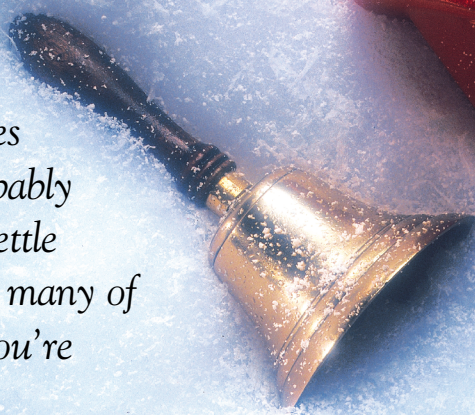


BELLS ARE RINGING:

The Red Kettle Campaign

by Monica Koch

You know the holidays are just around the corner when you start seeing the Red Kettles out around town. You've probably dropped a few dollars in the kettle already this season. And, like many of us, you might wonder what you're donations are being used for.



For many of us, the Red Kettle Campaign's cheerful, bell-ringing volunteers have been a fixture at holiday storefronts for our entire lives. They've just always been there. If you're like me, you've probably dropped in the odd dollar here and there throughout the holiday season—change from your last purchase, the odd bill floating in your pocket, or maybe your car's cup holder worth of small change, left from all those drive-through lunches. You may have even volunteered to ring bells for a few hours through work or a service organization.

Have you ever wondered where all the money they collect in those kettles goes? We here at FOX CITIES Magazine did, so I decided to check it out. I always assumed (correctly, I found) that because the money was going to The Salvation Army it was being put to good use, but I wanted to know exactly what I, and everyone who donates, was paying for.

I met with Robb Waugus, Development Director for The Salvation Army – Fox Cities at their building near Downtown Appleton at

eleven-thirty one Thursday morning. The parking lot was already starting to fill and I could smell cooking. Turns out, The Salvation Army – Fox Cities is the only organization in the area that provides a free lunch to anyone who needs it, seven days a week.

I wasn't sure where to go to meet Robb, so I waited in line at the reception desk with a couple of other women, a family with three small children, and a very nice man who opened the door for me when it was my turn. I came to learn that many people

wait in that line every day, requesting assistance with food, shelter, clothing, childcare, and more. "Our

agency is kind of a safety net for people who have slipped through the cracks. We've seen people from all walks of life come through here," Robb later told me. It sounds cliché, but it's true.

Throughout my conversation with Robb, I learned that the holiday

Red Kettle Campaign, which also includes mail-ins and end-of-year corporate donations, not only funds high-profile holiday programs like Adopt-a-Family, Coats for Kids, and the Toy Shop, but actually accounts for about half of the following year's operating budget. And when the holidays are over and the rest of us get back to our daily lives, The Salvation Army is still going strong, helping people all over the Fox Cities.

The lunch program, or Noon Feeding Program, is one of the most noticeable daily operations at The Salvation Army – Fox Cities.

The Salvation Army came to the Fox Cities in 1917. This year marks 90 years they've been serving our area. The Salvation Army has been rated in the top ten best-managed charities in the country by Forbes for eleven years.



"We served 61,000 meals last year," Robb told me. "We see 200 plus people every day." I toured the facility's industrial kitchen with him just as the volunteers (there is only one paid staff member in the kitchen) were wrapping up lunch preparations. As we passed bakery racks filled with buns for the hot-beef sandwiches on the menu that day, Robb explained to me that all of the food they prepare is either donated by restaurants and bakeries (here he pointed to the buns), or purchased with donated money. At that point, Robb told me that most of the people I passed in the kitchen were volunteers. Often times service organizations like Rotary or Kiwanis will have set days that they serve. I later had the privilege of speaking with a retired gentleman who became involved with the program through the Golden K Kiwanis Club, by the name of Bill Selle.

Thrivent Kettle Match Day: December 7th, 2007

Every year for the past three years, Thrivent Financial has chosen one day during the Red Kettle Campaign where they will match, dollar for dollar, the money collected in every kettle in the Fox Cities that day.

Bill, the retired former Director of Fraternal Benevolence and Vice President of AAL (now Thrivent), told me, "We have volunteered for a number of years at least three times a month preparing the meal and serving the meal at noon. I go every time with the Golden Ks. I've done it for four or five years now." Bill, Robb told me, pours the milk for the Noon Feeding Program when he volunteers, and his dedication has earned him The Salvation Army's "Volunteer of the Year" award.

After touring the kitchen, Robb showed me The Salvation Army's food pantry, which, in the Fox Cities, gives out about twenty tons of food per month to income-qualified families. "What we've been seeing here locally is an increase in need with companies closing or relocating. The food pantry sees thirty to sixty families a day," Robb told me. We said "hi" to the woman who was staffing the food pantry, and I watched as

the family that had been behind me in the reception line earlier filled a cart with groceries.

In addition to filling an obvious need for meal assistance, The Salvation Army has several year-round programs that help down-on-their-luck Fox Cities residents in many other ways. The Salvation Army – Fox Cities also runs Project Home, a transitional housing facility; Scattered Site Housing provides households with rental and support services assistance; they provide "Values-Based Child Care" at their Menasha Worship and Community Center; the Voicemail Program provides voice mailboxes for people who can't afford phone service and need a way for people, like potential employers, to get in contact with them; and, they have funds available for emergency assistance. If they can't help someone, they refer to other agencies throughout the Fox Cities.

The Salvation Army has a finger in nearly every charitable pie in the area, and worldwide. Robb told me, "There's probably not a program that The Salvation Army is not involved in: missions, disaster relief—we serve the needs of the communities we're in. Need is worldwide."

What many may not know, too, is to quote Robb, "When you talk about The Salvation Army, it's an army of volunteers." Reliance on volunteer support enables them to direct more funds toward serving the community.

When I asked Bill Selle why he volunteers to ring bells every year with his fellow Kiwanians (and for the last two years, Lawrence University student and cellist Tad Lietz), he told me, "We've seen the benefits from the meal programs, and we feel that many more people would benefit from the money collected at the Red Kettle program. I've been doing that (bell ringing) for three or four years now. I've done it every year, and I commit myself because I see the benefits to those people who are needy in the



Thrivent Kettle Match Day is one example of how organizations and volunteers in our community lend a helping hand.

community—men, women, and children especially. I am touched when families go by with their little children and look at us and the children wonder what we're doing here. On occasion I will let the little children ring the bell, and I keep loose change in my own pocket to let the children put in the kettle."

Bell-ringers are still needed!
If you've got just two hours to spare, consider signing up online at www.safocities.org or calling the East North Street office at 955-1225.

So now I, and you, my readers, know what your holiday donations really fund. Next time you pass a Red Kettle bell-ringer, drop a few dollars in with confidence, knowing you're doing your part to support an agency who, in turn, does more than their part to support the needs of our community.

Steaks • Brats • Chicken Homemade Soup • Salads

APPLETON EAST
1309 E. Wisconsin Ave.
(920) 738-0100

GRAND CHUTE WEST
2369 W. Wisconsin Ave.
(920) 738-0116

APPLETON KENSINGTON (Next to Menards)
221 South Kensington Dr.
(920) 739-5969

OPEN DAILY AT 10:30AM



Award-winning food cooked over **REAL Charcoal**

TRY WISCONSIN'S FIRST ALPHA OXY LED LIGHT SPA!

Increase your immune system and reduce stress.

Experience what our light spa can do for you in 30 minutes.

We can turn on the sunshine and give you a boost.

Offering meditation, high-heat detox, and more.

True Essence
Aura & Chakra Photography, LLC
1138 West Mason Street, Green Bay
920-884-7327



**BUY
2 SESSIONS
AND GET
ONE FREE!**