

## **HOME VISITS AND UTILITIES**

### **A Success Story with a Happy Ending!**

In FY 2018, the Holy Spirit Conference of St. Vincent dePaul spent \$69,794 of the donations from Holy Spirit parishioners on utility payments, by far our biggest expense. With that money we helped keep the lights on, water running and heat in winter for 322 families (averaging 6 families a week.) About 1300 individuals lived in the households we helped with utilities.

This is the story of one of those families. We'll call the mother Mary. Mary was the breadwinner for herself, her mother, and her young child. Before we met Mary she had a good work history, a savings account, and was doing fine. Then she had a major medical problem which required a prolonged treatment and recovery. At first insurance from her employer helped. When they could no longer carry her, there was unemployment insurance and then disability payments. These ran out. Her savings were gone. We first visited her in December when the utilities were about to be cut off for the apartment where Mary, her mother and child were living. Our team brought them food, contacted Huntsville Utilities, verified the information, and paid her bill. Over the next year we made several visits with Mary and her family. We provided Christmas, paid a doctor and pharmacy bill, and paid in all 3 utility bills.

When Mary's doctor finally cleared her to go back to work, she had a hard time finding a job. Our team steered her to a training for re-entry program that she attended and as a result landed a secretarial position.

With our help, this family was able to escape the downward spiral of ever-increasing debt and the circle of poverty. This would be a great success story in itself, but there is more. In getting to know the Vincentians, to trust them, and to know they really cared about her, Mary eventually felt free to tell them that she had been a Catholic, and would like to return to the church. Through their encouragement this happened.

Mary recently emailed the team members who had befriended her, thanking them and asking them to thank all who had helped her. She said that her job is going great and she loves being able to pay her own bills. With every paycheck, she buys a few items to go into the SVdP box where she attends church, paying forward what she received.