

Salvation Army Faces Huge Need as It Battles COVID-19

“If we ever needed help, it is now.” Kyle Smith, secretary for communications, The Salvation Army USA Western Territory, said while monitoring and coordinating responses in Southern California—one of the largest epicenters of the COVID-19 pandemic in the United States. “We have closed many of our Family Thrift Stores to make shelters for the homeless and get them off the streets to help stop the spread of the virus. As a result, we desperately need financial support to keep our Adult Rehabilitation Centers open during this time.”

The Salvation Army’s ARCs (substance abuse centers) are primarily funded by thrift store purchases. Not only has the Army lost the revenue from those stores that provide aid to those who need assistance, meals, shelters and substance abuse counseling, but it has also shut them down to provide spaces for beds and to help the homeless during the epidemic. In doing so, the Army is not only providing thousands of new beds but thousands of meals as well. Its food distribution centers and pantries are working overtime as volunteers and staff put their own lives and families at risk to work on the front lines.

Smith shares that more hard-working people are asking for help than ever before. Many people already on the financial edge before the pandemic and who had never asked for assistance before are now showing up at their facilities. The Salvation Army is known for its service to others without discrimination. And while some are hesitant to ask for help because the Army is strongly associated with a Christian worldview, now, even the skeptics are asking as never before. Consequently, the Salvation Army is fighting to meet the overwhelming physical as well as spiritual needs.

As a national board member for the Salvation Army and the co-founder of Cooke Media Group, a media production company in Burbank, California and the nonprofit, The Influence Lab, I have been assisting the Army on how to use media more effectively to communicate its needs and programs. Last September, Influence Lab Women—our initiative to women leaders in the media and entertainment industry, gathered at the Hollywood corps facilities to help serve and pray for the hundreds of homeless on the streets in Hollywood and to see the operation firsthand. I have also witnessed the almost daily updates from the National Headquarters as the national government and the Trump administration have recently recognized the Army as one of the leading providers for assistance to the public during the pandemic. As a result, I see just how great the need truly is and the many ways the Salvation Army is filling them.

But they need additional support right now as never before.

I received an email from Dale Bannon, national community relations and development secretary in Washington, D.C, which said, “We are doing our very best to communicate with the public about our programs and services and to seek the public’s support during these challenging times.” The Army is not just working hard to meet the need now during the pandemic, but also when it subsides. Bannon went on to say our local units need help as never before, “our strength is local Salvation Army units meeting local needs for over 150 years. Our reputation has been faithful, and we consistently meet human need in Christ’s name without discrimination. All COVID-19 donations made on the national site go to the local TSA to serve the most vulnerable during this pandemic.”

During the COVID-19 outbreak, the Army has not only been providing its normal ongoing food, shelter and counseling to its clients but has been staying in contact with the families, senior citizens and shut-ins it serves regularly. With the mandated closing of schools, daycare facilities and

businesses, the Army has been providing “in house at a social distance” enrichment programs, encouragement and even personal phone calls. Bannon said, “We anticipate this relief and recovery to last for a long time. The Salvation Army, through its 7600 centers of operation, is working around the clock to meet local needs.” Corporate sponsors who can provide financial or in-kind support (food, health, personal products) are greatly needed as never before. The Army needs our help so it can continue doing “the most good,” as its slogan says.

How can you help the Salvation Army “do the most good?”

– If you are connected to corporations that can assist financially or give large in-kind donations, please contact the Army immediately at national headquarters. You can call your local Salvation Army and ask how you can volunteer.

–Follow this link to give financially online.

–Pray for the hundreds of staff and volunteers who are putting themselves on the front lines at the greatest point of need. They need our prayers to stay well, healthy and sustained as they provide not only for people’s physical needs but provide words of encouragement and wisdom.

You can get in the fight right from your home knowing we all serve a good God. As we remember the biblical story of how Jesus provided the increase of fish and loaves when there wasn’t enough, pray that God does just that at this time. Help them show others how God heals and surrounds us all with His arms—even when it doesn’t seem there is enough. He is a God of life and life everlasting, and He is the ultimate answer.

Onward, Christian soldiers! {eoas}

Kathleen Cooke’s *devotional Hope 4 Today: Stay Connected to God in a Distracted Culture encourages readers to engage with God. As co-founder of Cooke Media Group and The Influence Lab, she publishes a bimonthly journal. Find out more at or on*

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