Fighting Homelessness

Learn how Down for the Challenge helps people in need

Behind the Scenes
with Vikings legend John Randle

Rappeler Spotlight
Meet some of today's rappelers and find out why they're Down for the Challenge

Fighting Homelessness
Learn how Down for the Challenge helps people in need

July 29-30, 2022 | Omni Viking Lakes Hotel
On June 10, a crowd of community leaders and media members gathered on the rooftop of the Omni Viking Lakes Hotel for a press conference announcing this year’s Down for the Challenge urban rappelling event with the Minnesota Vikings.

Among the guests was Vikings legend John Randle, who spoke his mind about the current housing and homelessness crisis in the Twin Cities.

“Seeing this happening here really gets to me,” said the Hall of Famer, who’s been living in Minnesota for nearly 30 years. “I know what people are going through – my mom raised us on $23 per week. And I know there’s something we can do about it. I’m hoping that the Viking nation is listening.”

Listening indeed: Nearly 300 rappelers answered the call to fight homelessness by participating in today’s thrilling event. Together, they supported our goal of raising $1 million for Salvation Army housing and homelessness-prevention programs.

These programs are more important than ever, as record-setting costs for food, fuel and housing push thousands of Minnesotans into poverty.

The Salvation Army is on the frontlines of this crisis, providing housing and shelter for up to 1,050 people every night, while offering financial assistance and case management services that last year helped save about 3,700 households from eviction.

Thank you to every rappeler, donor and partner for contributing to this year’s Down for the Challenge event.

“Your support will allow The Salvation Army to help people and families get through these tough times,” said Lt. Col. Dan Jennings, leader of The Salvation Army Northern Division. “God bless you all for being Down for the Challenge.”

Help fight homelessness by scanning the QR code to make a donation.
CONTENTS

Meet the Rappelers | 4
Learn more about our rappelers and why they’re *Down for the Challenge*

11 Dodging Bullets
Single mom finds a home after dangerous incident

13 Behind the Scenes
A hilarious video starring Vikings legend John Randle

16 Igniting Hope
House fire can’t extinguish single father’s resolve

THANK YOU TO OUR EVENT SPONSORS

Special thanks to our presenting sponsor, the Minnesota Vikings

www.SalvationArmyNorth.org
Rappeler Spotlight

Today’s rappelers are participating in Down for the Challenge for all kinds of reasons. Some want to overcome their fear of heights. Others are Vikings fans who want to do something courageous at training camp. Still others enjoyed last year’s event so much that they are back for more.

The following pages shine a spotlight on five incredible rappelers and their reasons for joining this year’s Down for the Challenge.

All five rappelers share one common goal: ending homelessness.

Wireless savings are closer than you think.

Come see what your local Xfinity Store has to offer.

Visit your local Xfinity Store and see how the Switch Squad makes switching to Xfinity Mobile fast and easy. They’ll help break up with your current carrier for you and get you connected to the most reliable wireless network. Plus, switching can save you hundreds on your wireless bill.*

*Based on weighted average of consumer reported savings compared to current charges for top 3 carriers. See xfinity.com/mobile/learn/savings-calculator. Xfinity Internet required. Reduced speeds after 20 GB of usage/line. Actual savings vary.

Go to xfinitystores.com to schedule an in-store appointment.

Save hundreds a year on wireless when you switch to Xfinity Mobile. Plus, get nationwide 5G included.

Learn more about our fast, reliable Internet and demo the Xfinity Voice Remote.

1-800-xfinity   xfinity.com   Visit a store today

Restrictions apply. Not available in all areas. Line limitations may apply. Based on weighted average of consumer reported savings compared to current charges for top 3 carriers. See xfinity.com/mobile/learn/savings-calculator. Xfinity Internet required. Reduced speeds after 20 GB of usage/line. Actual savings vary. Most reliable based on RootMetrics US Report. Results vary. Not an endorsement. NPA238520-0006
Devonne Mayweather is Down for the Challenge because he doesn’t want anyone to know how horrible it feels to be homeless.

The 35-year-old single father knows from experience: He was homeless for about 10 years, often sleeping on trains, in dumpsters, and inside of playground slides.

The colder it was outside, the more desperate he became to meet his needs.

“When it’s cold outside, there’s no telling what you’ll do – anything to make money for food and a warm place to sleep,” Devonne said.

Several years ago, while sleeping on a train, he awoke and locked eyes with somebody he knew and respected. The moment was a turning point.

“I was embarrassed and didn’t want that to happen again,” Devonne said. “I was tired of having nowhere to go. I wanted to show my kids something better.”

Three years ago, The Salvation Army helped Devonne find subsidized housing. He’s been living in his own apartment in Minneapolis ever since – and loving it.

“Having your own space, your own safe zone, is incredible,” he said.

Devonne is thrilled to support Down for the Challenge because he knows his efforts – and his personal story – will help others overcome homelessness.

“I have a heart to help people,” he said. “I’m not ashamed to talk about my past, if it helps people.”

He is just as thrilled to rappel down the Omni Viking Lakes Hotel.

“I want to conquer this – and it will be motivating to see others do it,” he said. “I think it will be an awesome experience.”
Michelle

Michelle, 41, is Down for the Challenge for one simple reason: “Homelessness is a problem I’ve wanted to fix since I was a child, and this is one way I can contribute toward a solution.”

She works as a real estate agent in western Wisconsin. She is admittedly terrified of heights, but her fears have not stopped her from wanting to rappel and raise all of the money she possibly can.

“I am not opposed to begging if it comes down to the wire and I still need some cash,” she joked, adding that she raised money from friends, family and coworkers, and by selling some of her personal belongings she no longer uses.

Michelle is also excited for the event because she is a Vikings fan.

“At first I started liking them because they wear purple – best color ever!” she said with a laugh. “Most importantly, the Vikings have players doing wonderful work off the field, who give back to the community in such huge ways.”
Kris from Ramsey, Minn., was one of the first rappelers to sign up for this year’s Down for the Challenge event, and for good reason: She is passionate about fighting homelessness because she once was homeless herself.

Years ago, Kris endured six months of homelessness, despite being gainfully employed.

“I was unable to secure housing,” said Kris, 53, who now works as a residential coordinator. “Between crashing at my friends’ houses and sleeping in the back of my truck, there was never a dull moment.”

Eventually, she landed on her feet. But she will never forget how scary it felt to be homeless – a fear that pales in comparison to that of rappelling down a building.

“Being afraid to step off the building is only scary for a couple of minutes, but being homeless was scary for months,” she said.

Kris also participated in last year’s Down for the Challenge event at the Mall of America.

“I signed up to help others in need and to push myself out of my comfort zone,” she recalled.

“Being afraid to step off the building is only scary for a couple of minutes, but being homeless was scary for months.”

She is equally excited to be part of this year’s thrilling event at the Omni Viking Lakes Hotel.

“I never asked for help back when I needed it the most – pride, shame and embarrassment all stood in the way,” Kris wrote on her Down for the Challenge fundraising page. “Now I am asking for your support – not for myself, but for others that may find themselves in a tough situation.”
Tom McKenna is participating in *Down for the Challenge* because serving others is in his blood.

He spent years serving his country as a U.S. Marine and saw frontline action in Somalia and Iraq. Here at home, he saw firsthand the effects that frontline action can have on the physical and emotional health of his fellow veterans. One day, he saw a vet on a street corner and asked him what he needed. The vet said he needed socks and underwear because he’d been wearing the same clothes for a week.

That chance encounter motivated Tom to launch Every Third Saturday – a charity that distributes clothing, bedding and coats at the local VA Center to struggling or homeless vets. Since 2009, the organization has grown to offer a special program called Warrior’s Path – a five-week course focused on making positive change out of past trauma and difficulties.

When Tom heard about *Down for the Challenge*, he wanted to help The Salvation Army and those who are homeless.

“They have been great to us over the years,” he said. “They would come down and serve meals while we were handing out clothes to the vets at the VA Center.”

He and nine of his fellow vets will be rappelling to help those experiencing homelessness.

“It’s a cool event, really, and it’s a good cause,” Tom said. “And it’s a great way for us to give back.”

**THE SALVATION ARMY**

**Love Beyond Homelessness**

SalvationArmyNorth.org
Anna

Anna is a teenage girl and two-time rappeler who is wise, brave and giving beyond her years.

She participated in last year’s *Down for the Challenge* event when she was just 12 years old.

“I’d always wanted to rappel – it was on my bucket list,” said Anna, whose list also includes skydiving and traveling to Australia. “It was thrilling, and I wasn’t as scared as I thought I’d be.”

The 13-year-old is back for this year’s *Down for the Challenge*. She spent weeks raising money from her friends and extended family, and knocking on doors in her neighborhood.

“Everyone was so generous,” Anna said. “*Down for the Challenge* is perfect because you are doing something fun while helping the community.”

The avid Vikings fan and is delighted that this year’s event is being held at training camp. She looks forward to seeing the players practice while she is on top of the 14-story Omni Viking Lakes Hotel.

“I can’t wait to rappel,” Anna said. “Being so high up in the air gets me excited.”

“*Down for the Challenge* is perfect because you are doing something fun while helping the community.”

[www.SalvationArmyNorth.org](http://www.SalvationArmyNorth.org)
The Salvation Army’s *Down for the Challenge* rappelling event with the Minnesota Vikings seeks to raise $1 million for Salvation Army housing and homelessness prevention programs in the Twin Cities.

These programs are vitally important in the fight against Minnesota’s housing and homelessness crisis. Examples of this crisis include:

- **Nearly 20,000 people are experiencing homelessness in Minnesota.** *(Minnesota Homeless Study, Wilder Research)*

- **Homelessness could triple in coming years.** *(Finance and Commerce, 10/18/21)*

- **About 77,000 Minnesota households are behind on their rent.** *(PolicyLink, National Equity Atlas, 3/11/22)*

The Salvation Army is on the frontlines of this crisis. We are Minnesota’s largest nongovernmental provider of services for those experiencing homelessness, and we are an expert in homelessness prevention.

In Minnesota, our five emergency shelters provide a safe place to sleep for more than 450 people every night. Additionally, we operate dozens of facilities that provide temporary and permanent housing for hundreds of people at risk of homelessness.

We prevent homelessness by providing case management services, assistance with rent and utility bills, and other resources. Last year, these services helped prevent about 3,700 people and families from being evicted.

The following pages include stories about real people whose lives changed thanks to your support of The Salvation Army and *Down for the Challenge*. 

---

**Fighting Homelessness**

**77,000**

Minnesota households are behind on rent

90% are low-income

44% are people of color

$1,900 average amount of back rent

*National Equity Atlas, 5/9/22*
Dodging Bullets

Gunshots boomed outside of Katrina’s home near Chicago, Ill. Three bullets zinged through her house.

One of the bullets came within inches of hitting her teenage son.

“He could feel the wind from the bullet,” Katrina said.

After that terrifying moment in 2018, Katrina knew she had to move her family far away, immediately.

“Somebody was going to die if I didn’t do something,” said Katrina, a single mother. “I sold everything I could sell in my house and drove my kids to Minnesota.”

When the family arrived, they spent months living with friends and in hotel rooms.

In order to afford the hotel rooms, two of Katrina’s teenage kids got part-time jobs at a pizza place to supplement Katrina’s income working at a school and grocery store.

“Those were hard times,” Katrina recalled.

The hard times ended soon after she walked into The Salvation Army in Maplewood. There, Katrina received all the help she needed to get on her feet, including long-term mentoring from a Salvation Army caseworker, and practical resources such as food, winter coats, and school supplies.

“Those were hard times.”

Today, Katrina is doing better than ever. She has an excellent job, a bigger car, and a three-bedroom home.

“I don’t know what I would have done without The Salvation Army,” she said.

Scan the QR code to read the full story about Katrina
DONATIONS MATCHED!

Cub is proud to support *Down for the Challenge* by matching your donation, up to $75,000. Your gift of any amount will help The Salvation Army provide shelter and housing for Twin Cities families in need.

GIVE NOW BY SCANNING THE QR CODE
Behind the Scenes:
Vikings legend John Randle stars in TV commercial

Many of today’s rappelers were inspired to sign up for Down for the Challenge after watching a TV commercial starring Minnesota Vikings legend John Randle.

The commercial features Randle pumping up a crowd of rappelers on the Minnesota Vikings’ practice field, moments before they descend the Omni Viking Lakes Hotel.

Just before the group departs, a young girl steps out of the crowd and hands Randle a rope and helmet, telling him that he also should rappel.

A wide-eyed Randle looks at the 14-story building and reluctantly replies, “No, no, no – I don’t do heights!”

The playful commercial ends with the girl consoling Randle as they walk off the field together.

“Come on, Mr. Randle – it’s not that bad,” the girl explains, patting him on the back.

“We sincerely thank Mr. Randle for donating his time for this commercial and we applaud Mr. Bentz for his creative vision,” said Angel Fields-Mitchell, Marketing Director for The Salvation Army Northern Division.

The commercial aired locally on FOX 9 and was directed by St. Paul-based filmmaker Patrick Bentz.

“I’m too big – I need to be on the ground,” the Hall of Fame defensive tackle pleads.

Watch the TV commercial now by scanning the QR code

www.SalvationArmyNorth.org
Debra, 67, had done everything right in life. She was a wife, homeowner and successful businesswoman, with ample savings and investments.

“I was a typical suburban housewife, with a full and rich life,” said Debra, who spent years living in New Brighton, with careers as a securities broker, jewelry executive, and bridal consultant.

Last year, Debra found herself on the steps of The Salvation Army Harbor Light Center in Minneapolis, homeless. She had lost everything after a series of unfortunate events that spanned many years. Key events included:

- In 2010, Debra’s husband of 28 years walked out on her. He left their house to her.
- In 2011, her relatives defaulted on a $70,000 loan she’d given them to buy a home.
- In 2015, she could no longer afford her house. She was unable to work because she developed Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS), a virtually untreatable disorder that causes extreme fatigue. She sold her home and moved into an apartment in New Brighton, living off investments and savings.
- In 2017, she was evicted from her apartment.
after her savings and disability insurance payments ran out. A kindhearted friend allowed Debra to live with her for the next three-and-a-half years.

“I thought I was the strongest person I ever knew,” Debra said. “But everything that had happened brought me to my knees.”

**Starting over**

In May 2021, Debra moved out of her friend’s apartment when the friend became involved in a serious romantic relationship. By then, Debra was almost fully recovered from her CFS illness and wanted a fresh start. She found and was offered a job in Kansas City, Mo., but when she arrived to start the job, it was no longer available. Stranded, broke and frustrated, she used her stimulus payment to return to Minnesota.

Suddenly, Debra was homeless.

Scrambling to find her next move, a friend-of-a-friend suggested that Debra stay at the Harbor Light Center. The six-story shelter is the city’s largest homeless outreach facility, providing food and shelter for more than 200 men and women every night.

Debra would spend the next nine months at the Harbor Light Center healing her mind, body and soul. She spent much of her time reading, volunteering, and befriending other residents.

“Everything that had happened brought me to my knees.”

“Most of the women there are in a lot of pain,” Debra said. “They need someone to be present and listen to them.”

She also developed deep bonds with Harbor Light’s staff members.

“They are incredible at what they do,” she said. “They will be in my life forever.”

Debra’s time at the center ended in February when a caseworker helped her find her own apartment in Minneapolis. She is now fully recovered from her illness and wants to begin working again.

Debra is grateful for the help she received from The Salvation Army and our donors.

“I have never felt more at home than I did at the Harbor Light Center – it was an amazing experience,” she said.
Soon after Eric and his son Austin moved to Minnesota last summer, something unthinkable happened: A fire destroyed their home.

“It was traumatizing,” Eric said. “Everything we owned was gone.”

Two months earlier, Eric and Austin had moved to Minnesota from opposite sides of the country so that Austin could enroll in a respected charter school. Eric had been living in Los Angeles, Calif., where he dropped everything – including his job as a commercial plumbing estimator – to reconnect with Austin, who had been getting into trouble while living with his mom in Washington, D.C.

“I walked away from it all to help my son – there’s nothing I wouldn’t do for him,” said Eric, who drove to D.C. to pick up Austin.

Suddenly, Eric and Austin’s new life together in Minnesota had been torched. Their only remaining resources were Eric’s car, the money in his savings account, and the clothes on their back.

They moved into a hotel, scrambling to figure out what to do.

Igniting hope
Two weeks after the fire, Eric and Austin stopped by The Salvation Army to ask for help.

“I instantly broke down crying,” recalled Eric, whose savings were dwindling after spending $800 per week on hotel rooms. “My son and I were homeless, with no family or friends around.”

Thanks to your donations, The Salvation Army was able to take action. One of our caseworkers, Kandi, gave them food and clothing, and she helped Eric find a new place to live. Months later, Kandi saved Eric and Austin from eviction by providing

House fire can’t extinguish single father’s resolve
Salvation Army rent assistance funds when Eric was experiencing financial troubles.

"My son and I were homeless, with no family or friends around."

Today, Eric and Austin are doing fantastic. They have a stable home, and Eric recently secured a new job as a special education paraprofessional at Austin’s school.

The father and son were so impressed by The Salvation Army that they are now regular volunteers and members of our church.

“We are fascinated by the work of The Salvation Army and we want to be a part of it,” Eric said. “We made it with the help of The Salvation Army, and now it’s our time to give back.”

Kandi, Salvation Army Caseworker

Single mom on a Pathway of Hope

Hannah arrived in Minnesota from the West Coast in a minivan with her three little kids, no job, and almost no money. Her ex-husband had left them.

The Salvation Army helped her avoid homelessness and start a new life. Thanks to your donations, Hannah received rent assistance funds for a home, and she enrolled in a Salvation Army long-term mentoring program called Pathway of Hope. The program has provided Hannah with emotional and practical support in order to become self-sufficient after being a stay-at-home mom for six years.

Today, Hannah is doing great and is close to reaching her goals. She is nearly finished with classes to obtain her real estate license and to become a certified yoga instructor.

“I wouldn’t have been able to do this without all the resources The Salvation Army provided me,” Hannah said. “I always thought The Salvation Army was just a place to buy furniture – but now I know it’s so much more.”

www.SalvationArmyNorth.org

HOMELESSNESS 17
Glenda, 56, is proof that patience, positivity and perseverance pay off.

In 2010, she arrived at The Salvation Army Harbor Light Shelter in Minneapolis, homeless. She immediately enrolled in a nine-month wellness program, receiving a safe place to stay, three meals a day, and nonstop spiritual guidance.

“It was a tremendous help,” Glenda said. “I didn’t just read the Bible every day – I had to live it. I learned to take ownership of my mistakes and not play the blame game.”

Just when Glenda was about to graduate from the program, she suffered a major setback: She had unexpectedly developed neuropathy in her feet and fingers.

“By the time I left the program, I needed a walker,” said Glenda, who spent the next 10-plus years living in subsidized housing and receiving disability payments, occasionally working as a security officer when she had the strength.

Thankfully, the setback never broke her. She used the spiritual tools and life lessons she learned at the Harbor Light Center to always stay positive and productive – including regularly volunteering at the Harbor Light Center and attending college classes to earn a degree.

**Payoff**

Glenda’s patience and can-do attitude eventually paid off.
In May 2021, she graduated from college with a degree in individualized studies. “One of the proudest moments of my life,” she said with a smile.

Incredibly, she also overcame her physical limitations. “I realized it was more in my mind that I couldn’t walk,” she said. “I took a leap of faith, and soon I could walk on my own again.”

In January, she built on that momentum by securing a job as a case manager at The Salvation Army’s new 30-bed women’s shelter in Minneapolis. The facility provides long-term housing and support for women walking in the same shoes that Glenda once did. “I wanted to go back to where my heart is – The Salvation Army,” she said. “I can relate to these women. After all I’ve been through, I have the compassion, patience and wisdom to give them good direction.”

Glenda is thrilled about her new life, and she is grateful for the help she received from The Salvation Army thanks to your donations. “God has brought me a long way,” she said.

The Salvation Army provides nightly shelter and housing for up to 1,050 people in Minnesota.
THE MINNESOTA VIKINGS ARE PROUD TO SUPPORT THE SALVATION ARMY AND THE “DOWN FOR THE CHALLENGE” EVENT TO SUPPORT THOSE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS.