

family



The Salvation Army of Greater Charlotte

2024 IMPACT REPORT

IN THIS ISSUE

From College Grad
to Homeless p10

A Special Report on
Hurricane Helene Response p14

+ How You Can
Help This Year

LETTERS FROM LEADERSHIP



It is an honor to step into the role of Advisory Board Chair and support the vital work of The Salvation Army of Greater Charlotte. As I assume this responsibility, I am deeply inspired by the longstanding commitment to service that has defined this organization for over a century.

The Salvation Army is more than an organization; it’s a movement of diverse individuals united by faith, hope, and a dedication to serving others. Through our wide range of programs, we are committed to building a more welcoming community, ensuring that everyone in need, regardless of background, feels supported and has the tools they need to overcome barriers to their success. Our mission remains steadfast: to meet human needs in Christ’s name, without discrimination, embracing the rich tapestry of our community.

Through both challenges and successes, this organization remains a beacon of hope, adapting to the evolving needs of all residents in Mecklenburg and Union counties. We are dedicated to fostering a culture of belonging and will continue to boldly pursue new opportunities to uplift and empower every individual we serve, working together to transform lives and create a more just and compassionate community.

We hope the stories and information within this report inspire you – as they do me – to join us in our ongoing efforts to build a community where everyone has the opportunity to achieve success, regardless of their circumstances.

Monica Chavis, Board Chair



Since 1904, The Salvation Army of Greater Charlotte has remained steadfast in its mission while continuing to grow and evolve. Our commitment to serving the Charlotte area has guided us through every decision, ensuring we stay true to our core values while embracing new opportunities.

In a world that is constantly shifting, our focus remains clear: to provide the highest level of service and support to individuals who rely on us. We continue to remain committed to strengthening relationships, overcoming obstacles, and deepening our impact in the community. We couldn’t do this work without the support of our donors, Advisory Board, volunteers, and, above all, our almighty God.

Together, let’s reflect on our past year’s work and continue to look ahead and build a future where everyone in our community has the opportunity to thrive.

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Features



From College Grad to Homeless

Ebony Lucas inspires with her story of overcoming the odds and finding stability for her and her son.



14

Desperate for Power

A special report on The Salvation Army’s critical work following the devastation of Hurricane Helene.



Looking Back at 2024.....4

By the Numbers.....6

7 Ways The Salvation Army Serves in Charlotte.....7

Better the Future Campaign Update.....22

2024 Financial Report.....23

How You Can Be Involved.....24

10

12



Finally Time to Reflect

After retirement, Deronda Metz looks back on more than 30 years of leading The Salvation Army’s homelessness support programs.



20

Finding True Freedom After Incarceration

Volunteer Lisa Knox spent much of her life in prison. Today, she gives back by inspiring women at the Center of Hope and showing them a better way.

Looking Back at 2024



1



2



4



5



3



6



7



8



9



10











6. Emergency Disaster Services volunteer hands food and supplies to a family impacted by Hurricane Helene in Aiken, S.C.; 7. All smiles during summer camp with the Red Shield Youth Center; 8. A student designs his STEM project at an event with the Red Shield Youth Center; 9. Volunteer with Road Runner Vettes collects new toys for The Salvation Army Angel Tree program through their annual Corvette Angels event; 10. Volunteers spread Christmas cheer with song while raising money for the Red Kettle Campaign; 11. The aftermath of a color war between students at the Red Shield Youth Center.



11

By the Numbers



-  **29,158**
People served
-  **551,396**
Meals and snacks provided
-  **201,221**
Nights of lodging provided
-  **35,184**
Articles of clothing distributed
-  **41,486**
Gifts distributed
-  **85**
Children from Charlotte enjoyed a week at Camp Walter Johnson in 2024
-  **91**
Men graduated from the Adult Rehabilitation Center program
-  **337**
Families housed through our programs
-  **5,738**
Volunteers
-  **15,208**
Volunteer hours served



Ways The Salvation Army Serves in Charlotte...

+ How You Can Get Involved

Since The Salvation Army can look a little different in each community, many people don't recognize the breadth of services the organization provides right here in our local area. Here are a few ways The Salvation Army of Greater Charlotte meets needs of local families. ->



1 Homelessness Services

Through The Salvation Army Center of Hope and its programs, we help women and children experiencing homelessness with their immediate needs of food and shelter, while working with them to provide a successful path to stability. Located two miles north of Uptown Charlotte, the Center of Hope sleeps an average of 290 women and children every night, and offers them the stability they need as they get back on their feet. An active member of the Homeless Services Network, The Salvation Army is a leader in helping families transition into permanent, affordable housing.

The Salvation Army follows a housing-first model, reflecting best practices from across the nation for permanently moving families out of homelessness. Last year, we rapidly rehoused 253 households, providing rental subsidies while individuals gained employment or worked to increase their income. Eighty-five percent (85%) exited this short-term program into permanent housing. Through our Supportive Housing Innovative Partnership (SHIP) with Inlivan, the local housing authority, we served 86

families, providing them with long-term stability while they received job training, attended school and increased their savings.

HOW TO HELP:
Adopt or serve a meal at the Center of Hope.

Donate critical items such as toiletries, linens, blankets or diapers.

Assemble “Welcome Home” baskets for families exiting the shelter into housing.



3

(seniors 62 and up) programs. Each year, thanks to the generosity of the community, thousands of children and hundreds of seniors in need receive Christmas gifts.

HOW TO HELP:
Volunteer at the Christmas Center or ring the bell during the Red Kettle Campaign.

Adopt Angels or Silver Bells.

Make a financial donation or donate toys or gift cards.



2 Youth Development

Through Red Shield Youth Centers (formerly called “The Salvation Army Boys & Girls Clubs”), The Salvation Army of Greater Charlotte has served children for more than 90 years, making it one of the most experienced and trusted providers of out-of-school programs for children in grades K–12 in Mecklenburg and Union counties. Parents have continued to rely on these programs, not just because of the affordable membership cost, but most importantly, because they can trust the organization and the people.

Many of our staff members have made mentoring youth their life’s work. Our history of service demonstrates our dedication to helping young people overcome

challenges and open up a world of possibility. Programs include academics, leadership & workforce development, health & wellness, and character & spiritual formation. Many of the Centers are strategically located in areas of need and high potential impact. These communities have lower median income, higher crime rates, lower performing schools and less opportunity.

HOW TO HELP:
Volunteer to help a child with homework.

Collect school supplies.

Coordinate involvement from your company or group.

Christmas Assistance

Since the beginning, The Salvation Army of Greater Charlotte has been there for families in need during Christmas, through its Angel Tree (children 12 and under) and Silver Bells



4

Emergency Disaster Relief

Salvation Army Emergency Disaster Services (EDS) brings together Salvation Army officers, staff and volunteers to provide food, shelter, clothing and spiritual comfort to first responders and survivors of disasters in the area and throughout the nation. Floods, fires and hurricanes do devastating harm. Since 1900, The Salvation Army has offered aid to people in places where we can do the most good—and stay as long as we are needed.

HOW TO HELP:
Donate to disaster relief at [HelpSalvationArmy.org](https://www.HelpSalvationArmy.org).

Sign up and train to become a disaster volunteer to serve during local and regional disasters.



5

Adult Rehabilitation

When you donate to one of the Salvation Army Thrift Stores in the Charlotte area, you are helping to change the lives of men in our community battling substance abuse, giving them a new beginning. Proceeds from the Thrift Stores support the Adult Rehabilitation Center, which serves 116 men at a time, providing housing and support to help them recognize the value of their lives and transition from chemical dependency to self-sufficiency.

HOW TO HELP:
Donate furniture, clothing and household goods - call 1-800-SA-TRUCK or visit [SATruck.org](https://www.SATruck.org) to schedule a pick up.

Shop at local Salvation Army Thrift Stores.



7

Communities of Faith

Charlotte is home to two Salvation Army Worship Centers where people from all walks of life can find healing and a sense of family through weekly worship services, Bible studies, music programs and activities for seniors and youth.

HOW TO HELP:
Attend weekly programs at one of the Worship Center locations, 940 Marsh Road or 901 Belmont Avenue.

From College Grad to Homelessness

Ebony Lucas's story proves that homelessness is a reality that can happen to anyone.

Ebony Lucas grew up in a family of educators. From an early age, she knew that education created opportunities—but those were limited in the small town she called home in South Carolina.

They were even more limited when she became a mother at the age of 18.

“With me being a teenage mom, I was not expected to get a college degree. I was not expected to thrive or achieve anything,” said Lucas. “I was a teenage statistic.”

That didn't stop her from furthering her education. With the help of her family, Lucas graduated from Shaw University in Raleigh, N.C., with a degree in Elementary Education. She taught in North Carolina, eventually settling in Charlotte, where she gave birth to her second child.

Diagnosed with autism at the age of three, her son faced special needs that led to difficulties at school.

Her son was told he could no longer ride the bus, which was his only way to school, so Lucas resigned from her job to care for him. With no income flowing in and Lucas's savings drying up, she and her son faced something no mother wants to explain—homelessness.



“It was a new experience for me. Not only was it new, but I also had to bring my son along,” she said. “I was trying to figure out – Will he understand what was going on? Would he think that this was a long vacation? How do I explain to him that we are literally homeless?”

Lucas's social worker suggested The Salvation Army for assistance.

“I was skeptical at first because I was like, really, someone is going to help me. Because I have been on my own for so long,” said Lucas. “But I went down to the shelter to do an entry assessment, and they [Center of Hope] got the ball rolling.”

The Salvation Army follows a housing-first model, reflecting best practices from across the nation for permanently moving families out of homelessness. Last year, The Salvation Army of Greater Charlotte rapidly rehoused more than 250 households, providing rental subsidies while individuals gained employment or worked to increase their income. Eighty-five percent (85%) exited this short-term program into permanent housing.

The Salvation Army enrolled Lucas in the Rapid Rehousing Program, where she worked with the shelter's social workers to find and maintain permanent housing. The organization temporarily secured a hotel room for Lucas and her son while they worked together to find a more permanent situation. During that time, Lucas received assistance from her social worker, and she had access to counseling, food pantries, and laundry services – free of charge. The Salvation Army also helped pay the upfront fees to help Lucas secure an apartment.

Today, Lucas and her son are embracing their new home, transforming their space with new decorations and cherished items that were tucked away for nearly a year.

“[The Salvation Army's staff] were committed to getting the end goal, and the end goal was to get me in a place that I was comfortable in,” she said.



“I do have a degree. I am educated, but even someone who is educated might fall on hard times.”



Scan to hear more from Ebony about her journey.

Lucas continues to maintain her home and found a school that caters to her son's needs.

She also released a children's book, *Dear Little Black Prince*, inspired by her son. Next, she plans to attend law school to become a legal ally to others.

She thanks The Salvation Army's Center of Hope staff for helping her get back on her feet during a traumatic time. Most importantly, she thanks God for giving her the strength to power through this unexpected experience.

“I always like to say, sometimes your biological father may not do, but your heavenly father always will,” she said. “I feel that everything that I went through, strangely enough, was necessary. There are situations where you are one paycheck away from being

homeless. And It's okay to say, ‘Hey, I am struggling.’ Some people will turn their eyes and say ‘oh well, that's not my problem.’ But those people don't outweigh those who do [help].”

Did You Know?

3,200+

People in Charlotte currently experiencing homelessness, an increase of around 15 percent from one year ago.

290

Average number of women, children and veterans who sleep at The Salvation Army Center of Hope on any given night.

124

Average number of days residents stay at the Center of Hope shelter.

271

The number of households rehoused through The Salvation Army's Rapid Rehousing program, which provides rental subsidies while individuals gain employment or work to increase their income and savings.

95%

The percentage of households who do not return to the program within six months.



After Decades of Looking Forward, Finally Time to Reflect

Deronda Metz, longtime social services director, shares about her career and The Salvation Army’s accomplishments

One of the most difficult tasks I’ve ever had to complete is writing these words. After more than three decades with The Salvation Army, serving on the front lines on the issue of homelessness in the city I was born and raised in – the city I love – it is time to step aside and enter retirement. I have given my life and career to helping end homelessness for one person, one family at a time. Now, it’s time to pass the torch to a new generation of leaders, and I’ve never been more confident that Charlotte will rise to meet the challenges we face. When I first began my career with The Salvation Army, our focus was primarily on emergency shelter – the “3 hots and a cot” mindset of meeting people at their point of crisis and providing for their immediate needs of warm meals and a place to sleep. Yes, we still do that today, but we not only address the symptoms of homelessness, but also the source. Today, we have programs focused on the root causes of homelessness. We provide case management, job assistance, access to healthcare, and most importantly, access to housing. I can truly say that I’ve been witness to our team helping to

end homelessness for thousands of families in our community.

It has been a privilege to work in the field of social work in the area of homelessness for the past 33 years. As the leader of The Salvation Army’s Center of Hope emergency shelter for almost 25 years, I can say with surety that my time has come. While the work isn’t finished, I’m excited to see a new generation of dedicated social workers continue to build on the progress we’ve made as a community.

It has been a learning experience with much purpose and humility. These years have been

“Individuals retire from jobs. They never retire from passions. That’s why my work at The Salvation Army never felt like a job to me. It has been a calling.”

marked by trying to figure out how to say “yes,” even when it looks like there is no way. Leading with love always gives you the peace that, yes, it is tough, but we are going to be alright.

We as social workers are dedicated to helping individuals better their situations and their lives; however, it is through this work that I feel that I am the one who has become a better person. I don’t do this for the accolades or recognition. In fact, anyone who knows me knows that it’s hard for me to think about “accomplishments.” I have been so focused on looking ahead that I very rarely take the time to look back. And, there are so many of my colleagues that have helped me along the way. It is truly a team effort.

This occasion provides a natural time to reflect on the past. I’m asked frequently about the most important things we’ve accomplished over the past 30 years as I’ve worked as the Director of Social Services for The Salvation Army of Greater Charlotte.

This list isn’t exhaustive, but it’s a start.

- We expanded our emergency shelter capacity tenfold – from 70 to more than 700 beds.
- We turned our overnight shelter to a 24/7 program with wraparound day programs including employment assistance, substance abuse and physical and mental health services.
- We created a low-barrier emergency shelter that became a national best practice program.
- We restructured our transitional housing program to serve veterans and their families.
- We partnered with Inlivan, the local housing authority, to create dedicated access to 60 affordable apartment units for families moving from the shelter.
- We implemented a rapid rehousing to address homelessness with housing.
- We secured a location for a non-congregate shelter to serve intact families.
- We implemented a human trafficking program designed to serve Mecklenburg, Union, and Anson counties.
- I’ve been able to be consistently involved with Mecklenburg County Continuum of Care for 25 years. And,

I’ve had the privilege of becoming a strategic homelessness planner on a local, state and national level.

I don’t share these things to be boastful, but rather to acknowledge how far we’ve come as a community and celebrate the countless lives that have been changed.

Individuals retire from jobs. They never retire from passions. That’s why my work at The Salvation Army never felt like a job to me. It has been a calling. Although I am moving on from my role as Director of Social Services for The Salvation Army, my passion for families experiencing homelessness and those being afflicted by past trauma including domestic violence remains. I look forward to continuing to serve my community as God allows.

I am dedicated – for life – to working to keep Charlotte a community where all citizens are able to live and thrive. Thank you to all who are with me in this fight – those who give of themselves to make Charlotte a better place for all.

“I am dedicated – for life – to working to keep Charlotte a community where all citizens are able to live and thrive.”

Kellee Hicks Brings Decades of Local Social Work Experience to New Role



In May of 2024, The Salvation Army of Greater Charlotte officially announced Kellee Hicks as the new Director of Program Services, following Deronda Metz’s 30-year stint. This position provides leadership to all of the organization’s programs serving those experiencing homelessness. In this role, Hicks is responsible for planning, developing and leading The Salvation Army of Greater Charlotte’s social services programs, including the Center of Hope shelter, Booth Commons family shelter, supportive housing programs and more.

A Charlotte native, Hicks has more than 20 years of social work experience, with most of her career serving in various leadership roles at the Mecklenburg County Department of Social Services (DSS) in the Youth and Family Services (YFS) division. After beginning her social work career at Mecklenburg County DSS, her hard work transitioned her to state trainer with the child welfare division of the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services. There, Kellee provided statewide professional training and education to DSS employees on North Carolina’s federal and state laws, policies, and procedures regarding child welfare.

After a brief stint at the state level, Hicks returned home to Mecklenburg County DSS as a Training Specialist in YFS, which led to her most recent role as Senior Social Services Manager. In this role, Hicks was instrumental in developing a partnership with the Annie E. Casey Foundation, a charitable foundation focused on improving the well-being of American children and youth. Hicks earned her bachelor’s degree in psychology from Hampton University and a master’s degree in social work from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte.



Deronda Metz Receives Highest Civilian Honor From NC’s Governor

The state of North Carolina recognized community leader and social work retiree Deronda Metz for her contribution to the homeless community in Mecklenburg County. The award came as a surprise to the honoree during The Salvation Army of Greater Charlotte’s Ambassadors of Hope luncheon event this week. This honor is presented to individuals with a proven record of service to the State of North Carolina or other notable achievement.

Metz, who served as the Director of Social Services for The Salvation Army of Greater Charlotte for more than 30 years, has left an incredible mark on the lives of countless homeless families. Metz used her voice to advocate for the most vulnerable by addressing issues of homelessness, affordable housing, domestic violence and human trafficking

in Mecklenburg County. She was a key participant in developing and expanding Mecklenburg County’s Continuum of Care, served on the North Carolina Coalition to End Homelessness board and was appointed to the State’s Interagency Council by Governor Roy Cooper.

“After presenting this award from the Governor of our esteemed state, it is evident that Deronda is not just worthy but truly deserving of this honor,” says The Salvation Army of Greater Charlotte Area Commander, Major Jason Burns. “Her dedication, passion, and unwavering commitment have not only elevated her own achievements but have also enriched our community, and we are privileged to celebrate her remarkable journey.”



Captain Michael Good, Corps Officer for The Salvation Army in Aiken, S.C., prays with a resident while serving meals after Hurricane Helene. The Salvation Army of Greater Charlotte deployed to Aiken to serve alongside Captain Good's team.

DISASTER RELIEF

Hurricane Helene: Desperate for Power

For many, going weeks without electricity brings new reliance on the power of prayer and a helping hand

Jannie Cheatham, a dedicated employee and Corps member of The Salvation Army in Aiken, S.C., examines her limited food supplies. She sees what she has in the pantry and refrigerator, and from that, she determines what food to prepare for the day. Many in the community - and communities like Aiken - relied on The Salvation Army in the wake of Hurricane Helene.

This particular day's lunch menu: shredded chicken and noodles with freshly baked cornbread.

For many in the area with no power, they had to survive on peanut butter sandwiches or crackers. Their first hot meal following the destruction left in the wake of Helene came from one of The Salvation Army's canteens or food delivery trucks.

Aiken, S.C., and the surrounding counties, according to officials, was the hardest hit area in the state, on the eastern side of Helene's eye wall. When Helene unleashed her fury, she came with 7-12 inches of rain and winds estimated to have reached 100 miles per hour. As a result, nearly a third of the county remained without power a week after the storm. Many homes were damaged and some completely destroyed.

By God's providence, The Salvation Army Corps in Aiken was spared from loss of power, despite the surrounding neighborhood and 98 percent of the county losing power. For this reason, The Salvation Army was able to respond in the immediate aftermath. From the Corps kitchen, with one stove, Cheatham and an army of staff and volunteers prepare each day for reaching out in the community. The Salvation Army

of Greater Charlotte was deployed quickly to provide additional resources, including staff and its mobile feeding kitchen.

The Salvation Army was on the ground serving from the beginning, providing more than 12,000 meals in the immediate aftermath. Many of the neighborhoods The Salvation Army served were not only the hardest hit, but they were already struggling before the storm.

"People barely making it by have now been pushed over the edge," said Captain Michael Good, Corps Officer for The Salvation Army in Aiken.

The Salvation Army disperses to strategic locations across the region for lunch service. Lieutenant Isaiah Rector from Charlotte's

Belmont Corps, leads a crew to the local YMCA serving as a hub of activity for residents, providing warm meals, toiletries and diapers.

Captain Good accompanies staff and volunteers to multiple locations. You can find him hugging residents, sharing a reassuring smile and providing a much-needed critical service: prayer.

People arrive at the local grocery store, KJ's Market, for a hot meal, many not expecting power to be restored at their homes for days, or even weeks. It's obvious The Salvation Army's presence is a spark of hope in an otherwise desperate situation. But, the gratitude is evident.

"God bless y'all."
"Thank you so much."
"Thank you; I have six kids at home."
"God bless you, I really mean it."

Good shares an encouraging smile. "How are you holding up? You doing okay?"

"I'm trying, I'm taking it a day at time," he hears in response.

Good stops in the moment and prays for God to provide peace and comfort. He asks God to be with the power crews and linemen and for power to be restored to homes quickly. Another resident drives by to pick up meals for her family, and Good reaches through the car

window to hold hands and spend a moment in prayer. She prays for Good in return.

"What prayer does is allow people to feel seen and heard. Hot meals do something for the body. Prayer does something for the soul."

People are desperate for power to be restored at their homes. Today, they are experiencing a different kind of power - the power of prayer in their lives. A simple act of kindness, just stopping for a moment to pray, makes people light up.

"You can find some food, water and ice. It's hard to find hope. The Salvation Army brings hope."

Salvation Army crews return to the Corps building from serving more than 1,100 meals at lunch and they immediately begin planning and preparing for what's next, ensuring they are reaching the communities that need it the most. Good's phone rings constantly as he coordinates with government agencies and partners. Volunteers and staff, including Jannie Cheatham, clean up from lunch and take inventory of what's on hand in preparation for the next meals.

What's on the menu tomorrow?

For certain, it will be a warm meal for the body and hope for the soul.



Hurricane Helene Fast Facts

132,000+
Meals served in the wake of Hurricane Helene in North and South Carolina.

11,000+
Survivors of Hurricane Helene with whom Salvation Army Emotional and Spiritual Care officers have spoken and prayed.

99+
Pallets of resources distributed across western North Carolina, including clean-up kits, blankets, food boxes, diapers and more.

125
Years The Salvation Army has provided disaster relief services, which began with the response to the devastating hurricane in Galveston, Texas in 1900.

Many communities are still recovering from the devastation. The Salvation Army has transitioned from response to long-term recovery, but that doesn't mean that the support has come to an end. In this phase of disaster recovery, community support is managed by the local Salvation Army in each area.

Charlotte's Belmont Corps Officer Lieutenant Isaiah Rector (rear), joins local volunteer Kathleen Hutto to serve meals from The Salvation Army of Greater Charlotte's canteen in Aiken, S.C. after Hurricane Helene.



CHRISTMAS ASSISTANCE

In a year of obstacles and heartbreak, a Charlotte mom finds hope for the holidays

It's been a challenging year for Elizabeth Taylor and her three sons. The Charlotte native and single mom recently lost her job. She had worked 10 years as a community service representative/manager for a local arcade, when it closed down permanently. Then, things got worse for the 37-year-old.

Since January, she has mourned a series of unexpected deaths, including the loss of her beloved 19-year-old cousin to gun violence. Several family members have dealt with debilitating health issues, property loss or a need for emergency medical care. That includes her father, who was in a serious car accident in October that sent him to the hospital for more than a week with broken ribs and a punctured lung.

Taylor, who is her dad's only family in the area, spent that time shuttling back and forth between home and hospital. She'd get her kids to bed,

spend the night at the hospital then return in the morning to take her sons to school.

After that, her father stayed with Taylor and her children for about a month to further recover. Taylor, who has worked part-time jobs on-and-off since she lost her angel position, had to temporarily stop work in order to manage his care. Earlier this year, Taylor also went through a serious depression, the devastated by the deaths in her family and worried about how she would pay her bills while raising her boys, 17-year-old Amari, Alijah, age 12, and 6-year-old Legend. What's more, her mom and younger sisters, whom she considers her main support system, recently moved out of Charlotte. She and her boys lived with them for a decade.

"I've finally gotten to a place where I can get myself together," Taylor said, "and try to keep going because I have to for my kids." She's also finding support this holiday season through The Salvation Army of Greater Charlotte's annual Angel Tree program for presents for her kids. They are among the thousands of Charlotte-area children who will receive gifts of clothes and toys under the Christmas tree again this year, thanks to contributors to The

"Without [The Salvation Army] this year, I probably wouldn't be able to do much of anything..."

Salvation Army of Greater Charlotte's annual Angel Tree program. In cases where donors don't step up,

Charlotte Observer readers cover the expense by giving to the Empty Stocking Fund, which the Observer has sponsored since about 1920.

Taylor said the Angel Tree program will enable her to have something

under the Christmas tree besides hand-me-downs for her two youngest kids.

"I have three boys, so I keep stuff from the last one... But as far as without that, this year, I probably wouldn't be able to do much of anything because I've been out of work, and the money that I do make goes towards bills."

After a challenging year, Taylor said the family is grateful to be a recipient of The Salvation Army of Greater Charlotte's Angel Tree Program. The 2023 Angel Tree program helped about 4,000 families in Mecklenburg and Union counties, representing at least 5,500 children. And the program is providing gift cards to at least 1,500 seniors and 400 people with disabilities.

The story was adapted from The Charlotte Observer, published on December 7, 2023, written by correspondent Liz Rothaus.



12 DAYS OF CHRISTMAS?

How about 365.

Your monthly gift helps support your neighbors all year round.



SalvationArmyCharlotte.org



Briana Higgins: Following Family Footsteps, But Carving Her Own Path



When Briana Higgins was seven years old, she simply wanted one thing – to hang out with her older sisters in the teen room, which was exclusive to Red Shield Youth Center (formerly called The Salvation Army Boys & Girls Club) members ages 13 and up.

Now, at 16, she hardly uses that room and instead spends time with the younger kids, reading with them, helping them with homework and sharing her experiences. It's this caring spirit that helped her win the 2024 "Youth of the Year" competition - a competitive process that recognizes outstanding youth in the community. Higgins was also selected as the 2024 North Carolina winner for The Salvation Army's centers.

"Winning the state title is truly a blessing and a surreal feeling. I'm so blessed to have had this opportunity," says Higgins.

A junior at Mallard Creek High School in Charlotte, Higgins is a member of her school's jazz, symphonic, and concert bands. She is also an athlete, running indoor track and field and playing flag football. In addition, Higgins coaches at a gymnastic academy in Huntersville, teaching children ages 4-12.

The teen has attended the Belmont Avenue center for nine years. She credits the program

and staff for helping her to get where she is today.

"The [Red Shield Youth Center] allowed me to realize my passions and gave me the confidence in my ability to become everything I aspire to be," she says. "The programs taught me to present myself in an honorable way, how to recognize my environment, and how to show kindness and compassion to every individual—no matter their backgrounds, beliefs, privileges, or appearances."

"She's a hard worker," says Latonya Marble, Belmont Avenue Red Shield Youth Center program lead. "She's very determined, driven



"She's very determined, driven and persistent. She never stops moving; that's just who she is as a person."
-Latonya Marble (above, left)

and persistent. She never stops moving; that's just who she is as a person."

Marble has been Higgins' mentor since she started attending the program.

"She taught me how to make friends," says Higgins. "She was always there when I needed her, and she's taught me a lot of things that I still use today."

Marble wasn't the only one who had an impact. Higgins refers to her older sisters as guides throughout her time at the center.

"They were a solid ground for me, and they helped me through every aspect of the Club," she says—especially her sister, Jasmine Higgins, who was the 2023 "Youth of the Year" for Greater Charlotte.

"I'm glad I learned from my sister," says Higgins. "She gave me tips and tricks on how to present myself and what to expect from the competition."

After graduation, Higgins wants to attend college and pursue her dream of becoming a neonatal nurse and opening her own birthing facility. She wants to provide a place of love and support for all patients who come through her door.

To achieve her goals, she attended an eight-day

medical conference at UCLA last summer. UCLA is her dream college, but she's also looking at other universities, such as Florida A&M, the University of Florida, Clemson and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

"At the conference, I learned basic skills that nurses do every single day," she said. "Dissections, anatomy, birthing – there are so many amazing aspects of that program. I'm just honored that I was accepted into it."

"She's setting an example for other kids, and that's to keep pushing," says Marble. "Always look towards the future. Don't get discouraged because one door closes, another one will always open."

As a result of her achievements, upon graduation, she will receive a \$10,000 scholarship from The Salvation Army's Women Auxiliary.

"I'm just thankful for the opportunity to keep going in my sister's footsteps and make my family proud, as well as the Belmont Avenue youth center," Higgins says.



5

Centers currently operating in Mecklenburg and Union counties

771

Members between the ages of 6 and 18

92%

On grade level and on track to graduate high school

77%

Making mostly As and Bs in school

54%

Qualify for free/reduced lunch

61%

Live in a single-parent household



The Higgins sisters, from left: Brooke, Jasmine and Briana. Scan the code (left) to hear more from the Higgins sisters.



Student Gives Back to Her Own Youth Center

"We do this work every day, so to impact a young person enough to want to give back was phenomenal," says Tonia Lewis, Branch Manager for the Red Shield Youth Center in the Oak Forest neighborhood in east Charlotte.

Michala Toler started attending the Youth Center in middle school around the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. She describes herself as an extroverted kid who likes to help when needed.

Now, a Julius L. Chambers High School sophomore, Toler did something the staff and other kids would always remember. She raised more than \$2,000 for her Center.

"I was extremely overwhelmed and surprised," says Lewis, "Michala is an extremely passionate young lady who likes to give back to her community and others."

She raised the money through her event, 'Sarai Slams,' a poetry slam open to the community. But this slam was not a competition. It was an exposure event for youth performers like Michala.

"I wanted everyone to have their own light," says Toler. "As a youth poet,

it's really hard for people to see your talent, especially when you're younger. So, I wanted to create an event that showcases that but also gave back to the community at the same time." All the money raised was through ticket sales and donations. Michala did not hesitate to put that money into the place that made her feel like family.

She bought an Air Hockey table and a PlayStation 5 with remote controls and repaired the pool tables and sticks. Perhaps the most memorable item on the list: a multi-game Pac-Man machine.

"Growing up, I used to go to the Laundromat with my mom and dad, and there always used to be a Pac-Man game," says Toler, "and it was fun, even if it was an older game."

"[The kids] love gaming systems anyway," says Lewis, "most of them knew what Pac-Man was, and they were ready to play right away." Toler says she was just happy to give back and had no idea how much of an impact this would have on the Youth Center.

"I'm just glad I was given the opportunity to give back."



VOLUNTEER

Finding True Freedom After Incarceration

Center of Hope Volunteer Lisa Knox Inspires with Her Story of Redemption



Around 300 women and children stay at The Salvation Army of Greater Charlotte's Center of Hope every night, some staying longer than others. The shelter is designed to provide emergency and transitional housing for families in need. Every family has a different reason for being placed at the Center of Hope. Still, some come together on common grounds to find peace and receive encouragement from longtime volunteer Lisa Knox.

Born and raised in the Queen City, Knox is a pastor for Soul Winners Outreach Ministry, a small church that uplifts impoverished communities. They travel to different areas of Charlotte with high crime and poverty to pray and spread the gospel. Knox and her team visit the Center of Hope every Saturday morning to speak with the ladies.

"My mission is to show love and hope and tell people to hold on," says Knox. "Don't give up, don't quit, don't stop fighting."

Knox knows what it's like to be at rock bottom. More than 20 years ago, Knox was on drugs and experienced homelessness. Her daughter was being raised by her mother and sister because Knox couldn't provide for her. She had fallen into prostitution, been in and out of jail 14 times and almost lost her life after being shot. It wasn't until her last sentence in prison that she started praying to God.



"I surrendered my heart and said, God, I want you more than drugs," she said.

That's where her journey to recovery began.

"Since November 6, 2001, I haven't gone back to the streets," says Knox.

Since her release from prison, Knox has turned her life around. She's been clean from drugs for

"My mission is to show love and hope and tell people to hold on. Don't give up, don't quit, don't stop fighting."

over twenty years and is a supervisor for her job as a janitor. Her faith in God grew, leading her to create Soul Winners Outreach Ministry after she felt a calling to share her story with others who are also struggling.

"I like using my personal testimony to inspire hope and real change because I know that was me once before," says Knox. "God saved me so that he can use me to help others."

Knox knew her story had inspired some to believe in Christ, but she had not realized its power to make people want to change.

"When we were praying and worshipping [at a meeting], a young lady came to me and surrendered her crack pipe. She told me she was tired and broke down in my arms," said Knox.

At that moment, Knox knew she was being called to consistently serve others who had experienced some of the same challenges she had. Today, she continues volunteering at the Center of Hope every Saturday morning, sharing her story and praying with anyone who needs it.

"I'm very grateful that God used me, humbled me, healed me, and set me free so that I can go back and tell them the love of God is far greater than any drug you can ever do," she says.



Noel Pipkin volunteers her time and resources for students at the Red Shield Youth Centers with her nonprofit, Barre Belle, a mobile dance studio.

"We love coming to the [Red Shield Youth Centers]. We see the same kids year after year, and once I recognize them, they get excited. I wanted to

offer an experience for students who didn't have the opportunity to dance. Whether that was an exposure thing, they didn't know about it, they didn't know they could do it, or they had financial burdens."

For seven years, Rosalind Richmond has hosted Power of the Purse, an event distributing new and gently used name-brand purses stuffed with toiletry items to women at the Center of Hope. Her mission is to uplift women, help them improve their self-esteem, and make them feel valued.



"The women are so full and happy when they get the purses. It warms my heart every single time."

Q&A

We asked some of our volunteers - the Army behind The Salvation Army - why volunteering is important to them. Here's what they had to say.



For the past 30 years, JP Rodgers and his family have served breakfast on Thanksgiving and Christmas to the women and children at the Center of Hope. He taught his children the importance of giving back and had them volunteer alongside him. Now, his grandchildren continue this tradition.

"I volunteer because I love to do it. I also believe it is God's will for me to be of service to others. If you come to the shelter, your life will never be the same."

Darinka Pawloski's family volunteered for the first time with The Salvation Army Center of Hope last year, serving dinner in honor of their late son.



"Service opens hearts, and it has this magical touch of healing, especially when you are grieving. I figured it was an excellent way to pay it forward since our son was always a helping hand to people in need. It was a great experience for all of us."

An Update on the Better the Future Campaign

Since its local founding in 1904, The Salvation Army has been there for people in Charlotte at their deepest point of need. In 1925, we opened our first women's and children's emergency shelter for those facing homelessness. The Salvation Army was the only local organized social agency in the city able to assist families during the Great Depression. In 1934, we opened our first Red Shield Club for youth, and in 1950, we started our Rehabilitation Center for men battling substance abuse.

Charlotte is a wonderful place to live, work and raise a family. This is why it continues to be one of the fastest-growing cities in the nation, with more than 120 people moving to the area every day. In fact, recent estimates predict the Charlotte area will grow by 50 percent - 1.5 million people - in the next 25 years.

While many come seeking – and finding – opportunity, many more who already call Charlotte home are left behind. The Salvation Army of Greater Charlotte believes that a community is not at its best until all its members jointly hold the opportunities that exist. We know that Charlotte can be the city

it aspires to be, and The Salvation Army will not rest until every person in our community has the opportunity to prosper in all aspects of life.

Catherine Booth, one of the cofounders of The Salvation Army in London in 1865, once said, “If we are to better the future, we must disturb the present.” In other words, we can't keep maintaining the status quo if we want to experience change in our community.

In 2022, we launched our Better the Future campaign, an effort to raise \$32 million to grow our programs and services in three areas:

Addressing Homelessness – Purchasing a hotel (Booth Commons) to serve families experiencing homelessness and expanding our existing Center of Hope shelter. At the Center of Hope, expansion includes expanded dining room space and a new addition to provide a safe place for individuals during extreme weather events. Both the Center of Hope expansion and Booth Commons renovation are breaking ground in Spring 2025.

Building Strong Families and Communities – Creating neighborhood centers in targeted communities, offering Red Shield Youth Centers and a variety of holistic programs for the entire family. The next phase in this project will commence in 2025 as the organization develops its program plan, and engages an architectural firm to begin the process.

Restoring Lives – Enhancing our programs and facilities for those battling substance abuse. The plans have been developed for a new recreation pavilion and exercise space and a vehicle maintenance shop. As soon as funding is secured, these projects will begin construction.

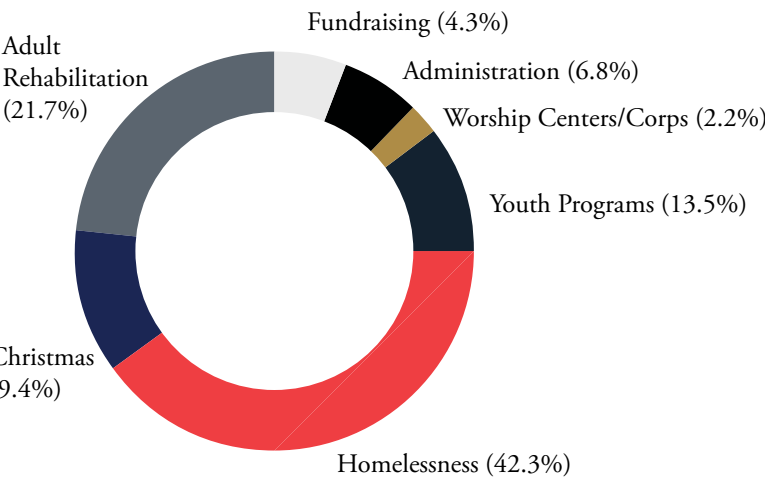
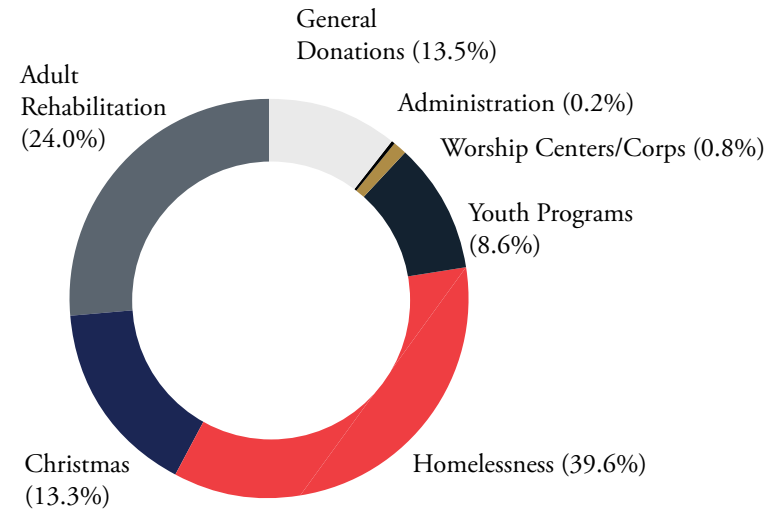


79%

At press time, approximately \$25.3 million of the nearly \$32 million goal has been raised.



Scan the code to learn more about the Better the Future Campaign or to join the effort with your donation!



Income

\$2,570,471	General Donations (13.5%)
\$37,228	Administration (0.2%)
\$153,689	Worship Centers/Corps (0.8%)
\$1,645,068	Youth Programs (8.6%)
\$7,566,556	Homelessness Services (39.6%)
\$2,545,558	Christmas (13.3%)
\$4,582,406	Adult Rehabilitation Center (24.0%)
\$19,100,976	Total Support & Revenue

Expenses

\$934,799	Fundraising (4.3%)
\$1,470,756	Administration (6.8%)
\$468,243	Worship Centers/Corps (2.2%)
\$2,925,967	Youth Programs (13.5%)
\$9,162,201	Homelessness Services (42.3%)
\$2,035,589	Christmas (9.4%)
\$4,712,186	Adult Rehabilitation Center (21.7%)
\$21,709,742	Total Expenses

*Audited financials were unavailable at press time. For audited financials for fiscal year 2023-24, please contact us at 704.334.4731.



\$.89 of every dollar donated goes directly to critical programs supporting people in need in Mecklenburg and Union counties.

5 Ways to Make a Difference This Year



1. Volunteer

There are many ways to get involved with us and impact people's lives in our community. Whether you serve a meal at the Center of Hope, help with homework at a Red Shield Youth Center, sort gifts or ring a bell at a Red Kettle location during Christmas, we need your support. There are opportunities to volunteer individually or with a group of your friends, family or colleagues.



2. Donate goods, or shop at a Thrift Store

Every day, your donations at the area Thrift Stores help to support men in the community battling addiction. Likewise, when you shop at these Thrift Stores, this financial support goes directly to support this critical program. To find a Thrift Store or drop-off location or schedule a free pick-up, call 1-800-SA-TRUCK or visit SATruck.org.



3. Collect items to support local families in need

There are also opportunities to donate in-kind items directly to benefit the people served by Salvation Army programs. At the Center of Hope, there is an ongoing need for full-sized toiletries, feminine hygiene products, diapers, linens and sheets. At the Red Shield Youth Centers, children can use school supplies, games and sports equipment. During Christmas, you can buy new, unwrapped toys or provide gifts for a child through the Angel Tree program.



4. Make a financial donation

Your financial gifts throughout the year help meet both short- and long-term critical needs in the community. You can donate conveniently and securely online at SalvationArmyCharlotte.org, or mail checks to P.O. Box 31128, Charlotte, NC 28231.



5. Remember The Salvation Army in your will

When you remember The Salvation Army in your will, you will also be remembered—for your legacy of transforming lives. And you will know your estate will be distributed according to your exact wishes, to aid the causes dearest to your heart. It's a wonderful way to let your compassion and generosity live on for generations to come. We offer assistance in drafting documents, trustee services, and professional investment management and administration. If you would like to show your support of The Salvation Army in your will, or by any other means, please call (704) 716-2769 or consult with an attorney.



“When You Really Need Help, They Are There”

What touched Celia and Bob the most about The Salvation Army was the fact that they never turn anyone away. “No matter how down and out you are, The Salvation Army will tide you over, give you shelter, give you food, and help you get back on your feet.”

Celia and Bob's own story reads like a novel. He was a pilot in the Air Force; she was a nurse. After her two-year tour was over, she was going to be stationed in Greenland. But that was too far for Bob, so he proposed.

As the couple neared retirement, Bob made good use of their income. He not only met their immediate needs but also funded charitable gift annuities with The Salvation Army. The dignity with which the Army treats people was an important factor in their charitable giving decision. And they felt good knowing that they would be helping future generations - providing loving care for people, as they had cared for each other over the years.

“It's a win-win,” says Celia. “If you decide that you want a charitable gift annuity as a way to save money, to provide for your own retirement - or if you want to use it as a way to do good, constructive things out in the community, to help people who are truly in need - you can have it all.”

sure she took care of all the provisions he had made. The Salvation Army helped her with a plan that would provide for her, her daughter, the Army, and her community.

“You can buy small gift annuities, and ours were not huge amounts, but we did it every year. And by the time you collect three or four, that makes a very nice increase to your retirement income. And it's especially nice for widows, which was our plan.”

With her annuities, Celia is making sure that the mission of The Salvation Army lives on, and that her ideals live on as well.

“This helps me, it helps my daughter, and it helps the Army.”

Contact Lisa Huffman to learn how confidential, personal planning can help you achieve your goals while helping to sustain our life-changing mission.



Lisa Huffman
Associate Director of Planned Giving
(803) 309-0436
lisa.huffman@uss.salvationarmy.org

After Bob died, Celia wanted to be



With every dollar we make change.

When you shop at a local thrift store or donate goods, you are helping men in our community battling substance abuse.

To schedule a free pickup, call 1-800-SA-Truck or visit www.satruck.org.

Let's Socialize!

Stay up-to-date on what's happening in our programs by following us on your favorite social media networks. We provide daily content in your feed - designed to help you stay informed, inspired and better equipped to make a difference. In addition to the below, we also regularly post content on other channels including X, LinkedIn and Threads. See you there!



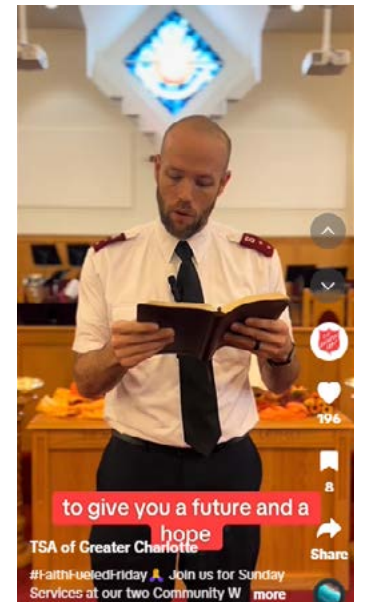
Facebook: [SalvationArmyCharlotte](#)

We regularly share information about upcoming events, Thrift Store sales, links to powerful stories of impact, and much more.



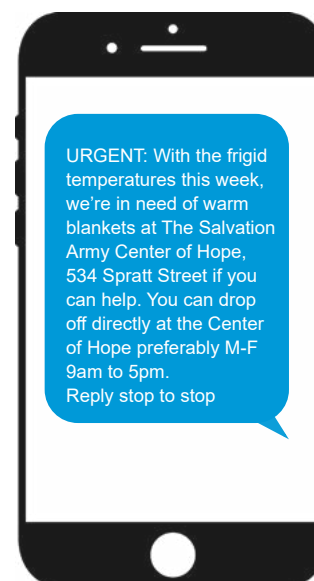
Instagram: [@salvationarmyclt](#)

We add encouragement to your feed with scripture graphics, images from donations across the community and information about upcoming events.



TikTok: [@tsacharlotte](#)

From our #FaithFueledFriday devotion series to fun videos from events at our Red Shield Youth Centers, following us on TikTok is sure to inspire and inform.



Join Our Text List

When you join our "Ambassadors of Hope" text list, you will be the first to know about urgent needs, volunteer opportunities or major announcements. **Text "Hope" to (833) 709-1052.** You can unsubscribe at any time, and we will never send more than 4 messages a month. Standard message and data rates may apply.

YouTube: [@salvationarmycharlotte](#)

Subscribe to our YouTube channel to see the latest videos including testimonials and stories of impact, event highlights and more.





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