

Ringing For The Salvation Army

BY SARAH WETZEL
 For the Plain Talk

Those passing by the Salvation Army bell ringers during the holiday season might think differently when they realize how close to home these donations reach.

“Ninety-plus percent of the money stays locally and frequently if there’s a major disaster or a house fire or something we actually end up getting more than the funds we raised through the bell-ringing,” said Pat Flanigan, one of the main volunteers. “The Salvation Army itself takes care of all our book-keeping for us. What we do is we are the Vermillion Emergency Fund and that’s where all these funds go to. So people that are having their electric turned off or their gas turned off or are being evicted we take care of that and keep their power on, negotiate with the people they’re having to deal with. That’s where all the money goes to.”

According to Flanigan, the Salvation army in Vermillion gave out around \$14,000 to locals in need. “We have a maximum amount we can give to someone to help them out,” she said. “It’s only \$150 for one person in a year. So that kind of explains how many people are needing the assistance. And they need to be Clay County residence though we do have occasionally someone who’s travelling through and gets stranded so we can put them in a hotel for a night or maximum of two nights. Other than that the majority of the money is going to Clay County residents in need. It’s kind of an eye-opening thing to know.”

Anyone can volunteer their time to be a bell-ringer as a chance to give back to the community during the holiday season.

“If we can get people to sign up or donate that would be wonderful,” Flanigan said. “This past weekend I don’t think we had many people at all on Saturday and Sunday so we kind of lost out on fundraising there.”

The main times for ringing are on weekends from 9 a.m. until about 7p.m. in two-hour shifts.

Stations are set up at Wal-



COURTESY PHOTO

Community members are encouraged to either volunteer their time or donate to the Salvation Army bell-ringing campaign.

Mart, Hy-Vee and Ace Hardware.

“A lot of times we encourage people to go with two of you so one of you can step inside,” Flanigan said. “Hy-Vee is doing a nice thing where you actually go inside that inner area where the carts are and Ace if it’s really cold will let you do that. Wal-Mart will not let you move your kettle inside. If there are two of you, you can rotate moving in and out to warm up a little bit. I’ve been out there and you just dress nice and warm.”

Bell-ringers are welcome to get creative as they wish to kindle holiday spirit during their shift.

“George Schlenker took his little pocket trumpet and played that one year,” Flanigan said. “Abby Burbach and some of her friends went out and sang carols; I think there were like four or five of them. People can

be very creative and do all kinds of things to have fun out there. Somebody took their dog who enjoyed all the attention he got being outside with them. You get to talk to a lot of people coming and going.”

Flanigan herself has enjoyed the experience of ringing and seeing how giving people can be both in donating and ringing.

“Some of my favorites are people that obviously don’t have a lot and reach in their pockets and get the change they have,” she said. “I think they tend to be extremely generous in sharing what they have. On Saturday we had a couple of people ringing who had received help from Salvation Army so that was really nice. It was a way for them to kind of pay back a little bit.”

The bell-ringing fundraising campaign runs this year from

Friday, November 27 through Sunday, December 20 through donations are accepted all year.

According to the Salvation Army website, last year more than \$144 million was raised by bell-ringers nationwide.

The famous tradition began in December of 1891 by Captain Joseph McFee of the Salvation Army in San Francisco, CA.

McFee needed a way to raise money to feed 1,000 poor people.

He had the idea to place a pot out to collect donations from a similar process he saw in England.

“The next day, McFee secured permission to place a brass urn at the Oakland ferry landing,” the website reads. “Beside the pot, he placed a sign that read, ‘Keep the Pot Boiling.’ Soon, he had all the money he needed to fund the Christmas dinner. Two years later, McFee’s fundraising idea had expanded to 30 kettle locations on the West Coast. He’d grown the program with help from two young Salvation Army officers named William A. McIntyre and N.J. Lewis.”

The idea of the Christmas kettle and eventually bell-ringing to accompany spread further when McIntyre and Lewis were transferred to the East Coast.

The red kettles spread through Boston and New York City providing hundreds of thousands of Christmas dinners for the poor nationwide.

“In 1901, kettle donations in New York City funded a massive sit-down Christmas dinner at Madison Square Garden,” the website reads. “The meal became a tradition for many years.”

According to the website, bell ringers average \$30 per hour in donations collecting enough in two hours to provide a week’s worth of groceries for a family of four.

Those interested in donating their time to ring the bells at the kettles can sign up online at <http://www.signupgenius.com/go/20f0f4ba8a722abf94-2015>.

Contact the United Church of Christ in Vermillion at (605) 624-3120 for more information.

Southeast CASA Is Recruiting Board Members

The mission of the Southeast CASA Program (SECASA) is to advocate in court for safe, permanent homes for abused/neglected children from our communities. SECASA started in Yankton County in October 2011, and it has been present in Clay County since July 2015. With this expansion, SECASA is now seeking Clay County representation on its Board of Directors. Applications may be obtained at the SECASA office at 23 W. Main Street in Vermillion.

Board members support the work of SECASA and provide mission-based leadership and strategic governance. While day-to-day operations are led by SECASA’s Program Director and Program Development Assistant, the appropriate involvement of the Board is both critical and expected. Specific board member responsibilities include:

- Regular attendance at SECASA Board meetings.
- Reviewing outcomes of SECASA to evaluate its impact, and regularly measure its performance and effectiveness;
- Reviewing agenda and supporting materials prior to board and committee meetings;
- Approving SECASA’s annual budget, audit reports, and material business decisions; being informed of, and meeting all, legal and fiduciary responsibilities;
- Contributing to an annual performance evaluation of the Director;
- Assisting the Director and Board chair in identifying and recruiting other board members;
- Serving on fundraising committees and taking on special event assignments;
- Acting as an ambassador of the organization.

SECASA board members will consider SECASA a philanthropic priority. So that SECASA can credibly solicit contributions from foundations, organizations, and individuals, SECASA expects to have 100 percent of board members make an annual contribution commensurate with their capacity.

Terms of Board membership are three years, and the member would be eligible for reappointment for one additional term. Board meetings are held monthly, with committee meetings held as needed.

This is an extraordinary opportunity for an individual who is passionate about CASA’s mission.

If you have any questions regarding this position, please contact Southeast CASA at 760-4825.

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