

Rendering of Newly Expanded Bishop Ott Sweet Dreams Shelter



\$200,000 Challenge Grant Issued by Huey and Angelina Wilson Foundation

We are pleased to report that the Huey & Angelina Wilson Foundation has issued a \$200,000 challenge grant to St. Vincent de Paul. The Wilson Foundation and its trustees believe that our vision of expanding our shelter capacity for homeless mothers and children is critically needed, and they are supporting that vision through this challenge grant. Every day, we receive calls from mothers who are seeking a place of refuge for themselves and their families. Too often, we are unable to help because we do not have space.

We have already raised \$245,000 of the approximately \$600,000 we need to expand our Bishop Ott Sweet Dreams Shelter services to homeless families. The Wilson Foundation challenge grant basically provides a third of the \$600,000 total we need for this project. The Foundation wants to see this project move forward quickly and would like to give us our first \$100,000 before December 31st. In order to meet this challenge, we need to have \$200,000 in commitments before that date. Commitments can be in the form of pledges paid over a number of years, end-of-the-year gifts, or other gifts and pledges that help us to quickly generate the dollars necessary to make this project a reality.

We are thrilled to receive this challenge grant, but we need your help to meet the challenge by December 31st. Will you consider making a gift or pledge to this effort? We ask you to do this on top of your annual giving to St. Vincent de Paul. This would be a special gift or pledge specifically for our efforts to expand our shelter for homeless mothers and families. In previous newsletters, we shared with you the plans for this much needed program. Now it is time to act. Will you help us to make this project a reality? If you have the financial capacity to give, please do so by filling out the commitment form below or by sending a contribution to: Vision 150 Shelter Challenge, P. O. Box 127, Baton Rouge, LA 70821. If you have questions or would like more information, please contact Michael Acaldo at (225)383-7837, ext. O, or email at macaldo@svdpbr.com. Help us to go from 36 beds to over 70 for this vulnerable population!

Vision 150 Shelter Effort Pledge/Gift Card

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

Email Address: _____

As an expression of support for the shelter project, the following is pledged:

Total Pledged: \$ _____ Amount Enclosed: \$ _____

Payable:

\$ _____ monthly for 36 months, starting _____
(date)

\$ _____ quarterly for 12 quarters, starting _____
(date)

\$ _____ annually for 3 years, starting _____
(date)

\$ _____ (other as indicated) _____

I understand that my gift is not legally binding on me or my estate. I do view it as a strong commitment which I plan to keep.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Make checks payable to: St. Vincent de Paul, P. O. Box 127, Baton Rouge, LA 70821-0127 -- Please mark checks SVDP Vision 150. For more information about this project go to svdpbr.org.

Project Summary:

Our project will respond to the need for additional short-term emergency housing, targeting the vulnerable population of homeless women and mothers with children. Our project consists of renovation and expansion of our Sweet Dreams Shelter, which will increase our bed capacity from 36 currently to over 70 after the expansion.

Homeless single women and homeless mothers and children come to us every day in search of a safe place to call home and a chance to start over. Unfortunately, we are not always able to respond to this critical need because of a lack of emergency shelter capacity.

Description of challenge/need to be addressed by this project.

One of the fastest growing segments of the homeless population in our community is homeless women and single mothers with children. We first recognized the growth of this community problem in the late 1990's. In 2001, we opened the Bishop Ott Sweet Dreams Shelter for Women & Children to respond to this growing need. Since that time, we have been struggling to meet the needs of our community. Too often, we are at capacity and have to turn away families. In addition, we are the only emergency shelter for women and children in our community that accepts families with boys over the age of five.

Single-parent families continue to be our primary target population. Unlike two-parent families, there is typically only one wage earner. This makes single-parent families particularly vulnerable, especially those families headed by single mothers who often earn less than men. Homelessness affects almost every aspect of family life. It damages the emotional well being of every family member and interferes with a child's education and development of self-esteem. This can affect children for the rest of their lives. In addition, we do not want children in poor families that experience homelessness to think that homelessness is a normal part of life or an acceptable lifestyle.

Last year, we provided night shelter to 123 women and 118 children. We also provided day shelter services to 379 women and 153 children. We estimate that we could have filled the additional beds in an expanded shelter over the course of the year, giving homeless, single women and homeless mothers with children a safe home and an opportunity to get their lives back on track. As the cost of living continues to rise in our

community, and given the inadequate inventory of permanent, affordable housing in our area, it's more important than ever that we are here to respond to the women and children who come to us. We especially need the additional capacity during extremely cold weather when there is a sudden spike in demand.

The women and children we serve desperately need a helping hand and a chance for a better life. Homeless women, especially homeless mothers, also need the life skills education, job counseling, and case management services we offer.

Program Description:

This new project – expansion of our Bishop Ott Sweet Dreams Shelter – will help us to meet the growing need for emergency shelter for the most vulnerable homeless population: single women and mothers with children. As the cost of living continues to rise across the country and in our community, and as local rents increase, life has become even more difficult for this population, with eviction and homelessness very real possibilities. The reason we are pursuing this project is because of our concern for the safety and futures of homeless women and children who have nowhere else to turn. Living on the streets is especially dangerous for women and children. Our program will not only provide safe shelter, but also life skills education courses, which include money management, employment assistance, and job counseling. An important objective of our program is to help each adult guest to regain her self-esteem and achieve self-sufficiency. We give them an opportunity to get their lives back on track.

We are pursuing this program because we so often hear, “I am desperate and have nowhere to turn for help.” It's hard to imagine the desperation a mother feels when she takes her child's hand and reluctantly walks away from their home for the last time. All they have left is each other. Every day at our Sweet Dreams Shelter, we see families who know exactly how that feels. They come to us in search of a safe place to stay and a chance to start over. We see women who are fleeing abusive situations and others who have lost the battle between low incomes and rising expenses. They have no families to turn to. These women have lost so much, but it's the children who are most devastated by circumstances which are beyond their control. They have lost everything familiar – their favorite toys, pets, friends, and their sense of security. We want to provide a place that these families can truly call home until they can reestablish a home of their own.

Single, homeless women are also especially vulnerable, and this service will reach them. It is important to note that female veterans are the fastest growing homeless population in the nation. We anticipate seeing more homeless female veterans in the future.

Goals, objectives and activities of this project.

The ultimate goal of our request is to have an expanded open, operating, emergency housing facility that can better meet the needs of the growing population of single, homeless women and homeless mothers with children. Accomplishing this objective will allow us to be successful in our mission of charity to this vulnerable population. In order to achieve this goal, one of our first activities will be to develop the resources to fund this project. We have communicated in general terms, through newsletters and other internal communications, our desire to increase our ability to serve families, especially vulnerable families headed by homeless women. This has inspired people to get behind the project and actually give significant contributions. Our supporters have already given \$245,000 in unsolicited donations toward this effort. In order for us to be successful, we will need an additional \$600,000 for this project.

As far as you know, is this type of program offered in the community?

A number of local charities offer housing for homeless women and homeless mothers, such as victims of domestic violence or substance abuse. However, there is a tremendous need in our community for additional

emergency beds for single homeless women and homeless mothers with children who are not affected by domestic violence and/or substance abuse.

Currently, the Missionaries of Charity at St. Agnes Church offers shelter to homeless single women and homeless mothers. Their bed capacity is approximately 40. St. Agnes limits service by only allowing women to stay for approximately three weeks, and they do not offer services to homeless mothers with male children over the age of five. St. Agnes and our Bishop Ott Sweet Dreams Shelter are the only local facilities that provide shelter to homeless women and homeless mothers with children without a prerequisite that they are fleeing from domestic violence or suffering from substance abuse.

Our program will add value to our community by expanding the bed capacity for this vulnerable population. We will be able to serve more homeless women and homeless mothers with children, providing a helping hand to them in their time of need. In addition, because of the short time that women are allowed to stay at St. Agnes, many of their guests need additional time to get back on their feet. Our shelter can give them the additional time they need and also provides life skills education, job counseling and case management services that are not provided through the St. Agnes program. We work very closely with the St. Agnes shelter and have had a fruitful collaborative partnership for many years.

Program Evaluation:

We define success of this project as renovation and expansion of our Sweet Dreams Shelter to better serve the local population of single homeless women and homeless mothers with children. Our goal is to have the majority of necessary funding in place by November 1, 2015. This will allow us to authorize our architect to complete construction documents and go out for bids so that construction can commence and this project can open in late 2016. We will track the short-term outcome of how we are progressing toward the long-term goal of opening this expanded program. We will measure our project's effectiveness through oversight of our fund-development program utilizing our VisionMaker software program. We will measure the success of the architectural and construction phase of this effort following the American Institute of Architects' building construction and monitoring procedures. This would be done under the direction of our architect, Bob Lunsford.

In regard to the services that will be provided, we will track the short-term outcome of getting homeless single women and homeless mothers with children off the streets and into safe shelter. We will also track the long-term outcome of helping our guests to achieve self-sufficiency. We do realize that it is more difficult to achieve this outcome for individuals who suffer from mental illness, behavioral health issues, and other disabilities; however, this project is committed to helping our target population. As part of our program, we help each woman we serve to recognize her gifts and how those gifts can be utilized to become an independent and productive member of our community. We will track the number of jobs obtained and/or income, as well as the number of guests that obtain permanent, affordable housing.

Our efforts enable our guests to be successful in their personal lives, many of them for the first time. More importantly, we make a significant impact in the lives and the futures of the homeless children we serve. Successfully achieving our short- and long-term outcomes has a direct impact on our community. Helping this vulnerable population means that we can not only break the cycle of homelessness for these individuals and families, we also impact our community in a positive way by reducing the number of people that may become chronically homeless. We will measure the effectiveness of our program using the data we collect through the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) provided by the Capital Area Alliance for the Homeless. This software allows us to evaluate our program's effectiveness by tracking the number of individuals and single-parent families we get off the streets and provide day and/or night shelter services to. We will also be able to track the progress of each guest as they work toward the goals outlined in their personal plan.

Floor Plan of the expanded New Bishop Ott Sweet Dreams Shelter

