



NEWS BRIEF

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CONTINUING HIGH UNEMPLOYMENT DRIVING MORE PEOPLE TO THE SALVATION ARMY FOR GROCERIES

Salvation Army feeding more homeless people this year

(CHICAGO—April 28, 2010)—Requests for free groceries top all other requests for assistance for the second consecutive year at many Salvation Army Corps community centers in Greater Chicago. With the March unemployment rate in Chicago-Joliet-Naperville metro area at 11.5 percent, people turning to The Salvation Army for assistance report having to choose between buying groceries and paying rent, or buying groceries and buying medicine.

Other requests from people in need include assistance with paying rent, mortgage and utility bills. Also, more people are asking for clothing this year than in past years, some of them saying they want to look presentable when looking for work.

Ranks of the chronically poor people -- the homeless -- appear to be increasing compared to last year. This January, a Salvation Army program that distributes hot meals to people living on the street served 18,850 meals, about one-third more than the 11,270 meals the program served in January 2009.

Loss of jobs, housing, and health insurance are the main reasons driving people, including formerly employed middle class people, to The Salvation Army.

One Salvation Army Corps community center in Chicago provided free groceries to a record 402 families – 1,853 individuals – in a single month, while another saw nearly a threefold increase in the number of groceries distributed to people in need compared to the previous year. At several Army Corps suburban community centers, requests for groceries have increased at least 30 percent over those of 2009, while the number of people seeking assistance for the first time was up nearly 100 percent at one center.

In some cases, middle class households that relied on two salaries to pay their mortgage now are down to one salary or no salary at all. Some in this group already have lost their homes to foreclosures and are struggling to make new living arrangements, including moving in with family members or friends.

One client seeking assistance at a suburban Corps community center said she never missed a single monthly mortgage payment for eight years, as she built her home cleaning business that steadily grew each year. Now, however, many of her clients have financial problems of their own and can't afford to pay her to clean their homes. Hopelessly behind on her mortgage, she now fears being thrown out of her home with her two children, whom she feeds, in part, with groceries provided by The Salvation Army.

Much of the food The Salvation Army distributes through its food pantries the Army purchases in bulk at a discount. Together with food that's donated, The Salvation Army is able to feed a family of four for \$32 a week.

In addition to food pantry distributions, The Salvation Army also provides meals to seniors, to the children enrolled in day care and after school programs, and to the homeless through the Mobile Feeding Program.

Other types of assistance The Army provides include helping people in need pay their energy bills, mortgages and rent; setting them up in emergency or transitional lodging; and providing clothing or clothing vouchers to them to use in Salvation Army family thrift stores.

Eighty-eight cents of every dollar donated to The Salvation Army Chicago Metropolitan Division is spent on services and programs that directly benefit the needy.

For more information about The Salvation Army, or to donate, please visit www.salarmychicago.org.

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