Thoughts and dreams of a future can be shattered when there is an unexpected teen pregnancy, but the compassionate staff at The Salvation Army’s Teen Parenting Center has helped hundreds of young mothers overcome amazing odds to achieve success.

Andrea came to the Center nearly two years ago. At 17, she had dropped out of high school, was sleeping on friends’ couches, and was six months pregnant. After a transition period that included the birth of her daughter, Andrea responded well to the structure offered by the Center. She faithfully attended educational programs and benefited from parenting and independent living skills classes.

In addition, she completed a four week drug education program to deal with some lingering issues with drug use. For the first time in her life, she experienced the feeling of being supported by a “family,” which is how she referred to Center staff and other residents.

Andrea recently turned 19 and has a very positive outlook for her future. Having secured her GED, she will soon graduate from the Teen Parenting Center and move in to her own apartment. Andrea is in a training program at Onondaga Earth Corps, where she will soon begin full time employment. She has developed an interest in environmental issues and hopes to go to college to study environmental science.
Celebrating “Faces of the Army”

BY MAJOR GAYLE LUBY, CEO, ONONDAGA COUNTY
& CAPTAIN JOHN LUBY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CNY REGION

The Salvation Army is celebrating 150 years of global service to the most vulnerable people around the world.

In 1865, William and Catherine Booth started a fledgling evangelistic church to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ to the poor, homeless, the hungry and the destitute in London, England. They preached to and converted hundreds by walking the streets of London’s poorest neighborhoods, ministering to physical, emotional and spiritual needs and mixing music, songs and a near-charismatic ardor with a message of salvation.

One-hundred-and-fifty years later, The Salvation Army continues to meet people where they are with a message of salvation and hope. Our mission to “proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ and meet human needs without discrimination” helps volunteers, professional staff, officers and church members provide a level of service that has made The Salvation Army one of the country’s oldest and largest providers of social services. The Army’s ability to “see a human need and fill it” has enabled us to provide a wide range of diverse services to meet the needs of each community. You can see that in the variety of programs that we provide in Onondaga County, along with our ability to collaborate with other community agencies to meet human needs.

In Syracuse, we are celebrating The Army’s 150th global anniversary by honoring the “Faces of the Army” – the men, women and children who have been helped by The Army or have found a passion for helping others through volunteer service.

As Salvation Army officers, we have noticed that when we first meet people, they are eager to share their stories about ‘The Army. Some have been helped as children at Christmas time when their families were struggling, while others attended a Salvation Army camp or “rang the bells” at a red kettle location in their hometown.

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Richard Sitnik has had a remarkably successful life and now he is doing something remarkable through The Salvation Army to help others succeed as well.

What's the definition of a "hardscrabble life"? When life is difficult and people are poor, trying to scratch out a living to survive. That word fits Richard Sitnik's early life, the ninth child of a family of ten, sleeping on the floor, working summers at the muck farms.

The 85-year old-retired businessman Richard Sitnik, from East Syracuse, has worked enough years that he now can sit back and enjoy the warm weather in Florida in February as opposed to Central New York's ever present snow and frigid temperatures.

With a detailed memory, he can recount the struggling days during the Depression as the second youngest of ten children growing up in Eastwood. The days of working on the muck fields or at Crucible Steel while his classmates were still in school are long gone, but while on his way to becoming a self-made businessman, he never forgot.

And now he is in a position to help others move from poverty to success as he did. He's made a legacy gift to the Syracuse Area Salvation Army to continue programs and services to those in need, to provide a “hand up, not at hand out.”

It is one of the largest commitments ever made to a Salvation Army in the upstate region.

“I've studied other agencies and all offer worthy programs, but the wide range of services that The Salvation Army provides for kids, runaways, young mothers and seniors, I felt donating to the Army would be the wisest use of my funds and a tour of their facilities on South Salina Street demonstrated this to me. They help those in need and prepare them to be successful.”

“I wanted to show others that over the course of my life, in spite of difficult circumstances, working hard since I was young and becoming successful in my business, that others could achieve success too,” he added.

“Mr. Sitnik’s legacy gift is a donation that will change many, many lives for years to come,” said Major Gayle Luby, chief executive officer of the Syracuse Salvation Army. “We are so very humbled by his generosity to ‘pay it forward’ to help us mend broken lives. With such a legacy gift, we will be able to help clients grow and attain self-sufficiency,” she said. “Sometimes, a hand up is all that's needed to turn a life around,” she noted.

It's ironic that a Depression era program established to create jobs led to his family's fall onto hard times. One of the federal government’s WPA (Works Progress Administration) projects in Syracuse back then was creating jobs by the construction of a sewer line extension through the Eastwood area. Although heavily subsidized by the federal government, homeowners had to pay additional taxes on the new sewer system. The burden of paying for the new sewer lines fell on taxpayers and Mr. Sitnik's parents could not afford to pay those additional taxes, so they lost their house to foreclosure.

They moved into a small house situated between two sets of railroad tracks near East Syracuse, one set of tracks carried freight traffic and the other side passenger rail. “It wasn’t much of a house,” he said, adding that he had to sleep with three of his brothers in one small bedroom. The house had neither electricity nor hot water. The house was eventually condemned and the family moved back to Eastwood.

Sitnik's work career started at the tender age of 5 when he and his brothers and sisters worked on a local muck farm, topping onions and earning five cents for a bushel. His goal was to accumulate at least a dollar to give to his mother who was essentially raising the family by herself.

At the age of 12, he started working summers at the muck farm, earning one dollar a day, which increased over the next three years to $3.00 a day. In the winters, he reset pins at the Eastwood Bowling Alley.

The day after he turned 16, he was forced to leave school and took a job in a Brass Foundry to help contribute to the families' earnings. The following year, he and his brother went to work at Crucible Steel in Solvay, where he worked for 30 years except for a stint with the Army when he volunteered in 1951 that included a tour of duty during the Korean War.

Later, he helped his cousin for three weeks with his business of buying and selling wholesale surplus, and decided to give it a shot. With cash being tight, and success only a dream, he started this venture by purchasing a well beat up thirteen year old 1950 Dodge pick-up truck for $175.00 and still has the receipt. It would have been quite a sight for one to have seen this old truck going down some of the steep hills on Route 20 just south of Syracuse while streaming a blue streak of smoke from its exhaust pipe as he was calling on customers. “It was from this that I learned that I had a talent for selling,” he said. He then opened his own business, Hiawatha Fasteners, selling wholesale nuts and bolts and related hardware.

What made his business unique and innovative is that he sold the majority of hardware by the pound allowing his customers to browse through open bins of fasteners, choosing only the quantity they needed to get the job done, which kept costs down and created a niche market that virtually no one else was offering. He ran the successful business until he retired in 1995, “on April 1, shortly before I turned 65!” he said.

As he enjoys his Florida winter, he paused to describe another reason for his legacy gift to The Salvation Army, "I would be able to help many people who were in the same spot that I came from… I can help people in need become successful in life.”
Gifts That Give Twice
(Gifts received from January 1, 2015 to March 15, 2015)
Those who make Memorial or Tribute Gifts to The Salvation Army have chosen a meaningful, tangible way to demonstrate how much they care about someone while also helping the people we serve. These gifts may be sent to the Development Office at 677 South Salina St., Syracuse, NY 13202.

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Thank you!

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677 South Salina Street
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