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Salvation Army breaks ground for two new Austin facilities

By Jan Gunter

Donors and supporters of the Salvation Army Austin Area Command gathered in the Texas sunshine on June 29 to break ground for two new facilities in East Austin: the Rathgeber Center for Women and Children – A Salvation Army Shelter, and the Citadel Corps Community Center and Area Command. The two buildings, one on Tannehill Lane and the other on Manor Road, will be constructed with funds raised in the record-breaking capital campaign that exceeded the phase two goal of \$17 million by raising \$19.2 million for four local projects.

Mayor Pro Tem Kathie Tovo and Travis County Commissioner Jeff Travillion were

among the dignitaries participating in the celebration. Both projects are being built on land donated by philanthropist and Salvation Army Advisory Board member Dick Rathgeber.

“This is the perfect example of government and philanthropy coming together,” Rathgeber said. “We’re so grateful to the City of Austin and Travis County for making it possible for us to serve more women and children, the most vulnerable of all our citizens.”

Also at the groundbreaking, the Women and Children’s Endowment was announced, established with a seed gift by Cathy and Randy Present, Salvation Army Advisory Board Member, to help with the operational expenses of the new emergency shelter. A donation to the

endowment will help ensure that The Salvation Army Austin will be able to help women and children transition from homelessness to self-sufficiency. People wishing to donate can do so at SalvationArmyAustin.org. Anyone donating \$500 or more to the endowment will have a named paver in the Pathway of Hope at the new shelter.

“Thousands of people in our community are shut out of the prosperity that so many enjoy,” said Major Andrew Kelly, The Salvation Army Austin Area Commander. “Among them are women and children who are experiencing homelessness. The new shelter will be a safe haven for them and will help them move from crisis to self-sufficiency.”



PHOTOS BY LICARIONE PHOTOGRAPHY

Commissioner Jeff Travillion, Jammie Ruebsahm, Major Andrew Kelly, Dick Rathgeber, Mike Nasi, Mayor Pro Tem Kathie Tovo, Dwight Thompson, Jan Lehman.



Salvation Army Advisory Board Members: Dwight Thompson, Rudy Garza, Freddie Proffitt, Jan Lehman, Mike Nasi (board chair) with Commissioner Jeff Travillion.



Salvation Army Austin Advisory Board Chair Mike Nasi.



Dick Rathgeber, Mayor Pro Tem Kathie Tovo.



Jennifer Mouritsen, Jammie Ruebsahm, Julie Metzger.



Advisory board member Neel White, Pam White, Major Amy Kelly (associate area commander.)



Ellen Muira with Dick and Sara Rathgeber.



Julie Metzger with Advisory Board members Rob Golding and Lee Doughtie.



Jammie and Ryan Ruebsahm.



Advisory Board members, David Barnett and Katherine Nelson.

The Wait Until 8th Pledge helps establish technology habits

By Molly Kendrick

This year, Brooke Shannon’s oldest daughter is starting 4th grade. When Grace arrives at school, she’ll reach in her backpack for shiny notebooks, crisp folders, and sharp pencils. What’s missing?

Grace and 20 other children in her grade have parents who have taken the Wait Until 8th pledge at www.waituntil8th.org. They are pledging not to give their children smart phones until they reach at least 8th grade.

Grace’s mom, Brooke Shannon, and several other parents started the Wait Until 8th pledge as a way to combat the pressure to get their elementary-age children smart phones. Since they launched the pledge in March, more than 650 parents from 200 schools in 35 states have signed the pledge.

Way back in 1st grade, Grace started seeing older students with smart phones, and began campaigning to have one of her own. As Grace climbed



Brooke Shannon

the elementary school ranks, Brooke saw smart phones become an increasingly popular present for 5th graders. Over the next few years, the phones trickled down to younger children. Pretty soon she observed 1st and 2nd graders attending school and play dates with the latest iPhone clutched in their tiny hands.

Ten is now the average age a child receives a smartphone. By age 12, 50 percent of children have social media accounts. On average, eight to twelve year olds



Ashley and Ben Cannati

are on their devices for four and half hours a day.

Brooke and her fellow pledgers felt growing concern about how this screen time impacts children. After doing a little research, they discovered leaders in the technology industry had similar concerns. Bill Gates has stated that he didn’t let his children have cell phones until they reached the ripe old age of 14. Steve Jobs made similar comments about limiting his children’s use of smart phones and iPads.

Brooke kept reading. In *The Wired Child: Reclaiming Childhood in the Digital Age*, author and adolescent psychologist Richard Freed reviews the negative impact of smart phones on developing brains. Digital entertainment is a distraction for what children’s minds do best — learn. *The Journal of the Association for Commercial Research* published a study that suggests smart phones can distract even while turned off.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommend that children have no access to technology as infants, and then very limited access as children. Child psychologists advocate either 12 or 14 as a healthy age for children to start using smart phones.

Brooke reached an important conclusion — “After reading numerous studies and articles, it was clear we needed to wait on this milestone until at least 8th grade. Childhood is just too short to waste.” Kids aren’t the only ones

who need convincing that smart phones aren’t necessary. Many parents want their children to have smart phones as they enter middle school, so they can keep in touch more easily when their children enter a larger school.

Wait Until 8th is only focused on smart phones. If you want to give your child a flip phone to use in emergencies, you can still be part of the pledge.

Yes, flip phones! They still exist, although these days, many parents find it all too easy to give their child an old smart phone. According to Brooke, “Parents should consider the basic flip. It just calls and texts, and avoids many of the distractions and the dangers that come with a smartphone. All of the major carriers make them.”

Wait Until 8th has grown rapidly since it began in March. “I’m really excited about the movement, and pleasantly surprised with the number of people who are ready to jump on board,” Brooke says.

Ben and Ashley Cannati are another pair of Austin parents who have joined the pledge. Ben says of the pledge, “We’re willing to sacrifice the perceived conveniences of these devices for a better future for our children.”

There is something to be said for strength in numbers. Parents have told Brooke that they want to wait to give their child a smart phone, but they fear social isolation — what if your child is the only one without a smart phone? Will they feel left out?

Luckily for Grace, she’ll have at least 20 other children in her grade who don’t have their eyes glued to a touchscreen. Childhood is a time to expand horizons, not limit them to a smart phone. Brooke’s hope is that by establishing good technology habits with her daughters now, those habits will follow them into adulthood.

To learn more about the Wait Until 8th campaign, go to www.waituntil8th.org.



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