



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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Seeing what God can do

In a central plaza in Charata, Argentina, community members mill about a sunny marketplace, visiting with neighbors and eating fresh sandwiches and empanadas. A street singer strums his guitar nearby. People dance in the heat of the day.

And Senaa Debela was in the middle of it all.

As an 18-year-old soldier of the Decatur, Ill., Corps, Senaa spent six weeks in Argentina as part of the Central Summer Mission Team, partnering in ministry with Salvationists in the South America East Territory.



Translator Zoe Araya with Summer Member Team members Elizabeth McCormick, Senaa Debela and Levi Mowers.



Levi and Senaa share some sweet treats.



Elizabeth, preparing for a painting project

"I loved it," Senaa said. "Once in their life, everyone should travel to a different country."

The team served not only in Charata but in Posadas and Buenos Aires. Along with Senaa, 21-year-old Elizabeth McCormick of the Mason City, Iowa, Corps, and 19-year-old Levi Mowers of the Royal Oak, Mich., Corps, made up the team. They were assisted by translator Zoe Araya of Patricios Corps.

"We were pretty much always together, living together and working together," Elizabeth, the team's leader, recalled.

The group worked its ministry in a range of activities like planning events for youth night at a corps; painting student residences; discussing faith at a camp; and helping repair/paint a health clinic and chapel.

Painting the clinic, both inside and outside, was especially memorable for Elizabeth.

"I was painting in the pediatric room there—and I decided to paint flowers in the room, to make it more personal," she recalled fondly.

"We were painting together all day out in the heat," Senaa remembered. "It was hard work of course. Our bodies were tired. But it was all worth it."

Levi learned about his late grandparents' ministry while visiting the

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Down for the Challenge dazzles in its third year

by Craig Dirkes

The Salvation Army's third annual Down for the Challenge urban rappelling event with the Minnesota Vikings took place this summer at the Omni Viking Lakes Hotel in Eagan, Minn., where nearly 200 people descended the 14-story building to fight homelessness.

Legendary Minnesota Vikings wide receiver Cris Carter helped kick off the event at a VIP party hosted by the hotel. His electrifying keynote address was followed by a Q&A with nine Vikings legends (Brian Robison, Carl Eller, Paul Krause, Chuck Foreman, Scott Studwell, Tommy Kramer, Leo Lewis, Randall McDaniel, and Patt Williams) which was moderated by WCCO-TV sports director Mike Max.

The following day, hundreds of rappellers, volunteers, donors and partners joined together to create a dazzling event that supported the goal of raising \$600,000 for The Salvation Army's local housing and homelessness-prevention programs.



Nearly 200 people descended the 14-story Omni Lakes Hotel to raise funds to fight homelessness in Minnesota.

ness-prevention programs.

Among the rappellers was Staci from the "Staci and Hutch Show" on KS95.

"This is probably the most fun way to raise money I can think of," she said. "Anything I can do to help The Salvation Army, I'm happy to do it."

Retired Minnesota Vikings defensive end Brian Robison also rappelled.

"We want to be a part of the community, and we want to give back to the community, and this is our

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Legendary Minnesota Vikings guard and Hall of Famer Randall McDaniel signs an autograph for a fan.

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Home is where the heart is

by Colonel Steven Howard
Chief Secretary

"There's no place like home," said Dorothy in "The Wizard of Oz." The concept of home encapsulates a safe place we are familiar with and where we are loved. My wife, Janice, and I have just passed the six-year mark in our appointments in the Central Territory. We feel at home.

This summer we were able to visit the only place where we lived for a longer time as officers. We spent seven years in Maine which has the slogan "Maine, the way life should be." We were there for our 40th session reunion as "Heralds of Hope" and to attend the Old Orchard Beach

camp meetings. It was great to reconnect with friends and colleagues. It was going home. It was a place of love. It was a familiar space. It was the way life should be.

I think some of you had similar experiences this summer as you took part in Central Bible Leadership Institute, Resonate or Central Music Institute at Wonderland Camp. These were times of feeling at home in a safe place and experiencing the love of God. I have every confidence there were many new relationships cemented with others and with the Lord during these weeks. Summer camps still serve as a place where



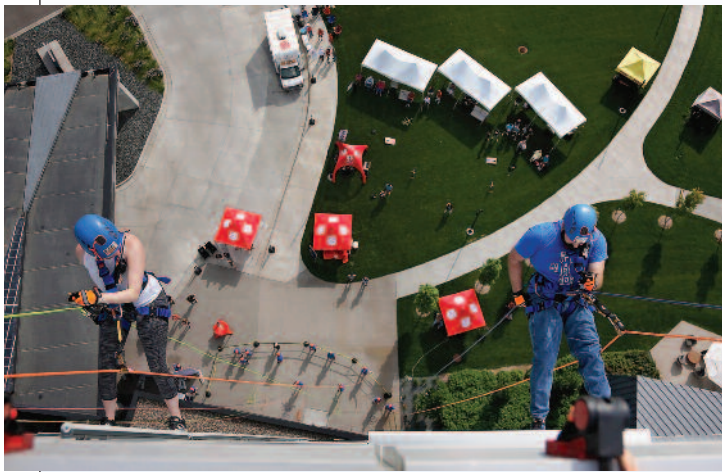
people can come to meet God and to grow in their Christian faith. We are truly blessed by such opportunities.

On the subject of camp, it is noted in this issue that the Great Lakes Division now has a new and beautiful performing arts center at Echo Grove Camp. This is a place made possible by generous Army donors. It is a place where many people were positively impacted this summer and where the name of Jesus was lifted high. That will continue to happen for years to come. It is a

place where our mission to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ and to meet human needs in His name without discrimination is at the forefront. It is a place where girls and boys and women and men made decisions for Christ.

I pray each of you has a place where you feel at home, where you are safe and you are loved. I pray that place is your corps. I pray that there you feel the love of God and cement relationships with other believers. May your corps also be a place where those who don't know Jesus Christ as their Savior can come home to a relationship with God. What is your part in helping to make your corps a home for others?

Down for the Challenge Continued from page 1



way of doing it," he said. "If that means putting myself out on a limb and coming down [14 stories], let's do it."

Cris Carter supported the event because he is passionate about The Salvation Army and the issue of homelessness.

"The numbers are staggering," he said, noting there are about 20,000 homeless Minnesotans on any given

night. "We also have an unusual number of young people who are homeless. What are the chances of those kids reaching their full potential if they don't have a place to call home? That's why I'm *Down for the Challenge*."

The Salvation Army is on the frontlines of the state's homelessness crisis, operating 25 housing facilities that serve thousands of Minnesotans. It also offers financial assistance and case management services that last year helped save about 3,500 households from eviction.

"The Salvation Army is grateful to everyone who contributed to this year's *Down for the Challenge* event," said Lt. Colonel Randall Polsley, Northern divisional commander. "Your help has changed lives in Minnesota."



Lt. Colonel Randall Polsley, Northern divisional commander

Rooted in Kingdom values



by Captain Chrissy Cooper

The summer sun shines, laughter flows and friendships are forged in the warm glow of campfires. Echo Grove Camp is a place where time seems to stand still. Amid the familiar sounds, smells and scenery, a new addition graces the grounds—the Mervin Price Chapel and Performing Arts Center. This sacred sanctuary already holds a special place in the hearts of campers and staff alike.

Inspired by Echo Grove's rich heritage and commitment to nurturing hearts in faith, the vision for the chapel was born from a desire to provide a dedicated space for spiritual growth, worship and reflection. Generous contributions from donors who share the camp's vision for fostering Christian values helped make this dream a reality.

The chapel's architectural design echoes nature's beautiful color and textural contrasts. A cross, visible from the top of the structure, extends down through the chapel entrance symbolizing hope and a beacon of light for those seeking solace and guidance as campers and guests enter at its foot.

Upon entering the chapel, a sense of reverence and tranquility envelops visitors. The chapel's lines approach the platform, inviting campers to take a moment from the day's activities and find respite in prayer or meditation while creating

a sense of expectation for what is to come. The first floor has many functional spaces that provide opportunities for activities. At music camp, five bands and two choirs met in the same building simultaneously.

Throughout the camp season, the chapel becomes a hub of gospel arts, meaningful decision moments and fun experiences. While the facility is mere months old, many tears have already been shed by children and adults, spiritually dedicating the space with heartfelt Holy Spirit-led responses.

"This facility means so much to us already," said Captain Jonathan Cooper, youth and candidates secretary. "Yes, it provides much-needed programming space. It is aesthetically beautiful, but more importantly, it has already been a hub of lives won by the Kingdom. We can't wait to see what the Lord will continue doing in these rooms."

In its short use, more than 1,000 people have heard the gospel from the platform.

The Mervin Price Chapel and Performing Arts Center is a testament to the camp's commitment to fostering faith, fellowship and spiritual growth. Rooted in Kingdom values, this sacred space serves as a guiding light, illuminating the hearts and minds of campers and guests as they embark on a journey of faith amidst the embrace of nature and a nurturing Christian community.



Legendary Minnesota Vikings wide receiver Cris Carter

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CBLI 2023: a living and active faith

by Captain Jen Polanco

Central Bible Leadership Institute (CBLI) 2023 is in the books, but the effects of it will be both long-lasting and life-changing for the 350 delegates who attended. This year's theme, "Faith Works," challenged them to put their faith into action in practical and powerful ways.



Throughout the week, each track focused on studying that theme, whether through inductive Bible study, small groups, STEM (science, technology, engineering, math) activities, crafts, The Salvation Army Outdoors (TSAO) activities, extended prayer times or games.

Motivational speaker, pastor and author Steve Carter walked the adult track through the book of James and intersected the text with life, our history and our emotions.



William Shiels award young adult track recipients Ezekiel Chojnacki and Lydia Welch (both center front) with Lt. Colonels Collette and Robert Webster, Major Shiels' daughter Major Catherine Mount (top right) and some of his grandchildren.

He challenged listeners that when we are squeezed by pain, we can stand on the promises of God, prayer and praise and then be able to persevere and truly live out our faith.

"When perseverance in a trial is at play, your faith will work," he said.

The highlighted scripture for the week was James 2:18 which says, "But some will say, 'You have faith; I have works.' Show me your faith without works, and I will show you my faith by my works." Several works proved the theme was being lived out during the encampment.

Delegates were extremely open and responsive to the theme because the effects of the scripture and the challenges received during the tracks were on display in several significant times during the week. One of those times was during the Tuesday evening United



Guest Steve Carter

Meeting Worship Circle led by the musical group "Of Dust." During that service, the Holy Spirit filled the room as people shared powerful testimonies and got on their knees in repentance and praise.

"There was a sweet Spirit of true worship during the Worship Circle, and God revealed Himself in beautiful ways," said Amanda Keene, young adult track leader. "Lives were transformed, reconciliation was experienced, and our Father was worshipped through song and surrendered lives."

Faith and works also came alive during the TSAO events as staff helped campers discover God through his creation.

Major AmyJo Ferguson said, "TSAO often ended the night with a campfire, where delegates were able to look

up at the stars, listen to the bats and enjoy a treat over the fire. During these moments, many were able to reflect again on just how awesome God's mighty creation is. We



Powerful praise, including a Worship Circle experience (pictured), permeated CBLI.



Lt. Colonel Robert Webster congratulates Paige Waldron on receiving the Sharon Green Winning Woman award.

can affirm with the old hymn writer, 'I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder, their power throughout the universe displayed. Then sings my soul, my Savior God to thee, How great thou art!'

Another time the camp experienced faith working was the Awards Night program during worship. The Jr. CBLI track sang louder than the rest of the campers in the chapel, believing with all their hearts the words of "Way-maker." It was a moving moment of true worship, of seeing the faith of young children in action—being an example to the teens and adults in the chapel.

For first-time attendee Rachel Roman of the Traverse City, Mich., Corps, the theme of CBLI came alive in a personal way.

"This week I really learned how faith and work come together and how my emotions and my past hurts play out in my life and affect my faith," she said. "By coming here as a family, we are learning how to live out our faith together in a healthy way and are being challenged to figure out how to keep doing it at home. This has been a safe place to share and to see how our faith can come to life."

Faith also worked in a practical way this week as campers from all tracks worked to raise a little more than \$11,000 (including a match from THQ) to send much-needed laptops and IT equipment bundles to the India National Headquar-

ters to build and strengthen their educational resources in Salvation Army schools. It was encouraging to see people in the Central Territory passionately giving to make a difference in the lives of children and youth across the globe. That was faith working.

Faith continued working in action even more when the World Missions Department presented the locations for next year's Summer Missions Teams to Italy, Greece, Malaysia and Singapore. Several young adults expressed interest in participating.

Throughout the week delegates also expressed interest in attending the territory's 730 Week-end in September, which explores calling into full-time ministry through officership and service in The Salvation Army.



God is clearly moving in the hearts of Salvationists in this territory for greater faith and works for His Kingdom. The fruit of CBLI 2023 will continue to produce a rich harvest of faith in action that will impact marriages, families, corps, communities and the world for years to come.

Full list of award winners online



Ed and Barb Higgins, and CBLI audience, are astounded by guest illusionist John Michael Hinton.

And justice for all

Berit Lolo (who prefers to be called simply Lolo—"It's easy to remember," she said) is a 25-year-old student from the East Kenya Territory who worked this summer as the first intern for the Central Territory's Social Justice and City Mission Center (SJCM), which has found a new home at the Chicago Midwest, Ill., Corps.

A lifelong Salvationist, Lolo is one of four children born to officer parents, Majors Julius Omukonyi Lolo and Gaudencia Atieno Lolo, who serve in the Kenya West Territory.

She first arrived in the United States in March as a member of the Salvation Army's International Social Justice Girls who took part in the 67th session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women.

"I was privileged to be part of a roundtable discussion there," Lolo recalled. "We were talking about the importance of girls' education—including girls with disabilities."

Lolo's passion is helping children who have disabilities. She is currently working on her master's thesis at Daystar University in Nairobi, focusing on school preparedness and integrating students with disabilities into all schools. She hopes to complete her degree by the end of this year.

"My biggest wish is that all students with special needs can attend a regular school, if they choose to—and they won't have any challenges. The building will be accessible. All resources [like books] will be accessible," Lolo said.

Lolo's first assignment at the SJCM was to create a pilot of a community assessment tool which is being used by the Midwest Corps, looking at the strengths of the community, programs the corps offers to residents and The Salvation Army's impact.

"I have managed to create some of the tools, like a questionnaire, that are helping me to get a general view," she said. "I think we are going to do community mapping, understanding some of the assets in the community that can be beneficial. Schools, resource centers and parks are assets that the department could have a partnership with someday."

Lolo also traveled a bit, visiting different corps, sharing her testimony about being a champion for justice. She also spoke of Kenya East and its provisions for quality education.

Lolo's skills and background have been a great match for the internship's duties, said Major Katherine Clausell, territorial social justice and city mission secretary.



Major Katherine Clausell and Lolo supporting World Services / Self-Denial

Internships available

Ignite your passion, build your capacity, make a difference!

The Social Justice and City Mission Center (SJCM) invites Salvationists, ages 18-29, to participate in an internship that is designed to ignite your passion for justice, build your capacity in advocacy, and serve as a strategic mission partner of the Central Territory.

The SJCM Internship is a part-time position (up to 10 hours a week) and can be performed remotely or in-person if you live in the Chicago area. Interns will be compensated at \$15/hour.

Interns will:

- Increase their knowledge of the biblical principles that underpin The Salvation Army's commitment to justice
- Support the work of the SJCM as it seeks to make a deeper and more sustainable impact on the lives of struggling individuals and communities across the territory
- Learn what it means to lead from a justice-informed lens
- Engage with community residents, local and state governments, local businesses and churches, and other stakeholders who share our call to look out for the interests of others (Phil. 2:4).

For more information about this internship program and requirements, please email usc.thq.socialjusticecitymission@usc.salvationarmy.org

"Lolo has been of immense help as our first intern," said Major Katherine. "Not only does she feel keenly God's summons to make the world right, she's doing the work of educating her mind and heart to ensure that her contributions to the varied ministry of The Salvation Army are of value."

Lolo has seen firsthand how The Salvation Army is held in high regard by many people.

"At lunchtime, Major Clausell and I walk around the community to see what life is like there in the city. People wave at us. People greet us," she said. "The Salvation Army has given many people hope."

One of the missions of the SJCM is to encourage residents of cities to

live and work together in harmony. This mindset has made an impression on Lolo.

"You have conversations with people who live in a city. It means a lot to them. You see it's home to them. On Sundays, Major always preaches about staying in the city and about people being a champion of growth. She says, 'Stay in the city and work together and see it blossom.'"



Big impact on Little Village

More than 300 residents of Chicago's Little Village neighborhood visited the La Villita Corps this summer for a bilingual back-to-school health and resource fair. In only its second year, the event was started by The Salvation Army and Aetna Better Health® of Illinois to help students and their families prepare for the start of the school year.

The free community event featured 25 partner agencies and vendors offering presentations and resources, including blood pressure and cardiovascular health checks, to help members of the community get on track to being healthier. The three-hour event also featured giveaways, prizes and food trucks.

"We provide new clothing for kids,

shoes, food, and health screenings," said Major Nivia Paredes, La Villita corps officer, with her husband Major Daniel Paredes. "It's very good for the whole family."

Akeya Harper, director of emergency assistance/case management, and Tameka Patterson, city missions regional social work manager, from the North & Central Illinois Divisional Headquarters provided references for further resources.

Soldiers of the La Villita Corps volunteered at the event, including manning a booth to provide information about corps programs and activities. They also prayed with anyone who was interested. According to Major Daniel, following the fair three families began regularly coming to the corps for Sunday worship.



North & Central Illinois divisional social services personnel Akeya Harper and Tameka Patterson happily greet and help community members at the fair.



Commissioners Barry and Sue Swanson with Major Nivia Paredes

Living joyfully in all circumstances

Davissons find adapting and adjusting is key

Every new appointment comes with the need for adapting and adjusting, learning about a new community, context and circumstances. For some, this transition involves the same type of work in a new environment. For others, it is transitioning to a new type of work. For yet others, it also involves learning a new language and everything else related to international service.

Colonels Phil and Sheila Davisson have experienced each of these over the course of more than 29 years of being officers. With service in three corps appointments, three different training colleges, plus a Salvation Army university, and now two territorial leadership positions, they have served in five territories with almost half of their officership outside the Central Territory. According to the Davissons, the first year or so often feels full of new experiences and learning.

"We've been here over a year-and-a-half, and it feels like 'our' territory now," said Colonel Phil. "There is so much more to understand, of course, but we are very comfortable operating in these roles."

The Davissons took up roles as the



Colonel Phil meets with the Central SMT.

territorial leaders in the South America East Territory, consisting of Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay, in February 2022 after four years in Spain and Portugal.

"The language is always going to be a challenge," Colonel Sheila said, "although it is easier for me to concentrate on just Spanish and not both Spanish and Portuguese."

But then there is the factor of different accents and regional expressions. The language differences between Spain and Argentina, for example, bring their own adjustments.

Beyond those elements, there is the continual need to think about residency requirements, establishing healthcare contacts, learning to navigate the transportation systems, and to discover how to adapt their cooking to what is available locally.

"Being a grandparent so far away is one of the costs," said Colonel Phil. All five of the Davissons' grandchildren were born since they left Canada for Europe over five years ago.

"The technology is great and very helpful for staying in touch, but with younger grandchildren there is nothing

that can replace being there in person," he said.

The Davissons have been able to return to the U.S. on average once a year during the past 12 years. Nine or 10 hours on a plane and time zone differences also force adaptations in routine family connections.

"We are so very grateful for the support of our home territory," said Colonel Sheila. "You'll never know how much it means to be able to count on folks back home."

Both Colonels Phil and Sheila experienced the death of a parent while away on international service.

Aging parents and growing grandchildren aside, they say there are the daily adjustments to leadership roles in another language and culture that fill their time.

Over these past months they have overseen a territorial review, a congress with the General, visits to over 90 percent of the appointments in the territory, the reinauguration of a territorial music institute, visits from youth mission teams from two territories, plans for a visit by the Canadian Staff Band, the further restructuring of the Argentina Division after consolidation, the development of the new governance model and the transition to the IFAS standards and implementation of the NetSuite software being promoted internationally.

The colonels were also members of the High Council in May which elected General Lyndon Buckingham. A significant challenge in Argentina is how to administer all the programs and support personnel with an



Lt. Yaqueline Felix Galindos, corps officer in Córdoba, Argentina, with the Davissons

annual inflation rate approaching 125 percent this year.

Through it all, the Davissons' focus remains on the great possibilities at hand coming out of the long period of the pandemic and closures it entailed, finding blessings in regeneration of mission priorities and in-person contact across the territory, even as they build on the successes of videoconferencing to integrate officers and soldiers across the territory in the various boards and committees.

Colonel Sheila concluded, "We are continually learning to adapt and adjust because that is what we now understand God has been calling us to do for many years. We miss our children and our grandchildren immensely, but we find ways to make it work. We, along with our people here, ask for God to give us strength and wisdom and peace to live joyfully in all circumstances."



Colonels Sheila and Phil Davisson at the High Council in May with Commissioner Bronwyn Buckingham and then General-Elect Commissioner Lyndon Buckingham.



At an Officers Councils in the Uruguay Division which is led by Majors Marcelo and Margarita Rosas

Seeing what God can do

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training college in Buenos Aires.

"My grandparents were directors of the school in 2008-2010. I met some of the former cadets, and they told me stories of my grandpa and grandma and about what good teachers they were," he said. "They left a huge impression on this territory for the better."

Team members only knew one another by name when they first met at orientation, but soon became close as they served in Argentina.



Levi and Elizabeth share music ministry.

"I was happy to share my summer with the team," Levi said of Elizabeth and Senaa. "It makes you a little vulnerable to share some hard things together, talking about grief, about God, about struggles. We shared life with each other."

Many of the children in Argentina were inspirational to Senaa.

"God was truly working there," she said. "The kids were not afraid to get out of their chairs and jump and sing. Hearing them give testimonies and not being afraid to speak up about how much God is doing in their lives—we, as a team, got to be a part of that."

There was time for relaxation too. The team met various corps officers through their travels and were also able to sample new foods and do a bit of sightseeing too.

"In Posadas we got to go to the beach with some of the officers' kids," Senaa said. "We played cards, played volleyball and looked at the water."

Elizabeth was particularly touched by a visit to the Iguazu Falls.

"Oh, seeing the waterfalls was of course a super-memorable experience. Seeing something like that, God's creation, drives home how amazing God really is," she said.

Levi remembers an evening at a

camp in Charata with youth from four different corps.

"It was so cool to be able to help with that, sitting and observing how the Lord was working on the youth of that division," Levi said. "The Lord saved kids' lives that night. It was an amazing experience, seeing how He can move and what He can do."

Senaa added, "It really opened my eyes, getting to see people worshipping God in a different place. The people in Argentina were on fire for God."



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Outreach in the plaza



Serving dinner with officers

Dwelling in God's presence

by Joy Caro

From the moment I was greeted to the time I left the scenic grounds of the Glen Eyrie Conference Center in Colorado Springs, Co., I found the National Seminar on Holiness was designed with purpose and provided ample opportunity to reflect on holy living.

On the first night we heard from National Chief Secretary Colonel Ralph Bukiewicz. He didn't ease into the deep challenges but right off challenged us to pray three daring prayers of surrender:

- Lord, help me to see sin as You see it.
- Lord, help me to see others from Your point of view.
- Lord, help me to see how I fit into Your plan of redemption.



Rachel Roman, Rev. Diane Ury and Mary Vollnik

I came without expectations in order to be open to whatever God had for me. My only expectation was that God would have something to say, whether conviction, clarification or confirmation. During this time I found He often convicted my heart, but with that came hope.



Heather Guthrie



Commissioner Jolene Hodder leads delegation in song.

When we genuinely pray this way, we may be surprised by the answers we receive. This call to surrender set the tone for the week.

The schedule included plenty of time for worship, learning, small groups, quiet reflection and prayer, and fellowship. We began each day in our small groups in prayer. This time opened our minds to hear whatever God had to say to us that day. After breakfast we participated in Sealed Orders. These personal devotions were based in Luke 24 where the resurrected Jesus walks along two men on the road to Emmaus.

This time of meditation was one of my favorite parts of the seminar. I would sit by the stream with the mountains in front of me and just read and reflect on God's Word surrounded by His beautiful creation. It is where God talked to me the most, convicting me of things I needed to admit to myself and confess to Him.

After Sealed Orders, we moved into

teaching sessions by National Ambassadors for Holiness Dr. Bill Ury and Rev. Diane Ury. These meetings were deep and thought-provoking. People sought the Lord at the altar



Many delegates enjoyed morning hikes in the Rocky Mountains. Pictured are Caleb Loudon and Charles Morrow.

Faithful and true

Kevin Hodges and Travis Heard keep the faith and represent the Midland Division on the Territorial Soldiers' Forum.

Kevin Hodges

The Salvation Army is a worldwide family, and Kevin Hodges is happy to be part of it.

"The Salvation Army makes this world a bit smaller," Kevin, a second-generation Salvationist and Midland divisional sergeant-major, said. "I have met people from all over who work in variety of ways, but we are all there for the same mission. People from everywhere—it really does feel like a family."

His love of music and involvement in it with the Army over the years also has fostered connections and brought many friendships.

"At Salvation Army camp, we used to have conservatories and spend four or five weeks in the summer learning about music and Jesus Christ at very advanced levels. I was building relationships with other teenaged kids. I still have a lot of friendships that go way back to those music camps," Kevin recalled fondly.

Growing up in the east, he once was part of the National Capital Band. Today, he is part of the Central Territorial Staff Songsters and plays cornet



Kevin Hodges speaks at his corps.

in the Midland Divisional Band.

Kevin, his wife Envoy Rosetta Hodges, and two sons, Caleb, 18, and Keagan, 15, have lived in the St. Louis area for 18 years. They attend the St. Louis Temple, Mo., Corps where Envoy Rosetta is the corps administrator.

"We have a music school where they teach brass instruments, drums



and singing," Kevin said. "There is also the community meal on Wednesdays, the Golden Age Club [for older adults] meets on Tuesdays, and there is the pantry during the week."

Kevin's sons pitch in with corps programs and activities whenever needed.

Kevin, who works as the senior director of finance for the St. Patrick Center in St. Louis, tries to show his faith by treating people in a Christ-like way.

"Showing my faith in how I conduct myself, and how I treat other people is important," he said. "I feel that many times, actions show a lot more than your words."

Envoy Rosetta says her husband is quiet by nature. But he listens well to others. And he is strong when tough times arrive.

"In the face of adversity, he stands in the truth," she said. "And that truth is his faith and trust in Jesus."

Travis Heard

Travis Heard remembers being furious with God after his father died.

"I blamed God for it," Travis recalled. "I was so broken. After the death, God said, 'Let me in and let me help you.' I thought I could do it myself, but I couldn't. Once I let Him into my life, it got a whole lot smoother and easier."

Today, Travis is the assistant divisional sergeant-major for the Midland Division and is a solider at the St. Clair County, Ill., Corps in the greater St. Louis, Mo., area.

He is also the first person in his family to be part of The Salvation Army.

He became a soldier at age 19.

"It was the next step in opening a new positive chapter in my life," Travis said.

At his corps, Travis runs the audio-



Lt. Marsha Williams-Miller, Lt. Shannell Johnson and Penni Johnson

during each session. The Holy Spirit was at work in our hearts.

On Wednesday, Meredith Bauman talked about the importance of simply dwelling in God's presence. That afternoon, instead of meeting in small groups, we each found a quiet place on campus just to be with God. For someone like me who identifies as a "Martha," a person perpetually busy and who prioritizes getting things done, this was hard. It was only about 45 minutes before I was distracted,

but this exercise helped me realize that I need to dwell with Him more.

Throughout the seminar, we were privileged to hear from many speakers. Each of them was passionate about holiness and living holy lives. But more importantly than what we learned, God started to mold us into holy people who are ready to reflect Jesus to the world.



North & Central Illinois Division delegation

visual media for Sunday worship and helps with the basketball program and weekly youth night activities. Once a week he works with music classes at the St. Louis Temple, Mo., Corps.

Travis has been a student in a weekly young men's mentoring class conducted by his corps officer, Captain Ken Jones.

"The captain talks in class about 'teaching you how to become a man.' I am learning, and I hope to teach my own classes someday," Travis said.

Captain Ken and his wife, Captain Samantha Nolan Jones, are helping to guide Travis on his path.

"You know you are never alone. God always sends people to help you on your journey—specific people at certain times to help you through things," Travis said.

"Travis is always willing to help out wherever there is a need," said Captain Ken, who refers to Travis as a servant leader. "He's always asking, 'Is there any way to help?' He loves being around people, loves to bring joy. It's a rare moment if you see him not talking with someone."

Connecting with people is one of the things that makes Travis a good forum representative.

"I am blessed to be part of the



Travis Heard at the National Seminar on Holiness

forum and make sure that everyone has a voice," he said. "A few years ago, I was not ready for this. But I know I can do this now—my faith in God is strong."

Someday, Travis hopes to become an officer.

"I want to show them about opening your heart to God and seeing how life gets so much better," he said.

To learn more about the Territorial Soldiers' Forum or find your forum representative, visit salarmycentral.org.



A column on holiness
by Dr. Bill and
Rev. Diane Ury

Is reading fiction holy?

by Rev. Diane Ury
National Ambassador
for Holiness



It is critical that Christians be readers of books. Theology, history, biographies, relationship resources should all be part of what we regularly feed our minds. Maybe I'm unusual, maybe not. But I believe it's nearly essential also to read fiction as a part of a holy life.

Paul repeatedly refers to the essence of Christianity being a mystery. The depths of the beauty of holiness cannot even begin to be approached without imagination. To behold God, to be beheld by God, is an encounter. In the still quiet of our hearts and minds, this occurs. When it does, we are transformed. Prayer is the making real in our spirits and minds what we "see" in God's heart. Faith is clinging to what is unseen, and yet we know it.

Fiction provides the development of imaginative creativity. Reality is understood through story. God revealed Himself and the nature of everything else, including ourselves, through story. He wants to enter our story.

Fiction provides contexts to learn empathy which does not come naturally but can be developed through story. Entering into another person's life and feeling their experience can cultivate the ability to care about someone besides ourselves.

Fiction can lift us out of difficult context into a new world that inspires courage, sacrifice, heroism, mercy and faithful kindness. Often, we meet characters who are quirky, irksome and difficult. We learn endurance and patience with these folks, perhaps realizing in fact we are not irritated, but irritate-able. The Spirit convicts, then He creates mercy and grace in our attitudes.

To preachers who read fiction, I want to say, "Thank you for the allure, the fragrance, the beauty—for more than mere information."

Different people's responses to what occurred at the Asbury Revival in February 2023 were very telling. Where many

flocked to meet the living God who had come to love and serve and heal those hungry for Him, others stood back with their arms crossed, demanding apologetics be taught at the altar, that people arise from prayer being able to get 100 percent scores on doctrine questions. Like Zechariah in Luke 1, they demanded certainty, where Mary offered herself to be beheld by her God and was filled with His Life.

Perhaps we wouldn't be debating the full beauty of what God can do in our lives when He sanctifies us entirely if we nurtured our imaginations so that His Word could fly on wind, and His Spirit could make our stony hearts tender, causing rivers of living water to flow out of them. His hand can reach into our leprosy and immediately cleanse us completely. Jesus' blood can wash away our defilement. He can bear our sins in His body. He can create the world in a week, and He can bring people from death to life in a moment, filling us with perfect Love.

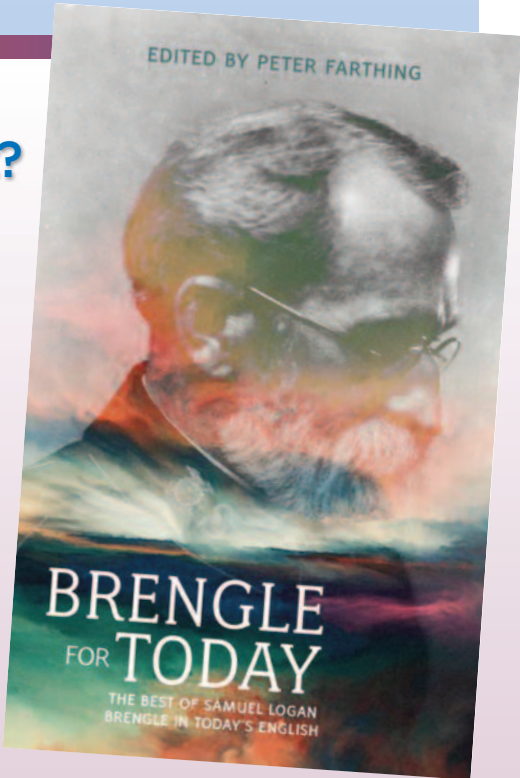
You don't believe that? You haven't experienced that? Curl up on a sofa and read *Middlemarch*, *Jayber Crow*, *The Warden*, *The Chronicles of Narnia*, *The Dean's Watch*, *The Hobbit*, and *The Lord of the Rings*. The Bible is the source of all good story, because it reveals Reality. Every morning immerse yourself within it, the very Real Word of God. Yes, that's what it certainly is. Every single word is True. And yes, you can hear His Voice.

What is holiness? Why is it important?

Nine of Samuel Logan
Brenge's works in
modern language

A clear and concise
explanation of holiness

To order, visit
shop.salvationarmy.org



730... AND BEYOND

4,127 days and counting

by Captain Marissa McCluer

Looking back over the past 11 years as an officer, I never anticipated all the opportunities God has given me to be a blessing and to be blessed. Had I written this article before 2020, it would have held a different sense of optimism and joy for the journey. However, the last few years have been filled with difficulty, uncertainty and what has felt like a cosmic shift in the demands of ministry. I am sure feelings of exhaustion resonate with other officers, soldiers and employees. Yet, I know with certainty I am *called* to this ministry, and God has used my feeble hands to share the love of Jesus.

I've learned joy does not come from a momentary mountaintop experience. It comes from the awareness of the deep abiding presence of God in all circumstances of life and ministry. Finding joy in the journey comes by continuously trusting Jesus to make Himself known despite the circumstances.

We tend to share good things that are happening, but miss how the hard places bring an unshakeable sense of joy gained by running the race with endurance. Just the other day, I reminded a friend that ministry is not a sprint. It is a marathon. We must run at a slow and steady pace.

So where have I found joy in this crazy, busy, beautiful journey?

I am grateful for moments at the altar with children and adults seeking the Lord. I am grateful for quiet moments of prayer in the chapel each Sunday morning, asking the Holy Spirit to make our sanctuary a sacred space for all who enter. I am grateful for the many Pathway of Hope families I've helped find hope, healing, a



new start and a community with the corps' body of believers. I am grateful to walk alongside staff during life's struggles, including the deaths of family members. I am grateful for God's provision when we weren't sure there was enough cash flow to keep the corps' doors open. Reflecting on these moments, I am reminded of how God has shaped and formed me through the years.

Early in my officership I learned, "You cannot lead others where you have not been or are not willing to go yourself." It's grown within me a desire for deep spiritual formation so I can share God's transformative power with others. For me, joy is allowing God to use the hard places to achieve His work in me and leading others to do the same.

My prayer for the next part of my ministry journey is found in Acts 20:24 (NIRV): "But my life means nothing to me. My only goal is to finish the race. I want to complete the work the Lord Jesus has given me. He wants me to tell others about the good news of God's grace."

I pray God will give you eyes to see how He can help you find joy in the hard places, knowing He is with you.

Reimagining ministry, creating community



Five senior soldiers were enrolled at the Grandview Southland Corps earlier this year.

"We're reimagining our ministry and our ministry spaces," said Envoy Brenda McSwine, corps administrator of the Grandview Southland, Mo., Corps. "We want to create a welcoming, family-oriented community."

Connected to the Booth Manor senior residence, the Southland Corps is in a prime location for ministry to the older adults who reside there as well as to their families and visitors. Residents are able to attend services and programs without having to leave the building, making opportunities for ministry and connection easily accessible to them. Community members also are invited through social services outreach.

"We've focused on the people we're closest to in Booth Manor, but our case manager invites anyone who comes through the door to join us on Sundays," said Envoy Brenda. "Everyone is welcome."

One of the ways ministry has been bolstered is through planning and coordination between corps and Booth Manor staff. Monthly calendars, program and activity plans and resources are shared, allowing staff to encourage and support one another and provide the best service to the residents and community.

In the past year, Sunday attendance at the Southland Corps has been growing and now includes a children's church program to accommodate a growing number of youth attending with their families. A focus on cultivating relationships within a Christ-centered community has resulted in significant spiritual growth in corps attendees and members. On Easter Sunday, five senior soldiers and four junior soldiers were enrolled.

Also in the past year, programs which had been on hold due to the pandemic have restarted and are going strong. Women's and men's ministries have gained momentum with rosters including both old and new members, and a Friday morning devotional time over coffee called Coffee Clutch is a popular activity among Booth residents.



Booth Manor resident Mother Darnell Burk with Envoy Brenda McSwine

As another point of connection, a newly reimagined, easily accessible space is housing a daily coffee shop which brings residents and community members together for a relaxed time of fellowship over a good cup of joe. Ambient music accompanies announcements which appear on a large tv inviting people to Sunday worship services and other activities and programs, including opportunities to attend youth summer camps and the corps' newest initiative, a monthly Dinner Church held in the redesigned corps dining room.

Envoy Brenda concluded, "We're excited to see all God is doing and all He is going to do at Southland."



The Grandview Southland Corps' newest junior soldiers: Makeela Lyle, Mikayla Nelson, My'Jhanek Lyle, and Martavious Lyle.

International College for Officers



**Major Alisha Cho, Corps Officer
Chicago Mayfair Community Church (Corps)
Session 255 Delegate
October 11 - November 20, 2023**

Friends, fellowship and physical education

by Captain Cassandra Moffitt

The Saginaw, Mich., Corps is in its fifth year of offering a physical education program that fills a need within the homeschool community.

In 2018, the corps worked with parents to develop Homeschool P.E., a ministry which provides affordable physical education with a curriculum that meets educational and state requirements for homeschooled children. Many of the children, ages six to 14, have been coming since the program started.

Janessa Niswonger, whose 12-, 10- and 9-year-olds attend said, "One thing I can't stress enough is the importance of finding cost-effective activities, especially when you have



Macy Niswonger practices some stretches during Homeschool P.E.

multiple kids. This program is very affordable and very reasonable."

At Homeschool P.E., Coach Jaden

Clobes, community center outreach ministry coordinator, leads youth through exercises and activities, teaching physical education skills that will last a lifetime and fostering confidence, leadership skills and relationships.

Coach Jaden's encouraging and supportive style helps them feel confident and comfortable. For example, when Leila Grimpow couldn't do an exercise, she was embarrassed, but Jaden helped her.

"Jaden never made a big deal of it," said Leila's mom, Becky. "He walked her through it a few times, just encouraged her to do her best, and then she practiced it at home, and now she's got it."

The kids encourage each other to learn the exercises and push each other to work hard. Jaden inspires them to do everything to the best of their ability. With the largest group being only 27 kids, there's room for personal attention, and the youth set and pursue their own fitness goals.

Coach Jaden also teaches leadership skills. As the older children grow more skilled, he pairs them with younger, less-experienced children so they learn to teach, help and encourage each other. Everybody benefits, and the parents love to see it.

From the kids' perspective, one of the best things about Homeschool P.E. is the friendships they form.



Coach Jaden Clobes with Homeschool P.E. participant Caleb Niswonger

Becky says her children look forward to coming every week.

"They're creating new friendships that can go further than just being at gym class for an hour," she said.

It's not all hard work, though. There is also room for free play. According to Jenessa, having access to a gym that enables exercise regardless of weather is a helpful resource.

"There's basketballs, hula hoops, dodgeballs, and things that we wouldn't normally have on our own," she said. "Just being able to have access to those things anytime is a huge benefit."



Homeschool families in Saginaw, Mich., help fulfill their curriculum requirements through Homeschool P.E.

Showers of blessings

by Justin Grajek

For nearly 20 years, the Wayne Westland, Mich., Corps has partnered with Warm Hearts, a nonprofit organization which hosts community baby showers to educate and pro-

vide resources for pregnant mothers.

Warm Hearts was started by Carol Sharp who was haunted by Michigan having the seventh highest infant mortality rate in the country. She was inspired to help pregnant mothers prepare for their babies' arrivals.

"I came to The Salvation Army here and asked if we could use their building," Carol said. "We didn't have any money. We said we'd muster some up, and that was the beginning."

Carol's vision was to provide necessities like diapers and bottles alongside educational materials, as well as to host breakout sessions on a variety of topics like breastfeeding and baby safety. With the help of donors, volunteers and community part-

ners, she's been able to do just that.

"Those little packages are pretty fragile, and it's a big responsibility to understand what's happening to them," said Carol. "The best thing you can do is educate yourself."

Envoy Andy Barylski, corps administrator, has been working with Carol for 15 years. His wife attended showers when she was expecting their two children. With Carol's retirement next year, the corps will take the reigns in throwing the community baby showers.

"Giving ladies hope is what I've seen," Envoy Andy said. "As The Salvation Army, we really want to embrace that."

The showers have gained steady support from the community throughout the years. At one shower the mayor drove up in a pickup truck full of diapers to distribute. This year volunteers from Ford Motor Company's Women of Ford Finance (one of its diversity, equity and inclusion groups) helped to ensure the shower ran smoothly. A community action agency also provided a grant which paid for some of



Participant Schquwana Troup, who was eight months pregnant when she attended, is grateful for the community showers.

the items distributed.

Schquwana Troup is grateful, saying the showers have helped her prepare for the arrival of her children.

"This is the third community shower I've been to," she said. "Just trying to gather a few things, you know. It was kind of hard during COVID money-wise, so this is a good thing for the community."



Envoy Andy Barylski and Carol Sharp have worked together on community baby showers for 15 years.

Cultivating creativity, talent and faith

by Elizabeth Malovance

In the heart of summer 2023, Wonderland Camp and Conference Center was a vibrant hub of creativity and musical exploration, hosting two distinct music and creative arts camps that ignited the passions and spiritual growth of the Central Territory's youth and young adults.

camps not only provided an exceptional platform for artistic growth but focused on the spiritual journey.

Artistic Immersion, Visionary Creativity

Guided by the theme "Visualize," Resonate immersed students for five days in audio/visual, dance, drama and praise band, igniting their imaginations and nurturing their talents. Adding international flair, guest instructor Stephanie Lamplough, United Kingdom and Ireland Territory assistant director for music and creative arts, lent her expertise in vocal music and musical theater, leaving an indelible mark on participants.

Ensuring spiritual nourishment, chaplains Captains Brenna and Vinal Lee helped campers visualize their creativity from the perspective of a holy God. Each day began with "Morning Manna," setting the tone with scripture, prayer and worship. A daily rhythm unfolded with technique sessions to refine craft, followed by individual majors for the week, and elective classes that offered

led to a breathtaking meeting on Saturday morning. Dedication, practice and shared vision culminated as students took the stage, showcasing the fruits of their labor.

Nurturing Melodies, Cultivating Roots

The next week a symphony of musical exploration unfolded at CMI which offered a profound journey into the world of brass band, vocal music and gospel choir. Guided by the spiritual theme, "Roots," the camp drew on the wisdom of Majors Dan and Stephanie Sawka, who cultivated a deep understanding of God's Word.

As with Resonate, each day dawned with "Morning Manna." From refining techniques to harmonizing in chorus, the pursuit of personal elective classes and the resonance of major rehearsals, the camp provided a comprehensive concentration in music.

Guest Gavin Lamplough enriched the experience with his expertise. As principal cornet of the International Staff Band and conductor of the

celebration of creativity. Elective performances took center stage, showcasing the unique flavors and styles each class brought to the

table. That same evening during the much-anticipated Awards Festival, each major ensemble was featured, and students were recognized for individual achievements with awards and scholarships. This year's Ben Meritt top camper award winner was JJ Pook from the North & Central Illinois Division and the Crosby O'Neil top corps award was presented to the Omaha Citadel, Neb., Corps from the Western Division.

As echoes of CMI resonated throughout the camp, leaving a trail of melodies and memories, the final moments arrived with Sunday morning's worship led by Territorial

Birmingham Citadel Band, his insights added an additional layer of mastery for participants. Vocal guest Stephanie Lamplough drew on her prowess in vocal music and inspired campers with her exemplary leadership.

CMI embraced recreation, inviting students to take part in a variety of optional activities that fostered a sense of fellowship and balance. Additionally, vocal and band reading sessions were offered to faculty and students alike. Monday night saw a memorable performance as guest recording artist Natalie Layne captivated the camp. Wednesday provided a day of exhilarating fellowship and fun as campers explored Six Flags Great America. Toward the end of the week, student showcase performances celebrated individual and ensemble achievements.

ElectFest also served as a vibrant

Commander Commissioner Evie Diaz. In this sacred space, the notes of the week's journey melded with worship, reminding participants that, like roots, music and, more importantly, their relationship with the Savior are sources of sustenance, growth and connection.

Full list of award winners online



The campground echoed with the talent of Resonate, a worship arts conservatory, where 70 students honed their artistic skills. Following



Guests Stephanie and Gavin Lamplough

in its wake, Central Music Institute (CMI) drew 170 aspiring musicians into its embrace, focusing on the mastery of brass band, vocal music and gospel choir. The back-to-back



Recording artist Natalie Layne

a diverse range of choices. Camaraderie thrived in small groups that fostered connections. One more major class, followed by an evening meeting, punctuated each day.

One evening, acclaimed speaker, Christian recording artist, scholar and author Scott MacIntyre, who rose to fame as the first blind finalist on the TV show "American Idol," presented an evening of performance, personal story and an audience-engaged Q&A session.

As the week drew to a close, the creative efforts



Birmingham Citadel Band, his insights added an additional layer of mastery for participants. Vocal guest Stephanie Lamplough drew on her prowess in vocal music and inspired campers with her exemplary leadership.

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Full list of award winners online



With Western Divisional Music Director Matt Walter, delegates from the Omaha Citadel, Neb., Corps receive the Crosby O'Neil Award from Lt. Colonel Collette Webster and Brett Tolcher at CMI.



JJ Pook is presented with the Ben Meritt Award for top camper from Lt. Colonel Collette Webster and Brett Tolcher.

Expressions of faith



Brie with friends and former CAST members Amanda Mercado and Erin McDonald

For Brie Simmons performing is more than rehearsed lines, spotlights and applause. It's relationship-building, God-honoring ministry.

As a member of several territorial music and creative arts ministry groups, including the Territorial Youth Chorus (TYC), Central Territorial Staff Songsters (CTSS) and the Bill Booth Theater Company (BBTC), she is utilizing her gifts as a testament of faith.

This summer Brie served as the sole member on the CAST Summer Mission Team, which since 2015 has sent a team of creative arts leaders across the territory and internationally to perform and instruct others in using creative arts ministries in their contexts.

"At first I was scared to be the only one," Brie said. "But I had a lot of support, and it turned out to be a 'God thing,' a chance for me to grow."

Traveling to several divisional camps, she assisted camp ministry teams and led classes, sharing her faith, knowledge and talent. From choreographing a musical during a conservatory in the Western Division to directing a show choir for the creative arts camp in Indiana to teaching drama electives at other divisional camps, Brie's summer in CAST was full of opportunities to try out her leadership skills as she ministered and was ministered to by those around her.

"I had an experience at Western Plains Camp where I was talking with a camper, and it was really amazing to see the impact this ministry had on her life," she said.

Growing up a child of officers, Brie had opportunities from a

young age to see her parents, Majors Dale and Becky Simmons, using the stage to share Christ. It was thanks to their encouragement that she pursued theater in school, developing her skills and gaining confidence which would later help enable her ministry.



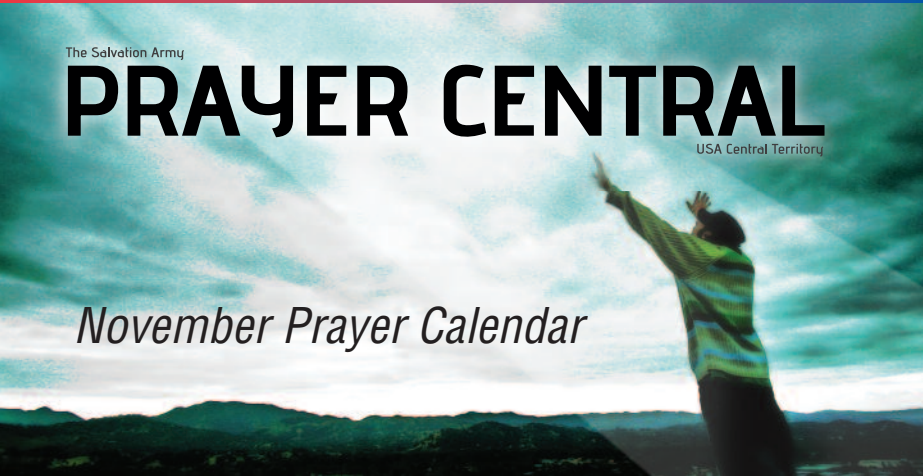
Participating at her corps, attending divisional camps and later taking the drama track at Central Music Institute (CMI) helped Brie to connect her God-given gifts with sharing her faith. From there it was an easy

decision to audition for the BBTC and territorial vocal groups, and a natural fit for her to spend a summer further developing her skills through CAST.

"It's just another way to express and illustrate what God can do in your life," she said.



A skit during commissioning weekend



My Prayer List	Day	Bible Reading	Pray for The Salvation Army
	1 Wednesday	Ecclesiastes 3-4	Omaha Citadel, Neb., Corps
	2 Thursday	Zephania	Minneapolis, Minn., ARC
	3 Friday	Acts 11-12	Flint Citadel, Mich., Corps
	4 Saturday	James 4	The Netherlands, Czech Republic & Slovakia
	5 Sunday	Deuteronomy 1-3	Grand Rapids, Mich., Kroc Center
	6 Monday	2 Chronicles 33-36	Upper Peninsula Area Coordinator
	7 Tuesday	Psalms 128-130	Kalamazoo, Mich., Corps
	8 Wednesday	Ecclesiastes 5-6	Madison, Ind., Corps
	9 Thursday	Haggai	Omaha North, Neb., Corps
	10 Friday	Acts 13-14	Plymouth, Mich., Corps
	11 Saturday	1 Peter 1-3	India Western Territory
	12 Sunday	Deuteronomy 4-6	Rapid City, S.D., Corps
	13 Monday	Ezra 1-5	Madison, Wis., Capital Area Coordinator
	14 Tuesday	Psalms 131-133	St. Louis, Mo., ARC
	15 Wednesday	Ecclesiastes 7-8	Warsaw, Ind., Corps
	16 Thursday	Zechariah 1-7	Lansing South, Mich., Corps
	17 Friday	Acts 15-16	Papua New Guinea & Solomon Islands
	18 Saturday	1 Peter 4-5	Mt. Clemens, Mich., Corps
	19 Sunday	Deuteronomy 7-9	Western Division Capital Area Commander
	20 Monday	Ezra 6-10	Niles, Mich., Corps
	21 Tuesday	Psalms 134-136	Community Outreach
	22 Wednesday	Ecclesiastes 9-10	Adrian, Mich., Corps
	23 Thursday	Zechariah 8-14	GIVE THANKS WITH A GRATEFUL HEART
	24 Friday	Acts 17-18	Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea Territory
	25 Saturday	1 John 1-2	Branson, Mo., Corps
	26 Sunday	Deuteronomy 10-12	Virginia, Minn., Corps
	27 Monday	Nehemiah 1-4	Lafayette, Ind., Corps
	28 Tuesday	Psalms 137-139	Superior, Wis., Corps
	29 Wednesday	Ecclesiastes 11-12	Metro Detroit Area Command
	30 Thursday	Malachi	Des Moines, Iowa, ARC

Go to www.salarmycentral.org
If you follow the prayer calendar during the year,
you will have read through the Bible!

Correction/Clarification

The Long Service list printed in the September issue inadvertently omitted Major Nicholas Montgomery who was recognized for 25 years of service. We apologize for this error and congratulate Major Montgomery on this milestone.

--Mustard Seeds--



Sitting in God's house

People often attend religious services inside buildings with wooden benches, potted plants and colorful stained-glass windows.

But some attend services outdoors, surrounded by a rainbow of blossomed trees, as ducks waddle by and a nearby waterfall churns.

This summer marked the 25th anniversary of the Tuesday in the Garden Salvation Army Summer Garden Ministry in the pavilion at Anderson Japanese Gardens in Rockford, Ill. The venue has partnered with the Rockford Temple Corps to present the outdoor ministry at 7:30 a.m. Tuesdays from Memorial Day through Labor Day.

The congregation has grown to about 50 people attending in-person, and an estimated 300 watching online around the globe via livestream on Facebook, said Jodi Beach, who assists her mother, longtime Salvation Army volunteer Sonja Beach, with the services.

"We are truly sitting in God's house," Jodi said. "We have every kind of beautiful Japanese tree. Everything is pink when we begin in May, with the azaleas. We are close to the Rock River and will often see a heron fly through."

Sonja organized the event in 1998 at the request of Anderson Gardens owner John Anderson.



Sonja Beach with daughter Jodi.

"Mom was the facilitator. She made all of the arrangements, handpicked the pastors and the singers, typed up the program and chose the hymns. She did it all. She even picked up the doughnuts," Jodi said. "She has been the wind beneath the wings."

Jodi began assisting her mother with the services several years ago, and the two now work side by side.

More than 50 churches of various Christian denomination have been represented there throughout the years.



Anderson Japanese Gardens – photo by Jeff Anderson

"The focus is on inspiration and encouragement," Jodi said. "Our goal was to unify the body of Christ. It has been beautiful to see the ministry expand."

Services feature hymns, guest singers and other musicians and an inspirational message. Refreshments are served following the program.

Sonja still oversees many of the details, making sure everything runs smoothly.

"Mom sets a pretty table with flowers and hands out the programs," Jodi said.

The Summer Garden Ministry is free and open to the public. Those attending are invited to stay and explore the gardens.

Major Angela Wandling, who leads the Rockford Temple Corps, has spoken at the Summer Garden Ministry several times and says the atmosphere is very peaceful.

"You walk [to the pavilion] on a wooded path," Major Angela said. "You look out over a pond where there are turtles and fish. The trees and flowers are everywhere. It's so inviting. You are right in the middle of God's creation and the beauty of it."



Tuesday in the Garden Salvation Army Summer Garden Ministry is free and open to the public.

Embrace life, be blessed



by Captain Tracy Gantner

As part of women's ministries at the South Bend, Ind., Ray and Joan Kroc Corps Community Center, I have introduced a quarterly "Embrace Life, Be Blessed" event.

My inspiration was John 10:10 (NIV): "I have come that they may have life and have it to the full." I have always believed God has called each one of us to embrace life, not merely to survive.

My vision is to connect women through shared experiences and celebrations. I want to provide opportunities for community, self-discovery, and development of gifts and talents. My goal is to empower them and improve their quality of life.

This year the invitation list includes all of the nearby corps officers and their women. We hope they'll join us simply to connect with each other and enjoy themselves. We are one Army and are better together.

The first event in February was called "Cupcakes and Canvas." We offered a salad buffet and painted with step-by-step instructions from Lauren

Freeze, one of our Kroc Center's art instructors. We concluded with prayer and cupcakes, a perfect ending to a joyful evening.

That evening 98 women gathered, connected and had a bit of self-discovery as they painted spring flowers on canvas.

Captain Kendra Hixenbaugh, along with six women from her corps in Goshen, Ind., embraced the fun. Major Charlotte Hall, Indiana general secretary, painted with her daughter, Lindsay. Major Jodi Montgomery, Niles, Mich., corps officer, attended and closed the evening with a thoughtful and encouraging prayer.

"It was such a blessing to be part of cupcakes and canvas at the Kroc," said Major Jodi. "What a beautiful diverse group of woman coming together from all walks of life in Jesus' name."

While I didn't know what to expect, I felt called to expand my reach with this program. After all, Kroc Centers have plenty of room. It's clear that God's hand was in it all from the beginning. He continues to overwhelm me with His grace.

Promoted to Glory

Major Florence (Mitzie) Moffitt

Major Florence (Mitzie) Moffitt, nee Kuhlke, was promoted to Glory on July 20, 2023.

Mitzie was an avid reader, lover of God's Word, creative writer and detailed programmer. A Salvation Army historian, she also loved researching the colorful characters who were the foundation of The Salvation Army.

Mitzie was born on January 5, 1933, in Chicago Heights, Ill. She graduated from Bloom Township High School in 1951 and immediately gained full-time employment in the accounting department at



Montgomery Ward.

Following God's call on her life, Mitzie entered officer training in 1953 and was commissioned in 1954. After serving two years as a single officer, she married Charles Moffitt on May 5, 1956.

Along with Charles, Mitzie served for another 42 years before retiring in 1998. She loved and cared for the people God entrusted to her in eight corps appointments, one divisional youth appointment and two territorial headquarters appointments, firmly believing God would use her anytime and anywhere to love others into His Kingdom.

She is survived by her children, James (Leslie) and Major Lisa (Butch) Frost; six grandchildren; and nine great-grandchildren. She was preceded in death by her husband and two children, Gail and Timothy.