

This is Lieutenant Roger McCort from The Salvation Army in Eureka with today's Community Comment.

For me, as for millions of people around the world, nothing quite signals the beginning of the holiday season like seeing that first bellringer standing beside a red kettle at my favorite store or grocery. And this year, as in most years, that first sighting is likely to take place next week in the day or two before Thanksgiving.

This is the 126th year of The Salvation Army's iconic Christmas kettles. Their story actually began here in Northern California, just a few miles to the south in San Francisco. There, on a cold and foggy November day, Captain Joseph McFee was trying to work out how to provide a hot Christmas meal for one thousand people who would go hungry otherwise. And he remembered something he had seen in his younger days, when he was a sailor. On the dock in Liverpool there had been a bucket set up for charitable donations to be thrown into by newly paid crews heading in for shore leave or for those with coin left to drop them before taking ship for their next destination.

The next day Captain McFee stood a brass urn out at the Oakland ferry dock with a sign reading, "Keep the pot boiling!" and the donations he collected made it possible for him to meet the needs of the poor and hungry that Christmas season.

In the next two years the fundraising effort had spread to Salvation Army units throughout the west coast and during the 1897 holiday alone donations to kettles provided over 150,000 meals.

Here in Humboldt County there has been a Salvation Army unit stationed in Eureka since 1888. Over those 128 years we have served countless thousands of residents with services ranging from meals to food boxes to clothing, energy assistance, housing and employment referrals, emergency disaster response and assistance, after school programs, character building programs, Bible studies, church services, recovery programs, holiday food boxes at Thanksgiving and Christmas, and even toys through various community partnerships. No, that list is not comprehensive! I just hit a few of the highlights.

The Salvation Army operates in 129 countries today, but all of our efforts are local community efforts. Without you, we cannot do the things we do to help those in need here.

The Red Kettles are certainly a major part of our fundraising efforts each year. On average a bellringer can raise about \$30 an hour. That means two kettle hours can feed a family

of four for a week or help an individual receive the assistance they need to begin a journey towards recovery from addiction or provide dry socks to almost a hundred people who otherwise would have none.

You can help! You can donate to those kettles as you go by or you can make a gift through our web site at EurekaSalArmy.org. Or, like hundreds of others in our community, you could make a gift of your time by taking a shift ringing the bell at a kettle site near you.

If you have any questions, please call our volunteer coordinator or myself at our office: 707-442-6475.

Thank you for putting up with my annual pitch. I hope to get a chance to interact with each and every one of you in the coming days.

Have a happy holiday season, a great Thanksgiving, and a very happy Christmas.

Grace and peace to you all. This has been Lt. Roger McCort with today's KINS Community Comment.