Five Years of Helping Children & Families

My name is Rebecca. I am seven years old. Last night, my mom left me alone in the house. The police showed up and told me that I needed to come with them because I would be staying somewhere else for awhile. I was scared. I wanted my mom. Now I’m in a new house with people I don’t even know, in a bed that isn’t mine. Everything seems strange. Will these people be nice to me? How long will I be here? When will I see my mom again? I have so many questions.

This is the experience of a child who has been removed from her family and placed in foster care. While children often need to be removed from dangerous or abusive situations, it is always stressful to be separated from one’s family. Fortunately, in Syracuse, there is a place that supports children through this transition. It is called Family Place.

The mission of Family Place is to assist in establishing permanency for children who have been separated from their birth families and placed into foster care or with relatives. Family Place is a warm and friendly space where children may visit with their families for extended periods of time, multiple days per week. The facility has been designed to meet the needs of children going through a scary period in their lives. There are several large visitation rooms along with a kitchen and playground area that lend new opportunities for parents to interact with their children. Families can complete craft projects, do homework or play on the indoor playground together. They are encouraged to cook and eat meals together in the kitchen, and there is space in the visitation rooms to put little ones down for naps. Most importantly, it is a place where children feel safe.

In April, Family Place celebrated its 5th anniversary. The program has been a successful collaboration between The Salvation Army, Huntington Family Centers, Catholic Charities, and the Onondaga County Department of Social Services. Together, these agencies offer a wide variety of services to children in foster care and their families. In its first year, Family Place served 57 families and 119 children. Last year, those numbers grew to 202 families and 494 children.

One thing that makes Family Place unique is that it provides families with visitation opportunities soon after the children have been placed in foster care, helping to maintain the family bond and increase parental motivation to work on reunification. Family Place also provides transportation for children so that they can be present for multiple visits without burdening the foster family. Staff is available to supervise visits and facilitate positive parent and child interactions. One of the key elements of the program’s success is parent coaching, which helps adults develop the skills and coping strategies necessary to be successful as parents. While every effort is made to reunify children with their birth families, the best option for permanency may include adoption or being placed in the custody of a relative. The following Success Story spotlights the impact that Family Place has made on the lives of children in our community.

Julia has a four-year-old son, Bobby, and a one-year-old daughter, Ella. Julia has a history of substance abuse, depression and unstable housing. Before Ella was born, Bobby spent some time in foster care while Julia attended treatment programs. Upon successful completion of her programs, Julia and Bobby were reunited. When Ella was born, Julia became overwhelmed taking care of both children and made some bad choices. Both children were placed in foster care.

Julia was referred to Family Place, where she was able to visit her children while receiving treatment for her mental health and substance abuse issues. Julia visited Bobby and Ella on a regular basis and was appropriate during her visits. She benefited from parenting classes and support, learning to provide positive feedback to her children, pay attention to safety issues and provide consistent affection and support. At Family Place, she was able to introduce her children to new activities and play with them in a relaxed setting.

Thanks to Family Place, Julia improved her parenting skills while successfully completing her treatment programs. Julia has continued to receive some support services at home, helping her to be successful in finding a job, caring for her children and maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Julia’s life is an example of how, with the right interventions, challenges can be overcome so that children can be kept with their birth parents.

As Family Place celebrates its 5th anniversary, we pay tribute to Diane Shepherd-Oliver, the first director of the agency. Diane passed away in early 2010, but her legacy lives on through the incredible program that she helped to create. On April 12, 2011, colleagues, friends and family gathered at Family Place to dedicate a new indoor playground in her name. Diane’s spirit will always be part of this safe haven for children in foster care.

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By Linda M. Wright, ACSW Executive Director for Professional & Community Services

In this edition of Others, we are thrilled to introduce the members of our newly charted Young Leaders Advisory Council. The idea for a Young Leaders Council emerged in 2007, when members of our Advisory Board suggested that we reach out to a new generation of community leaders and ask them to share their talents, enthusiasm and energy to help build a strong future for The Salvation Army of the Syracuse Area.

While we have always had young professionals involved in The Salvation Army as volunteers, we felt they had the potential to fill leadership roles. By increasing their investment in the organization’s success, our Young Leaders will help us fulfill our vision of providing quality, compassionate services to individuals and families who are most in need in our community.

Over the last three years, the structure of the Young Leaders Advisory Council has taken shape, culminating in its official charter on February 10, 2011 at our Annual Business Meeting. The induction ceremony was presided over by Major Donald Hostetler, Empire Divisional Commander of The Salvation Army, where 18 enthusiastic young professionals were welcomed as charter members.

Even before their official charter, our Young Leaders contributed to the success of The Salvation Army. In 2009, inspired by the 30th Anniversary of Booth House (a safe haven for runaway and homeless teens), our Young Leaders set a goal of developing a signature fundraising event to support our programs. Several brainstorming sessions grew into a dream of a 3 on 3 basketball tournament with support from local businesses and sports figures.

After many months of planning, Turn-Around Jumpers became a reality, with SU men’s assistant basketball coach Mike Hopkins serving as our honorary chair, Le Moyne College hosting, and 67 men’s and women’s teams of varying ages participating in the tournament last June. The event was a tremendous success, raising over $22,000 for our programs and services. Turn-Around Jumpers will return to Le Moyne this summer on June 11 & 12 (go to sasyr.org for more details).

We are incredibly grateful to have such a bright and compassionate group of young professionals involved in and committed to the success of The Salvation Army...

THE SALVATION ARMY OF THE SYRACUSE AREA YOUNG LEADERS ADVISORY COUNCIL

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“"We are incredibly grateful to have such a bright and compassionate group of young professionals involved in and committed to the success of The Salvation Army...”"
It appears that winter has finally made its last swipe at upstate New York (or at least we all hope so!). Signs of spring are peeking up all around us. Whether it is the sight of the red-breasted robin, the shoots of the crocus peaking from the muddy earth, the taut buds on the trees waiting for the appointed time to burst forth with new leaves or flowers, or perhaps the warm sun shining in our window, we recognize the hope of a new day and new life, and we rejoice in these signs of the beauty of nature and the grace and goodness of God.

Hope is a small, but significant word in any language: esperanza ~ l’espérance ~ Hoffnung ~ hoppas ~ tovoo. Hope is defined as the feeling that what is wanted can be had or that events will turn out for the best; a feeling of trust, anticipation, optimism and faith (dictionary.com).

In The Salvation Army, hope has a historical context. We draw inspiration from our founders, General William and Catherine Booth, who in 1865 gave hope to the homeless, hungry and destitute people of London through a transformational hope-filled ministry. Some 146 years later, our work is still based on the teachings of our founders as we are motivated to provide hope to the most vulnerable in our community by our love for God and mankind.

With tremendous support from our community partners, volunteers and church members, we strive to be an army of hope for the greater Syracuse community. This army reaches out to individuals and families at their point of need with a word of grace, a prayer, a smile, a hug and a provision of practical ministry. The work of The Salvation Army around the world is an expression of this same army of hope, providing assistance during earthquakes, floods, tsunamis, hurricanes and other challenges that require physical, emotional and spiritual support.

The Salvation Army is very blessed to receive support from hundreds of corporations in the Syracuse area. One of those companies is G&C Foods, a food service redistributor that recently moved into the old P&C Warehouse on Walters Road in Van Buren.

At the very end of last year, we received a call from David Lepage, President of G&C, who shared a story about someone he knew who had benefitted from a Salvation Army program.

When reviewing the company’s charitable contributions for 2010, Mr. Lepage decided that The Salvation Army should be included on their donor list. We were, of course, very grateful.

Early in 2011, we stopped by to thank Mr. Lepage and take a tour of their new facility. G&C has been around for over 30 years, but recent success has allowed them to expand their workforce and make the move to a much larger warehouse space. Mr. Lepage shared, “I used to dream about our company having this kind of space. We feel very fortunate to be in a position where we can take over a dormant warehouse, give it a makeover, and put it to good use.”

There is no doubt that G&C has made a major commitment to this community. They have invested over $2 million to make improvements to the old P&C facility, which includes a work-out facility for their employees. In addition, the company has shared its success with its employees through a profit-sharing plan.

As our relationship with G&C demonstrates, nothing speaks more clearly to potential donors than the success of our programs. Developing a personal connection with The Salvation Army is why many of our donors choose to contribute. In your own circle of friends, family, and colleagues, there is most likely someone whose life has been affected by a Salvation Army program.

During the week of May 9-15, our army of hope will celebrate National Salvation Army Week, a week that was first designated by President Dwight D. Eisenhower who declared: “Among Americans, The Salvation Army has long been a symbol of wholehearted dedication to the cause of brotherhood. In time of war, the men and women of this organization have brought to those serving their country far from home, friendliness and warm concern. In the quieter days of peace, their work has been a constant reminder to us all that each of us is neighbor and kin to all Americans.”

During National Salvation Army Week, we take the time to thank our generous donors and volunteers who help us bring hope and comfort to those in need. Our celebration this year will include a mayoral declaration at City Hall, donut deliveries to contributors and veterans groups, special events for seniors and youth and a community concert to recognize volunteers and staff who have expressed a “Can-Do” spirit through their service and life.

As spring comes into full bloom, our army of hope receives strength and comfort from our faith in a God of hope, a God who keeps us grounded and reminds us that we are part of something much bigger than ourselves. May we keep this faith as we continue our work in the year ahead.

“...and when we have this hope, we are very bold. There is a great gulf fixed between him that has the hope in Christ, and him that has not” ~ Hebrews 6:19-20

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Theresa Ripley is a great example of how volunteers are so important to the success of our programs. Theresa is a retired school teacher (Onondaga Central) who has chosen to share her creativity and talents with The Salvation Army. She volunteers in our After School Program, where she comes armed with teaching materials to keep the students engaged.

When asked what she likes about volunteering with these students, she shared, “Each day I tutor, I have a memorable experience, whether it be sitting and reading a good story, helping with homework, or playing a game. I really love seeing kids’ faces light up when they see something with which they’re not familiar. Last week … I brought in a sample of an uglu fruit … they all wanted to know what it was as soon as I pulled it out of the bag. They smelled, examined, and felt it.”

Theresa really likes moving from room to room and working with all age groups. She feels that she is part of a team, forming meaningful relationships with both teachers and students. When asked why she chooses to volunteer with The Salvation Army, Theresa replied, “The Salvation Army provides a safe and structured environment for children. It is a wonderful place where the teachers stress the importance of doing homework and treating each other respectfully. I like sharing my knowledge as a former elementary teacher to help the children and staff in any way that I can.”

When she’s not tutoring, Theresa enjoys cooking, reading, golfing and traveling. Most of all, though, she enjoys spending time with her family and friends. We feel very fortunate to have Theresa as part of our Salvation Army family.

If you would like to contribute to The Salvation Army as a volunteer, please contact Boney McCabe at 479-3668 or BoneyMcCabe@use.salvationarmy.org.
Each year, Syracuse Area Services celebrates the occasion by 450-1356 for more information.

Seneca Lake near Penn Yan. Contact Georgina Seabrook at registration information.

Hopkins is back as our honorary chair. Please visit sasyr.org for take place at the Le Moyne College Athletic complex and Mike be bigger and better than last year. The games will once again 3 on 3 basketball tournament for men, women and youth will

August 18-22 for seniors) Each year, a group of Syracuse Turn-Around Jumpers (June 11-12) Our second annual

National Salvation Army Week (May 9 – 15) This week was first established by President Eisenhower in 1954. Each year, Syracuse Area Services celebrates the occasion by thanking our contributors.

Wegmans’ KidsCare Campaign (May 8 – June 18) Our friends at Wegmans are giving customers the opportunity to add a dollar to their grocery bill to support The Salvation Army’s programs for children. When you’re in the Wegmans’ check-out line, look for the scannable KidsCare gift vouchers.

Turn-Around Jumpers (June 11-12) Our second annual 3 on 3 basketball tournament for men, women and youth will be bigger and better than last year. The games will once again take place at the Le Moyne College Athletic complex and Mike Hopkins is back as our honorary chair. Please visit sasyr.org for registration information.

Christmas in July While the weather is good, well like to get a jump start on our Christmas Campaign. If you can help by sponsoring a toy drive or mini red kettle campaign, please call Tony Morales at 479-1321.

Long Point Camp (July 18-22 for youth and August 18-22 for seniors) Each year, a group of Syracuse area youth (ages 6-12) and seniors spend a week on beautiful Seneca Lake near Penn Yan. Contact Georgina Seabrook at 458-1536 for more information.

Civic Celebration Luncheon (September 26) This year, The Salvation Army will honor the following individuals for their contributions to this region: County Executive Joanne Mahoney, Dr. Debbie Sydow and Eric & Judy Mower. In addition, former National Commander of The Salvation Army, Commissioner Israel L. Gaither, will be our keynote speaker. For sponsorship opportunities or to reserve a table, please contact Peter Irwin at 479-1319.

New Booth House Director Named

We are very excited to welcome Kevin Walton as our new Program Director for Booth House. He has been the case manager at Booth House since May of 2006 and has extensive experience and a passionate commitment to at-risk youth in our community.

Kevin considers the Booth House staff and residents to be part of his extended family and he is very excited to serve in his new role.

We look forward to Kevin’s leadership as Booth House continues to provide a safe haven for teens in our community. Kevin was born and raised in Kingston, Jamaica and came to the US in 1985. He credits much of his success to his grandmother, Ivy May White, who recently passed away.

Day Care Centers Upgraded

Two of our Salvation Army Day Care Centers are brighter and more durable following major renovations that included new flooring and play rugs, storage cabinets and painting. The sites, which annually serve up to 375 children, ages six weeks to five years old, are now better equipped to meet the needs of our very active youngsters. We are most grateful to the Dorothy and Marshall M. Reisman Foundation for its generous assistance that made the flooring phase of this project possible.

Most of the families we serve lack traditional support systems and face additional challenges associated with poverty. Our affordable, accessible day care allows parents to concentrate on making the life changes necessary to stabilize their families, because they are confident that their youngsters are well cared for in a safe, high-quality setting.

Your Lasting Touch

Each year, we receive calls from friends who want to include The Salvation Army in their will, and also want that gift to specifically support programs in the greater Syracuse area. To achieve that goal, the following exact wording should be used.

I bequeath to The Salvation Army Syracuse Area Services with offices at 677 South Salina Street, Syracuse, NY 13202, to be used solely and in its entirety for the ongoing programs and services provided by The Salvation Army Syracuse Area Services, the following:

Your Lasting Touch

Gifts That Give Twice (Gifts recorded from January 24, 2011 to April 11, 2011) Those who make gifts in honor of another or memorial gifts to our Salvation Army of the Syracuse Area have chosen a meaningful, tangible way to demonstrate not only how much they care about someone they love, but how much they care about their community.

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