

# The Vincentian Word

Winter 2005

## St. Vincent's keeps a young man's promise

Athletic, handsome, friendly, sensitive and full of life are just some of the words that described Eric M. Henry. In February of 2002, his life tragically ended as a result of a car accident.

Eric was a senior at Marian High School the year he died, and weeks before his death he had made a pledge to collect items for the needy and donate them to the St. Vincent de Paul Society. This was his Lenten promise and unfortunately he was unable to fulfill his wish.

"Eric was just like any other student on Ash Wednesday (2-13-02). He attended Mass at school that day and received ashes to his forehead. But, Eric had also made a conscious decision to be more giving. It was something he decided on his own, not something I said he should do," said Mary Molnar of her son's special Lenten promise that year. "He was a big candy lover. He always gave up candy for Lent, so I took his Lenten promise that year to be more of a life changing effort on his part, not just something you do for Lent and forget about."

Mary admired her son's determination to his cause and made sure to get his items delivered to the St. Vincent de Paul Society.

"Eric lived his faith. In a religion paper he wrote in 2002 he felt it was most important to live by the Golden Rule, and to treat others the way you, yourself would want to be treated," said Mary of her son's faith.

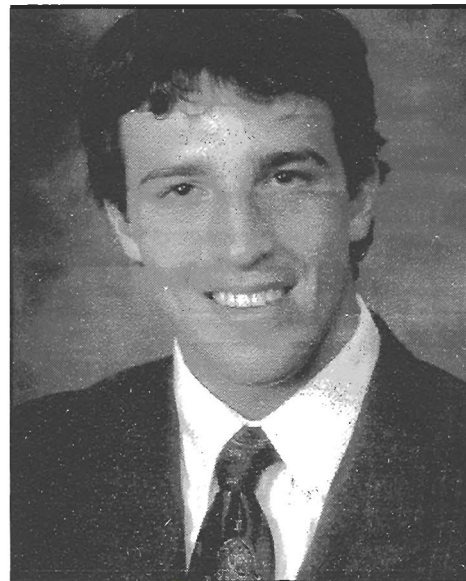
Mary was distraught with grief during those weeks and months

following her son's death. One moment of comfort came from a memorial mass for Eric at Marian. Classmates continued Eric's work and filled the church altar with bags and bags of goods that were donated to the St. Vincent de Paul Society.

The comfort that moment brought to Mary and her family was priceless, and she decided that getting area Catholic Schools involved in Eric's Promise-to be more giving during Lent would be a way of keeping Eric's memory alive. This was also a great way to let children get the full meaning of Lent and give them a better understanding of how they can help others.

St. Vincent de Paul Society executive director Sean Wendlinder is proud to have the society be part of Eric's Promise and feels the program is a great inspiration to people of all ages.

"St. Vincent's is thankful to be working again this year with Mary Molnar on Eric's Promise, a Lenten project that carries on the legacy of her son Eric. Eric's legacy is one of giving - giving of himself, his time and his belongings to help others," said Wendlinder. "Eric took to heart Jesus' call to reconcile with our neigh-



*Eric Henry's senior picture*

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### *Our Mission*

Inspired by Gospel values, the St. Vincent de Paul Society brings people together in prayer and in person-to-person service to those who are in need and suffering – providing food, clothing and financial assistance to families in our community. Vincentians witness God's love by embracing all works of charity and justice. The Society's mission is supported by a Thrift Store that sells gently used clothing, furniture, household items, appliances and collectibles.

## Eric's Promise

*continued*

bors in need. His example lives on through the efforts of his peers at Marian High School and with other students in schools around Michiana who collect clothing, household goods, food and money to support the work and mission of the St. Vincent de Paul Society to help people in need."

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Now in its third year, Eric's Promise has 15 area schools and religious organizations doing a number of things, from making a lump sum donation, food and clothing drives and specialty efforts like a peanut butter and jelly drive.

Eric's Promise campaign helps keep his spirit alive in the family's heart.

"Funny comes to mind when I think of Eric. He had a wonderful sense of humor. He could always make me laugh; even in the middle of one of my motherly lectures," recalled Mary of her son. "Eric was also full of energy. He was like a tornado. He never walked into the house or walked up and down the stairs . . . He flew."

"He was an affectionate son. We never left each other without a hug and kiss and an 'I Love You.' When he got to be a teenager and taller than myself, he would like to show off his strength by lifting me off the floor," said Mary.

"One lesson that I learned from watching Eric's Promise grow, is that one person can make a difference in the lives of others. Everyone can give something, it doesn't matter how small," said Mary. Mary hopes more people will get involved.

## Join St. Vincent de Paul in a walk to prevent homelessness

On April 17, 2005, the St. Vincent de Paul Society is participating in the Homeward Bound 5K Walk to Provide Housing and Fight Homeless-ness in South Bend. Several area agencies are coming together, bringing teams from their organization and walking as one to fight homeless-ness. The walk will begin at 2 p.m. with registration starting at 12:30 p.m.

The St. Vincent de Paul Society is forming teams to collect donations and attend the walk. People of all ages are invited to partici-

pate. School groups, play groups, social groups, families and businesses are all encouraged to put together a team, raise money, and walk for this worthwhile cause.

This special event will help St. Vincent's to raise money for programs that help local families avoid eviction or foreclosure so they can stay in their homes.

Please join us. Call 574-251-4906 for more information.