Dear Friends,

Recently I had the opportunity to speak with my sister and wish her a “Happy Birthday.” I paused to offer a brief prayer of thanks for the fact she is still with us today. There was a time I did not know if she would be, as she faced some possible life-threatening obstacles in her life. One of the significant things that helped my sister through all she faced was the strong and loving support of a tremendous family.

As you read through this issue of our newsletter, you will find the many faces of homeless people we serve. No, we are not just speaking of those who stand at the intersection holding up signs asking for donations. We are talking about homeless people seeking real help, a real family, and strong support.

During the past weeks I have received a few e-mails from ladies who at one time were residents of our women’s shelter Sally’s House. They were e-mails thanking me and the staff for being there for them and helping them get to where they are now. Ladies who have earned their GED, graduated college, gained stable employment, purchased their first homes, regained custody of their children and remained clean and sober.

What are they thanking us for? For becoming the strong, loving family they never had and giving them the support they needed to overcome the many obstacles in their lives.

You are a part of our family. Because of your generous support, we are able to see many homeless and lost people turn their lives around, get back on their feet and become all God wants them to be!

On behalf of all those we serve, thank you for your support. Thank you for being there for us so we can be there for them.

God Bless You!

Major Chris Flanagan
Area Commander
Greater Houston Area Command
Conroe Corps Breaks Ground on New Shelter
Wayne Bergstrom Center of Hope will triple current emergency shelter capacity

On February 27, The Salvation Army held a groundbreaking ceremony for Conroe’s new homeless shelter, The Wayne Bergstrom Center of Hope.

Serving the Montgomery County community since 1984, Conroe Corps offers program support that includes social services, Christmas assistance and emergency shelter.

While the Corps continues to do all it can to serve its community, the increase in the homeless population in Montgomery County has put a strain on the current emergency shelter. The shelter, which can comfortably fit 20 individuals at any given time, has had to accommodate more than 60 plus individuals, more and more frequently.

The current location is limited in who it can serve. Single fathers with children, single mothers with teenage sons or a whole family unit, cannot be kept together in the current shelter.

Families are separated because of safety issues. For a family that is already going through a traumatic experience, separation only adds pressure to an already difficult situation.

Currently, the Corps rents hotel rooms for these families so they can remain together. In the new shelter, families can stay together in one of four family rooms.

The Wayne Bergstrom Center of Hope will be able to serve three times the number of people the current shelter does. The Center will be 15,700 square feet and will accommodate 64 men, 48 women and four families. The Center will also have a cafeteria, children’s playground and a multi-purpose space for men, women and families.

The new Wayne Bergstrom Center of Hope is scheduled to open in early 2016. The current Conroe Corps building will be used for administration, education and church services.

Social Services Helping House Homeless Young Adults
Young Adult Resource Center is the only day center of its kind in Houston

Life is full of promise when you are young. To see young adults on the streets instead of going to college or starting in the workforce can be disheartening. How can this happen? Some age out of foster care, others because of a traumatic experience—a parent’s death, addiction, delinquency—while others it is due to their family’s rejection of their sexual orientation.

For these young adults, there are few options. The Salvation Army Social Service opened the Young Adult Resource Center (YARC) in 2013, to address the fact that these young adults—ages 18 to 25—had no access to daytime services. At YARC, young adults have the opportunity to engage in different social and educational activities while having access to case managers ready to help them.

“It takes time for young adults to trust you,” explained Rafael Sarango, Social Services’ Young Adult Program Manager. “For many of them, it is because of an adult that they are on the streets. On the other hand, it only takes one caring adult to make a difference in their life.”

This was the case with Bilal Jaffri. At age 18, he found himself homeless. After being on the streets for some time he was referred to YARC. Sarango was his case manager and was able to help him get an apartment and secure a few months rent so Jaffri could find a job and be independent. Today, Jaffri is a Peer Intake Case Manager at YARC, where he serves as a familiar face to clients and motivates them to do better for themselves.

Once young adults are ready to receive help, YARC focuses in helping them in four areas: housing, education, employment, and their overall well-being. Each client’s situation is unique and the Salvation Army Social Services office works with each client to see what assistance they need in order to start their adult life on the right foot.

Donate your appliances, clothing, furniture, household goods and other items to the Adult Rehabilitation Center. To schedule a pickup, call 1-800-SA-TRUCK (728-7825) or visit satruck.org.
How Your Contributions are Making a Difference
Meeting human needs in His name without discrimination

For 125 years, The Salvation Army of Greater Houston has been serving those most in need in our community. Today, the Army helps prevent and combat homelessness through several programs, including Social Services, Harbor Light Center, Sally’s House, Family Residence and the Conroe Corps Emergency Shelter.

The Grooms Family

Despite being raised by parents with severe mental illnesses, Dalesia Aprill Grooms found professional success at an early age. After gaining experience, she climbed the corporate ladder and had three children. Unfortunately, life took an unpleasant turn and after fourteen years she left her well-paying job as she dealt with postpartum depression and had better care for her children.

After a legal dispute, one of the children’s fathers accused Grooms of neglect to Child Protective Services, a claim that was later disproved. After five months, she got her children back but her savings were depleted and she had no job. They were evicted and lived at a homeless shelter for six months.

Once connected to our Fort Bend Social Services, the family moved to an apartment through the rental assistance program. She was also connected to other programs, including tax services, counseling and United Way’s THRIVE program.

Now her children are in school and she is working again. Soon, her youngest will be in school the full day and Grooms will be able to focus on her career again. “I am doing the best I can for my family and my priority is that we stay together.”

Robert Negron

At the age of 43, Roger Negron was set. He had a job, a house, an established life. In 2007, he accompanied a friend to Costa Rica and once there, he decided to take a chance and start his own business. Negron sold all his belongings back home in order to follow his dreams.

Despite his best efforts things didn’t work out and when his visa expired, he was deported back to the United States in 2014. Having nothing to return to, a family member offered him a place to stay. Unfortunately, with no transportation, securing a job was no easy task and after a few months it was time to move out.

Since January 2015, Roger has been at Conroe Corps’ emergency shelter. Three weeks into his stay, he met a volunteer who offered him a position at his car dealership. Not only did they give him employment but they also helped him getting to and from work.

Negron is now starting again at 50, saving money so he can get his own place and a car. In the meantime, he is grateful for all the Army has done for him. Conroe Corps has given him the support so he can get back on his own two feet.

Shanel Thompson

Originally from New York, Shanel Thompson moved to Houston after early retirement in 2012. She was struggling with diabetes, had a stressful job and was unable to cope with her traumatic experience on September 11th and her mother’s death on the same day eight years before that.

Starting anew, she found a less stressful job, began eating healthier, and a few months later she no longer needed to take five insulin shots a day. A year after her move to Houston, she lost her job and lived with her sister-in-law for the next six months until her host relocated to another city. With no place to stay and her seasonal work as a cook not enough to afford an apartment, she sought shelter at Sally’s House.

For the next three months, she worked as a cook at Minute Maid Park and came to sleep at the Transient Women Center at Sally’s House. During her stay, a cook position opened up and she became a Sally’s House employee. With a stable income and help from a case manager, Thompson found an apartment in a senior living community, where she has been for the past five months.

Looking back, Thompson says, “I have no regrets. Texas saved my life. Thanks to Sally’s House I have a new and happier life.”
WHY I SUPPORT
THE SALVATION ARMY

CHRISTY MYERS
Retired Journalist

For more than 20 years, Christi Myers has been a great supporter of The Salvation Army’s Family Residence.

Covering a story on homelessness in the 80s, Myers visited Family Residence and was impressed by the work they do. “They help at the basic level and help clients become functional once again. The program works for those who put in the hard work.”

Not only that, but Myers remembers her mom telling her that her great-grandfather was a bell ringer in the early 1900s, so she was interested in getting involved with The Salvation Army.

Over the years, Myers has donated her time, talent and treasure. She has served as a judge for the Christmas door-decorating contest and provided gifts to the participants. She and her husband Russell Laughead have made financial contributions and her teenage daughter Laura has also gotten involved.

Laura volunteered this past summer at Family Residence, helping children read, leading activities and preparing gift bags for families moving into a place of their own. Most recently, Laura and her classmates hosted a Valentine’s Day party at Family Residence.

Three generations of serving the Salvation Army - why? “The Army helps people turn their lives around. I have seen clients have better lives because of their contact with the Army. If you want to make a difference, the Army is a wonderful place to do it.”

CHIC BOUTIQUE AFTER SALE
“Doing the Most Good” by Shopping!

The Salvation Army could not do all it does without the support of our local community. All the financial contributions made to The Salvation Army Houston Area Command stays in the greater Houston area.

One of the Army’s biggest supporters is the Salvation Army Women’s Auxiliary (SAWA). Chartered in 2003, SAWA is a fundraising arm of the Army, providing both financial and volunteer support to several Army locations including Family Residence, Sally’s House and The Salvation Army Boys & Girls Clubs.

Every year, SAWA hosts their largest fundraiser of the year, Reflections on Style, which includes the Chic Boutique, Runway Show and Luncheon. In its 11th year, Reflections on Style helps raise grant funds that will be awarded to several Army locations for program support throughout the year.

While attendance is limited for Reflections on Style event, the Chic Boutique 4-Day After Sale is open to the public. Help the Army in Doing the Most Good by shopping at the After Sale beginning Wednesday, April 15 through Saturday, April 18. Guests will find top shopping deals, including brand names from Chanel to Chico’s at a bargain price. All the money you spent at the After Sale will benefit The Salvation Army of Greater Houston.

To learn more about the Women’s Auxiliary, the After Sale or if you would like to make a clothing and accessory donation, please call 832-201-8023.

“REFLECTIONS ON STYLE”
CHIC BOUTIQUE
4-DAY AFTER SALE

Wednesday, April 15, 5-8 p.m.
Preview Night “First Look” ($20 donation at door)

Thursday, April 16 – Saturday, April 18
9 a.m. – 6 p.m.

6010 C Washington Ave. at Westcott Circle

Donate online at SalvationArmyHouston.org or call 1-800-SAL-ARMY (1-800-725-2769).