Playing a critical role in crisis response

A team of 30 staff and volunteers from the territory participated this summer in the Miles Paratus Exercise, a five-day training exercise with military and civilian components held at two military venues, Volk Field and Fort McCoy, in Wisconsin. It concentrated on coordination of responding to multiple disaster scenarios with disaster response agencies at the local, state and national levels with over 75 agencies and 3,000 participants.

The Salvation Army managed a fixed feeding site, dispatched two canteens and provided hydration service throughout the exercise area. “We rely heavily on non-government agencies, like The Salvation Army, to provide shelter and canteen style feeding to the civilians in the devastated area. We just don’t have the resources to do all of that,” said Steve Fenske, Wisconsin Emergency Management East Central Regional director.

The Salvation Army’s Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) trained chaplains worked alongside seven military chaplains to provide emotional and spiritual care. “Working with non-military community organizations, like The Salvation Army, helps to add to the long-term care of the individual. It means a lot for us to be able to connect someone into a ‘care network’ within the community for the long haul,” said Lt. Colonel Douglas Hedman of the Wisconsin National Guard.

Throughout the exercise the Salvation Army Team Emergency Radio Network (SATERN) improved internal communication and situational awareness between Salvation Army units. “I am very pleased with the professionalism of each of the amateur radio operators. We made use of the brand new communications trailer from the Lincoln, Neb. SATERN team. It is totally self-contained and solved a number of logistic issues,” said Aaron Rogge of the Lincoln SATERN team.

Terri Leece, Wisconsin and Upper Michigan Division emergency disaster services director, concluded, “Exercises like these help us hone our skills so that when God calls us to serve His people we are ready to respond.”

New adolescent treatment at Chicago Harbor Light

by Jacqualine Raachev

The Chicago Harbor Light Center, which opened in August 2015 in the West Humboldt Park neighborhood, has launched a new alcohol and substance abuse treatment program for adolescents. The Adolescent Substance Abuse program includes group and individual therapy for youth ages 13 to 17. They also participate in recreational and social activities at the corps which promote positive social interactions and appropriate development. Wrap-around services include shelter, food and educational services.

“Most of our clients are caught in a circle of drug use and don’t know how to live without it,” said Debbie Shepard, outpatient clinic manager. “We work with them to identify the causes and triggers of the drug use and give them coping skills to deal with the triggers. We also work to identify other options to help them achieve some of their goals, such as a steady income.”

Clients are placed in group counseling sessions based on gender, type of substance abuse and gang affiliations so there is commonality and a basis of understanding. “We can also serve individuals who have suffered severe trauma and are facing issues such as homelessness and abuse,” said Laura Garcia, director of clinical programs.

In addition to treatment and therapies, Debbie said the program provides something more important: love and care. She shared a story of one young woman who mentioned how hungry she was at the end of a therapy session. Debbie took her to the food pantry and gave her a bag with a peanut butter and jelly sandwich, fruit and snacks. “Her eyes lit up as she ate the sandwich. She said this was the only food she would have all day because it would be after dinnertime when she arrived home, and there would be nothing left. Something as simple as a sandwich can make a difference,” said Debbie.

“This program really addresses a need in West Humboldt Park,” said Laura. “Organizations offering similar programs have closed or are no longer serving this area.”

The program is licensed by the State of Illinois and can fulfill court mandates. Social workers partner with the Cook County Youth Drug Court, local probation officers, school social workers and others who work with young people who have been arrested, suspended or expelled for drug or alcohol possession.

One young man came to the program after his probation officer identified his substance abuse issues. At 16, he hadn’t been in school for more than a year, had a criminal record and no stability. Within weeks of starting the program when his parents threw him out, he was able to stay at the Harbor Light while staff worked to find foster care. Saying it was the first time he truly felt loved, he begged that a foster home would allow him to continue coming for treatment. It did and the young man progressed quickly. He stayed away from substances, enrolled in school, started attending every day and earned good grades. His depression lessened, and he now laughs and has friends. With three months of sobriety he has a toolbox of skills to handle problems. And with support and love, he has hope!
Connecting the dots

by Lt. Colonel Renea Smith
Assistant Secretary for Personnel

W henever I’m confronted with the need to be creative, my mind is drawn to the nine-dot puzzle. The challenge is to connect the dots by drawing no more than four straight, continuous lines that pass through each of the nine dots without lifting the pencil from the paper.

Some have observed the puzzle only seems difficult because we imagine a boundary around the edge of the dots. As long as we think inside the box, the puzzle is difficult to solve. However, if we think on a larger scale, outside the perimeters of the box, possibilities emerge and the puzzle is easy to solve. We have to look beyond the obvious.

We are called to a great mission. It’s our privilege to bring the message of Jesus Christ to the world. Corps ministry and leadership can be challenging. Officers and lay leaders must work together to engage their communities for Christ. Ministry doors open as we build relationships with those around us. To accomplish this, we may need to think differently about what we are doing and how we are doing it.

This kind of thinking isn’t easy, and our ability to do it—or not—isn’t a reflection of our intelligence. We need God’s wisdom to bring innovative solutions to the challenges of ministry.

It’s our privilege to bring the message of Jesus Christ to the world. Ministry doors open as we build relationships with those around us. To accomplish this, we may need to think differently about what we are doing and how we are doing it. This kind of thinking isn’t easy, and our ability to do it—or not—isn’t a reflection of our intelligence. We have to leave our psychological comfort zones and explore solutions in the world around us. And that requires mental agility, boldness, courage and creativity. It’s seeing possibilities rather than limitations or boundaries, opportunities for ministry rather than obstacles to it.

The Bible tells us, “For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him.” John 3:16-17 (NLT). This is a message worth sharing. We need to see the possibilities for bringing people to Christ rather than the obstacles. We need faith God will use us, expand our vision and open doors for meaningful relationships to occur right in our own neighborhoods.

So today exercise creativity. Think outside the box. See ministry through new eyes. Listen and be guided by the Holy Spirit.
The difference in Rochester

Even though most of its members are already involved in the 33 programs and ministries offered by the Rochester, Minn., Corps, they continue to clamor for more opportunities to serve God and increase His Kingdom, according to Majors James and Paulette Frye, corps officers.

This increased excitement for service began last year when the congregation was issued a challenge by Majors Craig Stoker, divisional commander and divisional administrator of the Booth Memorial Residence in Wichita. They then served at divisional headquarters in the Western Michigan/Northern Indiana, Eastern Michigan and Northern divisions. In 2001 they were appointed as divisional commander and divisional director of women’s ministries for the Midland Division and then were appointed to lead the Wisconsin and Upper Michigan Division. They concluded their service as divisional leaders of the Northern Division.

The Thomsons have retired to Clearwater, Fla. “There’s a big retirement complex there with lots of retired soldiers and officers,” Colonel Robert said. “We’re looking forward to beginning a new chapter of ministry.”

An avid golfer, he added with a smile: “It feels good to retire.”

Colonel Nancy is also looking forward but is satisfied with all they’ve accomplished in the name of Christ. “Would I do it all over again? You betcha,” she said. “I thank the Lord for His faithfulness. I’m not sure what He has in store for us, but the journey continues.”

Thomsons retire

by Craig Dirkes

After 41 years of officerhood Lt. Colonels Robert and Nancy Thomson have retired. The occasion was marked with a service this summer at the Noble Corps in Brooklyn Park, Minn., where friends, family and colleagues gathered to honor them.

After marrying in 1972, the Thomsons were commissioned as officers with the “Soldiers of the Cross” session in 1975. They started as corps officers in cities throughout Kansas, including Kansas City, Junction City, Pittsburg, and Lawrence, and also as assistant administrators of the Booth Memorial Residence in Wichita. They then served at divisional headquarters in the Western Michigan/Northern Indiana, Eastern Michigan and Northern divisions.

This desire for evangelism training also showed up in the corps’ STEP’s (Strategic Tool to Engage Potential) review, as it had for many other corps in the Northern Division, the major added. So, when the division decided to sponsor regional evangelism and leadership training weekends, the Rochester Corps quickly offered to host one!

Now even better equipped to serve, corps members are continuing to see first-hand how they’re being used by God to make a difference!

Sharpening each other

by Craig Dirkes

The chance for men to gather at the rustic Black Hills Camp in South Dakota is so popular that half of those registered for the Western Division’s Men’s Adventure Weekend obtained permission from Black Hills Coordinator Major Nathan Johnson to come a day early!

The weekend led by Major Curtiss Hartley, Western divisional program secretary, gave officers, soldiers and men from the Omaha, Neb., Adult Rehabilitation Center a great opportunity to explore their faith, worship God and see Him at work through His marvelous creation.

Major Craig Stoker conducted daily devotions using examples from nature to illustrate God’s Word. Key messages included avoiding temptation, being the best man you can be, looking below the surface as God does and not being afraid to get your feet wet when it comes to living for Him.

Occupying tents and cabins, the men enjoyed fishing, fellowship and good food starting with a Friday-night feast of a big steak filling one plate, a huge baked potato filling another, plus side dishes and dessert!

The men also spent time making minor repairs to the camp’s kitchen and its mountain-top landscaping which had been damaged by high winds and flooding, including the removal of downed trees.

Among the side trips offered were pontoon boat fishing and visits to area landmarks, such as Mount Rushmore, the Crazy Horse monument and Wind Cave.

Quoting Proverbs 27:17 (NIV), Major Johnson observed of the weekend, “As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.”

Photos by Craig Dirkes

Volunteer opportunities abound at the Rochester, Minn., Corps, including helping at its free medical clinic.

Major Jim Frye serves men at the corps’ adult day care center.
We learned at an early age that God can be found wherever you are, especially outside. Family worship was not just relegated to Sunday in a chapel.” — Terry Tempest Williams.

Seven hundred and twenty young people and their leaders from Puerto Rico to Alaska converged this summer on the Huzzah Valley in Missouri’s Ozark mountains for the National Jamboree. Over the course of a week, they explored the beautiful Ozark wilderness, seeing God in His creation and seeing new things in themselves as they tried activities they’d never considered.

Missouri’s lakes, forests, caves and rivers were perfect places for youth to learn to canoe, raft, hike, spelunk, fit an arrow to a bow string, see a grizzly bear (stuffed) up close, swim, cook over a campfire and grow closer to God as He walked with, strengthened and showed them that the jamboree’s theme verse, “I can do all things through him who strengthens me,” Philippians 4:13 (NRSV), is a claim they can trust all their lives.

Squish, click, squeeze, zip—no, not all life jackets are one size fits all, but everyone managed to find one so they could load into canoes and paddle off down Huzzah Creek. It was a good thing they were wearing the jackets as lots and lots experienced their first canoeing by tipping and then learning the most important lesson: how to empty a canoe of water, get back in and paddle again. Thankfully, the water was not deep, and it was really refreshing on a hot day.

Meramec Adventure Learning Ranch lived up to its name! Whether the kids knew they were learning something is uncertain, but the adventure was obvious.

Our welcome to the ranch was a blindfolded trust walk down a steep hillside covered in wet rocks and leaves, while the guide hopefully steered us away from poison ivy along the trail. Slackline Village challenged balance, while a barn with climbing walls to boulder up and a slide from the second floor helped overcome the fear of heights. The lake was the most popular spot with stand-up paddleboards, kayaks, a climbing combo and best of all a tower from which to swing into the water or to leap onto “The Blob,” a huge air-filled cushion that launches friends already sitting on it high into the air before splashing back into the lake. And then it was time to do it again and again.

Back to Huzzah Creek, yet another day to navigate it with your team in a raft. The creek was beautiful, running close behind many campsites, and a perfect place to cool off when the temperatures climbed. Rafts, filled with corps kids from Maine to California, set off down the river stopping at sandy beaches for lunch and swimming. One group tried to dam the Huzzah, linking arms to span the creek. They soon learned the power of water, even slow moving. At the “take-out,” a fancy way of saying the end where the rafts get taken out, some of the bravest scaled a hill to a perfect spot to jump back into an ideal swimming hole.

If not rafting, tackling challenges at the ranch, or canoeing, there was caving to be done—no hard-core spelunking this time but the chance to explore Onondaga Cave at the state park with the same name a few short miles from where the jamboree’s hundreds of tents were pitched. The cave, first discovered and explored in 1886, is just one of thousands in Missouri, and those who got to spend time in it were blessed by its beauty and fascinating history.

Around the campground there was much to be done, too. Archery and a new addition to the old standby of bows and arrows, “sket” archery! Archers nocked
rubber tipped arrows onto their bowsstrings and with the call of ‘pull’ the thrower would launch plate sized foam discs into the air and arrows would be released. The Salvation Army has some great archers with many discs knocked to the ground! Riverside Wildlife Center in nearby Sullivan, Mo., brought some of their friends—tortoises, boa constrictors, young alligators and more—for campers to meet and learn about. There were also workshops on metal detecting, crafts, 9-Square and more.

Alma and Stony, members of Safari Club International, brought a mobile natural history museum called “Sensory Safari.” Lines of youth waited to walk through the trailer-turned-museum to see preserved animals from around the world and to learn conservation ethics, camping and survival tips, and maybe to hear Alma’s bear hunting story.

Trading was a popular activity with every division and territory bringing things that represented them, like Arkansas Razorback noses and wooden discs with a map of North and South Carolina. Bandanas from Midland were popular, especially to wipe sweaty faces, while buttons from Eastern Michigan, Texas, Kentucky, California and more began to sprout all over backpacks and hats. Despite only one designated trading evening, it went on all week with calls of “Hey, do you have one of those Razorback noses?” and “Do any of you have one of the Southern Territory’s flying discs? They make great fans!”

One of the most memorable parts of the jamboree is the microburst storm that suddenly hit the area. Heavy winds and rain blew into camp fast, knocking down tents, soaking everything and knocking out power for 30 hours, but by God’s grace and protection, everyone was safe. The situation drew the best out of the campers. The kids quickly got to work using pioneering skills they’d learned in order to come to camp. They repaired tents and set them up again and rigged clotheslines to dry sleeping bags and clothing. It was great to see their ingenuity and spirit.

Evenings were filled with worship and fellowship under the big top. Bean and Bailey pointed campers to God with their humor, Lt. Colonel Paul Smith shared God’s Word (ask him about the skunk story); Barb Higgins brought her obvious love for God and the kids to her devotions, and Salvationist musician and actor Damien Horne’s testimony had a tremendous impact on campers.

Jamboree 2016 was memorable for many reasons—storms, new friendships, new experiences, new places—but above all else campers left knowing the theme verse was true and they could indeed do everything through God who gives them strength.
Greener gardens, thumbs

Learning over recent years that growing their gardening skills was just as important as growing their garden, folks at the O’Fallon, Mo., Corps hit their stride this season! Neat rows of vegetables from Swiss chard to broccoli—surrounded by marigolds to naturally keep insect pests out of the garden—were used in meals prepared for the corps’ shelter residents, some of whom assisted volunteers in weeding and watering the garden.

"Many residents told us working in the garden was relaxing and helpful in refocusing," said Major Amy Ferguson, corps officer. "Gardening is therapeutic. It allows people to get out and work toward a goal, getting exercise and fresh air while connecting with the soil from which our food originates."

The project began in 2012 by soldiers in a corner of the corps’ property. In 2013 three raised garden plots were installed, with two more plots added in 2014. This year thanks to the Boone County Garden Club, two more plots were added for use by community families and the first five plots were repaired, fertilized and planted for corps use.

Marion takes its shot

by Glenn Welch

The Marion, Ind., Corps’ archery team came in 12th place in the middle school category at Centershot Ministries National Archery Tournament in Louisville, Ky. The Marion Corps team was the only one from The Salvation Army to participate in the tournament drawing 930 archers with teams from 48 states.

Marion’s coach, Sarah Welch, placed sixth among female adult archers.

The competition capped off an eventful year for the Marion archers. Three weeks earlier Marion faced teams from Indianapolis and Lafayette at The Salvation Army’s regional Centershot meet at the Indianapolis, Ind., Eagle Creek Corps and came home with a first place trophy. In addition to winning the team and coming home with a first place trophy, the team found practices, and the team has found the devotionals held regularly at practices, and the team has found opportunity for outreach, such as shooting on the lawn of Northwood Manor to entertain residents of this local retirement community.

I started archery initially to enjoy an activity with my daughter, Rebekah, but soon became more blessed by the devotions and fellowship than the sport," said Mark Stasi.

AND BEYOND

by Captain Jonathan Fitzgerald

Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less traveled by.
And that has made all the difference.
—Robert Frost

There were a number of roads I could have traveled, but God was leading me down the road of officerhood. When I chose to follow God’s call on my life, I had no idea where this road would lead. I certainly didn’t expect my third appointment would be in Kingston, Jamaica, the Caribbean Territory’s Training College.

Now I find myself working in one of the most culturally diverse environments I could imagine. The Caribbean Territory is composed of 17 countries, which our training college reflects. Our current cadets come from Haiti, Jamaica and Suriname, while our officer staff is from the U.S., St. Lucia, Barbades, Jamaica and Haiti. Almost all of us are in a country that is not our home, yet we are living in a community united by our faith in Christ. All of us want the same thing: to be obedient to God’s calling on our lives.

Earlier this year, I was teaching a class and we were discussing entire sanctification. Many cadets were skeptical about God’s promise to change our hearts so completely that we live with a heart of pure love in His sight. As I taught, more cadets were convinced this promise is true. In that moment, I felt the same joy I had when teaching in my home territory. I knew God can use me anywhere where He sees fit.

God has used my passions to help fellow Christ-followers grow in their knowledge and translate that knowledge into real, Christ-like living. Wherever in the world God places me, He can use my gifts for His glory.

Being obedient means following wherever He leads; it means saying yes to the roads He places before us. For some that means becoming a Salvation Army officer like me; for others it is a different path. But if we are obedient to God’s desire for our lives, we are walking on the road less traveled.

I don’t know what twists and turns await me, but I can tell you this—I chose the road less traveled…and that has made all the difference!
### New Members

**April - June 2016**

- **121** Senior Soldiers
- **45** Adherents
- **100** Junior Soldiers

### Building walls of support

It took four days for the Bay City, Mich., Corps to celebrate the impact of The Salvation Army on its county over the last 125 years.

The anniversary weekend began on a Thursday night with the annual advisory board dinner. The speaker was Major Shirley Myers, who has served since 2005 as the corps officer with her husband, Michael—and who served as the Bay City corps officer 25 years earlier when she was single!

A recap of the Army’s service to the community included a successful capital campaign in 2011 for a new building and a decade-long feeding program that last year alone served 45,000 meals. Ron Deuscher was named Volunteer of the Year, and Al Eichhorn was presented the Community Service Award.

The celebration continued Friday evening with a concert by recording artist Dennis Gwizdala. Known as “Kenny G of Christian music,” the saxophonist and clarinetist is well-known in the Bay City area from which he tours nationally to share his testimony and compositions.

“Young children at our corps are still singing his song from that night, ‘I’m so blessed,’” said Major Michael Myers, who added the corps’ youth flag, dance and singing groups performed at events throughout the weekend.

On Saturday evening, the band and songsters from the Flint Citadel Corps Band and Songsters.

A packed house at the Bay City, Mich., Corps enjoyed the Flint Citadel Corps Band and Songsters.

### October Prayer Calendar

**My Prayer List**

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<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Bible Reading</th>
<th>Pray For The Salvation Army</th>
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<tr>
<td>1 Saturday</td>
<td>Numbers 22-24</td>
<td>Janesville, Wis., Corps</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 Sunday</td>
<td>2 Chronicles 11-15</td>
<td>New M in in Christ on this Decision Sunday</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 Monday</td>
<td>Psalms 117-118</td>
<td>Indianapolis, Ind., ARC**</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 Tuesday</td>
<td>Proverbs 28</td>
<td>Farmington Hills, Mich., Corps</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 Wednesday</td>
<td>Jonah</td>
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<td>6 Thursday</td>
<td>Acts 3-4</td>
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<tr>
<td>7 Friday</td>
<td>Hebrews 5-7</td>
<td>Kansas City Blue Valley, Mo., Corps</td>
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<tr>
<td>8 Saturday</td>
<td>Numbers 29-27</td>
<td>Blue Island, W., Corps</td>
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<tr>
<td>9 Sunday</td>
<td>2 Chronicles 16-20</td>
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<td>10 Monday</td>
<td>Psalms 119</td>
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<td>11 Tuesday</td>
<td>Proverbs 31</td>
<td>Grand Forks, N.D., Corps</td>
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<tr>
<td>12 Wednesday</td>
<td>Micah</td>
<td>Hastings, Neb., Corps</td>
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<tr>
<td>13 Thursday</td>
<td>Acts 5-6</td>
<td>Kansas &amp; Western Missouri CHI**</td>
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<tr>
<td>14 Friday</td>
<td>Hebrews 8-10</td>
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<tr>
<td>15 Saturday</td>
<td>Numbers 28-30</td>
<td>Chicago Staff Band ministry in Hazen, Wis.</td>
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<tr>
<td>16 Sunday</td>
<td>2 Chronicles 21-24</td>
<td>Youth character-building programs</td>
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<td>17 Monday</td>
<td>Psalms 120-121</td>
<td>Captains Jeremy &amp; Rachel Stouder (U.K.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>18 Tuesday</td>
<td>Proverbs 31</td>
<td>Kenosha, Wis., Corps</td>
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<td>19 Wednesday</td>
<td>Nazareth</td>
<td>Women’s ministers mission trip to Alaska</td>
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<tr>
<td>20 Thursday</td>
<td>Acts 7-8</td>
<td>Kansas City, Mo., ARC**</td>
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<tr>
<td>21 Friday</td>
<td>Hebrews 11-13</td>
<td>Flint Beecher, Mich., Corps</td>
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<td>22 Saturday</td>
<td>Numbers 31-33</td>
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<tr>
<td>23 Sunday</td>
<td>2 Chronicles 25-28</td>
<td>Women’s ministers throughout the territory</td>
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<tr>
<td>24 Monday</td>
<td>Psalms 122-124</td>
<td>Pan American Zonal Conference</td>
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<tr>
<td>25 Tuesday</td>
<td>Ecclesiastes 1-2</td>
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<td>26 Wednesday</td>
<td>Nahalakuk</td>
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<tr>
<td>27 Thursday</td>
<td>Acts 9-10</td>
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<tr>
<td>28 Friday</td>
<td>James 1-3</td>
<td>Switzerland, Austria and Hungary Territory**</td>
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<tr>
<td>29 Saturday</td>
<td>Numbers 34-36</td>
<td>Holland, Mich., Corps</td>
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<tr>
<td>30 Sunday</td>
<td>2 Chronicles 29-32</td>
<td>Majors Robert &amp; Rae Duller (NAM)**, Wis.</td>
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<tr>
<td>31 Monday</td>
<td>Psalms 123-127</td>
<td>La Crosse, Wis., Corps</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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* = Adult Rehabilitation Center
** = Divisional Headquarters
PIM = Partners in Mission

Go to [www.prayercentralusa.org](http://www.prayercentralusa.org) for prayer updates.

If you follow the prayer calendar in the next year, you will have read through the Bible!
A life well lived

by Major Ron Gorton

Having recently celebrated his 101st birthday, Lt. Colonel William Kish seems to have been cut from the same cloth as Joe the Turk, George Scott Railton and other early Salvationists who displayed a “certain edge” often found in our saints of days gone by.

Before his conversion, Bill Kish was a rough and tough railroad man whose lists did much of his speaking until he found himself at a Salvation Army meeting where, to his and others’ amazement, he wandered forward and knelt down next to a faithful saint who led him to the Lord.

God’s marvellous grace brought into Bill’s life his dear wife, Fran, and two wonderful children, Tim and Kathy. That same grace helped them endure the loss of Tim as a very young man. Along the way, Bill and Fran faithfully followed God’s leading to become officers, marching forward to the point of denominational leadership. One of Bill’s favorite stories concerns the time when he, in his greenness as an officer, built a new corps building and invited headquarters to come dedicate it before they knew anything about it.

When Bill speaks of the times God has used him to lead others to Jesus, his eyes often tear up; he has never ceased to be amazed God would use him. Until well past Bill’s 100th birthday, he’d spend hours talking about the life God gave him. In recent months, however, Bill is suffering memory loss, deteriorating eyesight and very poor hearing. But at his 101st birthday party, Bill’s face lit up when I played a cornet solo of “No one ever cared for me like Jesus.”

A variety of resources, including posters, a Bible study and sermon outline and videos, featuring this year’s theme, “Speak Out – Give Hope!” are available in English and Spanish.

Visit: http://www.salvationarmy.org/ihq/antitrafficking

The Oshkosh family

Captain Vicky with a great team of volunteers who help with the Christmas toy shop

A sk almost anyone who attends the Oshkosh, Wis., Corps and they’ll tell you it’s not just church, it’s family. Although relatively small the corps is growing, and those who are involved are all-in.

Corps Officers Captains Don and Vicky Karl.

“We are a family corps. I have folks with needs, and others who are willing to help out. If someone needs a ride to their doctor’s office or anything else, someone is there,” said Captain Vicky. “There’s a general feeling of friendship in our building—people are willing to go the extra mile.”

As a result of the strong relationships, activities are flourishing. Women’s ministries meet every Tuesday night, and the men’s ministries meet at 6:00 a.m. on Tuesdays, often gathering with men from the Menasha Fox Cities and Pond du Lac, Wis., corps. Then on Sunday after worship the captains have organized a fellowship time.

“It’s something that really ignites them and gets us excited,” said Captain Don. “Through this, they feel like they really belong.” Youth activities are on the rise with more than 30 children attending kids club on Wednesday nights and the teens helping with the younger ones. There is a tight-knit teen group, who attended youth councils together this spring and put together an Easter presentation. This summer they’ve helped with vacation Bible school.

In the last year two volunteers were hired part-time as Pathway of Hope [POH] case workers, and the POH initiative is growing.

“I’ve never had two employees come in and buy into our mission as much,” said Captain Don. “We’re always introduced to new clients immediately.” Captain Vicky continued. “We’ve prayed with more clients in the last year than the previous seven!”

The Oshkosh Corps has the only meal program in town. Last year the corps served 43,000 hot meals and bagged lunches to those in need.

The corps is working toward holding a capital campaign. They have obtained property next to the current building and have hired a development director.

From cars to Kingdom building

“always encourage people—don’t just have Jesus as your Savior, but as the Lord of your life,” said Captain Don Karl. He’s taken his own advice. As a result, Don is on a drastically different path than he ever could’ve imagined.

Growing up, Don was often at his family’s business, an auto body repair shop. One day the Lord led a Salvationist named Bill to work at the shop. Don could see there was something different about him.

“It caused me to ask questions,” Don recalled. “At 29 with a wife and three children, I was struggling with life; it felt futile—I was running so hard, but to what end?”

Bill’s testimony caused Don to accept Christ and start attending the corps. Sadly, his wife didn’t understand. A year later, she left Don and their children.

Around this time he felt a call to ministry, and met Vicky, who also felt called to serve and whom he would marry. In 2001 they sold the auto body shop and were hired at the Appleton, Wis. Corps. God kept using them, and at the 2007 Mission and Purpose Conference they simultaneously felt the call to officership.

Now, eight years as corps officers Don said, “It’s the most meaningful life God could have called us to.”