

# St. Vincent de Paul ID Program

## *Helping those in need secure identification documents*

**E**DUCATION, contacts, faith, and commitment are all important factors in “making it” in today’s society, but none are more important than a simple state identification card. “You have to have top-flight ID,” says a Minneapolis woman who has endured the ordeal of not being able to prove her identity as a Minnesota or U.S. citizen for months on end.

Basic valid identification is required to start rebuilding self-sufficiency and the necessities of life — work, housing, education, and services. In many cases, people in crisis and transition lose track of important documentation while they are focusing on surviving. They may have to move frequently or live without housing and a secure place to keep important documents.

The number of people visiting The Basilica’s St. Vincent de Paul (SVdP) ID Program in search of help to obtain some form of official identification document, validating their status as a Minnesota citizen, outpaces the projections every year. Each week, 63 volunteers assist guests in starting this process that can take a couple weeks and up to three months, depending on the circumstances.

The Basilica works with Hennepin County to streamline the ID-acquisition process for clients of the SVdP ID program. What began as a simple referral process evolved into a substantial program. The Basilica now provides clients with vouchers, which they redeem to obtain needed services, such as copies of birth certificates, and to pay for

their state IDs, through Hennepin County. Hennepin County then bills the costs back to The Basilica.

The Basilica funded \$70,000 for the program in 2016, helping 4,222 people obtain citizenship-validating state IDs. Costs are paid entirely by charitable contributions, and with the need growing, The Basilica looks to the generosity of parishioners to continue the program each year.

For people living on the margins of society, the process of obtaining the required ID documentations can be overwhelming, says Janice Andersen, Director of Christian Life at The Basilica. A new Minnesota state ID card costs \$19.25. A new driver’s license costs \$44.25. Minnesota charges \$26 for a new copy of a birth certificate. To get a new or replacement state ID card, one must provide two forms of proof of identification, such as a birth certificate, social security card, marriage certificate, or certified high school or post-high school transcript. Each step is fraught with difficulty, especially so for those with little or no means, and doubly so for those born out of state.

Minnesota residents born in other states face even more daunting challenges in reclaiming their lost identities. The process can be long and frustrating, especially if the name of the requesting party doesn’t match up precisely to a record on hand. Linda Raynor grew up in Minnesota and considers herself a native of the North Star state. But she happened to be born in St. Louis, Missouri, a way station as her parents made their way northward from Louisiana to the Twin Cities. “I was conceived in Arkansas, born in Missouri, and raised in Minnesota,” says Raynor. “They were just passing through St. Louis when I was born.”

Fast forward a few decades, and Raynor finds herself living in Minneapolis as a single mother of eight with no financial resources and only one clear way out of her predicament. A regular participant in the SVdP ministry since 1995, she knew the church offered help in a variety of ways to people seeking to get back on their feet.



“We came there hungry, broke — and I’ve got to think of the kids in school,” she says. “All these complications...”

As part of its street ministry, Saint Stephen’s Catholic Church in Minneapolis helps those without IDs from out-of-state apply for vital documents in their home states. The Basilica and Saint Stephen’s partner up to help people get their IDs straightened out, with Saint Stephen’s taking on the out-of-staters. Even so, time-consuming complications lurked ahead for Raynor.

The people in St. Louis could not match her last name up with a document in their files. She tried again, this time using her mother’s last name — Moore. That turned up a match. “The people in St. Louis work pretty fast,” she says. The duties of motherhood distracted her from keeping track of her birth certificate, causing her to request help retrieving her birth certificate once again this past winter. “I’ll make sure to hang on to it this time,” she adjures.

“To make a long story short,” she adds, “The Basilica is a blessing. I am blessed to have The Basilica working for me.” ✚

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*For more information about The Basilica’s SVdP ID program, and to become involved as a volunteer or donor, please contact Janice Andersen at [jandersen@mary.org](mailto:jandersen@mary.org).*