



# Central Connection

The Salvation Army / USA Central Territory  
**News and Views from the Midwest**

"We are all one body, we have the same Spirit, and we have all been called to the same glorious future." Eph. 4:3,4 (NLT)



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Getting in lots of steps

## New program restores health and hope

Chris Reinsma knows firsthand that giving people a bit of hope can make a big difference.

Chris, program supervisor for older adult health and wellness at the Ray and Joan Kroc Corps Community Center in Grand Rapids, Mich., was one of the designers of the center's Restoring Health program that received the national Excellence in Programming Award for Kroc Centers in the Central Territory last November.

When COVID-19 shut down the Kroc Center, Chris took an online course in wearable technology, focusing on products like the Fitbit fitness tracker. He and other Kroc staff began to talk about a health-coaching program where people could be equipped with wearable technology.

When the pandemic restrictions were lifted, Grand Rapids Kroc Center staff were granted \$100,000 from the Michigan Health Endowment to launch a program for underserved—mainly Black and Brown—populations.



Aquatic exercise with friends



The joy of making music and staying fit

Participants in Restoring Health were given weekly health-coaching on nutrition, exercise and self-care, along with a Fitbit to record their daily walking steps.

And something very positive began to happen, Chris said.

People in the program began to lose weight, gain muscle strength, walk more each day, lower their blood pressure and feel more optimistic about life.

One participant said, "My doctor wondered what I have been doing, as my last checkup reflected that I lost weight, my blood pressure went down, and I had a better attitude. This is due to the lessons I learned from this program and all the support I received."

Another explained, "I have kidney disease and felt tremendously isolated during COVID, and just

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## Let's do lunch

Every weekday the corps building in the small city of Oshkosh, Wis., is filled with the smells of a freshly made, hot, hearty meal ready to satisfy the hungry bellies of more than 170 people.

From 11:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., guests are welcomed to join in fellowship with one another over lunch. It's supplemented by a sack lunch provided on Sunday after the worship service.

It's one way Major Jim Mungai, corps officer with his wife, Major Penny Mungai, says The Salvation Army is helping to fight food insecurity and loneliness in the community.

During the lunch hour, Majors Jim and Penny grab a tray and enjoy the meal alongside guests. They make sure to greet regulars and newcomers alike, offer a listening ear, prayer and an invitation to corps activities, and refer those in need of additional support to the social services staff.



Cook Laura Selenka makes a hearty midday meal.

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## Leadership changes



Majors Thomas and Julie Loudon, officers of the USA Southern Territory currently serving respectively as Divisional Commander and Divisional Leader for Mission Advancement/Director of Officer Development for the Ken-

tucky and Tennessee Division, have been appointed as Chief Secretary and Territorial Leader for Leader Development for the USA Central Territory. The Loudens will take up their new appointments with the rank of colonel on July 1, 2024. They succeed Colonels Steven and Janice Howard who are retiring.

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# What is the state of the territory?

by Commissioner Evie Diaz  
Territorial Commander

During my first several months as territorial commander, I have often been asked, "What's different?" "What do you see?" or "What does the future look like for the territory?" I've heard a lot of questions!

Because I'm back home, there are familiar places and faces as I travel. But after seven years away, I'm aware of differences—new ministries and new faces. I celebrate and rejoice in God's continued, but ever-evolving, work across the Central Territory.

What do I see?

I see people praying, as reflected in the January prayer initiative and other prayer focuses locally in corps. I see lives changed because people are meeting Jesus on Sundays and throughout the week in our corps, adult rehabilitation centers and through social service ministry. I see cadets excited about Jesus and His calling on their lives.

I see corps finding innovative ways to reach communities and share the love of Jesus. Leaders are encouraged to be creative in their

programming and are finding freedom to think differently about programs and outreach.

Pathway of Hope continues to be a powerful initiative where families experience stability and hope. Whether through pastoral care conversations or invitations to participate in parenting and skill-development classes, youth programming and/or corps gatherings, POH is a means of presenting and living out the gospel. Individuals and families are finding Jesus.

Across the territory, retired officers are actively engaged as candidates' secretaries, emergency disaster services workers, pastoral care officers and in the day-to-day life of their corps. I see them as a valuable resource.

Some corps have closed, it's true. Quite a few of those have been transformed into 360 Life Centers or Service Extension Units where people's needs are met both practically and spiritually. The Salvation Army has not left those communities.

Youth programming is alive and well, although in many places it

does not look like our traditional programs. Character-building, junior soldiers and corps cadets are still effective in numerous corps. In others, youth programs and activities have been reimagined to meet the needs of their community. New partnerships have provided grants, volunteer teachers and mentors, and resources to support youth development. Young people are still learning about Jesus through discipleship training, teaching and one-on-one relationships.

We continue to be Jesus to both the stranger and our neighbor in times of need and crisis. Whether it is a migrant family, a disaster survivor or a struggling rural family, the love and kindness of Jesus is expressed through our congregational and social service ministries. Gracious welcoming congregations are helping new Americans find a spiritual home. Adult rehabilitation centers continue to proclaim and prioritize the powerful and life-changing message of the gospel.

And there's more: I see a strong focus on leadership development for officers through certificate programs

and initiatives. The Territorial Soldiers' Forum listens to local congregations and shares the heart of the territory with leaders. One division is focusing on "God Conversations." Corps are finding their impact strengthened through community partnerships.

Evaluation of the impact of Mission Imperatives and Project Advance continues, and I assure you, information will be shared with the territory soon. I'm grateful for the territorial and divisional leaders who work alongside me and share the privilege of serving the Central Territory.

What's ahead? I expect God to continue to work in the territory. I hope you do too! Together, let's anticipate the Holy Spirit moving in our lives and our ministry. Let's find freedom in trying new and innovative methods to preach the gospel and meet human needs in His name without discrimination. Join me in praying for more people to respond to the gospel invitation and to serve Him in The Salvation Army. Finally, I expect spiritual fruitfulness will be evident across the territory because individually and corporately we are listening to and obeying God's call to know, love and serve Him more and more.

## Restoring Health

Continued from page 1

wanted to give up; but I met so many wonderful people who have become my family and support system, and this program gave me a reason to live again."

The Grand Rapids African American Health Institute (GRAAHI) is one of the organizations that part-

nered with the Kroc Center and provided a grant to help Restoring Health continue for a second year.

Vanessa Greene, CEO of GRAAHI, said, "This has been one of GRAAHI's best partnerships. I speak of the program in terms of its comprehensive approach to health and wellness...and the fact that every participant raves about the benefits they have gained from the program."

Major Carol Huffman, senior Kroc Center officer in Grand Rapids, said Chris has been the backbone behind the success of Restoring Health.

"The impact Chris makes in the lives of these people is tremendous," Major Carol said. "He embodies the highest level of health,

wellness and excellence. And he moves them from merely existing to thriving. He does this by providing a system of health and hope and healing. It's a beautiful thing for all of us here to watch."

Chris thanked his fellow Kroc staff and others.

"It takes a village," he said. "I have great people to work with, great Kroc officers who support me and great partnerships in the community. It takes a lot of people; a lot of heroes."

In the first two years of Restoring Health, more than 100 people have changed their lives for the better, Chris said, adding that the majority of them met some sort of goal, whether it was weight loss or taking more daily steps.

"They were moving more. Not just sitting on the couch. Some wanted to get off blood pressure medication. Some wanted to be able to get down on the floor and play with their grandchildren. We want to be alongside them to help them do that," Chris said.

Participants began to support and network with one another, celebrating each other's victories. They also would meet in groups with Kroc staff to share stories of being a minority in the nation's healthcare system.

"It was a privilege for me to sit in those rooms and hear them talk about their health stories and how difficult some of them were—in particular, their experience with the healthcare system was not always as good as mine had been, as a Caucasian male," Chris said.

The third year of the program began in March. Two groups are participating: new members and returning graduates. The graduates are being given a bit of structure, but have much more independence now.

"They have been through the program, so we are upping the ante. We put them in small groups with other graduates. They need to take ownership together and move forward sustainably," said Chris.

About 20 new people and 20 grad-



Pictured (l to r) Vanessa Greene, Grand Rapids African American Health Institute (GRAAHI) CEO, Chris Reinsma, Kroc Center supervisor for older adult health and wellness, Deborah Clanton, GRAAHI program liaison, and Keely Newbeck, Kroc Center older adult health and wellness specialist.

uates are involved in the program now. Later this year, another 40 participants are expected for the autumn session.

"These folks really do want to live their best lives," Chris said. "Sometimes they just feel stuck. Healthcare at a doctor's office can feel transactional. But at the Kroc Center, we say, 'This is our time. What is important to you?' We work on these things together. We really do enjoy meeting with them, talking with them. And they feel that they are heard."



Drumming to the beat



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# Service with a smile

*Omaha Kroc rates as a best place to work*

Serving the community is the goal of the Omaha, Neb., Ray and Joan Kroc Corps Community Center. Having exceptional and engaged employees is vital to that objective.

"We implemented concrete steps to reinforce our commitment to making the Kroc Center an excellent workplace," said Captain Alex Yanez, senior Kroc officer.

The Omaha Kroc Center refocused and energized its "Fun Squad" composed of staff from all levels at the center to develop and execute fun opportunities to show recognition and appreciation to the team. An "Employee Development Reserve" was developed and funded to support ongoing professional development opportunities and let employees know the center is committed to their growth. Significant time during the center's annual maintenance and closure week was dedicated to the employees, not only for fun and recognition, but to train and connect them to the key values and mission.

The leadership of the Omaha Kroc Center is committed to creating a col-



laborative environment where front-line staff can freely approach leaders with ideas and suggestions in a healthy and safe environment. Even if those ideas ultimately cannot be implemented, the reason is communicated, and staff know their voice was heard and valued. Lastly, Omaha Kroc leadership is deliberate about sharing the gospel with the team by choosing a monthly scripture verse, incorporating prayer and scripture in meetings, encouraging prayer requests, and providing pastoral counseling.



As a result, the Omaha Kroc Center was certified as a Best Christian Workplace in 2022 by the Best Christian Workplaces Institute (BCWI). This honor was achieved by averaging a score over four on a five-point scale on BCWI's employee engagement survey.

The BCWI surveys employees and evaluates their opinions on eight key factors of a flourishing workplace: fantastic teams, life-giving work, outstanding talent, uplifting growth, rewarding compensation, inspirational leadership, sustainable strategy, and healthy communication. The survey responses are kept strictly confidential, assuring the opinions are honest and fair.

"What makes the survey so valuable is that it's collected from the opinions of the employees, not just the opinion of leadership, so it truly reflects the health of the organization," said Jonathan Kuebler, Omaha Kroc Center general manager.

Beyond the survey itself, valuable data and professional assistance in

interpreting the data is provided to leadership. Tara VanderSande from BCWI assisted the Omaha Kroc leaders in understanding and highlighting key areas of success, but also areas of opportunity in interpreting the responses to assist in making strategic decisions.

Captain Alex reinforced, "There is still a long way to go, but we work hard every day to make the Omaha Kroc a good place to work and are blessed with a great team."



## That and better will do

*Kroc Certificate Program continues to develop leaders*

Kroc Centers present distinctive ministry opportunities to develop new models of organization and operation which require qualified and trained leaders. Responding to this need—with significant input from the National Kroc Center Committee—the Central Territory took the lead in developing the Kroc Leadership Certificate Program, designed for officers, including those serving at Kroc Centers or those interested in future opportunities in Kroc ministry or larger corps community centers, along with key Kroc employee leadership staff with potential for greater responsibilities.

This initiative was originally developed in 2017 in partnership with The Salvation Army's Booth University College. Beginning in 2022, Indiana Wesleyan University (IWU) has served as the educational partner in this significant endeavor, bringing it to a new level of academic credibility.

The Kroc Leadership Certificate Program is offered in a cohort structure and is available to students from across the U.S. Entering its seventh year, more than 150 people from the four territories have completed the program. It is comprised of four required courses (12 credit hours), utilizing delivery modes of intensive and online learning. It includes two hybrid courses, one with a concentration in leadership principles and practice and one with a concentration in operations and programs—including weeklong intensives at the Phoenix and Chicago Kroc centers.

Also included are two online courses covering specific practice content and a capstone assignment.

Cohort 7 in 2024 is comprised of 28 students from across the four U.S. territories. Nine are from the Central Territory. As in previous cohorts, the current roster includes a diverse cross-section of participants reflecting those served by Kroc Cen-



Members of the seventh Kroc Leadership Certificate cohort (l to r): Captain Jennifer Davidson, Captain Linnea Forney, Bram Roberts, Major Jason Poff, Captain Caleb Montes.

ters. This cohort includes 19 officers and nine employees.

"The Kroc Leadership Certificate Program has been a significant part of furthering participants' onboarding and understanding of Kroc Center operations and ministry opportunities," said Bram Roberts, Central territorial Kroc program & mission engagement manager who serves as a lead instructor for the first intensive course.

Lt. Colonel James Nauta, who coordinates this endeavor in post-retirement, added, "The excellence of Indiana Wesleyan University is unsurpassed and is well-suited to serve as the designated certifying academic institution for this initiative. As a fully accredited academic institution whose mission is completely compatible with the Army's mission, IWU has built on and enhanced the program's early successes."





# Schedule of Events

## Saturday, June 8

9:00 am	Onsite Registration and Packet Distribution
11:30 am – 7:30 pm	Trade Central open
11:30 am – noon	Registration and Lunch for Service Projects
noon – 2:30 pm	Depart and participate in Service Projects
6:30 pm	Onsite Registration and Packet Distribution
6:45 pm	Childcare for Pre-Registered Children (ages 12 and under)
7:00 pm	Doors to theatre seating area open
7:15 pm	Words of Welcome and Parade of Flags Evening Session “Spirit Living” with Commissioner Evie Diaz

## Sunday, June 9

8:00 am – 1:00 pm	Onsite Registration and Packet Distribution
8:15 am	Childcare for Pre-Registered Children (ages 12 and under)
8:30 am	Doors to theatre seating area open
9:00 am	“In Memoriam/Promoted to Glory” video followed by Commissioning and Ordination of the Defenders of Justice Session
noon – 1:00 pm	Grab ‘n Go Lunch Box for all attendees

Spanish translation provided for general sessions.

For the full schedule, including By Invitation Only Events, visit [centralcommissioning.org](http://centralcommissioning.org)

Schedule as of February 14, subject to change.

# Service Projects

On Saturday of Commissioning weekend, you will have the opportunity to express your faith, and specifically the Fruit of the Spirit kindness, through acts of service. Each project will last approximately three hours, including transportation and lunch.

## Hunger Doesn’t Take a Summer Break

Milwaukee Distribution Center

Be part of a team that prepares for the kick-off of the mobile Feed the Kids program, which takes lunches to thousands of children in Milwaukee who during the school year enjoy a free or reduced-cost lunch and might go without food during the summer break. Help set up food prep tables, sort and organize paper goods and other supplies, clean vehicles and food tubs, restock pantry shelves, and sort donated clothing items in preparation for fall back-to-school distribution.

Volunteers needed: 20

## Simply Sweet Service

Milwaukee Emergency Lodge

Join other delegates in holding an afternoon filled with games, arts and crafts, and then an ice cream social for families and single adults. While some basic help with set up is needed, this project will focus on serving and interacting, sharing your kindness and hope, with those in difficult life situations who are temporarily residing at the shelter.

Volunteers needed: 15

## Express Your Inner Marie Kondo

Milwaukee Cold Spring Corps

Roll up your sleeves and serve in the context in which you’re most familiar as a Salvationist: a corps. Join other delegates in cleaning and organizing the multipurpose children’s room, which is a hub for youth programs, and in sorting food and stocking shelves of the corps’ pantry which serves approximately 100 families each week. While the tasks are simple, according to Major Clifford Scott, corps officer, they are important in creating a welcoming atmosphere and better equipping the corps to serve its members and community.

Volunteers needed: 10

## Share the Love

Milwaukee West Corps

Don’t miss the blessing of being part of a community outreach right in downtown Milwaukee. A small corps with a big heart, the Milwaukee West Corps invites you to join them in engaging with their neighbors in a multifaceted event. There will be many opportunities to serve. For instance, you can man a booth about the corps’ programs and opportunities, sign up children and families for camp, or prepare and serve food. Most importantly, you’ll have the privilege of interacting with people one-on-one and helping them feel welcomed and valued.

Volunteers needed: 20

## It’s in the Bag!

Miller High Life Theatre

Stay onsite and still be part of making a difference. Join other delegates in assembling outreach bags that will be distributed in the Milwaukee area to those experiencing homelessness and children and adults who are served on the Feed the Kids routes this summer. This is an especially good opportunity for those who have mobility issues to engage in service.

Volunteers needed: 20



# People make the difference

*At Ray and Joan Kroc Corps Community Centers, staff are key to the Army's mission and success. We are privileged to highlight two of the many exceptional employees who make the difference.*

## A fitness friend



Jen Poljacik with some of her Kroc Center students.

Students in Jen Poljacik's cycling class at the Green Bay, Wis., Ray and Joan Kroc Corps Community Center have pedaled bikes together all the way to New Zealand and Hawaii, and across Route 66—without ever leaving the classroom.

Along the way, they have become fast friends.

Jen, a group fitness instructor and personal trainer who began working at the Kroc Center in 2021, teaches cycling, kickboxing and a mobility class. She also has created close-knit groups of students in her classrooms—the cycling class in particular.

"They come to class not just because of exercise. We consider each other to be family. It sounds simple, but we really care about each other," Jen said.



Major Malinda O'Neil and Jen

Participants use fellow students' vacation destinations as travel goals, riding miles on stationary bikes. They celebrate one another's birthdays and anniversaries. They check in with one another if someone does not show up for class.

Bill Matheson, a cycling and kickboxing class participant, said he appreciates how Jen gets to know each and every participant.

"She greets them, gets to know their names and makes them feel like they fit right in," Bill said. "Her great spirit and upbeat attitude put you in a great mood to start the day. She embodies what the Kroc Center is all about."

Jen also has been recognized by her peers and received the Quality Service Keys Award from the Green Bay Kroc Center in 2023 for her exceptional commitment to the mission.

"It's not very often you get to work alongside someone with the passion, initiative and knowledge like Jen's, and we are all the better for it," said Lexi Olinske, fitness and sports manager at the Kroc Center.

Jen, who has been a fitness instructor for 30 years, moved to the Green Bay area from New Hampshire in the summer of 2020.

"I came here and did not know a lot of people. They [the Kroc students] quickly became my friends," she said.

Jen's enthusiasm for exercise and for her students has been contagious. Class participants share snacks, play trivia games, dress in Green Bay Packers gear at times and get together outside of class too.

"There isn't a week that goes by where the class isn't celebrating an anniversary, birthday or milestone, and our members can't get enough," Lexi said. "They highlight holidays, no matter how small, and transform the cycle studio into a party that everyone wants to be a part of—all while working toward their individual fitness goals."

"As God's children we are very accepting of whatever level people are at," Jen said. "I have an elite cyclist and a recovering heart attack patient, and everyone has a blast. No judging. We have a huge safety net of sharing and caring."

"It's more than just a class," Jen said. "I really truly love these people."



Jen assists a cycling class participant.

## A man of honor

Long before Albert Montiel was walking his dog and saw the Grand Rapids Ray and Joan Kroc Corps Community Center being built in his neighborhood, God had tucked the idea of working for The Salvation Army into his heart.

"Ever since I became a Christian, I wondered what it would be like," said Albert, referencing the early 1980s and his admiration for the organization's commitment to preach the gospel and serve without discrimination.

His circuitous journey to being Kroc facilities supervisor started in California, with a vision of missionary aviation.

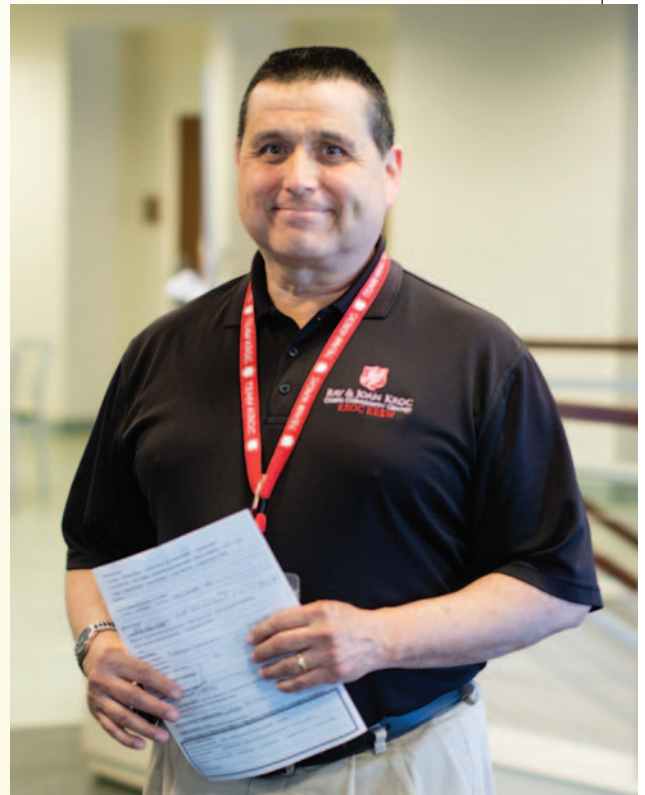
Albert and his wife, Ruth, moved to the Midwest in 1990 to pursue it. When the school they'd been attending to prepare for missions closed, they prayed for direction. Convicted about incurring more debt, they put full-time ministry behind them, and Albert landed in the field of security. Ironically, it was another step toward working for The Salvation Army.

The next came in spring 2011. Albert was looking for a new job and felt compelled to apply for a facilities/security job even though the listing didn't identify the company. It just so happened to be the Kroc Center. Six months after the center opened, he joined its staff. He's been there ever since.

"God directed our path all along," Albert said. "I now see the missionary field is right outside our front door."

Perhaps no one has had more influence at the Grand Rapids Kroc Center than Albert, not only because of his longevity but his unwavering commitment to the Army's holistic mission.

While the nature of his position requires him to be vigilant about maintaining a safe environment and



Albert Montiel

fills his days with an endless array of tasks, Albert says the essence of his work is about serving God and serving people. He's just as likely to be talking with members about their families or school as about guidelines. He can be found on Sunday mornings in the center's prayer garden sitting with and listening to a man who is hungover and homeless, getting him food and water, and cleaning up before coming into the worship service.

This kindness, this compassion, emanates from Albert's faith. As a soldier, he volunteers countless hours at the center, serving on the corps council and helping in unassuming ways like driving a van to pick up congregation members who lack transportation or beneficiaries from the nearby adult rehabilitation center. He and Ruth began attending the corps when Major Marc Johnson, then Kroc center senior officer, simply invited them.

"When we invite people to church, we open a door," Albert said. "Being a fitness and community center with a church, it's a perfect segue for those who are looking."



Albert Montiel with Lt. Jack and Major Carol Huffman



**Your  
Voice.**



**Your  
Army.**

Central Territory  
Soldiers' Forum

*The Soldiers' Forum has been called by God to inspire and empower soldiers to positively influence, strengthen, and grow our Army now, and for future generations.*

*Share your ideas, needs and concerns for the Army with your Soldiers' Forum representative.*

*The forum's next meeting is in August, so don't delay.*

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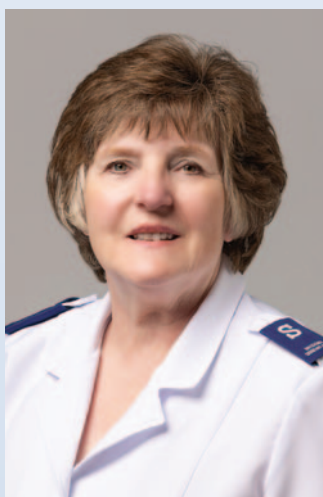
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# Everyone belongs here

*How one corps expresses kindness and embraces cultural riches*

by Major Tina Stasiuc

Upon entering the Des Plaines, Ill., Corps on a Sunday morning, you're immediately surrounded by a vibrant tapestry of global cultures. Faces from Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Americas reflect a community united in its diversity, each bringing their unique heritage to the pews.

This corps is a beautiful example of inclusion, with cultural richness woven into its fabric. The heritage and traditions of each culture are celebrated with openness to learn and understand. During February's Black History Month, for example, African-American history is celebrated with fervor, while the trilingual Christmas carol services in English, Spanish and Russian resonate with the diverse congregation.

My husband, Major Victor, and I are originally from Eastern Europe, and we strive each day to foster a sense of belonging for everyone through all of our programs and services.

Thursday evening youth programs, a highlight among our initiatives, brings together children and teachers from varied backgrounds for character-building programs. Alongside intercultural camps and outreach efforts, the youth group embodies the corps' commitment to service and unity.



Major Gloria Stepke joins in the fun.



Mervedi becomes the newest Junior Soldier.



Angel and Yagni Christian sign their Articles of War

Last year marked a significant milestone with the enrollment of new soldiers, a testament to the growing appeal of this multicultural ministry. Special services and translated carols have further engaged diverse groups, ensuring that everyone, regardless of background, finds a place at the Des Plaines Corps.

The corps' kindness and compassion truly shone when the Ukrainian crisis unfolded in 2022. Mobilizing quickly, Victor and I were able to utilize our regional knowledge and language skills to assist displaced

individuals from Ukraine, Russia and beyond. The corps was able to assist in many ways, from emergency housing to job search aid and community integration programs. Our efforts have been a lifeline for many.

A heartwarming example is the story of a refugee family who arrived with little. We provided them with a Christmas tree and food, transforming their first holiday season in a new land into a memory of joy and warmth.

Looking ahead, the

Even though the corps has three distinct language groups, it strives to be welcoming and pursue unity in all its forms. The corps has worked hard to ensure it functions as a united force as symbolized in the corps' logo of intertwined colors. ("...a triple-braided cord is not easily broken." Eccl. 4:12)

corps remains committed to listening to community needs and enhancing accessibility and inclusion. As my husband often proclaims, "Our vision is for everyone to feel they belong here."

With a focus on compassion, diversity, and transformation, the Des Plaines Corps is poised to shine even brighter in the future. Its journey of embracing cultural riches is not just about celebrating diversity; it's about creating a community where everyone is welcomed, valued and united in service.



Refugees regularly volunteer at the weekly corps pantry.



Several refugee families were warmly welcomed by corps members at a picnic in June.

## This Kind of Fruit

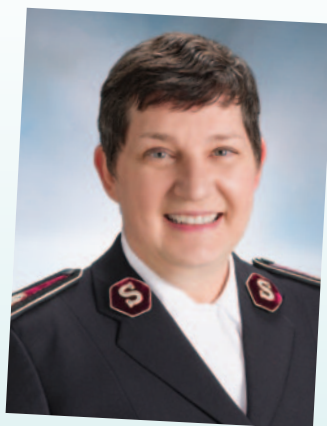
by Commissioner Evie Diaz  
Territorial Commander

The fruit of the Spirit is kindness. As Christians, it's hard to think about sharing kindness without being reminded of the kindness God has shown us. The Apostle Paul writes these beautiful words in Ephesians 2:7 (NLT): "So God can point to us in all future ages as examples of the incredible wealth of his grace and kindness toward us, as shown in all he has done for us who are united with Christ Jesus." What wonderful kindness we have experienced through the saving grace of Jesus!

There are many types of kindness, but the kindness Paul writes about is best revealed in our relationships with others. Anyone can be kind on occasion, but authentic kindness isn't natural. The fruit of kindness that flows freely

and generously is supernatural—Spirit-generated.

This kindness is expressed as a welcome to the stranger who walks through the corps doors on Sunday morning. Kindness can look like the soldier who sits with this newcomer and shows him or her that they belong. A Pathway of Hope caseworker kindly comes alongside a single mom struggling to balance children, finances and all the demands of life. Godly kindness is seen when an adult rehabilitation center officer cries with and for a resident who has relapsed one more time. The kind volunteer considers it a privilege to sit at the table with a family during the community dinner, helping with the kids and bringing a smile to a challenging situation.



At Territorial Headquarters, employees showed kindness by donating baby items for a struggling family in a nearby corps. At the Elgin Corps, a mom from Pakistan experienced kindness by a hug and a prayer from the corps officer. In Oak Creek, Wis., a new Senior Center opened where kindness is regularly expressed as a warm welcome and hospitality to everyone who comes.

This kindness is expressed because God's Spirit is at work within us. Will you allow the Holy Spirit to touch others through your genuine acts of kindness?

International Headquarters published a Lent 2024 series titled, *An Act of Kindness*. If you didn't use it during Lent, I encourage you to use it this month. Let's find ways to practice this kind of fruit.

Share how you are experiencing and expressing kindness in your community. Visit [sarmycentral.org](http://sarmycentral.org) or email [bearingfruit@usc.salvationarmy.org](mailto:bearingfruit@usc.salvationarmy.org)

*But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things! Galatians 5:22-23 (NLT)*



# Belton new chairman of National Advisory Board

**M**arc Belton became Chairman of the National Advisory Board (NAB) in January, succeeding Mike Cassling, who served in that role since 2021. Mr. Belton has served on the NAB since 2014 and most recently held the position of Vice Chairman.

We thought you'd like to learn more about this dynamic leader in his own words.

## ***Tell us about your career.***

I had a wonderful 32-year career with General Mills. I'm currently Chair of Minnehaha, a private Christian school in Minneapolis, The Guthrie Theatre and United by Black which is an inner-city collaborative in the Twin Cities. I started a consulting agency named Wisefellows Consulting, which allows me to work with purpose-driven businesses, focusing on creating sustainable growth and enabling strategic clarity for companies and not-for-profits. Serving is a passion for me.

## ***How did you first become involved with the Army?***

I became involved with the Army in 2000 when I was co-chair of a capital campaign for the Northern Division.

## ***What do you most appreciate about the Army's ministry?***

I love the Army because of their focus. They serve "the least, the last, the lost and the left out" in our communities with the love of Jesus.

## ***What should The Salvation Army expect of advisory board members at the local level?***

I think the Army should look to their advisory boards for solid governance skills, practical guidance and ambassadorship. Advisory boards should be the first line of offense, sharing their advice and expertise. Being an ambassador is also very important—the ability to open doors, show unwavering support and create new relationships are central to the growth of the Army.

## ***What is your expectation for officers who work with advisory board members?***

Teaching people the ministry, listening without judgment and creating windows for effective participation is central to building a vibrant advisory board and Salvation Army relationships.



National Advisory Board Chairman Marc Belton with his wife Alicia and children Alexander and Gabrielle at the Dallas Cowboys football game on Thanksgiving Day.

## ***What do you view as the greatest challenge and opportunity for The Salvation Army?***

Adapting to change. Finding the "best of both worlds"—which for me is finding the balance between autonomy and granularity and leveraging scale for increased efficiency and effectiveness. Focusing on the bigger picture by not letting the opportunity for increased ministry get crowded out by administrative and other challenges.

## ***How do you see the NAB's role in accomplishing the Army's mission?\****

The NAB's role is to use wisdom, ability, and expertise to ensure The Salvation Army fulfills its mission to "preach the gospel of Jesus Christ and to meet human need in His name without discrimination."

I truly believe that God has hand-picked His servants for this particular task and at this particular time.

I know that I can speak for every member of the NAB in saying that it is a tremendous honor to serve the King of Kings in this way.

## ***What are you hoping will be achieved by the NAB while you serve as chairman?\****

We are living in unprecedented times. It is my hope that we can together meet the challenges of these times operationally, strategically and innovatively while never losing focus on the mission of sharing the love of God through Jesus Christ.

## ***Who is your most admired leader and why?***

The absolute best model of leadership is Jesus Christ. If I have to pick an earthly leader, I would choose Nelson Mandela. He had grace in the face of extreme persecution and wisdom in unifying a nation with extreme divisions.

## ***How does faith influence your career and community?***

The greatest challenge is to keep our minds, hearts and actions consistent with a life in Him. There are so many distractions and controversies that can take our focus away on what really matters. The world we live in is volatile, uncertain, complex and is highly unlikely to change. How can we keep our minds and hearts right amid it all?

Questions, originally published in the *War Cry*, used with permission.  
\*Additional questions.

Photo by Jassem Robertson



Immediate past NAB Chairman Mike Cassling, National Commander Commissioner Kenneth G. Hodder with Marc Belton at the most recent meeting of the NAB

## Oshkosh lunch program Continued from page 1

As a result of their accessibility and kindness, they have built relationships with many of the regular visitors to the lunch program and have seen several among the congre-

gation on Sunday mornings.

"This is our ministry niche here," Major Jim said. "Our only heartache is knowing some of the people coming in for lunch won't eat again until their next meal at the corps."

With the cost of necessities seeming to increase with every visit to the grocery store, the major said that more than one in 10 Oshkosh families relies on the corps food pantry to supplement what they are able to afford. The lunch program helps to offset expenses even more, and demand for both continues to grow as people struggle to make ends meet.

"People are just barely making it by budget wise," he said. "We're feeding not only

those experiencing homelessness or battling addiction, but also seniors and whole families, especially when kids are out of school. The seniors are on fixed incomes, the families are struggling. So, this is helping stretch their funds."

The lunch program is successful thanks to stellar cook Laura Selenka and the hard work of volunteers who help with serving and cleaning up after the meal. Volunteers include several church groups and community organizations, some of which have made it part of their weekly or monthly commitments. In the summer, for example, an executive team from a local company comes once a



Majors Penny and Jim Mungai enjoy lunch with a family.

week to fire up the grills. Some volunteer groups consider it a privilege to make a weekly visit to the corps and say it's the highlight of their week.

"We anticipate seeing a large increase in the number of people served," concluded Major Jim. "We're grateful for the blessing of this ministry to our community."



Volunteers serve lunch to hungry Oshkosh, Wis., residents.



# A voice for Others

Earlier this year Salvation Army officers and staff, and members of the National Advisory Board, the National Leadership Council of Echelon (young adult professionals) and the National Capital Advisory Council visited members of the U.S. Senate and their staff.

The goal was to build awareness of The Salvation Army's service and impact, and to build partnerships to meet people's needs, according to Lt. Colonel Margaret Davis, national social services and public policy secretary.

She said the meetings specifically focused on the crisis of homelessness which has skyrocketed in the U.S. Due to a lack of housing supply and the gap between income and affordable housing options, homelessness has increased nationally in recent years after a period of decrease. In fact, recently released data shows an alarming 12 percent spike from 2002-2023. On any given night, over 653,000 people experience homelessness.

Salvation Army officers and staff, serving as liaisons, with an individual advisory board or Echelon member, were matched with states in their territory. In 37 one-on-one meetings, they shared The Salvation Army's comprehensive response to the homelessness crisis nationally, as well as a

snapshot of what the organization is doing to address the issue in their state. Packets of information, along with the business card of Lt. Colonel David Davis, national social services liaison and special representative to Capitol Hill, were provided.

"Colonels Steve and Janice Howard and I had the wonderful opportunity to visit with senators and staff from Central Territory states. It was a privilege to tell them about the great front-line work which impacts their communities," said Central Territorial Commander Commissioner Evie Diaz. "In some offices, a prayer was shared, and in all the story of meeting human needs in Jesus' name was told."

Advisory board or Echelon members made three "asks." First, they asked senators and staff to let The Salvation Army be a resource for them in combatting homelessness, whether providing statistics and testimonies, or drawing on our vast experience to serve this vulnerable population. Second, they asked for collaboration, that legislators fully engage and support solutions to homelessness. Senators and staff were encouraged to be part of every effort to help fight homelessness by highlighting this critical issue and working for remediation through funding opportunities across the full continuum of homelessness services.



Sen. Pete Ricketts of Nebraska is presented with the Fight for Good award during the visit to Capitol Hill. Pictured (l to r): Commissioner Jolene Hodder, national program secretary; Mr. Mike Cassling, immediate past National Advisory Board chairman; Senator Ricketts; Commissioner Evie Diaz, Central territorial commander; Colonel James Betts, national chief secretary; and Commissioner Kenneth G. Hodder, national commander.



Salvation Army officers and staff with members of the National Advisory Board, Echelon National Leadership Council and National Capital Advisory Council

Third, they encouraged charitable giving and volunteerism. They urged senators and staff to improve access to the charitable deduction and other public policies that encourage giving and volunteering.

In conclusion, senators and staff were invited to visit one of the Salvation Army facilities in their home state, to volunteer in one of our programs, or to consider ringing bells at kettles next Christmas in support of local Salvation Army programs.

During this visit to Capitol Hill, Sen. Pete Ricketts of Nebraska was presented the Fight for Good award for his support of The Salvation Army locally and legislatively. Introduced in 2018, the Fight for Good award has three objectives: recognize congressional relationships and expand knowledge of services provided

throughout the country; honor congressional members who either worked closely with or supported The Salvation Army in their state or district; honor congressional members who sponsored, co-sponsored or supported legislation that benefits Salvation Army clients and beneficiaries. To date, 46 congressional members have been honored with the award.

At a dinner the evening before the visit to Capitol Hill, Congressman Don Davis, who represents North Carolina's 1st District and is a new NAB member, spoke on effective presentations to members of Congress. It set the stage for the highly successful endeavor, according to Colonel Margaret Davis, who also indicated the NAB's interest in such future engagement.

Photos by Jassem Robertson

## Family perseveres in the face of life's hard knocks

by Craig Dirkes

Every time Carlos and Marlene thought life couldn't get any worse, it did. Until two years ago, everything was going great. Carlos had a steady job as a grain inspector in Fargo, N.D., while Marlene stayed home with their four young children. The family had moved to the Fargo-Moorhead area from the U.S. territory of Puerto Rico in the mid-2010s.

Tragedy struck during winter 2021 while they were on vacation at an indoor waterpark. Returning home, they found the mobile home they were renting had been burglarized, and instead of calling the police their neighbors looted the place.

"Everything we had was gone," Carlos said.

To make matters worse, the front door was left wide open, causing all of the pipes to burst. The ice-coated

home was a total loss.

Suddenly, the family was homeless.

They lived in hotels until they found a cheap apartment to rent. But several months later Carlos severely



injured his back and couldn't work. He was in a wheelchair for five months, and the family's landlord chose not to renew their lease during winter 2022.

The family was homeless again. But this time, they had no income other than the modest unemployment checks Carlos received every two weeks. Each check provided enough money for one week's worth of hotel stays. The other week, they lived in their minivan. At night, Marlene helped Carlos from the wheelchair into a front passenger seat. She slept

in the other front seat; the kids slept in the back. Unable to afford gas to keep the van running all night, Carlos would turn on the van and crank up the heat when the cold became unbearable.

### THE SALVATION ARMY PATHWAY OF HOPE

"I was so depressed. I was completely hopeless," Carol said. "I kept thinking, 'What am I going to do with my family?'"

Eventually, Carlos' back healed, and they found another cheap apartment. But they faced an uphill battle to return to self-sufficiency.

Last summer, Carlos and Marlene came to The Salvation Army in Fargo for help. Caseworker Sarah Akin provided groceries, gas cards, rent assistance, back-to-school supplies and clothing for the children.

They also enrolled in Pathway of Hope. Corps officers Majors Abe and Ronda Tamayo provided pastoral care, and Sarah assisted Carlos and Marlene in creating goals to improve their lives and their children's future. These have included securing better housing, budgeting, and learning English as a second language. Sarah helped Marlene obtain a driver's license and Carlos find job training for a stable, long-term career.

"Carlos and Marlene are gracious and hard-working people who, no matter how hard they've tried, just can't seem to catch a break," Sarah said. "It's been an honor to serve them."

Today, Carlos is optimistic about his family's future. "My family has been through a lot, and we are happy for this opportunity," he said. "The Salvation Army is a very good friend to us."



# Global Mission Teams yield unexpected outcomes

by Viki Payton

The Central Territory offers opportunities for officers, soldiers and other corps members, employees, advisory board and women's auxiliary members to participate in short-term, cross-cultural missions experiences through Global Mission Teams (GMTs).

Each year, an average of three teams partner with Salvationists around the world.

Some teams have a program focus, others focus on construction; still others have a little of both. Regardless, all teams have expressed purposes such as developing an awareness of the international Salvation Army, becoming advocates of World Services/Self-Denial fundraising in their corps, and establishing relationships with Salvationists in their host locations. Not surprisingly, after their mission experience some GMT members commit to learning another language, and others go on to serve overseas long-term. Many have a renewed appreciation for The Salvation Army as their place for worship and service.

But sometimes there are unexpected outcomes as seen from two of the most recent GMTs.

## New skills practiced back home

The GMT to Guatemala in spring 2023 had a wonderful experience renovating the divisional camp in Tecpan. The five-person team from four divisions was joined by several officers from the Guatemala Divisional Headquarters in doing facility maintenance, sanding and painting, floor and countertop tiling, roofing, and making other repairs.

Putting in long hours each day to complete renovations, several team members learned new skills and gained interest in painting, tiling, landscaping, etc. A few were so excited about what they learned that with newfound confidence, they



The Dearborn Heights Corps gets a facelift inspired by Major Valerie Carr's GMT experience.

took on projects back home.

Major Valerie Carr had a vision to renovate areas in her corps, Dearborn Heights Citadel, Mich. Upon her return, she promptly headed to the hardware store to pick up supplies and recruited people at the corps to help. They got to work updating the waiting area, and a few weeks later took on a landscaping project.

Jill Johnson, a soldier of the Royal Oak Citadel, Mich., Corps, said, "I'm very grateful for the opportunity I had to both serve and learn alongside The Salvation Army in Guatemala."

"A big part of our project was to lay new tile in the community center. I had always wanted to learn how to tile but never had the confidence to try. I came home with the skills to finally tile my fireplace hearth. Now, every time I light a fire, I think about the good people in Guatemala."

## New bonds bless territory

In spring 2022, the first post-pandemic GMT went to Denia, Spain. Most of the eight team members from three divisions had never met, but say that from the first moments they felt like family. A deep bond developed during their 10 days of ministry. It served them well even on the trip home when the team encountered a lot of stress. Two members tested positive for COVID-19 and had to remain in Spain. The others missed their connecting flight in Madrid and were delayed for 24 hours. When the two remaining members finally traveled home, the others prayed for them in the middle of the night. The setbacks drew the team even closer together.

Over the 18 months since the team returned from Spain, members continue to connect frequently with each other through a Teams channel, sharing prayer requests and life struggles, as well as joys and victories. They continue to cry and celebrate together.

For instance, when one member was hospitalized, another sent her favorite treats, and when a mem-



The Spain GMT celebrates fellow team member Cadet Matthew Manley's welcome to training.

ber's husband was in the hospital, one of the team visited to support them. When a member shared about their local ministry with refugees,

other members donated items for the work. When team members have been welcomed to the training college as cadets or commissioned as officers, the others

have been there to celebrate. Members have even opened their homes to each other for vacations, offering a place of rest and restoration.

They look forward to any territorial event that can allow a reunion. Commissioning weekend 2023 brought together seven of the eight members who found a downtown restaurant in Milwaukee to share a meal and then prayed with each other on the sidewalk. A couple of passersby sarcastically asked if they were holding a prayer meet-

ing, then were shocked to be invited to share their own prayer requests and be included in the circle!

While GMTs are composed of very different people from across the territory, the experience of living and serving together creates a strong bond. Friendships span the territory and often last a lifetime.

The Territorial World Missions Department is excited to offer the opportunity to Salvationists across our territory to participate in GMTs.

If you're interested in being on a GMT, be sure to follow us on social media, and visit our website [centralmissions.org/GMT](http://centralmissions.org/GMT).



From left: Captain Josh Polanco, Major Catherine Mount and Viki Payton.



Jill Johnson cuts tile for her fireplace, a skill she learned on a GMT.

## Promoted to Glory

### Major Ruth Dalberg

Major Ruth Dalberg was promoted to Glory on January 25, 2024. Ruth had an adventurous spirit and gladly followed the Lord wherever He led, including South America. Throughout her life she ministered with insight and inspiration.

Ruth was born to Salvation Army officers, then-Captains Garfield and Helen Dalberg, on March 5, 1935. As the oldest of six siblings, she set the pace for her brothers. From the start she was naturally gifted in music with a beautiful voice and the ability to play multiple instruments.



Ruth accepted Jesus as her Savior when she was 8. At just 12 she received her call to be an officer.

She attended the Chicago Evangelistic Institute before entering training. Commissioned in 1959, she served for seven years in the Central Territory before setting sail from New York to Santiago, Chile, to become a missionary. She served in eight appointments over 14 years in the South America West Territory before returning home in 1980. She continued to serve the Hispanic population throughout the Central Territory until her retirement in 2000.

Ruth is survived by her brothers, Lt. Colonel Ted (Nancy), Major David (Debra), Timothy (Tae), and Major Wesley (Susan). She was preceded in death by her brother Paul.



# Hearts of fertile soil

Two corps focus on prayer and fruitfulness



### A broken vessel

**O**n the holiness table at the front of the chapel of the Kansas City Northland, Mo., Corps sits a broken jar. It rests on its side, seemingly useless. But despite its appearance, the jar serves an important purpose. Prayer requests reside within it. Whether the salvation of a loved one, physical or spiritual healing, or release from sin, corps members have left their petitions to the Lord.

"The broken vessel represents our own brokenness," said Major Joseph Wheeler, who leads the corps with his wife, Major Lois Wheeler. "It's about looking at the condition of our hearts and preparing the soil for planting and bearing good fruit."

In response to the Territorial Commander's Call to Prayer, the corps has been focusing on spiritual growth. It began with the Wheelers offering an assessment to help corps members discover their discipleship styles. The congregation responded

enthusiastically, with 50 people taking the assessment. Weekly sessions have provided time for discussion and learning; sermons also have focused on preparing hearts to be good soil and to bear fruit.

"There has been a hunger for it," said Major Joseph. "People turned up for service even on a Sunday when most churches had closed due to the weather, and our online following has really grown. I keep thinking, 'What a beautiful thing, this theme is focusing on the right stuff.' Really, it's a holiness message."

With the soil tilled and enriched, the Wheelers plan to distribute a Fruit of the Spirit assessment which helps people see how, or if, they are bearing fruit. Discussion groups, Bible studies and worship services will focus on each fruit such as kindness.

"It's really eye-opening," Major Joseph concluded. "We're looking forward to what the Lord has in store for Northland as we explore the fruit of the Spirit together."

### A flickering flame

**O**ne by one, members of the Warsaw, Ind., Corps, held flash paper with words representing their heartache, burden or repentance over a candle's flame. In an instant, the strips of paper disappeared—a visual of what happens when things are given to the Lord.

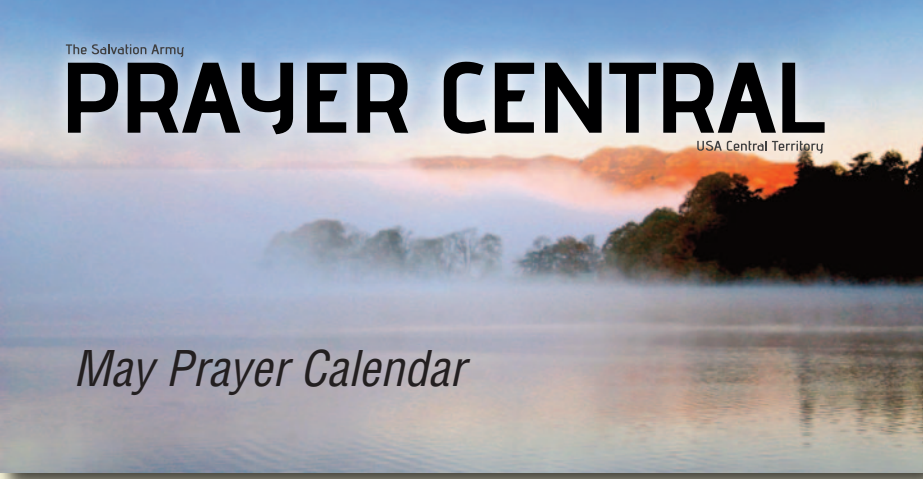
"Some of our members have been going through very difficult situations," Envoy Ken Locke, corps administrator, said. "The prayer focus was a great opportunity to help people surrender their struggles to the Lord."

He says the Territorial Commander's Call to Prayer has fostered a deeper sense of connection and closeness among the corps members and has rejuvenated their desire for spiritual growth.

Watching the video introducing the Call to Prayer, the congregation also was encouraged by the realization that although their corps is small, they are connected to the whole Body of Christ and the international Salvation Army, and they can make a difference through prayer and World Services/Self-Denial giving.

They have adopted Philippians 4:13 as their verse for this year, a reminder that it is Christ who strengthens and enables them.

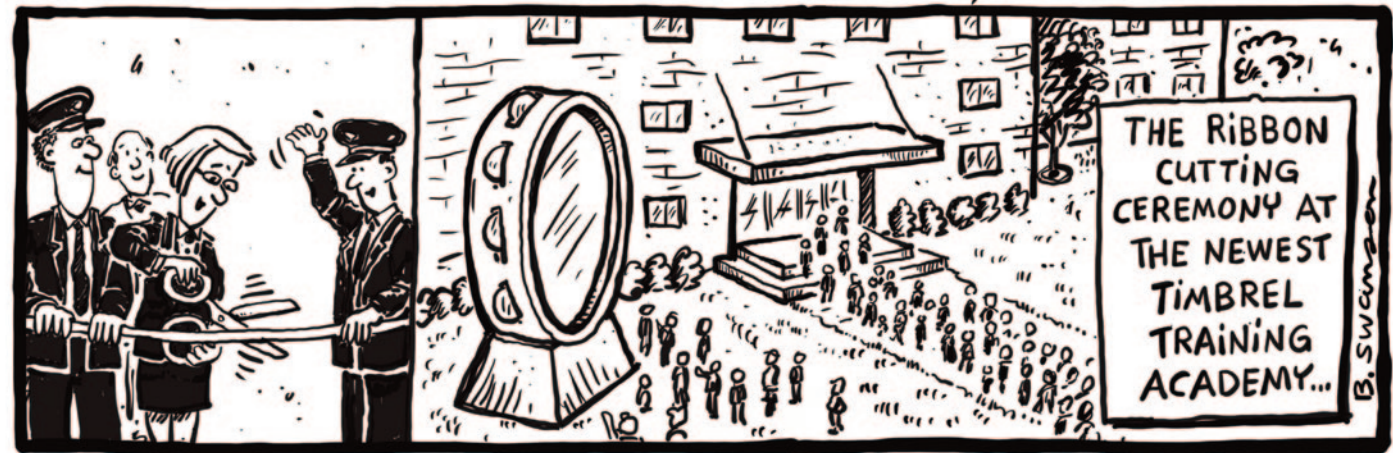
"We are already seeing spiritual fruit, and I am confident we will see more," the envoy concluded. "We are committed to continuing to focus on prayer and growth."



My Prayer List	Day	Bible Reading	Pray for The Salvation Army
	1 Wednesday	2 Samuel 5-9	Alpena, Mich., Corps
	2 Thursday	Psalms 51-53	Switzerland, Austria and Hungary Territory
	3 Friday	Job 35-36	Bismark, N.D., Corps
	4 Saturday	Jeremiah 27-31	Cedar Rapids, Iowa, Corps
	5 Sunday	Mark 15-16	Chicago Temple, Ill., Corps
	6 Monday	2 Corinthians 4-5	Jasper/Newton County, Mo., Corps
	7 Tuesday	Exodus 21-24	East Chicago, Ind., Corps
	8 Wednesday	2 Samuel 10-14	Flint Beecher, Mich., 360 Life Center
	9 Thursday	Psalms 54-56	Gary-Merrillville, Ind., Corps
	10 Friday	Job 37-38	India Central Territory
	11 Saturday	Jeremiah 32-36	Hammond-Munster, Ind., Corps
	12 Sunday	Luke 1-2	Indianapolis Fountain Square, Ind., Corps
	13 Monday	2 Corinthians 6-8	Kansas City Blue Valley, Mo., Corps
	14 Tuesday	Exodus 25-28	Madison (Capital Area International), Wis., Corps
	15 Wednesday	2 Samuel 15-19	Community Outreach
	16 Thursday	Psalms 57-59	Hong Kong and Macau Territory
	17 Friday	Job 39-40	Lafayette, Ind., Corps
	18 Saturday	Jeremiah 37-41	Rapid City, S.D., Corps
	19 Sunday	Luke 3-4	Shelbyville, Ind., Corps
	20 Monday	2 Corinthians 9-10	Rwanda and Burundi Territory
	21 Tuesday	Exodus 29-32	Terre Haute, Ind., Corps
	22 Wednesday	2 Samuel 20-24	Waukesha, Wis., Corps
	23 Thursday	Psalms 60-62	Youth Ministries
	24 Friday	Job 41-42	Decatur, Ill., Corps
	25 Saturday	Jeremiah 42-46	Midland, Mich., Corps
	26 Sunday	Luke 5-6	Southern Africa Territory
	27 Monday	2 Corinthians 11-13	St. Charles, Mo., Corps
	28 Tuesday	Exodus 33-36	Salvation Army Volunteers
	29 Wednesday	1 Kings 1-4	Keokuk, Iowa, Corps
	30 Thursday	Psalms 63-65	Emergency Disaster Services
	31 Friday	Proverbs 1	Lincoln, Ill., 360 Life Center

Go to [www.salarmycentral.org](http://www.salarmycentral.org)  
If you follow the prayer calendar during the year,  
you will have read through the Bible!

## --Mustard Seeds--





## A Moment in Time



### Taking the gospel to the streets



**B**efore the car was king, when travel was slower, and city residents walked or took public transportation to work and school, outdoor meetings called open-air were an important evangelism tool for The Salvation Army. As shown in this 1930s photograph from Clark Street in downtown Chicago, open-air took the gospel to the streets.

Often, corps officers, the band and soldiers marched in a Parade of Witness to and from the open-air location. Spectators and converts followed along, and the spontaneous meetings drew attention. A bass drum served as a place where people could pray in repentance and accept Christ and new converts could give their testimony. An upside-down timbrel collected offerings. Songs brought the congregants together in a shared experience. At the conclusion of the meeting, those assembled were invited to attend meetings at the corps.

Local authorities weren't always consulted before open-air, and sometimes nearby residents or businesses complained about the noise which could bring police to the scene. This might lead to municipal bans on outdoor preaching and jail time for those who participated. Some communities created designated places for outdoor preaching and speeches.

Audiences were not always kind. In the late 1800s through the early 1900s they would throw rotten food, bricks or firecrackers into open-air meetings as well as traditional church services.

Open-air faded from popularity during the mid-20th century as car travel and television viewing increased. Today, corps occasionally hold services outside in parks with the same aim of sharing the gospel, making connections and ministering to those who might not enter the corps.

Visit [sacentralmuseum.org](http://sacentralmuseum.org)

# 730... AND BEYOND

*2,848 days and counting*

by Captain Patricia Anderson

I love serving God as an officer in The Salvation Army. There are so many incredible moments in full-time ministry.

As we look forward to summer, I can't help but think of just such a moment at camp. During the pandemic, when having traditional camp wasn't possible, we held small group retreats. One corps brought a few children to experience camp for the first time. We did all the usual things like visiting the petting farm, exploring the outdoors, making crafts, and riding the pontoon boat.

A brother and sister caught my attention. The brother didn't seem like he wanted to be there and was a little stand-offish. The sister seemed like she wanted to be at camp but was reserved and followed her older brother. At our pool, we have a large yellow waterslide that is a favorite of campers. The sister, probably 6 or 7, would go to the top but would get nervous and go back down the ladder. She probably did this 20 to 30 times during the three-day camp. The camp staff and I offered encouragement, but she would back out every time.

The last night of camp, we did Jesus Theater and invited the children to accept Jesus as their Savior. The brother went to the altar and soon was joined by his sister. They



both wanted Jesus in their hearts.

Those two kids were different at the pool that night. He was more free, and they both had joy. That young girl started her waterslide routine. It was my turn to spot the top of the slide and as she came back up, looking nervous, I asked if I could pray for her. When we were done, her brother signaled he was ready to catch her at the end of the slide. I asked if she wanted to go down. She nodded, and off she went. The whole camp erupted in cheers! We were all so happy for her, and from that moment on we could not get her to stop going down that slide.

But it's really about much more than the slide. It's about leading children to the source of joy, courage and strength to face anything before them in life. That's what I love about being an officer.

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