

STORIES OF HOPE

RAFFLE

A while back, a mum of two lost her husband and was finding it tough to get by. The local SVP wanted to help her, but she was struggling with accepting charity and so turned down all their offers. So, the SVP group teamed up with the local butcher to hold a raffle for a year's supply of meat. The mum bought just one ticket, and guess what? She won! Everyone in the community thought it was a brilliant how 'by chance' the the right person always won the SVP



KEBAB

A phone call went like this... 'I wanted to let you know that one of your parish groups might be getting taken advantage of by someone they help. I appreciate the SVP's support for families in need, but I noticed that after two members delivered a food hamper on Monday, the family ordered kebabs that evening, which seems a bit off.'

We reached out to the local conference about this, but they didn't think the family was exploiting them; they felt the family genuinely needed help and friendship. After a long chat, they decided to improve their approach. They'll now ask families for food preferences during first visits and use an online app to place evening orders after those visits.

VINNIE PACKS

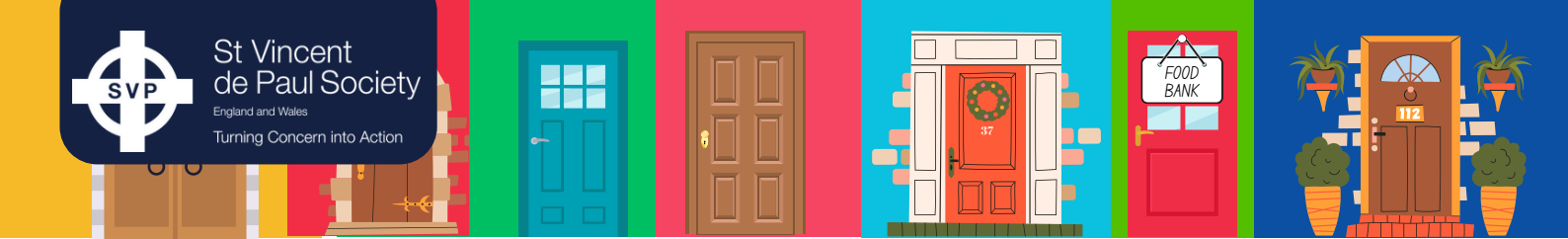
One of our Young Adult Conferences spent an evening meeting rough sleepers and handing out Vinnie Packs. They chatted with a man living in the entrance of a closed shop, and he was really grateful for their friendship and support. When he received the Vinnie Pack, it brought him to tears, and the team felt the power of their small gestures. They noticed he was using a kids' sleeping bag that was covered in mildew and offered to help him get a new one. With a quick WhatsApp to get permission from the Conference and some browsing on an online shop, he picked out a new sleeping bag and a waterproof sheet for rainy nights. If you would like to know more about Vinnie Packs [Click Here.](#)



COMMUNITY CAFE

During the winter fuel crisis, many churches offered "heating in the halls" or "Warm Welcome" initiatives. One conference, however, opened up but had no visitors. On the second day, they hit the streets to hand out invitations to those in need. One person they met said, "I haven't been in a church for 30 years, and being cold won't change that."

Instead of arguing, the member asked how they stayed warm, and the person mentioned spending time at a local café. By the end of the week, the heating project was scrapped, and the SVP sponsored a couple of tables at the café. They set up a regular presence on Tuesdays and Thursdays for anyone who wanted to chat, and offered a tab for healthy meals for those who couldn't pay. Now, the conference meetings are held at that café instead of the parish room!



MINI VINNIES

One December, the Mini Vinnies at a school were invited to a local care home to sing carols. They practiced hard and had a fun day pulling crackers, wearing party hats, and munching on mince pies. At the next school assembly, the Head Teacher praised them for representing the school so well. One resident even called to say it was “the best day of our year!” When a student asked if they could go back, the Head Teacher shared they’d been invited to return next year. Another student suggested, “If it was the best day for them, shouldn’t we go more often?” So, plans were made for an Easter party, but then the pandemic hit. One Mini Vinnie lived nearby and started waving at the residents during daily walks. Days turned into weeks, and they loved making those connections. They even got their parent to buy birdseed to make feeders and kept returning to top them up, always waving and making people smile. One day, staff from the care home ran out, excited to ask, “Which resident are you related to? Everyone thinks you’re their child or grandchild!” The Mini Vinnie replied, “I have no relatives here, but I’m a Mini Vinnie and I’m just here to do good.” That day sparked a deep friendship, with residents adopting the Mini Vinnie as family, and their parent, now an SVP member, bringing coffee for the staff. When school returned, the Head Teacher had dozens of letters to read, but the mystery Mini Vinnie never raised their hand.



SOME GREEN PAINT

At the start of the Conflict in the Ukraine, the UK government gave people an opportunity to invite a family to stay with them in their homes. Many of our SVP members offered their homes to families fleeing the war. During an early Zoom meeting, one member excitedly shared that she was chosen to host a lady and her two kids. Everyone was happy for her! She mentioned that during a Zoom call with the mum, they found out the mum had great English, but the kids were shy and scared. Then, her husband had a great idea—he quickly grabbed some paint swatches and asked the mom what colour they’d like to paint their temporary bedroom. That got the kids talking for the first time! They debated colours and finally decided on a cheerful shade of green for their new space.