



## Fun Day Out with Our Friends In Need

On 25 May 2024, some 700 Friends in Need (FINs) attended SSVP Family Day Movie Treat – a perfect way to start the school holidays.

The event was organised by the Milk & Diapers (MaD) Programme Committee from SSVP Ltd., an affiliate of Society of St Vincent de Paul (National Council of Singapore). Apart from the beneficiaries of the MaD Programme, the students and families of the Edufriends Programme as well as FINs from SSVP Conferences were also invited to join in the fun.

Even before the screening of each “The Super Mario Bros” movie, the air was thick with excitement and chatter with scenes of elated pre-schoolers dragging their parents and grandparents from station to station enjoying the activities



*Families had fun dressing up at the “unlimited” photo-booth and gamely posed for the camera!*

prepared for the families.

For many of our FINs, it was indeed a real treat and a much

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*Our volunteers were instrumental in ensuring the event went smoothly.*



*Children chose their favourite Mario Bros characters and waited patiently for the volunteers to apply the temporary tattoos.*

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needed break to be able to spend a carefree and stress-free day together as a family. 



Volunteers sculpting balloons for the kids.

*“Thank you so much SSVP for remembering and inviting us to the Family Day Movie Treat. My family had a lot of fun and the kids loved it so much. It was such a great experience.”*

– From one of our FINs



*Multiple halls were booked in the morning and afternoon for two separate movie screening times to accommodate the schedules of the families and the kids took the opportunity for a “dance-off” before the movie started.*

## MaD Making the Difference

Ms Fatin was taking care of one young son and expecting another when she first reached out to the Milk & Diapers Programme (MaD) for support.

Despite the many ups and downs, this family has tirelessly worked towards their goal of creating a loving home for their children. The good news is that they have stayed on the straight and narrow path, taking one step at a time towards their goal of financial stability and owning their own flat.

Last year, Ms Fatin started working at a nearby student care centre and loves the engagement with the students under her care. She’s also grateful for the support rendered by her supervisor and colleagues.

Her husband has also been a great


pillar of support– he’s a real Mr Fix-it to make the home more comfortable and is also holding down a job with better prospects.

Thus, Ms Fatin decided it was time for the family to “graduate” from the MaD Programme so that another family with greater needs can be helped.

“Looking at how the parents are more loving and how the children are growing up... the best feeling is knowing whatever you did, even a little bit, makes them feel more loved” said Kingston and Susan, who have been befriending the family for almost three years (pictured above).

The Programme currently



supports some 400 babies under the age of three. As the Programme reaches its 10th year milestone this year, it has grown from strength to strength. Starting with 15 babies in the beginning, it crossed the 1,000th beneficiaries mark in 2023. Email the team at [milk.n.diapers@ssvpltd.org](mailto:milk.n.diapers@ssvpltd.org) if you would like to support as a donor or volunteer. 

# Embodying Christ's Love

*"But whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst" John 4:14*



SSVP's annual Youth Camp was held from 14 to 17 June 2024 and was attended by 43 youths and young adults.

In response to last year's feedback, one extra day was added this year to enable the youth to fully immerse in the camp's theme - "Living Water" as all sessions, praise and worship, activities, and sharings focused on drawing our strength and energy from the living water of Christ.

Held at the Church of Divine Mercy and the St. Francis Xavier Retreat Centre, the activities on Day One were led by Friar Gerald Tan, OFM, who introduced the theme and how we can centre our lives around God. This was followed by a presentation by Vincentians, Marcus and Dorina from the Conference of the Holy Trinity who shared about the social landscape in Singapore,


how Vincentians engage with our Friends in Need (FINs) and community via our outreach activities.

On Days Two and Three, the youth visited our FINs in the Redhill area with Vincentians from SSVP Conference of St. Ignatius. The youth brought with them gifts of fruits and their desire to learn how to befriend our FINs.

During the sessions conducted by Friar Reginald Marie, Father Venus Praveen and Brother Joseph D'Crux, the attendees were asked to reflect on how to be Christ-like with FINs during outreach sessions.

As the camp came to a close on the fourth day, Sister Janet Wang inspired the youth to open themselves to allow God's spirit to move in them and through them. The youth then wrote their personal prayers of commitment

that they would undertake after the camp.

Enriched and filled with the Spirit of God, the camp concluded with thanksgiving and inspired youth, charged to go forth to bring the Light and Love of Christ to those they help and meet. 



*With open hearts and minds, the youth visited more than 100 FIN households, getting to know the FINs, overcoming language barriers and the wide age gaps.*

# Together, We Grow in Holiness by Loving & Serving Those in Need



Vincentians came together for Mass celebrated by Father Eugene Vaz before the 69th Annual General Meeting (AGM) on 14 June 2024.

Having been SSVV's National Spiritual Advisor for a decade before stepping down last year, Father Vaz commended Vincentians for their faithful service to our Friends in Need (FINs) and to continue to be guided by the Holy Spirit in our acts of mercy.

During the AGM, National Council President Ms Lucy Cher presented to Vincentians an overview of the Society's activities. In 2023, the Society supported 6% more FIN

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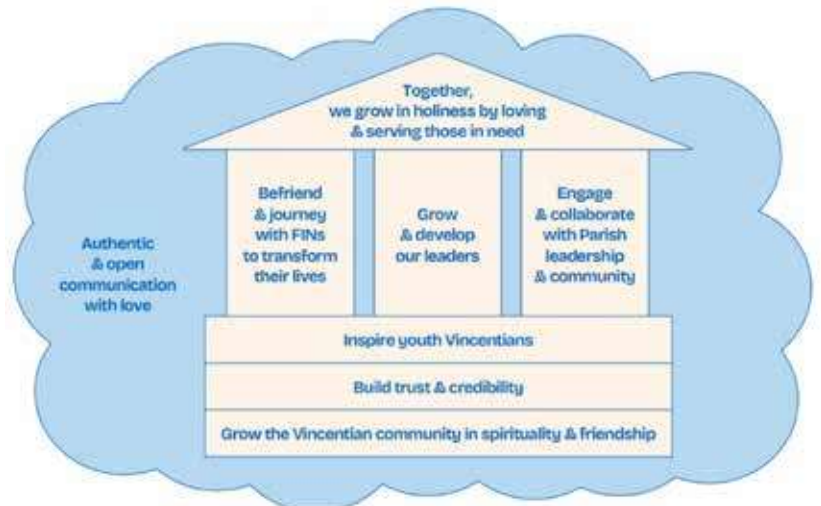
*After Mass, Vincentians enjoyed the joy of fellowship over dinner.*



*In 2023, SSVP continued to bring joy and hope to our FINs, alleviating their poverty with essentials, extending friendship when visiting them or organising activities at the Parishes or taking them on special outings.*

individuals (3,398) and households (2,017) compared to 2022. These statistics are for FINs who have received financial assistance and do not include other beneficiaries whom we have supported through our outreach, befriending and special works projects.

The Society spent almost \$4.4 million on FINs in 2023, a significant increase of 9% from 2022. This expenditure included financial aid, rations, grocery vouchers, education aid, medical aid, and transport aid etc. The increased expenditure can be attributed to the rise of FINs supported by the Society as well as our efforts to align financial aid to rising living costs. 



*Vincentians were updated on Vinnies @ Katong, a collaboration with the Church of the Holy Family. While plans are still being concretised for the charity thrift shop, there will be a series of Pop Ups at 182 East Coast Road (left) over four weekends starting from 28 to 30 June. We opened SSVP Shop (right), our first thrift shop at 501 Geylang Road in September 2019 which has continued to do well.*

# Bringing Joy and Love To Our FINs

*Keeping our Elderly FINs Young at Heart*

**S**SVF Conference of Our Lady of Lourdes co-organised an Easter party with students from Catholic Junior College's Genesis Catholic Community on 7 April 2024.

It was a first for the 50 students who have never planned such an activity before. The programme for our 40 Friends in Need (FINs) included a delicious afternoon tea as well as entertainment which included singing and dancing. The students also spent the afternoon striking up conversations with our elderly FINs and even prepared

goodie bags with Easter eggs, biscuits and personalised cards.

Genesis President Brian Matthews Sekar, 17, said, "We learnt about the challenges our seniors faced. I remember an uncle lamenting how he was left alone in his old age despite the successes of his children with their families overseas. It was a good reminder about my responsibility as a son to remain filial to my parents who love me so much."

On the morning of 10 March 2024, the SSVF Youth Team joined the **SSVF St Peter Conference**



on their monthly befriending and distribution visits to our FINs. They were joined by Seminarian Brother Jordan Steve (pictured above) who had been spending time with our FINs and Vincentians since March as part of his pastoral attachment.

Our FINs were also invited to join in an afternoon of fun and games organised by the SSVF Youth. This included an invigorating session of Bingo at the Church of Sts Peter and Paul.



## Reaching Out to the Vulnerable in Our Community

**SSVF Conference of Christ the King** (CTK)'s newest programme reaches out to the under-privileged staying in six blocks of one-room rental flats in Ang Mo Kio. The "Wednesday Lunch Time Ladle" initiative kicked off on 18 April 2024 where every Wednesday, Vincentians, volunteers from Catholic Welfare Services and parishioners would host our neighbours to a "fine-dining" experience with scrumptious dishes, lovingly prepared by parishioners in a welcoming "atas"

(posh) restaurant environment.

Vincentians, parishioners and attendees have lunch together at tables prettily dressed up with tablecloth and flowers, with nice glassware and cutlery at the canteen of the Church of Christ the King.

The response has been heartening. From 25 attendees at the start, it has grown to as many as 40 attendees. Our Friends in Need who attend are also encouraged to bring along a friend cum neighbour who lives in the



one-room rental blocks. Through this initiative, we have befriended many vulnerable elderly who have since become our FINs under the care of CTK Conference.

*“We are very grateful to all SSVP members and the church who make us feel God’s love for the poor and the needy.”*

*- Joseph Han, Wednesday Lunch Time Ladle attendee*

Early this year, **SSVP Youth Team** from the **Conference of Divine Mercy** launched the “Golden Hour” initiative. Vincentians would visit and spend time with our homebound and elderly FINs once a month.

During the home visits, Vincentians and FINs had fun making paper lanterns during Chinese New Year, playing card games or praying together. For some of the Youth Vincentians, it was their first time taking part in an activity outside of the “usual” Conference programme. More importantly, it’s an enriching



*Vincentians and FINs making a pretty photo frame together during the Golden Hour initiative.*

way to befriend and build deeper relationships with the FINs and hopefully bring joy into their homes.

## SSVP Goes Back to School!

We were thrilled to have been invited to Catholic Junior College for their service-learning fair on the 22 March 2024. The SSVP Youth Team spent time to inspire the Year One students to collaborate with the Society to aid the poor.




*Vincentians from the Conference of St Mary of the Angels helmed the SSVP booth and shared more about our social mission.*



*As the students streamed in to visit our booth, there were many meaningful conversations that piqued their interest and they demonstrated a genuine enthusiasm for service and social change. By the end of the fair, the Society had connected with numerous students who were excited to join our cause, sparking enthusiasm for the future of the Society.*

We were also invited to be part of Millennia Institute’s Social Bazaar on 24 May 2024, having the honour of being one of the two

charities picked by the students to benefit from the funds raised by the students who ran a variety of creative booths. 

# Recurring Seizures Won't Keep This Mom Down

Upon meeting 43-year-old Madam V, you will be immediately drawn in by her effervescent personality and infectious laughter. It is also clear that her world revolves around her husband and her six children aged between 14 and 24 years old.

Family has always come first as both husband and wife worked hard to rise above their circumstances. The family moved out of their rental flat into their dream home, a three-room flat in Punggol which they bought three years ago.

Unfortunately, Madam V's health took a turn for the worse as she suffered from extensive medical conditions including diabetes, epilepsy, asthma, high blood pressure, heart palpitations, thrombophlebitis, and ovarian cysts. Eventually, as she was no longer able to work, there was an added toll on her mental health as she was stressed about finances. She worried about her husband, her primary caregiver, who worked long hours to support the family and care for her.

Even so, Madam V tries to maintain normality at home; caring for her four school-going children before and after school, "powering" through the home chores and cooking the meals before the effects of the medication hits and she is unable to even get out of bed. Alarming, her seizures have been occurring with increased frequency and severity. In fact, she has been hospitalised 18 times in

the past 14 months, often ending up in the Intensive Care Unit.

Madam V recounted one recent episode, "The moment I sweat, I already knew it was happening (seizure). I tried to walk and my hands started to shake. I called my son and then I passed out."

Madam V feels she is very blessed because of her children's care and concern. They always make sure that one of them will be home with her (they have been trained on how to respond when she has a seizure) as well as show their love with small gestures like buying her chocolates.

Despite her deteriorating health, financial difficulties, and worry for her children, Madam V is hopeful that the family can overcome their

challenges to regain their financial stability and independence.

"We started helping the family in 2017, and it is heartening to see the couple's determination to work through the hard times together for the sake of their children. In the last two years, we have worked very closely with the family, creating a tight network with other social service agencies including the Society's Conference of the Transfiguration, Red Cross, etc. The road ahead is a long one for the family as we continue to journey with them in hope." - Ms Meera Ramachandran, Head of Community Services [pictured below during a recent home visit with the family] 