An Army raised up for such a time as this

Soldiers’ Congress renews faith, restores hope and refocuses vision

As the world began to emerge from the pandemic, the Central Territory’s first virtual Soldiers’ Congress, themed “Indescribable Grace, Indescribable Hope,” felt like a deep and reassuring breath—coming at just the right moment to renew faith, restore hope and refocus our vision.

“We have heard about and seen first-hand how soldiers have stepped up in unprecedented, Spirit-empowered ways all throughout the territory,” said Territorial Commander Commissioner Brad Bailey in thanking soldiers across the Midwest who have shared the Good News and cared for others during COVID-19. “This Congress is designed to celebrate mission advancement and inspire us onward to even greater things.”

The good news is that we have a God who through Jesus Christ pours out indescribable grace on all who call on Him, and, therefore, as soldiers of the cross we can live victorious lives now and move into the future with an unshakable, confident hope!” exclaimed Commissioner Heidi Bailey, territorial leader for leader development, in the keynote session Resilient Hope.

Advocating there were no better people to inspire and encourage, the Baileys introduced The General and Commissioner Rosalie Peddle (WPWM). The international leaders virtually greeted the territory. Wearing a Cubs jersey, The General quipped, “I always know how to pick the right team, and in regard to spiritual warfare I pick our soldiers who are battle-ready and help us daily in this salvation war!”

More than 1,300 registered delegates attended the livestreamed Congress, a hybrid of prerecorded and live elements, which was viewed in watch gatherings in corps, camps and homes across the territory, with several thousand soldiers, officers and friends tuning in for one or more of its components.

Throughout the meeting soldiers were featured including an eloquent testimony to their session’s diversity, the cadets declared their commitment to God and The Salvation Army as they presented their affirmation of faith in English, Spanish and French via video with Chief Secretary Colonel Steven Howard.

As their families watched from a specially designed set, each cadet crossed the platform to be ordained and commissioned as officers by territorial leaders Commissioners Brad and Heidi Bailey, who affirmed their calling, giftedness and readiness for service. A/Captains Doug and Kim Winters and A/Captains Milagros López-Pagán and Pedro Pagán Acevedo also received their commission as full captains.

They rose to the challenge.

“The salvation war demanded it, and they responded,” he said, “because they want to be of use to the Kingdom. They want to make a difference.”

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The God of second chances
by Commissioner Brad Bailey
Territorial Commander

As I look back on my early parenting, I am embarrased and even saddened by times I might have approached a teaching moment with my beautiful girls in frustration or anger rather than love. Let me be clear. There has never been a time when I have not loved them with my whole heart. Yet, I’m haunted by times I may have approached a corrective moment and my unconditional love may not have shone through.

We are painfully aware that when we attempt to correct or discipline children in the midst of disappointment or anger, we may get the appropriate behavior at the moment, but we also might be sowing seeds of frustration and rebellion that ultimately reap a harvest of brokenness and pain. In recent days, we’ve witnessed how words can either heal or harm, build up or tear down, renew or destroy others.

This is why Paul counseled the Ephesians, “Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen,” (Ephesians 4:29, NIV).

Thank goodness God doesn’t give up on us. The Bible says we are to love others the way Jesus loves us. God never asks us to do for others what He hasn’t already done for us. One of the most important things we can do is to help people deal with failures, mistakes, misunderstandings, hostility—and the pain experienced as a result. We all have failed at one time or another, but God is the God of the second, third, fourth and fifth chance. That’s an essential aspect of the Good News. “He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 1:6, NIV)

Jesus brought out the best in people, and He calls those who desire to be more like Him to do the same as we engage in everyday life with fellow image-bearers even those with whom we might disagree. One of our main challenges is to be encouragers. Let me use it our mission, who we are and not just what we do.

The level of our commitment to be more like Jesus will determine how we respond to others. This calling to authentically care for OTHERS unconditionally is not easy, but God has promised to direct and sustain us in a manner that brings Him honor and glory!

As Christian Salvationists, God continues to call us to be a people who care from a heart full of grace and with a confident hope to respond, “Here am I. Send me!”

The past does not define us
by Michelle DeRusha

After three stints in prison and many years battling drug and alcohol addiction, LaTosha Bolton is grateful to be sober, employed as lead kitchen manager for the Omaha North, Neb., Corps and finally in a position where she can offer her own story as encouragement to others.

LaTosha grew up in “the projects” of south Omaha, shuttling between her parents’ home and her grandparent’s house in nearby Bellevue. She earned a cheerleading scholarship, but her dream to attend college was thwarted when she became pregnant shortly after graduation from high school.

After having a second baby, LaTosha became addicted to drugs and alcohol and ultimately landed in prison for attempted robbery. Although she was determined to set herself straight when she was released nine months later, drugs and drinking got the best of her again.

Not long after being released, the unimaginable happened: Bolton’s eight-year-old son was hit by a car and killed. Consumed by grief, she attempted suicide and sought escape through drugs and alcohol again. It wasn’t until she became pregnant with her fourth child that LaTosha finally committed to sobriety.

For the next 18 years, LaTosha’s life was stable. Her career at McDonald’s flourished, she and her husband welcomed a fifth child into the world, and her record stayed clean. But in 2015 her past caught up with her. LaTosha was incarcerated for a crime she’d committed 20 years prior, when she’d used Social Security income benefits for herself that were intended to support her daughter, who has a learning disability and was living with Bolton’s mother at the time.

Upon her release, LaTosha again committed to making a fresh start.

She began volunteering every morning at the Omaha North Corps after finishing the night shift at McDonald’s. When a job in the corps’ kitchen became available, she applied and was hired. Five years later she is still grateful every day for the opportunity to contribute to her community.

“The Salvation Army gave me a chance,” she said. “It took so much over the years, but now I’m in a position that I can give wholeheartedly to my community.”

“Tosha is a really important part of our team,” said corps officer Lt. Ken Jones. “She’s not a ‘punch in and punch out’ kind of employee. Tosha has a great work ethic and is always looking for specific ways to improve. She is truly a blessing to us.”

Despite ongoing challenges, LaTosha’s faith keeps her strong and stable. “God has put me in the right place,” she said. “I really hope people who hear my story know they can take a chance on themselves, because the past, no matter what’s happened, doesn’t define us. God has the last say. Every day I struggle, but at 54 years old, I’m finally getting it.”

Walk for Justice
by Jonathan Toetzle Ruthberg

COVID-19 presented challenges in providing services and fundraising alike, but that didn’t stop our team at the William Booth Legal Aid Clinic from hosting its annual Walk for Justice in metro Detroit. With the complications imposed by the pandemic, it was crucial for the Clinic to maximize opportunities for the event and raise as much support as possible. Our staff resolvers over 1,800 legal issues a year for individuals and families in need.

Instead of the normal one-day event at the Detroit Zoo, we invited the community to participate in a three-day virtual Walk for Justice from their local park, neighborhood or favorite outdoor location.

Every event participant received a Walk for Justice mask, entry for a door prize, and access to an online silent auction. Participants stayed connected by sharing photos on Facebook using #WalkforJustice.

We are beyond grateful for our broad base of donors and participants who walked and participated in a virtual silent auction, and for the local musicians who performed on our behalf! At the time of publication, the goal of $60,000 had been exceeded with more donations anticipated.

We are thrilled to know that because the Walk for Justice was successful, we can continue to provide our critical service to those in need of legal representation in the Detroit area.

The Salvation Army
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Central Connection
Advancing racial justice in the Central Territory

by Major Katherine Clausell

During the Racial Justice Summit last fall, the Central Territory convened a Racial Justice Summit where nearly 1,000 delegates virtually were challenged to be on the forefront of combating racism, both within our organization and society.

With the aspirational goal of “moving forward together toward diversity, inclusion and anti-racism in the Central Territory,” officers, soldiers and employees returned to their commands to devise a plan with achievable goals and action steps that would serve as a blueprint “to do better” as we strive to achieve God’s ideal of unity.

Each division, the Adult Rehabilitation Centers Command and the College for Officer Training wasted no time establishing Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committees which each were tasked with creating a specific statement for their context and goals to help enable them to hit the target they set with respect to amplifying diversity, equity and inclusion. Here are just a few examples of the many goals and action steps:

- Purposely ensure all boards, councils, committees and divisions
- Examine and identify policies and procedures within our division
- Conduct a survey to ascertain all of the division’s officers’ intention, involvement and cultural intelligence on the topic of anti-racism/inclusion, equity, and racial reconciliation

Events represent our divisional diversity
- Create two webinar training opportunities for our officers, employees and soldiers this fiscal year and have 25 percent of corps participate. This will move to a yearly goal of four per year in 2022.
- It has been exciting to see Salvationists at the local level come together to examine themselves to determine if racism operates in our ministry and take on the difficult task of confronting what surfaced with a view toward devising strategies for dismantling it. This work is paramount.

If the Church, including the Salvation Army, is unable to reach consensus or unite around the issue of racism, I fear our commitment to fulfill both the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19…”go and make disciples of all nations…”) and The Salvation Army’s mission (“preach the gospel of Jesus Christ and meet needs in his name without discrimination”) will be compromised severely. However, as a people of faith and hope, we do not lose heart because Jesus has prepared the way for overcoming racism and discrimination.

Bed & Bread trucks take COVID-19 vaccines to Detrotiers

by Jonathan Tostige Ruthberg

The Detroit Harbor Light, Central City Integrated Health (CCIH) and the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) have collaborated to educate and vaccinate Detroiters affected by racial and economic disparities in access to and delivery of healthcare.

The Harbor Light’s Bed & Bread trucks have been accompanied on their routes by a CCIH mobile care team consisting of two nurses and a peer support specialist, who share information about the safety and effectiveness of the COVID-19 vaccination and administer the doses.

“The timing and the need could not be greater. We are grateful for the opportunity to reach deep pockets of our community where access to care is limited,” said Jamie Winkler, Eastern Michigan Harbor Light System executive director.

A CDC vaccination card is provided to participating community members with the date of their vaccination and the date of their second vaccination, which they can get from the Bed & Bread truck in their neighborhood. If they are unable to make it to the truck, they can call CCIH and get their vaccination at any CCIH facility. Clients also receive information on the comprehensive array of services, including housing, offered by CCIH. Referrals are made upon request and/or based on necessity.

In 2020, CCIH partnered with The Salvation Army’s Bed & Bread program to provide prompt access to integrated health services including primary healthcare, mental health and dental services, and substance abuse treatment.

“It’s an honor to go out and meet the needs of Detrotiers, addressing the racial and economic disparities in the access and delivery of care,” said Dr. Kimberly Farrow, Central City Integrated Health president and CEO. “We’re excited to bring vaccines to the community and thankful for The Salvation Army mobilizing this initiative.”

The collaboration between the organizations will protect those in need in Detroit, expand access to integrated healthcare services to high-risk populations, and support the state’s goal of vaccinating 70 percent of Michiganders ages 16 and older as quickly as possible.
Finding her path

When Katherine Reid and her mom came to The Salvation Army’s Crossroads Shelter in Independence, Mo., it was for a fresh start. Due to her mom’s substance abuse, they’d been through hard times and had even lost their house. At the shelter, they not only found help but people who cared and a new sense of family. It connected Katherine to what eventually would become her life’s work.

“People had dinner together. They had chores. They did Bible study. I had other kids to play with; it was so great,” said Katherine. “It kept me focused and steady—to come home and have someone help me with homework versus just trying to do something like this one day.” That was my dream,” she said.

Later as a mother herself, Katherine couldn’t make ends meet and didn’t know where to turn since she’d been self-reliant. At her aunt’s suggestion she called the Lawrence, Kan., Corps and got an appointment with a caseworker. Though the office was closing when Katherine arrived late due to excruciating circumstances, caseworker Kate Rylander welcomed her and not only provided assistance but connected her with the Pathway of Hope (POH) initiative.

“I just remember feeling so relieved,” Katherine recalled. “If we hold loosely to our plans and give God room to move, it can change people’s lives like mine.”

With POH’s strengths-based approach, Katherine set goals to get a job that was more fulfilling and would better support her family and secured a new position. It was through volunteering at the corps she discovered what she really loved—helping people. She volunteered at the corps every day before going to work in the evenings.

Initially content to just serve others, she eventually attended worship at the corps and found people were friendly and the sermon spoke to her heart. She became a leader for character-building programs, soldier, corps council member and then an intern in the Ministry Discovery program.

Taking Uber to the Independence, Mo., Corps, for her second internship, she was dropped off at the shelter which seemed familiar, and she talked about this with the first person she saw, Kathy Asher.

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Pray for the new lieutenants as they step into their first appointments as officers and share the message of hope found in God’s grace.

Messengers of Grace

Lt. Shannon Cabrera
Spanish Training Officer
College for Officer Training

Lt. Kaitlin Cheyenne Fulp
Kroc Center Officer for Mission Integration
South Bend, Ind., Ray and Joan Kroc Corps Community Center

Lt. Donna L. E. Gooden
Assistant Corps Officer
Milwaukee Citadel, Wis.

Lt. Michaela K. Lendt
Corps Officer
Marion, Ind.

Lt. Luke Hursh
Corps Officer
Salina, Kan.

Lt. Breanna L. James
Corps Officer
St. Louis Euclid, Mo.

Lt. Wayne Strayer
Assistant Corps Officer
Springfield Clear Lake, Ill.

Lts. April and Joe Alvarez
Corps Officers
Aberdeen, S.D.

Lts. Jean Rene Nkedia Kiangebeni and Merveille Zola Mabondo
Assistant Corps Officers
Rockford Temple, Ill.

Lt. Breanna L. James
Corps Officer
St. Louis Euclid, Mo.

Lts. Johnny Lee Miller and Marsha M. Williams-Miller
Corps Officers
Omaha North Side, Neb.

Lt. Katherine Elaine Joyce Reid
Assistant Corps Officer
Bloomington, Ill.

Lts. Sarah and Simon Micula
Corps Officers
Kansas City Northland, Mo.

Lts. Johnny Lee Miller and Marsha M. Williams-Miller
Corps Officers
Omaha North Side, Neb.

Lt. Samantha Tamayo
Corps Officer

Lts. Audrey and Shawn Sutter Sr.
Corps Officers
Downriver, Mich.

Lt. Macy Theriot
Corps Officer for Congregational Life
Evanston, Ill.
God’s Grace in my life

Though the 20 lieutenants commissioned this June come from different backgrounds, they are united by God’s transformative grace in their lives and their desire to share this message of hope with others. Get to know this amazing session through a few of their stories.

A persistent calling

by Lt. Jean Rene Nkodia Kiangebeni

In my life, God’s amazing grace has been incredible. I was born in the Democratic Republic of Congo and spent much of my youth with my Salvation Army officer grandparents.

Never in my wildest dreams did I see myself following in their footsteps. Despite faithful involvement in my corps, I never considered becoming an officer. I had other goals, like obtaining a college degree, having a successful career, getting married and building a home. Through God’s grace, I was able to achieve these things.

Amid my accomplishments, God started whispering in my ear about officership. At first, I thought it was just my imagination, but the idea persisted and I began to wonder if I should leave my job to seek officership and live in challenging circumstances as my grandparents did. My wife expressed similar sentiments.

When we were considering this, through God’s grace we received a special visa that permitted us to enter the United States and receive our green cards, allowing us to become citizens. My wife and I were completely open to God’s leading at this stage. We began our journey at the New Rochelle Corps in New York. Facing a variety of obstacles, we questioned our decision, but God’s grace shone bright and our corps officers encouraged us to consider pursuing officership in the Central Territory, where my family was greeted with open arms.

A heart for others

by Lt. Shannon Cabrera

As a bicultural, bilingual woman in this country, sometimes standing my ground and finding my place in any setting can be difficult. When my heart mourns with people who look like me, who sound like me—and even those who don’t—I realize how much God’s grace has allowed me to become who He created me to be. His grace has allowed me to find a passion for serving and advocating for people.

Our session song, “Grace Wins,” by Matthew West, says, “For the lost out on the street, for the worst part of you and me, for the world that is lost, grace wins.” We were all in this place at some point in our lives, and for me, grace did win.

As I transitioned to life as a college student a few years ago, I trusted God could use me, a shy, introverted young woman, to pursue a career in criminal justice. He gave me a heart for His people, so I, too, may show grace and be faithful in serving Him. God has given me countless opportunities to grow, to be challenged and to follow His calling to full time ministry as a Salvation Army officer. His grace and faithfulness are constantly overflowing in my life. How can I not share the overwhelming feeling of God’s grace and love?

“Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need,” (Hebrews 4:16, NIV).

A hope and a future

by Lt. Wayne Strayer

I am not your typical Salvationist. My family did not go to church, and before age 46 I didn’t know what The Salvation Army was or did. I come from a small town in north central Iowa. Life was difficult as a child. I had mental health issues. Not accepted by my peers, I was bullied and had very few friends. Life at home was not much better; I suffered from abuse and a hard and angry father.

Despite that, I thought I knew everything and wanted to prove myself to my family and everyone else. I joined the Navy at 18 and did well until I was introduced to drugs and alcohol. When my addiction exploded, I was forced to leave the military. Addiction ruled my life. I tried to make changes, but nothing could fill the hole inside of me. After two failed marriages and the loss of a great paying career, I was lost and alone. Evicted, I was homeless and without a place to call my own. The Adult Rehabilitation Center (ARC) in Davenport, Iowa, was where my family was greeted with open arms.

When we were considering this, my wife expressed similar sentiments. Facing a variety of obstacles, we questioned our decision, but God’s grace and faithfulness are constantly overflowing in my life. How can I not share the overwhelming feeling of God’s grace and love?

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A waymaker in my life
by Lt. Shawn Sutter, Sr.

Without me even knowing it, God’s grace has been in every aspect of my life.

While living in Cheyenne, Wyo., God’s grace was present when my mother finally built up the courage to leave my siblings’ abusive father after he passed out drunk. She then raised us four kids for eight years by herself. Though my siblings’ father is Hispanic, and our mother is white, we have always treated each other like there is no difference between us. My mom told us about God and made sure we attended the neighborhood Catholic church.

In 1992 she met my stepdad who loved her and us kids as if we were his own. After graduating from high school in Topeka, Kan., I enlisted in the Air Force. While stationed at the base in Minot, N.D., I met my wife, Audrey. By God’s grace, we have been married for more than 23 years and have four children. She introduced me to The Salvation Army, but we did not attend faithfully until I heard Major Dan Burris preach. God used his words, actions and his past to reach me.

I finally truly believed in Christ and wanted to do more for Him. Within the year, I was enrolled as a senior soldier. Increasingly I felt a passion to do more in The Salvation Army and talked with my wife about it. Amazingly, she had felt the call to become an officer as a teenager; now, 20 years later, I had the same calling.

Though the devil tried to derail our path to officership, by God’s grace we were accepted to training and now are becoming officers. I am forever thankful for the people God put in my life to keep me on the right track.

A constant presence
by Lt. Breanna James

When I find myself reflecting on God’s grace, I think about today, right now, here in this moment, and how God continues to show His grace to me.

While preparing my heart to come to training, there were plenty of times I was tempted to turn around and deny what I knew God was calling me to, but I stepped out in faith and followed God’s plan instead. When I thought I was losing my freedom or wondering if I was good enough, I asked myself, ‘Are you sure God is calling you?’

God showed me grace even in my uncertainty, hesitation and concerns. His presence was always with me. I realized later that through His grace, God was providing a once-in-a-lifetime experience to serve Him in the greatest capacity of being a servant. I became overwhelmed with gratitude by the moment-to-moment grace showered upon me through His goodness.

What I have learned in my experiences through God’s grace is that my service to the Lord as an officer does not take away or restrict my freedom, but instead, perfects it. This moment-to-moment grace helps me overcome the restricting power of sin, and I have the privilege to help others see that their real obstacle to freedom is sin. God’s grace is so sufficient that even in my time of despair and worry, He chose me to be a ‘Messenger of Grace’ and showered me with an immeasurable amount of love and assurance that I am His messenger witnessing of His grace!

A beacon in the storm
by Lt. Macy Theriot

God’s grace has been a constant in my life before and after becoming a Christian. His grace extended to me even though I didn’t deserve it and couldn’t do anything to earn it. There have been many times in my life when I can pinpoint receiving God’s grace, but a monumental one was when my family went through Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

Looking back at God’s goodness during this time always brings me to my knees. By God’s grace our lives were preserved. Surrounded by havoc and destruction with water everywhere that wouldn’t stop coming, I felt hopeless. But in that moment God offered hope to me—a young girl who didn’t know Him but who He loved anyway. God knew my name, He knew me. He knew the path He had planned for my life, and it was far greater than anything I ever could have imagined. After the storm came the calm and peace that passed all understanding despite the confusion and fear all around us.

Though we lost everything we owned, everything we knew, and became homeless, we were thankful to be alive. We stayed in a shelter for months and eventually relocated to Minnesota where I met The Salvation Army when my family walked through its warehouse to receive clothes, including much-needed coats. That day I met a soldier who eventually became my prayer partner. I also met officers who often called our home to invite us to corps activities. Again, God’s incredible grace reached out to me, connecting me with The Salvation Army and changing my life.
Hodders inspire scholarship winners

National leaders Commissioners Kenneth G. and Jolene K. Hodder congratulated the 14 scholarship winners at the 23rd annual D.J.’s Hero Awards Luncheon this summer in Omaha, Neb. The Hodders visited with the award winners—each of whom received a $10,000 scholarship—and celebrated their youth’s achievements before attending the main event.

“When we look at you, we have reason to hope,” said National Commander Commissioner G. Kenneth Hodder.

The luncheon was held outdoors at the TD Ameritrade Park, a baseball stadium and home of the NCAA College World Series, as a pandemic safety precaution, with guests enjoying traditional ballpark fare and speakers addressing the crowd from a stage at home plate. The event raised nearly $530,000 to support The Salvation Army’s youth programs and services.

Among this year’s scholarship winners were Hamnoom Darweesh, who arrived in Nebraska from Iraq in 2016 as a Yazidi refugee and a survivor of genocide at the hands of ISIS, and Andrea Williams, who maintained stellar grades and excelled as a cellist and a leader on his high school robotics team while living in a homeless shelter for more than a year.

Speaker Byron Pitts, co-anchor of ABC News’ “Nightline,” shared insights from his own story of perseverance and gave a call to action to the event’s attendees.

“Indifference can be a deadly weapon,” said Pitts. “Right now—no matter your age, no matter where you are in life—don’t be indifferent to your opportunity to change the world.”

The D.J.’s Hero Awards were established in 1999 in honor of D.J. Sokol, who died at 18 after a battle with cancer. The scholarships are underwritten by David and Peggy Sokol, in partnership with the Fred Hunezker family and Terri and Jack Diesing. They are awarded to Nebraska high school seniors who exemplify perseverance and selflessness and who are servant-leaders in their communities.

Pivoting through adversity

by Jason Pearson

Pivoting through adversity, The Salvation Army of Kent County, Mich., used these words that perhaps have developed a clichéd reputation due to the pandemic to bring the community inspiration and hope. “Pivoting through Adversity” was the theme of Kent County’s seventh annual Red Shield Event, which was held virtually for the first time this year. During this check-full celebration that spanned nearly an hour, attendees were treated to learning more about how The Salvation Army has adapted and continued to serve the Greater Grand Rapids area under challenging circumstances, and hearing testimonials from a lifetime board member, a thankful client and a longtime volunteer.

Western Michigan/Northern Indiana Divisional Commander Major Glen Caddy and local television personality Michele DeSelm provided a relatable message for what so many people currently face.

Keynote speaker John O’Leary delivered plenty of takeaways throughout the evening. A St. Louis native, O’Leary was initially brought to Kent County’s attention following the suggestion of a local advisory board member, who heard a reverberating message from John several years ago. As a child, O’Leary was given a less than one percent chance to live after suffering horrific injuries during a housefire. Now a bestselling author, podcast host and acclaimed speaker, O’Leary provided a relatable message for what so many people currently face.

His passionate storytelling, unexpected humor, authenticity and Christian background enthralled his talk. While numerous moments proved quotable as O’Leary integrated elements of his own struggles with the strains we encounter today, two of his more salient points included finding someone or something you are grateful for, and asking yourself the simple but powerful motivating question of “What more can I do to make tomorrow better than today?”

The Red Shield Event is Kent County’s second largest annual fundraiser. Proceeds support year-round programs and services, including those that provide emergency food assistance, housing resources and energy bill assistance, aid individuals struggling with substance use disorder through Turning Point Programs and the Adult Rehabilitation Center, provide programs that impact people of all ages at the Ray and Joan Kroc Corps Community Center and Fulton Heights Corps, and support disaster relief.

National leaders Commissioners Kenneth G. and Jolene K. Hodder, 2021 event chairs, Dr. Ken and Annie Bird, scholarship founders and underwriters David and Peggy Sokol, and Western Divisional leaders Majors Greg and Lee Ann Thompson with 12 of the 14 scholarship recipients.

An unexpected honor

Bill Blakemore has served on the advisory board in Jackson, Mich., for more than 12 years. In that time, he has been instrumental in revitalizing the board, improving The Salvation Army’s visibility in the community and spearheading efforts to engage board members in projects and fundraisers to further the mission.

In 2020, Bill, who currently serves as the advisory board chair, was the recipient of the National Advisory Organizations Conference (NAOOC) in Phoenix, Ariz., and came back with a whole new perspective.

“A shift happened for me at NAOOC,” Bill said. “I came back really on fire for building our board and changing the culture of our board.”

With encouragement and support from the corps officers and development director, Bill researched Salvation Army advisory boards and manuals, created a board manual tailored for local needs and implemented a board development program. Before long the board was filled with local business owners and community members invested in supporting The Salvation Army’s programs and services.

Over the past several years, ambitious fundraising goals have been set and surpassed time and again under Bill’s leadership, enabling corps programs and services to thrive with adequate financial support.

“The things are moving, and we’re excited about it,” Bill said.

Bill has proven to be dedicated to The Salvation Army’s goals of service, said Major Jose Tamayo, Jackson corps officer. “He brings outstanding service not only to The Salvation Army, but to the entire community of Jackson through the donation of his time, expertise and energy.”

Bill’s first encounter with The Salvation Army was in 2006 when he participated in a small golf outing fundraiser with friends. Afterwards, he began to explore the Army’s purpose and place in the community.

“The more I learned about The Salvation Army, the children’s programs, the food pantry and all the other services, I wanted to be involved,” he said.

Although he didn’t have much time to devote to it while running his Christian bookstore and a small chocolate factory, Bill joined the advisory board when he retired. A few years later, in 2016, he attended the National Advisory Organizations Conference (NAOOC) in Phoenix, Ariz., and came back with a whole new perspective.

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Centralites appointed overseas

Two Central Territory officer couples have recently been appointed to serve overseas, effective July 1, 2021.

Captains Rona Mutcha and Matthew Beatty are taking up appointments in England. Captain Matthew will serve at International Headquarters as International Emergency Services Program Officer for Strategy, Security, and Project Support. Captain Rona will serve as the Chaplain at the No. 10 Drop-In Center with St. Anne’s and as Associate Officer at the Regent Hall Corps in London, England, in the United Kingdom Territory with the Republic of Ireland.

Majors William and Cassandra Defjesis are taking up appointments in the Argentina Division in the South America East Territory, where they will serve as Divisional Mission Secretaries and Corps Officers of the Bahia Blanca Central Corps.

Majors Bob and Audrey McClintock receive their retirement certificates from Lt. Colonels Paul and Renea Smith.

Majors Bob and Audrey McClintock trusted God for their future when they answered His call to become Salvation Army officers in 1988. Two years later they were commissioned with the “Witnesses for Jesus” session, a name that aptly captured their life’s mission.

Thirty-one years later, they testified this spring at their retirement service to God’s incredible faithfulness as they served in six appointments. Surrounded by family, friends and colleagues they celebrated with tributes from friends near and far (via video messages) of lives that have been changed by their ministry.

“I can’t think of a better place to serve the Lord than The Salvation Army,” Major Bob said. “The opportunities are so varied, the people so diverse and the donors so generous. In TSA we are so blessed to see both the generosity of those who give and the gratitude of those who receive.”

The McClintocks served as corps officers at the Omaha North, Neb., Corps and Aberdeen, S.D., Corps before being appointed to Northern Divisional Headquarters as divisional youth/candidates’ secretary and assistant divisional youth secretary, sunbeam and girl guard director and corps cadet counselor. Subsequently they took on the responsibilities of Black Hills Area coordinator and special services coordinator and Rapid City, S.D., corps officers. They led the Rockford, Ill., Adult Rehabilitation Center before being appointed to Territorial Headquarters as correctional services director/men’s fellowship secretary and silver star secretary.

“All of our appointments were rewarding,” concluded Major Bob. “Some were more challenging than others, but every appointment was fulfilling. We especially enjoyed working with young people as divisional youth secretaries and the life-or-death ministry of the ARC.”

The McClintocks and their daughter, Stacy, now reside in Loves Park, Ill.
Amics have walked the good path

by Major Cherri Hobkins

“This is what the LORD says: ‘Stand at the crossroads and look; ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls’” (Jeremiah 6:16, NIV).

As Lt. Colonels Richard and Vicki Amick reflected over their 43 years of officership, there were many crossroads, occasions for a choice of direction. Some are common to officers like accepting Christ as Savior, responding to a call to officership, marriage and family. Others, not of our choosing, include times of disappointment, sickness and loss. However, we are given the opportunity to choose how we respond, allowing experiences to cause either a bitter spirit or a deeper reliance and trust in the Lord.

Time and again, the Amics have chosen the path of closely following the Lord. The Amicks’ life’s challenges have been shaped by daily meditation on the Bible and prayer. As a result, God has worked through them to accomplish His purposes and plans for their lives. They have discovered where the “good way” lies and have faithfully walked that path.

Their retirement service was full of stories and experiences that brought joy and laughter. The fun-loving ways in which the Amicks have approached corps and headquartes appointments have brought a pleasant atmosphere. Their care and concern for others, as evidenced by “Friday walk-ins” and an open office door, have brought a spirit of comfort and solace. Both are known for praying with others in times of joy and sorrow.

Lt. Colonel Dick has used his gift of administration of finances for the majority of his officership. The Central Territory has been strengthened because of his diligence in handling the financial assets given by others for the glory of God and the benefit of those in need. He is a good financial steward!

Lt. Colonel Vicki has used her effervescent personality to uplift others. Her infectious laughter has filled the halls and rooms of her appointments. In recent years, the territory’s retired officers have found in her a trusted friend. She’s been a faithful and diligent prayer warrior.

At the conclusion of their retirement service, the Amicks shared a vocal duet, “As for Me” (Maranatha! Singers), that summed up the secret to their ministry. Based on Psalm 17:15, the catchy tune underscores the good paths of those who seek the Lord: “As for me I will behold Thy face in righteousness I will be satisfied When I awake with Thy likeness I want to be just like You Lord So as for me I will behold Thy face.”

But Christians never have a right to love to boast!

I’m so grateful the love of God is deeper, stronger and more unrelenting than our misguided viciousness. God’s justice moves from His mercy; I’ve experienced the avenged conviction of His just eye upon my vindictive ways, but I’ve also experienced the cleansing, washing, tendering of my spirit by His undeserved mercy. If you’ve discovered yourself to be a disgrace to those who need hope and not self-righteous rage, cry out to Jesus and receive His cleansing mercy.

The healing of being reborn is beyond description. It is true rest for the soul. That’s what holiness is. The Bible continually reveals that our pure, good speech will be the primary evidence that the Holy One is present and in charge of our lives. Jesus longs to pour His love into our lives for the sake of His world. As Amy Carmichael, an Irish missionary to India, once prayed: “Love through me, Love of God. There is no love in me; O Fire of love, light Thou the love, That burns perpetually... Love through me, even me.”

May our hearts also echo this prayer from China: “Help each one of us, gracious Father, to live in such magnanimity and restraint that the Head of the Church may never have cause to say to any one of us, ‘This is my body, broken by you’.”

(Prayers for Springtime compiled by Phyllis Tickle)

Love through Me, Love of God

O God, it is You who know my folly, and my wrongs are not hidden from You. May those who wait for You not be ashamed through me, O Lord God of hosts; May those who seek You not be dishonored through me, O God of Israel. (Psalm 65:4-5, NASB—1995)

by Diane Ury

What heartbreaking times we live in. The news is baffling. What people write on social media is sometimes crushing. Than once I’ve been unable to sleep because I’ve realized, based upon their posts, people who I thought were my friends have malign me by labeling me or blankly grouping me with others. It’s shocking behavior. Such hateful divisiveness is not pleasing, it’s evil.

What are young people thinking about that? What is anyone else who might be seeking God thinking of His followers, and therefore of God? Himself, as a result?

We can be skilled at denying our sin with excuses, blaming some other ideological group for our own foul thoughts and words.

But Christians never have a right to love to boast!

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Rising Stars a big success

by Elizabeth Malovance

Last year saw the start of a new online music and creative arts festival called Rising Stars which turned out to be perfect timing. In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic and limitations on programs, Rising Stars served as a great opportunity for the territory since it allows participants to record entries wherever they are and submit them online. Digital accommodations are available for free to all who do not have access to a live accompanist as well.

With an increase of more than four times the involvement, this year’s Rising Stars was a huge success! Participants of all ages submitted virtual performances in brass, drama, piano and voice. To expand opportunities for development, new composition categories were added encompassing submissions in brass, choral and songwriting. One of the benefits of the festival’s format is that it allows participants to submit performances in more than one category. Many chose to do this which maximized their growth across multiple disciplines.

All Rising Stars participants receive comments from three adjudicators, an overall rating and a certificate of participation. The adjudicators are made up of highly qualified individuals from across the globe and provide a great opportunity for our Rising Stars to learn invaluable personalized insights on their craft.

“Rising Stars has given a wonderful opportunity for Heartland Regional Music Schools and Heartland Online Music Education students to enhance and improve not only their music and creative arts skills but to use and share their talents to glorify God at their local corps,” said Peter Hoffman, pastor of the Heartland divisional music and creative arts director.

Each year more solo selections and categories are available. Be sure to mark your calendars to participate in Rising Stars 2023 next spring.

For more information, visit samusiscentral.org/YouTube channel.
An Army raised up

Continued from page 1

quint prayer by Sharlene Olivera; a beautiful guitar medley by Carlos Navarro, Jr.; testimonies by four soldiers from the Indianapolis, Ind., Fountain Square Corps who spoke of finding peace in Christ and purpose in the Army; and a mesmerizing sacred dance by Paola Giraldo.

An undoubted high point was the live Q & A with The General and Commissioner Peddle moderated by soldier Angela Weckley, whose casual manner belied the challenging inquiries about complex subjects she pitched to the international leaders, who hit each one out of the park. With answers unequivocally grounded in God’s Word, they responded articulately and compassionately to questions about racism and social justice, LGBTQ+ and so on. They encouraged Salvationists to be engaged positively in the conversation about important issues and to be a people of reconciliation.

“It was a privilege to listen to The General and Commissioner Rosalie,” said Alfredo Martinez, Aurora, Ill., soldier. “I particularly enjoyed the questions and answers segment with them. It gave me great hope as a Hispanic soldier that The Salvation Army is interested in me, and that I can feel welcome as a member of this wonderful church.”

The morning meeting culminated with a powerful message from the General, who identified himself first as a soldier, then spoke about God’s role for the Army and its continuing mission. “I remain confident that this raised up Army, with its unique DNA within the body of Christ, can survive a nonbelieving culture, and in fact, as people shift their values and nations abandon belief, pushing faith to the margins, our presence, our story, our presence will continue to shine a light.”

The Territorial Visual Communications team, which made the virtual Congress possible,

The Territorial Visual Communications team which made the virtual Congress possible.

The Chicago Staff Band “Hemispheres – Music from Around the World” Saturday concert

Point people to the Savior,” he said. The territorial commander then led a time of response, reminding delegates that in any circumstance, whether everyday struggles or life-changing events, strength and resilience are found in Christ.

Delegates could access a virtual prayer room, manned by 30 officer and soldier counselors, at the end of each meeting. “Our passion for supporting seekers doesn’t take a back seat to technology,” said Major Rachel Stoudner who with Mark Rendon organized this ministry in English and Spanish. Of course, many delegates could pray in person with their corps officers in watch gatherings throughout the territory.

In Burlington, Iowa, corps officer Captain Dennis Jolly said what resonated most were the messages by the General and Commissioner Peddle. He surmised, “I believe it gave my corps members the excitement to start doing more.”

Zoom workshops focused on the soldier’s role in the holistic mission. The most popular workshop was presented by international Ambassadors for Holiness Dr. Bill and Diane Ury, who drilled down on this foundational Army doctrine. Another popular session on evangelism was given by well-known pastor, speaker and author Steve Carter.

“For me, the Congress brought life to the mission,” said Neisha McNee, Norridge Citadel, Ill., soldier and Adult Rehabilitation Centers Command employee. “As a new soldier, I sought a deeper investment into The Salvation Army. Each segment, breakout session and prayer meeting allowed me to feel a great pride in the corps and workplace that I choose each day to be a part of.”

The Chicago Staff Band, led by Bandmaster Dr. Harold Burgmayer, gave a short dynamic concert, “Hemispheres—Music from Around the World” which ushered in an evening meeting that shared uplifting stories of God’s work around the globe and revealed a World Services/Self-De nial Ingathering total of more than $10 million! Alongside ongoing programs from the Congo to India were highlighted snapshots of sacrificial service by Salvationists during the pandemic from Spain to Thailand.

Speaking frankly about the hardships and loss in the last year, the General testified to God’s faithfulness, saying the Almighty had prepared the Army for such a time as this, and gave incredible examples of God’s grace and goodness. He thanked the Central Territory for its generosity and commended its corps for their creativity in pivoting to meet the needs of their communities.

Among the meeting’s enriching music was “Floodgates” performed by the Central Territorial Staff Songsters and “Sigues Siguiendo Dias” (You are God) written for the Congress by Jose Sanchez and performed by the Mokan Spanish Singers. Commissioner Rosalie made an impassioned case for increasing our faith in God whose love is everlasting and who is still at work in the world even when we can’t see it, when loss is overwhelming and lives are changed. She cautioned Salvationists to be aware of three common perspectives [disobedience, forgetfulness and lack, or expectation] that limit God and urged them instead, “Don’t put limits on God, and don’t let the world put limits on you...Join me in the fight for the Kingdom of God!”
Promoted to Glory

Major Alice Scott

Major Alice Marie Scott was promoted to Glory on April 5, 2021. Capable, compassionate and caring, Alice was a joy and light in the lives of many. Her Bible study, engaging in community ministries, and singing with her husband, Jason and Amanda; sisters, Debi Roudabush and Darla Mantle, and brother, Robert (Cheryl) Mantle.

Major Brian Merrill

Major Brian Stuart Merrill was promoted to Glory on April 8, 2021. As a committed student of God's Word, he was known for his integrity and sound and godly wisdom on which he built his lifetime of faith.

Alice was married to Richard and Mary Mantle in 1944 as a teenager, she started attending the West Loop Corps as a child. She accepted Christ as her Savior at age 16. After graduating from high school, Alice joined the US Army. After being a teacher before entering officer training in 1965. She was commissioned in 1967 with the "Witnesses to the Faith" designation.

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