of communications do you receive from each charity you donate to? (Facebook, email, etc) Email, mail

3. Is there any type of communication you wished you received? More phone calls

4. Who influences your decision to donate to a nonprofit? Mother, the Catholic Church

5. Do you ever have conversations with your friends about charities, and if so which ones? I talk about issues indirectly with friends and if it naturally comes up in conversation

6. What media channels inform you about new charities (Facebook, Twitter, other websites, email)? Mail, Catholic radio, Facebook, National Catholic Register

7. What issues are important to you? What are the most important things in your life right now? My health, prolife issues, evangelization, theology of the body, feeding the hungry, Catholic issues

8. What emotions motivate you to donate to an organization? Feel good knowing I'll help people change who are going the wrong way in life, and knowing I'm contributing to the greater good

9. Are there any issues that keep you up at night? Prolife issues

10. Do you tell other people about causes you care about? It depends if it comes up in conversation

11. Do you go to events that support the cause? If the events are close: Knights of Columbus meetings, March for Life. The annual FOCUS and SPO conferences are too far away.

12. What prevents you from donating to a charity? Finances, if it goes against the teachings of the Church
Demographics
Female
Age: mid 50s
Parishioner

1. Do you donate to any charities, and if so, which ones? *Bowling Green Pregnancy Center*

2. What types of communications do you receive from each charity you donate to? (Facebook, email, etc) *Email, snail mail*

3. Is there any type of communication you wished you received? *Less snail mail*

4. Who influences your decision to donate to a nonprofit? *My husband*

5. Do you ever have conversations with your friends about charities, and if so which ones? *I speak with friends a little bit at church about prolife organizations*

6. What media channels inform you about new charities (Facebook, Twitter, other websites, email)? *Email*

7. What issues are important to you? What are the most important things in your life right now? *Prolife issues*

8. What emotions motivate you to donate to an organization? *Compassion and sadness, knowing it is pleasing to God*

9. Are there any issues that keep you up at night? *Prolife issues*

10. Do you tell other people about causes you care about? *Yes-friends, coworkers, family*

11. Do you go to events that support the cause? *Yes, Pregnancy Center banquet, Walk for Life, March for Life*

12. What prevents you from donating to a charity? *Lack of funds, charity doesn’t seem to need it*
Demographics
Female
Age 21
Student Parishioner

1. Do you donate to any charities, and if so, which ones? Yes, Cystic Fibrosis Foundation, Catholic Charities.

2. What types of communications do you receive from each charity you donate to? (Facebook, email, etc) Facebook, email, in mass, mail.

3. Is there any type of communication you wished you received? No

4. Who influences your decision to donate to a nonprofit? The fact that I have CF influences my decision to donate to CFF and that I’m involved in my Catholic faith and that they take collections at mass.

5. Do you ever have conversations with your friends about charities, and if so which ones? Yes, mostly the CFF.

6. What media channels inform you about new charities (Facebook, Twitter, other websites, email)? Facebook, twitter

7. What issues are important to you? What are the most important things in your life right now? Growing in my faith, staying healthy, finding balance in my life, preparing myself for my future career and marriage.

8. What emotions motivate you to donate to an organization? The need and personal connection /interest in organization. Also priority.

9. Are there any issues that keep you up at night? Poverty in the world, the reality of CF

10. Do you tell other people about causes you care about? Yes-friends, coworkers, family

11. Do you go to events that support the cause? Yes, CF fundraisers

12. What prevents you from donating to a charity? Lack of income
Appendix C: SWOT Analysis: St. Vincent de Paul Food Pantry

**Strengths**
- Donors have the opportunity to volunteer at the organization
- Parishioners have high awareness about the presence of the food pantry
- Receives financial and volunteer support from the parish
- Allows Christian donors to support a cause that aligns with their values

**Weaknesses**
- Provides only non-perishable goods
- Only open 2 days a week
- All clients receive 2 bags of food, without regard to the size of the family
- Unable to keep up with demand: the pantry currently allows clients to pick up food once a month, and in the past they could do it twice a month

**Opportunities**
- Capitalize on BG’s student population: partner with various service organizations on campus, like Omega Phi Alpha and Circle K
- Sororities and fraternities are required to have philanthropy hours, so they could help with food drives and
- Some students take service learning classes and the food pantry could be a resource for service projects
- University students often have extra meal plan at the end of the year that can be used to purchase canned goods for the pantry

**Threats**
- The economy has still not fully recovered
- Decreased government support for food banks, which is where the pantry purchases its food
- People donating to more organizations but spending less on each nonprofit
SWOT Analysis: Feed Your Neighbor Ministries

**Strengths**
- Has a website and a link to donate online
- Utilizes social media like Facebook
- Provides clients 3 days worth of food
- Wide distribution network of 14 pantries located in Toledo
- Young Leaders Council provides volunteer opportunities for people interested in nonprofit management
- Better Business Bureau Accredited Charity

**Weaknesses**
- Does not have a Twitter
- Provides only nonperishable goods
- Clients can receive food once a month
- Each food pantry has different hours, so it can be confusing trying to determine when the pantry is open

**Opportunities**
- Draw upon the Christian groups at the University of Toledo
- Create a Twitter account
- Provide internships in nonprofit management
- Provide group volunteer opportunities for high school youth groups

**Threats**
- Demand for food is greater than the availability to provide it
- Competition from Food for Thought and Helping Hands of St. Louis soup kitchen
- People donate to multiple charities and donate less per charity

SWOT Analysis: The Common Good

**Strengths**
- Has a website and a link to donate online
- Utilizes social media like Facebook
- Provides two dinners and one breakfast a week
- Volunteers have the opportunity to cook the meals
- Dinner discussions on various issues every Thursday
- Free Yoga twice a week

**Weaknesses**
- Does not have the means to provide completely free meals - asks for a $1-$2 donation or a canned good
- Lack of consistent donor base

**Opportunities**
- Create a Twitter account
- Part of WAM: Wood County Area Ministries - look to members for donations
- Create a blog
- Find grants to fund other programs - art programs for kids, health and wellness activities

**Threats**
- Competition from St. Vincent de Paul Food Pantry, Martha's Kitchen
- The economy is still recovering, so people are more cautious about donating their money
- Panera is a major food donor - what happens if they ever go out of business in the distant future

SWOT Analysis: Martha’s Soup Kitchen

**Strengths**
- Provides hot meals-main dish, side dish, soup or salad
- Menu changes every week
- Strong volunteer base: 15 churches in BG take turns helping each week
- Clients can come every week
- Volunteers provide both the service and the meal

**Weaknesses**
- Does not have a website, Facebook, or Twitter
- Only open on Fridays
- No option to donate online

**Opportunities**
- Draw upon the BG Christian groups on campus, like H2O, CRU, ACT, and Veritas
- Advertise volunteer opportunities through Bowling Green’s Office of Service Learning
- Develop a website and social media strategy
- Funding from church collections

**Threats**
- Slow economic recovery prevents people from donating
- Competition with local food pantries such as the St. Vincent de Paul Food Pantry and Bowling Green Christian Pantry
- Scarcity of government funds and grants

SWOT Analysis: Bowling Green Christian Food Pantry

**Strengths**
- Provides canned goods as well as meat, dairy products, and eggs
- Clients can fill a shopping cart filled with food, and determine what food they would like to eat
- Provides toiletries when available
- Allows donors to support an organization that aligns with their Christian values

**Weaknesses**
- Provides food only once every 3 months
- Does not have a website, Facebook, or Twitter
- Only open Thursdays and Saturdays
- No option to donate online

**Opportunities**
- Draw upon the BG student population for volunteers and donations
- Receive support from local BG churches
- Develop a Facebook and social media strategy
- Funding from private grants

**Threats**
- Slow economic recovery prevents people from donating
- Federal government funding is decreasing for food banks
- Competition with local and national nonprofits for donations

Post 1: What is the St. Vincent de Paul Society?

The St. Vincent de Paul Society at St. Thomas More University Parish has been around since the 1980s, and has fed thousands of hungry people in Bowling Green over the years. The food pantry is a local chapter of the national/international St. Vincent de Paul Society. The organization is over 150 years old, and was founded in 1833 by Frédéric Ozanam in Paris. While attending the School of Law at the Sorbonne in Paris, a friend challenged his faith and the practices of the Catholic Church at the time. Frédéric acknowledged that the church in France had once placed a lot of emphasis on serving the poor, but now the church’s focus on this issue seemed to dwindle. In light of this challenge, Frédéric created the "Conference of Charity", an organization dedicated to helping those in need in the streets of France. In honor of its patron saint, the organization later changed its name to the Society of St. Vincent de Paul.

The fame of the society spread, and in 1845 the organization made its way to the United States. Father John Timon introduced the rule of the society to various churches in St. Louis Missouri, and it was eventually embraced by Bishop Peter Richard Kenrick. He commissioned Fr. Ambros Heim to start the St. Vincent de Paul Society in the diocese. In 1846 the chapter was officially recognized by the international headquarters in France.

How do we react when our faith or way of life is challenged? Do we follow in the footsteps of Frédéric Ozanam and tackle the issue head on? Do we look at our lives and ask ourselves “Am I using my resources and time not only for myself, but for the good of others?” Often times, I find myself complacent with how I live my life. It can become easy to become wrapped up in the demands of school, work or home, and ignore what is going on in the world around me. It takes some extra effort to become aware of national and local issues. Awareness of social issues helps us become more in tune to the needs of those around us. Even if I am not directly affected by the government’s policy on food stamps, I have the opportunity to become compassionate towards those who use food stamps. And who knows, with the way the economy is going, I could be in the same boat as those living in poverty in Wood County.

Becoming involved with the St. Vincent de Paul Food Pantry is one way of becoming more aware of what is happening to our sisters and brothers. Consider volunteering an hour of your time to hand out food. Offer to unload items from the food bank. Serving in and of itself is not difficult, but the real challenge comes when we must look outside ourselves and decide to give up our time or our money. Becoming part of a volunteer organization like the St. Vincent de Paul Society provides the support to make this decision a little easier.

*History summary from [www.svdpusa.org](http://www.svdpusa.org)

Post 2: Mission of the St. Vincent de Paul Society

The mission of the St. Vincent de Paul Society is at the core of the organization and guides the practices and decisions made within the organization.
“Inspired by Gospel values, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, a Catholic lay organization, leads women and men to join together to grow spiritually by offering person-to-person service to those who are needy and suffering in the tradition of its founder, Blessed Frédéric Ozanam, and patron, St. Vincent de Paul.”

The St. Vincent de Paul Food Pantry fulfills the first part of the mission statement by providing opportunities for volunteers at the pantry to have direct contact with the clients. Volunteers give bags of food to those in and help the clients load the food in their cars. Donors and volunteers can grow spiritually by performing the corporal work of mercy of feeding the hungry. Through acts of service, volunteers can become more thankful for what they have, and realize that everything they have is a gift from God that is meant to be shared. How can you connect your service to your spiritual life?

“As a reflection of the whole family of God, members, who are known as Vincentians, are drawn from every ethnic and cultural background, age group, and economic level. Vincentians are united in an international society of charity by their spirit of poverty, humility and sharing, which is nourished by prayer and reflection, mutually supportive gatherings and adherence to a basic Rule.”

Food pantry volunteers come from many different backgrounds. Some are in high school, while others are college students and baby boomers. Bowling Green volunteers are united to one another and those in chapters all over the world through their love of Christ. Like the Vincentians, we too are called to serve with humility and love. Practicing humility isn’t always easy. It can be a struggle to see myself on equal footing with those I’m serving. However, when we see others through the eyes of Christ and through His love, we can begin to serve others with a pure heart. Participating in the local committee meetings is helpful in unpacking the volunteer experience and becoming aware of the inner workings of the organization.

“Organized locally, Vincentians witness God’s love by embracing all works of charity and justice. The Society collaborates with other people of good will in relieving need and addressing its causes, making no distinction in those served because, in them, Vincentians see the face of Christ.”

The members of the St. Vincent de Paul Society not only run the food pantry, but also perform other acts of charity, like delivering the Eucharist to the homebound or volunteering at another local soup kitchen. The organization collaborated with Wood County Area Ministries for the Feed the 5000 Food Drive, a canned goods collection during Lent. And finally, the food pantry serves all who come to receive food because they are made in the image and likeness of God.

Looking back at the mission statement, how can you make a greater effort to perform acts of charity and justice? How can you incorporate prayer into your service?

Post 3: Are the phrases food pantry and food bank interchangeable?

In the last two posts, I’ve discussed the mission and vision of the St. Vincent de Paul Food Pantry. But what is a food pantry, and how does it differ from a food bank or soup kitchen?
Food banks are as a major supplier for food pantries. They serve as food collection and distribution centers. Food banks get their food from a variety of sources- the government, corporate retailers and manufacturers, farmers, and local grocery stores. The St. Vincent de Paul Food Pantry purchases some of its food from the Toledo Seagate Food Bank and the Toledo Northwestern Ohio Food Bank. The Toledo Northwestern Ohio Food Bank serves 8 counties and provides 6,115,736 pound of food a year. This food bank is also a member of Feeding America, a nonprofit that supplies over 202 food banks around the country. Food banks generally do not serve food directly to clients, so they use food pantries and soup kitchens to distribute the food to those in need.

A food pantry is a place where clients can come to receive food to take home to their families. Some food pantries, like the St. Vincent de Paul food pantry, provide only non perishable goods. Other organizations, like the Bowling Green Christian Food Pantry, offer both perishable and nonperishable goods, like meat, dairy products, and even eggs. Bigger pantries let clients “go shopping” and pick out which food they would like to eat. Smaller pantries give bags of food to the hungry.

The main difference between food pantries and soup kitchens is that soup kitchens serve hot meals, while food pantries distribute food that is consumed elsewhere. However, soup kitchens are not limited to providing hot soup. Martha’s Soup Kitchen in Bowling Green has a changing menu. One week it might be lasagna and then spaghetti the next.

Hopefully this article has given you some insight into the world of food-based nonprofits.

For more information about the food banks, check out their websites.

Feeding America: http://feedingamerica.org
Toledo Northwestern Ohio Food Bank: http://www.toledofoodbank.org/
Toledo Seagate Food Bank: http://theseagatefoodbank.org/

Post 4: Who was St. Vincent de Paul?

The St. Vincent de Paul Society was founded not by St. Vincent himself, but by Frenchman Frederic Ozanam. However, St. Vincent de Paul is one of the most influential French saints, and we can all learn from his example.

Vincent was born a peasant in Gascony, France in 1581. When he was 19 years old he was ordained a priest. In 1605 he was captured by pirates and sold as a slave. He escaped two years later, and after that experience he had a great love for victims of slavery. Twelve years later, with the help of St. Louise de Marillac, he started a religious order for women, the Daughters of Charity. The group raised money to free galley slaves, and also established hospitals for the poor. He later founded a religious order for priests, the Congregation of the Mission, which is known today as the Vincentians. The focus of this order was to serve the sick and the poor in the community. Vincent died in Paris in 1660, and was canonized a saint in 1737.
So what can we learn from the life of St. Vincent de Paul, a man who lived over 300 years ago? St. Vincent de Paul was dedicated to serving the lowliest members of society, which included slaves. Who are the slaves among us today? People who are dependent on alcohol, drugs, or pornography are slaves to their addictions. We have the ability to reach out to those friends and challenge them to seek help for their addictions.

In the spirit of St. Vincent, when serving others we should strive to do the work with a loving heart and a cheerful disposition. We should throw our entire selves into volunteering, not just giving physical labor, but our minds and hearts as well. It means being cheerful and joyful even when life may be crashing down around us.

“You will find out that Charity is a heavy burden to carry, heavier than the kettle of soup and the full basket. But you will keep your gentleness and your smile. It is not enough to give soup and bread. This the rich can do. You are the servant of the poor, always smiling and good-humored.”

And even if we do not have the financial resources to give to the poor, we can help those who are spiritually poor. Why not invite someone to go to Mass with you? Compliment a random stranger. Call a family member who you who haven’t talked to in a while. These simple acts of service can brighten someone’s day and are practical ways of living out the Gospel.

St. Vincent de Paul remains a beloved saint and his example reminds us of the importance of serving both the material poor and spiritual poor around us.

*Facts on St. Vincent de Paul’s life are from the New Advent Catholic Encyclopedia

**Post 5: On Homelessness**

Post 5: Did you know there are about 13,000 people are homeless in the state of Ohio? A majority of us will never experience homelessness, but certain instances provide insight into what it would be like to have no home. We can experience moments of solidarity with the less fortunate when we are without the typical comforts we normally enjoy. It is the uncomfortable moments that challenge us to be grateful for what we have and to think of the needs of others.

Yesterday morning I had one such experience. I originally volunteered to greet people at a meeting held in the Business Administration Building, and was later sent outside to give people directions to the building. Wearing my khaki pants and blazer with an orange and brown umbrella to shelter me, I faced the traditional BG weather- windy, cloudy, and rainy.

As my fingers froze, clenched to the umbrella, I started thinking about my situation. As hard as it was to stand in the cold, I knew that I would be there for only an hour. And then it dawned on me- I could go inside to get warm and dry at any time, but thousands of people all over the country did not have this opportunity. Even though in my mind I was complaining about the rain, I had a decent sized umbrella to keep the water off my back. I started to become more thankful for these items, and I had a more positive mindset as I greeted people as they entered the building.
Other people have taken more radical measures to discover what it is like to be homeless. In the documentary *The Human Experience*, produced by Grassroots Films, two brothers decided to live with the homeless on the streets of NYC for a week during the winter. The object of their experiment was to find out how people could find purpose in their life in varying circumstances. The brothers immersed themselves in the streets of New York. They slept in boxes during the night, and begged for food by day. The brothers built relationships with the homeless, and talked with the homeless about whether their life had any meaning. One man replied, “God has a purpose for us all. If He didn't have a purpose for me, I would've been gone a long time ago.” The homeless man’s quote points to the idea that every individual is here on this earth for a reason. Even if someone does not have an “ideal life” by our standards, they deserve to be here just as much as you and me.

Not everyone has to live among the homeless to experience a taste of their struggles. When we are uncomfortable with our hunger or being out in the cold, we can remember our brothers and sisters who deal with those situations every day. And we have the opportunity to make their lives better by acknowledging their dignity as an individual, and sharing what we have- weather it be time, money, or food.

*Homelessness statistic from the 2011 Ohio Homelessness Report

**Post 6: Pope Francis-Servant to the Poor**

Pope Francis is a shining example of how we should live simply and treat the poor in our midst. Elected on March 13, Pope Francis has inspired thousands- both Catholics and non-Catholics alike, during his first month as pope. He turned down living in the papal apartments in favor of living at the Vatican hotel, Casa Santa Marta, and even rode the bus there instead of taking a chauffeur-driven car. Pope Francis is known for being an advocate for the poor and speaking out against social injustice. He once stated, “We live in the most unequal part of the world, which has grown the most yet reduced misery the least...The unjust distribution of goods persists, creating a situation of social sin that cries out to heaven and limits the possibilities of a fuller life for so many of our brothers.”

So what can we learn from Pope’s Francis actions? His commitment to only living on what he truly needs should inspire us to reexamine how our lifestyle choices affect those around us. Blessed Mother Teresa said “Live simply so others may simply live.” Everything we has is a gift from God, and our wealth is meant to be shared with others. “And John would answer and say to them, "The man who has two tunics is to share with him who has none; and he who has food is to do likewise." (Luke 3:11). Do we spend our money on frivolous things or purchase multiple items when just one would suffice? When we donate to the poor, do we give them items that we ourselves would not want to use, or do we give them the best of what we have?

I struggle to apply this concept of living simply. Sometime this summer, my family will move to a smaller home that is easier for my parents to take care of. Over winter break I had to clean out my room and go through all my belongings and determine which items to keep, throw out, or give away. In my closet I found four pairs of dress shoes, including a pair that had been worn only once. Why did I need so many in the first place? The money I spent on clothes could have
gone to a good cause. And I still have some nice hardback children’s books in my closet that I obviously never read, but I can’t bear to part with because of their high quality and sentimental value. Living simply is a process that involves changing our attitudes towards what we own and how we use our possessions. It means thinking of two people when we buy things- how will this purchase affect myself, and how will it affect my ability to help others? Living simply is not always easy, but with the grace of God and the example of role models like Pope Francis, anything is possible.

**Post 7: Honoring the Poor: St. Louise de Marillac**

Have you tried to do a project on your own, but it just seemed impossible to do by yourself? How much easier is it to accomplish large tasks with the help of others? St. Vincent de Paul needed assistance in organizing a group of women who dedicated their lives to helping the poor in Paris. St. Louise de Marillac became his protégé, and she eventually founded the Sisters of Charity.

Louise was born in 1591 in Paris, to Lord Louis de Marillac. She never knew her mother, who died during childbirth. Her father was a rather disagreeable man, and this influenced her love of the downtrodden. Louise was eventually sent to live with her aunt, a nun at at Poissy. At the age of 16, Louise felt a strong call to enter the religious order of the Daughters of the Passion. However, her spiritual director convinced her to explore the option of marriage. After her father’s death, Louise married Antoine Le Gras, and eventually had a son. During her son’s life she dedicated her life to his education, as well as assisting those in need. After 12 years of marriage, Louise’s husband died. She then sought to dedicate her whole life to aiding the poor, and eventually me St. Vincent de Paul. Louise worked closely with him in serving the sick and poor, and she was inspired to found the Sisters of Charity. In 1660 she died in Paris, and was canonized a saint in 1934 by Pope Pius XI.

St. Louise is an example of how we should love everyone we meet, including the marginalized. “Love the poor. Honour them, my children, as you would honour Christ himself.” It is not easy to love the poor. When I see someone on the street asking for money, I may become suspicious of them. If I give that man money will he use it to buy drugs or alcohol? How do I know that he is not a panhandler who could have a “real job” if he tried? Why am I so judgmental of someone whom I have never taken the time to get to know? Not all homeless are alcoholics, but I did not want to enable them. When I was in Chicago a couple years ago, I came up with my own solution to this issue. As I saw people in the streets begging for money, I would sacrifice my snack for the day and put a granola bar in their money cup. When I ran out of food, I would pray for them. Donating money and food to a pantry or a soup kitchen is a way of honoring the poor and making sure they get the care they deserve and need.

*Facts about St. Louise de Marillac come from the New Advent Catholic Encyclopedia*
Post 8

Teach a Man to Fish

Imagine that you are a poor, young woman in Kenya. You receive food from an international charity, but they only come once a month and your food supply is low. Your family once had a small farm, but most of the animals died during a drought. You learned to weave baskets from your mother and grandmother, and would like to start your own business, but you don’t have money for supplies. Will you ever be able to create a better life for yourself?

An ancient Chinese proverb states, “Give a man a fish and he will eat for a day. Teach a man to fish and he will eat for a lifetime.” One of the best ways to alleviate poverty is to give people the means to support themselves, instead of giving them a handout. Many people in developing countries have an entrepreneurial spirit, but they are unable to receive a loan which would give them the startup money for their business. Giving people animals so they can start their own farm or providing micro-loans are some solutions to this problem.

Heifer International is an organization that gives animals to families and communities in need. These animals not only provide food, but a means of raising income for the family as well. This gift helps people become self-sufficient and gain a sense of independence. This also plays into the Catholic Social Teaching theme of promoting the dignity of work. By removing the initial financial obstacles of purchasing livestock, Heifer International gives families the chance to do the work they desire. The program also asks recipients to share what they have with their neighbors in need. This multiplies the effects of the donation, as one grateful client reaches out to another, starting a chain of people helping their fellow community members.

http://www.heifer.org

For people who want to start their own business, microfinancing is a viable option. In many developing countries, there is a lack of credit available. This is where organizations like Kiva step in and provide small loans for entrepreneurs. The money raised by these organizations goes to a microfinance bank, and clients can receive the capital they need. Because the client is now able to now create a successful business, the client is able to repay the loan, which puts more money into the bank. Kiva is a microfinance social networking site where donors can choose to support a specific project, and the donor will eventually receive his or her money back so they can lend it again. Microfinance also teaches entrepreneurs how to save money, as well as how to become leaders in their community.

http://www.kiva.org

Post 9 Catholic Social Teaching Part 1

The Catholic Church has long been a champion of the poor and marginalized, and has developed an extensive teaching on these issues. Catholic Social teaching is based on a variety documents and encyclicals such as Rerum Nevarum (On the Condition of Labor), Mater et Magersteia (Christianity and Social Progress), Pacem in Terris (Peace on Earth), the Bible, the Catechism, and many others. The Church has created a set of guidelines regarding how we are to perform acts of love and justice.

The 7 themes of Catholic Social Teaching are:

1. Life and Dignity of the Human Person
2. Call to Family, Community, and Participation
3. Rights and Responsibilities
4. Option for the Poor and Vulnerable
5. The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers
6. Solidarity
7. Care for God's Creation
Over the next couple blog posts I will be delving into these themes.

**Life and Dignity of the Human Person**

Every human life is a gift from God—from conception to natural death. "Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you. Before you were born, I set you apart for my holy purpose" (Jeremiah 1:5). Everybody person dignity and worth— from the mentally disabled to the poor and homeless who can’t find worth. This theme informs the Church’s teaching regarding abortion, contraception, euthanasia, cloning, and the death penalty. Every stage of life is to be respected from the newborn to the elderly. How can we live out this teaching? Support your local pregnancy center and speak out against abortion. Speak up if your friends make fun of a certain group of people and join the campaign to end the use of the word “retarded”. Pray for peace and an end to crimes against life.

**Call to Family, Community, and Participation**

People are called to develop their families and live as role models in today’s society. For married couples it means making a lifelong commitment to one another. We are called to become active members of our community and evangelize with our actions. “We are one body, individually members one of another.” (Romans 12:4-8). Our actions affect those around us, and they have the ability to make someone’s day better or worse. Participate in a local community garden. Attend a 5k to support cancer research. Spend some time at the local senior center. We should also strive to remove social and economic barriers that prevent people from participating as active members of society. Volunteer at a local job placement agency and look over someone’s resume. Donate an old suit to the salvation army.

Stay tuned for the next post to read the discussion on Rights and Responsibilities, Option for the Poor and Vulnerable, and The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers

* Information on Catholic Social Teaching on [www.usccb.org](http://www.usccb.org)

**Post 10 Catholic Social Teaching Part 2**

Last post I discussed the first two tenets of Catholic Social Teaching: **life and dignity of the human person** and the **call to family, community, and participation**. Today we will learn about the themes of **rights and responsibilities**, **option for the poor and vulnerable**, and **the dignity of work and the rights of workers**.

**Rights and Responsibilities**

The dignity of the individual can only be achieved if he or she is guaranteed their basic rights. These rights include human rights such as access to food, water, clothing, and shelter, as well as the right to life. We have a duty to protect these rights and fight for justice if they are infringed. This theme plays off the idea that we are responsible for the well being of our neighbors and that we are all connected because of our humanity and identity as children of God. Proverbs 31:8-9 calls us to advocate for those who need our help. “Open your mouth in behalf of the mute, and for the rights of the destitute; Open your mouth, judge justly, defend the needy and the poor!” Write to your Congressman about supporting programs that provide food for the hungry. Consider boycotting businesses that use sweatshops or child labor.

**Option for the Poor and Vulnerable**

In our daily decisions, we have a responsibility to consider the needs of the poor and marginalized. When the government passes laws we should consider if they make the lives of the poor better or worse. According to Blessed Pope John Paul II, “A society will be judged on the basis of how it treats its weakest members and among the most vulnerable are surely the unborn and the dying.” In looking at our discretionary income, do we consider donating it to charity?

**The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers**

People have the right to work in order to support themselves and their family. Workers have a right to have fair wages, safe working conditions, have the ability to create unions and bargain with employers, and to have their own
property. This theme also supports the idea that workers should have the ability to freely exercise their religion, such as respecting Sunday as a day of rest. “On the seventh day God completed the work he had been doing; he rested on the seventh day from all the work he had undertaken. God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work he had done in creation.” (Genesis 2:2-3). Do you take the time to rest from your work and thank God for all he has given you? Where is your work in your list of priorities?

Keep reading next week to learn about the last two themes of Catholic Social Teaching—solidarity and care of God’s creation.

*Information taken from http://www.usccb.org

**Post 11 Catholic Social Teaching Part 3**

To finish up the review of Catholic Teaching, I will be examining the last two themes—solidarity and care for God’s creation.

**Solidarity**

“If you want peace, work for justice” This quote by Pope Paul VI illustrates the idea of solidarity. This concept does not just mean being aware of the plight of our neighbor, but actually working for the common good. Solidarity recognizes our interdependence on one another. The civil war in Syria and human rights violations in North Korea affects us because the people in those countries are part of our human family. Right now, we live in a “peaceful” country, but thousands of people do not have that luxury. In following the golden rule of treating others the way they want to be treated, we should work for justice so that others can experience the peace that we enjoy. Pray for peace in the Middle East and all over the world. The way to achieve peace begins in our own lives. When engaging in conflict with others, watch your language and actions towards others. Compromise and talk out your issues. Solidarity also entails embracing people of other cultures and races. We should work to end racism and prejudice in our midst. Speak up if you hear someone making a racist joke or comment.

**Care for God’s Creation**

“Then God said: Let the earth bring forth vegetation: every kind of plant that bears seed and every kind of fruit tree on earth that bears fruit with its seed in it...God saw that it was good” (Genesis 1:11-12). The earth is a gift from God and is meant to be respected. Even though humans have been given “dominion” over the Earth does not mean we have the right to use it however we wish. This plays into the idea of consumerism and how it relates to the environment. In our quest for more and more material goods, how are we affecting the Earth? What type of pollution contributed to the making of the five pairs of shoes I bought? What will happen to the shoes after I no longer wear them? Do I recycle plastic bottles and cans? Do I consider using a reusable shopping bag? When I need a new item, do I check to see if it is available in a second hand store? Do I drive my car when I can walk or ride my bike somewhere? Our Earth contains limited resources, and it is up to us to ensure that they are available for future generations.

Catholic Social Teaching should guide our daily actions and challenges us to promote these ideas to a secular society.

For more information, check out [www.usccb.org](http://www.usccb.org)

**Post 12 Mother Teresa: The woman who loved**

“I have found the paradox, that if you love until it hurts, there can be no more hurt, only more love.”

Bl. Mother Teresa is a modern day example of someone who not only gave her time and service to the poor, but gave her whole heart as well. Gonxha Agnes was born in Skopje, Albania in 1910. Her father died when she was eight, and after this tragedy she developed a strong relationship with her mother. Agnes became an active member of her parish, and eventually felt called to become a missionary. When she was 18, Agnes went to Ireland to join the Sisters of Loreto, and took the name Theresa after St. Therese of Lisieux.

In 1929, Mother Teresa left Ireland and journeyed to India, where she taught at a school run by the sisters in Calcutta. On a train ride from Calcutta to Darjeeling in 1946, Mother Teresa received interior locutions and visions
from Jesus asking her to go to the streets and love the poor and the dying. He explained to her his thirst for souls and asked her to become a “victim of love” who would share His love with others. Upon Jesus’ request, Mother Teresa founded the Missionaries of Charity, an order of sisters dedicated to serving the poorest of the poor. Mother Teresa’s work eventually spread to 123 countries all over the world. She died in 1997 and was beatified in 2002.

So what can we learn from this modern day saint? I know many of you are probably thinking “I’m no Mother Teresa. I can’t move halfway around the world to serve the poor in India” However, we can imitate her in performing acts of charity with great love. She placed less emphasis on her service and more about letting people know that they someone cares about them. “The biggest disease today is not leprosy or tuberculosis, but rather the feeling of being unwanted.” We can follow her words by reaching out to those who may seem isolated and alone. Consider going to a nursing home and talking with the residents. Call a friend or relative you haven’t talked to in a while. If you are a student, find someone who is sitting by themselves at the cafeteria and go eat with them. These acts of service may force us out of our comfort zone, but making someone’s day makes it all worthwhile.

“Love begins by taking care of the closest ones - the ones at home.” We can recognize those who need our help right in our midst. Is there a neighbor who might be lonely and need someone to talk to? Does the food pantry need some extra hands? Do you have the time to tutor or mentor a child at the local YMCA? We don’t have to work in the slums to become like Mother Teresa, but we can bring love and joy to everyone we meet.

*Biographical information from http://www.motherteresa.org

*Quotes from Brainyquote.com

**Post 13 Water World**

Did you know that 4,000 children die from lack of clean drinking water every day? A majority of these deaths occur in India, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Pakistan, China, and Nigeria. About 800 million people do not have access to water all over the world. Thousands of people suffer and die from waterborne illnesses like diarrhea and typhoid fever. However, a lack of clean water causes many other issues as well. Women in developing countries will walk an average of 6 kilometers a day to transport water. This gives them less time to spend supporting themselves and their family, and even prevents girls from going to school.

So what can we do to help this crisis? First of all, we can donate money to organizations that provide clean water and build wells in developing countries. UNICEF creates wells in developing countries and provides means for water sanitation. The organization also establishes separate bathroom facilities for boys and girls at local schools. By contributing to the TAP project, a $5 donation can provide 200 days worth of water to a person in need. The Water Project is another organization that builds wells in Africa. They also build sand dams and catchments to collect rain water.

How can we make this issue relevant to our everyday lives? The Water Project suggests drinking only tap water for a couple weeks. In America, we have the opportunity to drink any number of beverages- soda, coffee, tea, alcohol, milkshakes, and more. Drinking only tap water will help us be in solidarity with people who don’t have access to these beverages. It will also help us appreciate the refreshing power of a clean glass of water. We can then take the money we would have spent on other beverages, and donate it to charity.

Becoming better stewards of our water is another way we can connect to this issue. The water we do have is a gift from God, and should be used wisely and not wasted. "The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it." (Psalm 24:1) I am personally guilty of wasting water by taking long showers. I spend so much time contemplating my life that I forget how long the water has been running. To solve this issue, I try to time myself in my head and see how fast I can take a shower. When brushing my teeth, I try to make sure that I turn off the water right away. Little actions like only drinking as much water as I need or watering my lawn less frequently in the summer help conserve water and raise my awareness about the abundance of clean water in my life.

So the next time you take some water from the drinking fountain, reflect of the gift of water and consider donating to those who have none.
Post 14 Global Hunger

Did you know that 870 million worldwide go hungry every day and 5 million children die of hunger each year? Annually, another 17 million children will be born underweight because their mother’s did not have access to enough food. However, there is hope for this growing issue. There are several organizations that are dedicated to serving the poor and hungry in developing countries.

Catholic Relief Services

Catholic Relief Services, CRS, was established in 1943 by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops to aid refugees of World War II. By the 1950s, the organization looked to provide aid to more people, especially those in Asia, Latin America, and Africa. During this time, CRS not only helped those affected by war, but also those who were trapped by poverty. CRS works with those in developing countries to help them fight poverty and hunger through community centered development.

http://crs.org/hunger/

Caritas International

Caritas International promotes the Catholic ideals of social justice all over the world. Its core values are dignity, justice, solidarity, and stewardship. The organization was founded in 1987 by Graham Oldman in Germany, and his focus was to serve the poor and oppressed. In 1901 Caritas spread to Switzerland, and a chapter was established in the United States in 1910. Today, Caritas is an umbrella organization for 164 other programs that serve in 200 countries. CRS and Catholic Charities are two organizations that serve under Caritas in America. Some of the services it provides are emergency food relief, peacekeeping, conservation, and empowering women.

www.caritas.org

Hunger in America

About 37 million Americans go hungry every day, despite living in one of the richest nations in the world. Numerous organizations are dedicated to fighting poverty in the US.

Catholic Charities

The National Council of Catholic Charities was founded in 1910 by Rev. Thomas Shahan. Its mission was “to bring about a sense of solidarity among those in charitable ministries, and ‘to be the attorney for the poor’.” The organization served as a way to connect separate diocesan ministries to one larger organization. In 1983 the organization worked with the government to found the Emergency Food and Shelter Program. The organization changed its name to Catholic Charities USA in 1986. Today Catholic Charities provides adoption services, counseling, nutritional programs, and disaster response.

http://www.catholiccharitiesusa.org

Catholic Campaign for Human Development

The Catholic Campaign for Human Development, or CCHD, is the poverty fighting arm of the United States Council of Catholic Bishops. The purpose of the organization is to “carry out the mission of Jesus
Christ, "... to bring good news to the poor ... release to captives ... sight to the blind, and let the oppressed go free" (Luke 4:18). The CCHD gives grants to organizations for community and economic development. The organization also focuses on educating people about poverty and community development.

http://www.usccb.org/about/catholic-campaign-for-human-development/