

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

As of July 1, 2018, The Salvation Army has served Humboldt County from a corps building in Eureka for 130 years. I will have been privileged to have been here for three of those.

I wonder what it was like back in 1888 when Captain George Rutherford opened the doors of his small storefront hall. While social services have been a part of our activities from the beginning, those early officers were known much more for their street corner evangelism. I imagine he spent his first afternoon out in town, across from the busiest saloon, loudly proclaiming the evils of demon rum and encouraging the patrons to come learn about Jesus instead. Then, after a couple of hours out in the sun, he probably gathered his volunteers and the handful of converts he made that day and marched back through town to The Salvation Army hall for a proper worship service.

Officers have never stayed long in Northern California for some reason. I've been told that it's the isolation or rural nature of the posting which keeps the pastors of a largely urban religious movement shuffling in and out. I never got that myself, and if I'd had my way we would have stayed here for the rest of our careers. The Redwood Curtain hasn't kept our corner of the world from suffering the ills of modern life and I've found plenty of need in both the cities and the remote corners of Humboldt – enough so that sometimes it feels like we aren't making headway in our efforts to restore broken lives to health and wholeness however we can.

At the same time, I see the success stories, so I know that we make a difference every day. Between dozens of people coming in for food, for clothing, for energy assistance, and for counsel every day, I know that my time here has been productive, just like it was for every one of those officers who came before my wife and I arrived.

The Friday, April 5 issue of the Humboldt Times from 1907 included several stories about service done by The Salvation Army in Eureka, followed by this comment from Ensign Lillian Sullivan, the Corps Officer of the time. "There is a noble work to be done here, work

which The [Salvation] Army, by its peculiar organization can do better than any private party.” She referenced cases where we had assisted in placing children into proper care, a circumstance where a family of six found themselves without even a bed to sit or lie on, and how, over the previous three months, in her words, “31 drunkards have forsaken their cups [...] and helped by the Army are leading sober lives.”

I marvel at these stories of days long past and all the work they accomplished to help our community then. But when I consider our modern circumstances, I find that we aren't so different. In the last month we have seen over a hundred families receive food to fill hungry bellies. Thanks to generous donations to our clothing closet, over 50 people were able to put on clean, dry clothing in place of wet rags. We helped a family who lost everything to a fire get back on their feet. And while I don't know that I've pulled any drunkards from their cups, we have held recovery meetings and helped a handful people find and get into the right treatment programs so they can begin rebuilding their lives.

We have loved our time here, giving the care only our peculiar organization can. We leave it in the hands of our successors now, as they begin the next 130 years. Thank you for your continued embrace of The Salvation Army in Humboldt County.

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