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Red Kettle drive kicks off

Funds raised will 'restore dignity, provide hope' to those in need in harsh economy

By Sharahn D. Boykin
Staff Writer

SALISBURY -- Harsh economic conditions and an increased crime rate felt throughout towns and cities across the nation are placing a greater emphasis on the need to raise more money during this year's Salvation Army Red Kettle Campaign, according to business and law enforcement leaders.

About 225 volunteers sat around tables draped in white linens with red kettles sitting on top at the Fountains Wedding and Conference Center on Thursday morning.

This year's bell ringers hope to raise \$200,000 during the campaign season, which starts in November, after falling short by \$36,983 last year.

The campaign's chairman, Perdue Farms Chairman Jim Perdue, and a co-chairman, Wicomico County Sheriff Mike Lewis, stressed the need to raise more money this year. Perdue said the Salvation Army wants to focus on its social service work.

"So far, thankfully, the food pantry has stayed stocked. Unfortunately, however, there are no funds for emergency assistance for families and individuals who have qualified and are in desperate need," Perdue said.

During the last 12 months, social service requests for items such as food, housing and energy assistance, clothes and furniture have increased by 21.3 percent, Perdue said. The number of families requesting aid increased by more than 18 percent and the number of requests for groceries increased by 20 percent.

"Many people have come to the Salvation Army for help for the first time and it is hard for many of them -- mothers, fathers and grandparents -- who feel like failures or are embarrassed that they can't provide for their families," Perdue said. "The Salvation Army is trying to restore their dignity and provide hope for the future."

Tough economic conditions in the county and many counties across the nation are causing typical law-abiding citizens to resort to desperate measures, according to Lewis.

"If we can provide for those who are less fortunate than we, we can expect to see a decrease," Lewis said. "Desperate people will do desperate things to provide for their children."

Danny Foxwell, a 64-year-old Eden resident who has volunteered with the organization since 1993, said he enjoys helping others in need.

"I come from a family who didn't have much," Foxwell said. "I do whatever I can to help somebody."

Last year, he took his post beside a red kettle and rang his bell all day long from 6 a.m.-10 p.m., he said.

Another bell ringer said volunteering is just a way to give back.

"The community has been good to me over the years, and now it's time for me to give back," said T.A. Phillips, a 76-year-old Salisbury resident.

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Additional Facts

2008 Red Kettle awards

Individual Bell Ringers

- 1st: Ken Menser rang 132 hours and collected \$5,474.21 in donations.
- 2nd: John Peters rang 115 hours and collected \$3,500.38 in donations.
- 3rd: Michelle Dashiell rang 48 hours and collected \$1,969.04 in donations.

Corporate Bell Ringers

- 1st: George G. Strott Law Firm rang 58 hours and collected \$2,612.57 in donations.
- 2nd: Peninsula Regional Medical Center rang 33 hours and collected \$1,606.97 in donations.
- 3rd: CFS Retirement & Tax Solutions rang 41 hours and collected \$1,536.41 in donations

Clubs and Organizations Bell Ringers

- 1st: Ocean Pines Kiwanis rang 147 hours and collected \$7,543.81 in donations.
 - 2nd: Optimist Club of Salisbury rang 74 hours and collected \$2,665.79 in donations.
 - 3rd: Quota Club of Salisbury rang 44 hours and collected \$2,106.20 in donations.
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