

Application for Funds to Assist the St. Mary Star of the Sea Out-Reach Mission

December 19, 2008

Mr. Thomas R. McDonald
George B. Storer Foundation, Inc.
P.O. Box 1040
Tavernier, FL 33070-1040

Dear Mr. McDonald:

The St. Mary Star of the Sea Out-Reach Mission (Star of the Sea Mission) appreciates the opportunity to submit this Letter of Application – a grant proposal – for \$25,000 to the George B. Storer Foundation. Our request is to help meet an unprecedented demand for emergency food and related social services by our three largest groups of struggling neighbors who live in the lower reaches of the Florida Keys including Key West, Stock Island, and Boca Chica Key.

In ever-increasing numbers, our clients mainly include

- working poor families with children
- seniors subsisting on tiny, fixed incomes
- homeless men, women, and children – often families

In Monroe County, approximately 7,000 people out of a population of 75,000 residents live in poverty. While these numbers are small compared to Monroe's neighbor to the north (Miami-Dade County: population 2.4 million - 410,400 in poverty), the fact remains that there are several thousand individuals and families in Monroe County – especially in the service area of the Star of the Sea Mission – who desperately need the variety of human services provided by our humanitarian organization.

We realize that many non-profit organizations are requesting support from caring donors like the George B. Storer Foundation. We are also aware that operating funds are sometimes the least attractive request made to a foundation. We want you to realize that the Star of the Sea Mission (our Board, our single staff member, and

hundreds of dedicated volunteers) are working very hard to develop and strengthen other methods to generate the funds that are necessary to operate what has become one the busiest and most effective centers for emergency social services in all of the Florida Keys.

Star of the Sea Mission: Providing Effective Social Services in the Lower Florida Keys.

The Star of the Sea Mission was a vision of Reverend Francisco (Paco) Hernandez and Deacon Peter Batty of St. Mary Star of the Sea Catholic Church in Key West, Florida. After many years of planning, locating a suitable facility, and securing the initial funding, the Star of the Sea Mission became a reality in the summer of 2006. The Mission was officially dedicated by the Most Reverend Felipe Estevez from the Archdiocese of Miami.



Pictured cutting the ribbon are Reverend Felipe Estevez, Fr. Francisco Hernandez, City Mayor Morgan McPherson, City Manager Julio Avel, and County Mayor Sonny McCoy.

While the Star of the Sea Mission was founded and is largely staffed by volunteers from the St. Mary Catholic Church in Key West, in fact our mission is to provide **all** of our services to help **all** of God's people regardless of religion, race, color, national origin, sex, age or disability. And without doubt, we very much appreciate our many volunteers who not members of the St. Mary Catholic Church.

For two and a half years, the Star of the Sea Mission has served as a non-profit, faith-based organization seeking to serve those individuals and families in the lower Florida Keys who have found themselves in an economic crisis. The majority of the people assisted by Star of the Sea Mission are senior citizens who are subsisting on impossibly tiny incomes; low-income working families who are the essence of our service, construction, tourism, and fishing economy; and homeless individuals and families.

Many of the people who are assisted by the Star of the Sea Mission work 2 or sometimes 3 jobs just to make ends meet. All are experiencing an economic crisis which threatens their basic survival needs.

On Stock Island, just east of Key West, our one paid counselor and trained volunteers see nearly fifty (50) of these individuals or families every single day. Some families need our continuous support for food, clothing and/or prescription medications – others need short term assistance (i.e. rental, medical, utility, or a bus ticket) due to circumstances beyond their control such as a job loss, an operation, a family separation or even a broken down car that prevents them from getting to work. Since the Star of the Sea Mission is open five days per week from 10:00 to 5:00, this adds up to a whopping 931 emergency visits each month, representing assistance to that number of needy people **plus** an additional 885 dependents.

In fact, the primary reason the Star of the Sea Mission is reaching out to grant makers such as the George B. Storer Foundation is because of the alarming and steadily increasing need for our services. In July of 2007, the Star of the Sea Mission provided services to 1,170 individuals and their dependents. Last month, October 2008, we provided services to 1,816 individuals and their dependents – an incredible 55% increase in the number of hurting people served. Another measurement tells the same story – in July of 2007, the Star of the Sea Mission distributed 7,329 pounds of fresh, frozen, canned, and boxed food. By October of this year (last month), we were distributing 17,312 pounds of food – a mind-numbing 136% increase from just 16 months earlier.

Our Records Tell the Story – 136% Increase in Food Provided to Needy People

	HEADS OF HOUSEHOLD, INDIVIDUALS AND HOMELESS	DEPENDANTS: CHILDREN AND OTHER RELATIVES	TOTAL	Pounds of Food Distributed per month	Bus Tickets	Prescriptions
July, 2007	729	441	1170	7,329	8	58
Aug, 2007	901	660	1561	18,534	9	50
Sep, 2007	817	539	1356	11,413	12	34
Oct, 2007	1101	805	1906	13,991	7	52
Nov, 2007	1043	873	1916	27,311	0	54
Dec, 2007	1022	755	1777	13,763	1	25
Jan, 2008	1346	985	2331	12,922	2	46
Feb, 2008	1083	725	1808	8,459	4	22
March, 2008	1243	800	2043	20,284	4	29
April, 2008	1169	850	2019	14,305	3	31
May, 2008	865	559	1424	13,884	1	23
June, 2008	1150	729	1879	16,823	1	24
July, 2008	878	804	1682	20,858	1	34
Aug, 2008	796	672	1468	7,474	3	28
Sep, 2008	713	784	1497	16,236	2	25
Oct, 2008	931	885	1816	17,312	1	21
				TOTAL	59	556

Due to the high cost of living in the Lower Keys, thousands of our low income working families are living in sub-standard housing (example below). They cannot afford the \$1,500 to \$2,000 monthly rent that is the norm in the Keys. Some of our poorest families rely upon the Star of the Sea Mission for continuous support.

A good example of a typical Mission client is Maria, a single mother of four who speaks little English. Maria works as a housekeeper in two local hotels. She cannot afford a car so she bus fare to get back and forth to work. Making \$9.00 an hour, Maria's bills quickly eat up her earnings. Maria's meager earnings – about \$1,400 each month before taxes – pay for food, rent, clothing and school supplies for her children, and other essentials that are necessary for even a life in poverty. Maria supplements her family income by



utilizing the Star of the Sea Mission food pantry. Once, about a year ago when Maria's husband passed away, the family was forced to move and the Star of the Sea Mission was able to provide furniture and household items that had been donated to the organization just a few weeks earlier.

Human Services Provided by the Star of the Sea Mission

The following are a few examples of the humanitarian activities the Star of the Sea Mission conducts for our community in the Lower Florida Keys:

Food: The Star of the Sea Mission is a certified food pantry that has served as much as 27,000 pounds of life-saving emergency food bags in a **single month**. The Mission

stocks a variety of foods that represent a well-balanced diet and specific foods for persons who require special diets.



To the left is a Mission volunteer providing non-perishable foods to a home bound senior who is unable to visit the Mission. At right is a Mission volunteer working in our busy warehouse full of food to help feed the poor, including hungry children, families and individuals.

Referrals: The Star of the Sea Mission provides referral services when requested. We maintain an extensive list of other organizations and agencies who provide social services and assistance for people with special needs.



Bus Tickets: The Star of the Sea Mission provides one-way bus tickets to recently released inmates who have been released from the Monroe County Jail who request to relocate from Key West to another location within the continental United States.

Other services: The Star of the Sea Mission provides access to apply for Food Stamps, Temporary Cash Assistance, Medicaid and other services as may be directly requested by the pastor of St. Mary Star of the Sea Catholic Church or the Senior Acting Official. We also help needy individuals who make their way to our doorstep without such referrals.

Finally, we have also received and redistributed over seven (7) tons of furniture, bed linens and clothing donated by the US Navy in 2008 alone.

The Star of the Sea's Request to the George B. Storer Foundation - \$25,000 for Critical Operating Costs

It is not hard to see that the Star of the Sea Mission is one the busiest centers for emergency social services in all of the lower Florida Keys. The day-to-day existence and struggles of many of our area's low-paid workforce and seniors on very tiny incomes are sometimes heartbreaking and usually hidden. While a paradise, the lower Florida Keys includes low-income, working families; impoverished senior citizens; and hundreds of poor children who too often miss meals. This population has exceptionally high percentages of minority families. In too many areas, sub-standard housing is the norm, not the exception, and problems like broken families, homelessness, substance abuse, unemployment, crime, and adolescent pregnancies round out this picture of hopelessness.



While the Star of the Sea Mission is working very hard to meet the variety of human needs that emerge each day in our service area, the single, biggest obstacle standing in our way is our current and serious challenge to "get ahead of the curve" in raising the funds for our operating budget. These important costs relate to our own rent, utilities, the modest salary of the Mission's single staff member, the purchase of deeply discounted food supplies that are unavailable through donations, computer technology (the Mission is often on-line looking for services for needy clients), and small funds to help pay for emergency medical procedures, travel needs, and critical rent challenges for truly needy people.

In an environment where the Star of the Sea Mission is seeing increased numbers of needy families and individuals, the organization is finding it impossible to move beyond a daily exercise in triage to assist the poorest families who face immediate economic disasters. That is why we are making this respectful request to the George B. Storer Foundation for help in meeting our operating expenses.

In an effort to be as transparent as possible about this request, on the final page of this proposal is the Mission's complete operating budget. For convenience in reading, the yellow highlighted sections include the critical operating expense items for which we seek a \$25,000 grant from the George B. Storer Foundation. To be perfectly frank, what the Mission is looking for is an award made with trust that the Board will direct the gift to operating areas that will have the most potential for meeting the burgeoning demand for emergency food and services by our area's poor.

Conclusion: Seeking Partnership with the George B. Storer Foundation

In the last year, the nation's headlines on domestic hunger were stunning: "Nine Million Children Eligible for Free School Breakfasts Not Getting Them"; "Record Numbers Seeking Holiday Aid"; "Land of Plenty Has Plenty of Hunger"; "Many Americans Working

For a Pittance”. These headlines – and hundreds more in periodicals, TV, and radio across the Florida Keys and the U.S. – underscore the seriousness of the problem of hunger in the nation and here at home.



The Star of the Sea Mission is extremely serious about fighting the problem of hunger and related human need in the lower Florida Keys. The Mission’s dedicated Board and stakeholders desire nothing more than to see strong communities in which our services were no longer required. In the meantime, we have a huge responsibility in providing thousands of pounds of emergency food, household supplies, and critical services to the neediest people in the Lower Keys.

A grant for \$25,000 from the George B. Storer Foundation to help the Mission to strengthen our ability to meet our critical operating expenses would go a long way toward the goal to make sure that no individual should be hurting in our community.

These needs are not just budget challenges for us – they represent opportunities to help our community members to move forward, get back to work, and to be financially independent.

Thank you for your consideration of this important request from one of the most effective centers for emergency social services in all of the Florida Keys. If we may answer any questions or provide additional clarification, please do not hesitate to call. Finally, it would be our greatest pleasure to provide an informative tour of the Star of the Sea Mission so that you can come to know this amazing and effective charity.

Sincerely,

Tom Callahan, Treasurer
St. Mary Star of the Sea Out-Reach Mission Board of Directors

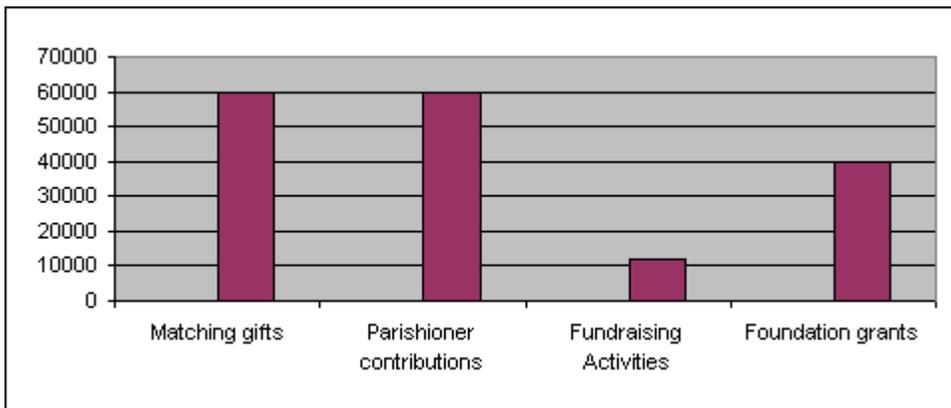
Attachments:

- Star of the Sea Mission Operating Budget
- Copy of November 23, 2008 Key West Citizen feature story about the Star of the Sea Mission

Star of the Sea Mission Operating Budget (Summary) 2009

Revenue

Matching gifts	\$60,000
Parishioner contributions	\$60,000
Fundraising Activities	\$12,000
Foundation grants	<u>\$40,000</u>
	\$172,000



Expenses

Salaries & benefits	\$26,500
Occupancy costs & utilities	\$17,172
Fuel, Insurance & Maintenance	\$11,462
Accounting & Fundraising	\$1,266
Assistance (Food, Prescriptions)	<u>\$115,600</u>
	\$172,000

