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DAILY NEWS-SUN

Salvation Army fights to clothe kids

JESSI TODDEN
DAILY NEWS-SUN

Scouring the popular brands by Mary-Kate and Ashley Olson, Kim Possible and Lizzie McGuire for suitable tops, Olga Valdivia often had to temper her third-grader's tastes.

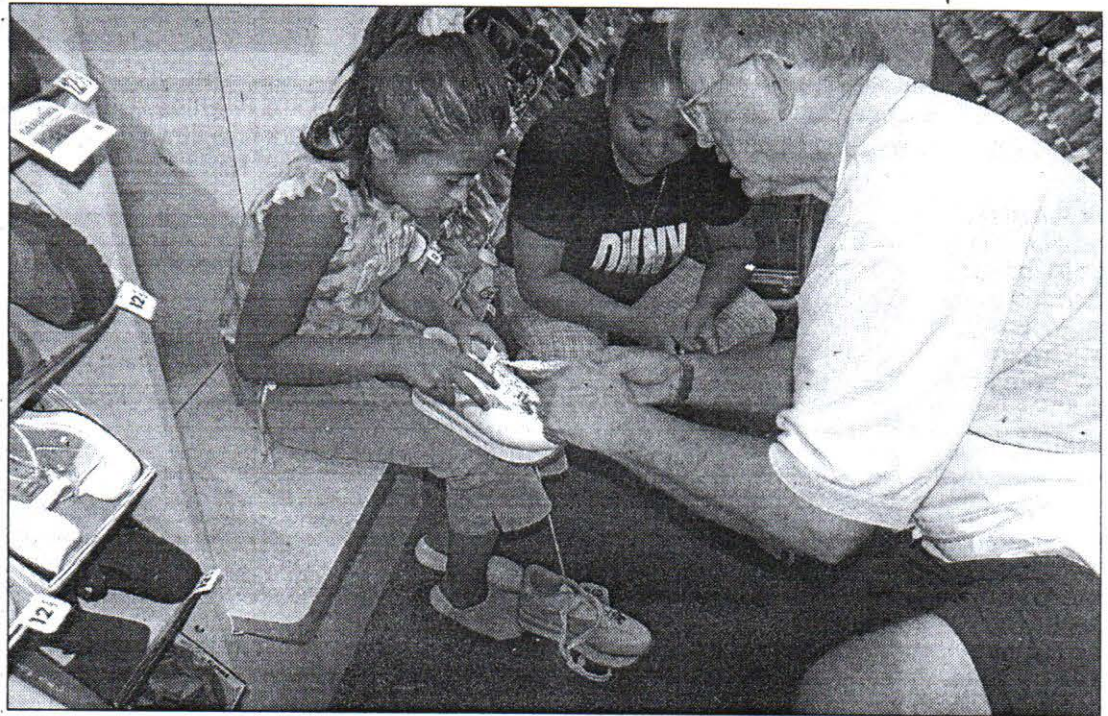
"If the skirt cannot come down to your knees, I'm not down with that," Olga Valdivia said. "Britney Spears — they can't understand when she's on stage she's in costume. It sends out the wrong message."

Her daughter, Lilianna, attends Sun Valley Elementary School, which has a strict dress code.

The Valdivias were among a group of 80 children who got new clothes for school July 28 at the Peoria Wal-Mart, a week after a similar event was held in Surprise. The clothes were purchased by the Women's Auxiliary and the Sun City branch of the Salvation Army.

The children chose two tops, a pair of pants, new shoes, a package of socks and a package of underwear. The Women's Auxiliary and the Salvation Army were raising funds for the clothing drive during the past year.

The Woman's Auxiliary began the program 21 years ago, and the Salvation Army volunteered to store the clothes. As the number of students in need increased, the charity partnered with the local Salvation Army, which then partnered with Wal-Mart.



MOLLIE J. HOPPES/DAILY NEWS-SUN

Ken Zable of Surprise, a Salvation Army volunteer, tries to find the right shoe for 8-year-old Alexandra Garcia. Her mother, Maria Cisneros, watches. The Salvation Army had its annual back-to-school program last week at the Peoria Wal-Mart.

Wal-Mart agreed to match funds raised and donated \$2,000 to both the Surprise and Peoria distributions. Students attending the Dysart Unified School District and the Peoria Unified School District were chosen as recipients of the clothes.

The district referred families to the Salvation Army, which interviewed each student to assess the level of need based on the family's income and the number of children, said Tina Wilson, Salvation Army social worker.

"They've been wonderful

with us. They've helped us with everything," said Patricia Franco of El Mirage. "My husband works, but I'm not working right now. The uniforms are really very expensive."

Franco has nine children and three were treated to new uniforms. Third-grader Marco, second-grader Anna, and fifth-grade Mary will be attending Surprise Elementary in El Mirage in the fall.

"It's fun," Anna said. "I got Bratz shoes, cause they're cute, I like fashion stuff."

One hundred forty-one

kids participated in the Surprise distribution last week. The Wal-Mart Supercenter then donated additional supplies. The Peoria store gave each student backpacks.

"I would be able to afford new clothes, but not everything they want," said Maria Cisneros. Her daughters Gabby and Alexandria will be entering seventh and third grades. "It's a big difference or else they're not going to be happy. I want them happy to go to school. I want them to have what I didn't."



STEVE CHERNEK/DAILY NEWS-SUN

Rick Anderson, manager of Fletcher Music in Sun City West, plays the Salvation Army's new organ for Major Joe Utrera, corps officer for the Sun Cities Area Corps. The new organ replaces one that was demolished in a fire.

Powerful pipes find salvation

Sun Citians give refurbished organ

KATY O'GRADY
DAILY NEWS-SUN

Fire couldn't destroy the goodwill of some Sun Citians and a local business that came to their aid.

When a fire broke out in January at the Salvation Army's headquarters in Sun City, the organization lost an organ that was used for worship services, and members of the Ladies Auxiliary lost a collection of donated items they were planning to sell to raise money for their back-to-school clothing project.

Auxiliary member Geri Hastings happened to be taking lessons from Fletcher Music Club of Sun City West at the time of the fire. She showed the company's manager, Rick Anderson, an article about the fire that appeared in the Daily News-Sun, and Anderson decided his company could lend a hand.

Fletcher Music Club gave the Salvation Army a refurbished organ valued at \$2,200.

"In its day, this organ was probably worth \$15,000," Anderson said. "It's about 20 years old."

"But it sure sounds good," added Hastings, who has been taking lessons for about two years.

The organ received major overhaul before being brought to the Salvation Army headquarters at Union Hills Drive and 107th Avenue.

"It's a blessing. It's a nice organ," said Major Gloria Utrera of the Salvation Army.

Utrera said the old organ broke when firefighters lifted it in an attempt to remove it from near the blaze in the storage closet.

"It just fell apart. It was old," she said. "We use it monthly for Sunday worship and then whenever we can use it for programs during the week."

Anderson said Fletcher was happy to help since it already has a habit of contributing to the community.

"When we heard of this situation, it just seemed to be a natural fit," he said. "It's just good community relations."

When Hastings showed him the article about the fire, "the light went on," he said.

Fletcher has 30 stores in the United States and is preparing to celebrate its 100th anniversary next year, said Ed Buckman, the Sun City West store's sales manager. The company has 24,000 students whose average age is 74.

Buckman said the company also has community outreach programs with Westside Food Bank and Nadaburg Elementary School, among others. He agreed that helping the Salvation Army in this case was an easy decision.

"It's just something we wanted to participate in mainly because of Geri being one of our students and bringing the need to us," he said.

As for the collection of donations for the Ladies Auxiliary's back-to-school drive, Hastings said the funds have been raised thanks to response from the community after the fire. The auxiliary is planning to clothe 225 students this fall, with each child getting \$100 worth of outfits.

The auxiliary has been sponsoring the back-to-school program for about 20 years.

Katy O'Grady can be reached at 876-2514 or kogradj@aztrib.com.

Back-to-school bargain hunters

Program aids families with clothing needs

By RUTHANN HOGUE
Staff writer

Old Mother Hubbard would be jealous if she could see the stash of school clothes Selma Patterson is hiding away at the Salvation Army meeting house in Sun City.

"I take over everybody's cupboards for these last two weeks," the 88-year-old Sun City resident said, pointing to shelves stuffed with shoes, jeans, dresses and homemade T-shirts. "I've got every cupboard space full that I can latch onto."

Patterson is co-chair of a group of women with the Salvation Army who work all year shopping for bargains on jeans, shoes and undergarments, and transforming donated materials into colorful T-shirts and shorts for children in need of school clothes.

The Salvation Army's chapel will be transformed on Aug. 13 and 14 into a mini department store complete with tables and racks of clothes and a seating area to try on shoes.

"This is a church on Sundays, but it could be most anything in between," Patterson said, pointing out how easily chairs that form the pews can be moved to make way for other activities.

Families who need assistance outfitting their children for school this fall may contact the Salvation Army in advance to apply for help. A caseworker will ask qualifying questions such as the total gross income of the family, each child's social se-



Mollie J. Hoppes/Daily News-Sun

Wanda Emmi, 88, works on her 72nd or 73rd sweater made to donate to the Salvation Army. Wanda said she crochets almost every waking moment of her day. The sweaters are for the Salvation Army's Back-to-School Program which benefits students.

curity number and date of birth. Proof of legal residency through citizenship or a work permit is also required by the federal guidelines under which charitable organizations such as the Salvation Army operate. Those who receive assistance from the Sun City Salvation Army must

also live in the areas of the Sun Cities, Peoria, Youngtown, El Mirage and Surprise.

"We don't get involved in turning people down," said Mascia, a caseworker who only uses her first name to prevent people from calling her at home. "If people have beaucoup

bucks, their kids are going to refuse to come here anyway, and will want to go shopping someplace like the mall."

A drawer filled with file cards lists the names and qualifying information of hundreds of families who are regulars of the clothing drive. This year, fewer than five new clients have applied for assistance.

"It's slow right now," Mascia said.

Still, she said, there is plenty of time for people who need help to call and be qualified for assistance.

"We give them the benefit of the doubt right now," Mascia said. "I think the day and time will come when it will be a difficult situation. We'll be cracking down. But for now, we don't really turn anybody away. Let's face it. If somebody needs the clothes enough to call us, we'll help them."

Seeing the smiles on the faces of children who've picked out new clothes for school makes the effort worthwhile.

"I'll tell ya, for some of them that don't have anything, it's just like Christmas," Patterson said.

Being given the opportunity to donate their time and talents is also a blessing to many volunteers.

"What would I do if I couldn't crochet?" asked Wanda Emmi, who crochets sweaters in children's sizes 5 to 8. "It's a blessing because I don't like television."

Emmi, who has difficulty seeing and "feels her way" around her yarn, usually crochets from 6:45 a.m. to 11:15 p.m. at home each day. On Wednesdays, she meets at the Salvation Army church building from 9 a.m. to noon with others who volunteer for the back-to-school clothing drive.

DAILY NEWS-SUN August 19, 1993

Army recruits students

Volunteers distribute back-to-school gear

By IAN MITCHELL
Daily News-Sun staff

SUN CITY — Children and adults browse through aisles, past tables filled with clothing. Kids try on shoes, pick through piles of shirts, reject their elders' fashion choices and look warily at the other kids.

It might have been a back-to-school sale at any department store but for two things: There were no cash registers and the "store's" windows were stained glass.

The Sun Cities Area Salvation Army has been giving out clothing to needy children headed back-to-school since 1976.

For two days a year, the women's auxiliary and their fellow volunteers take the chairs out of the chapel and turn the space into a department store where more than 400 children get new clothes for school.

"We are a church on Sunday, but we are a church in action, really," said Mrs. Major Dolores Austin, Corps officer, as she glanced around the room filled with clothes and kids.

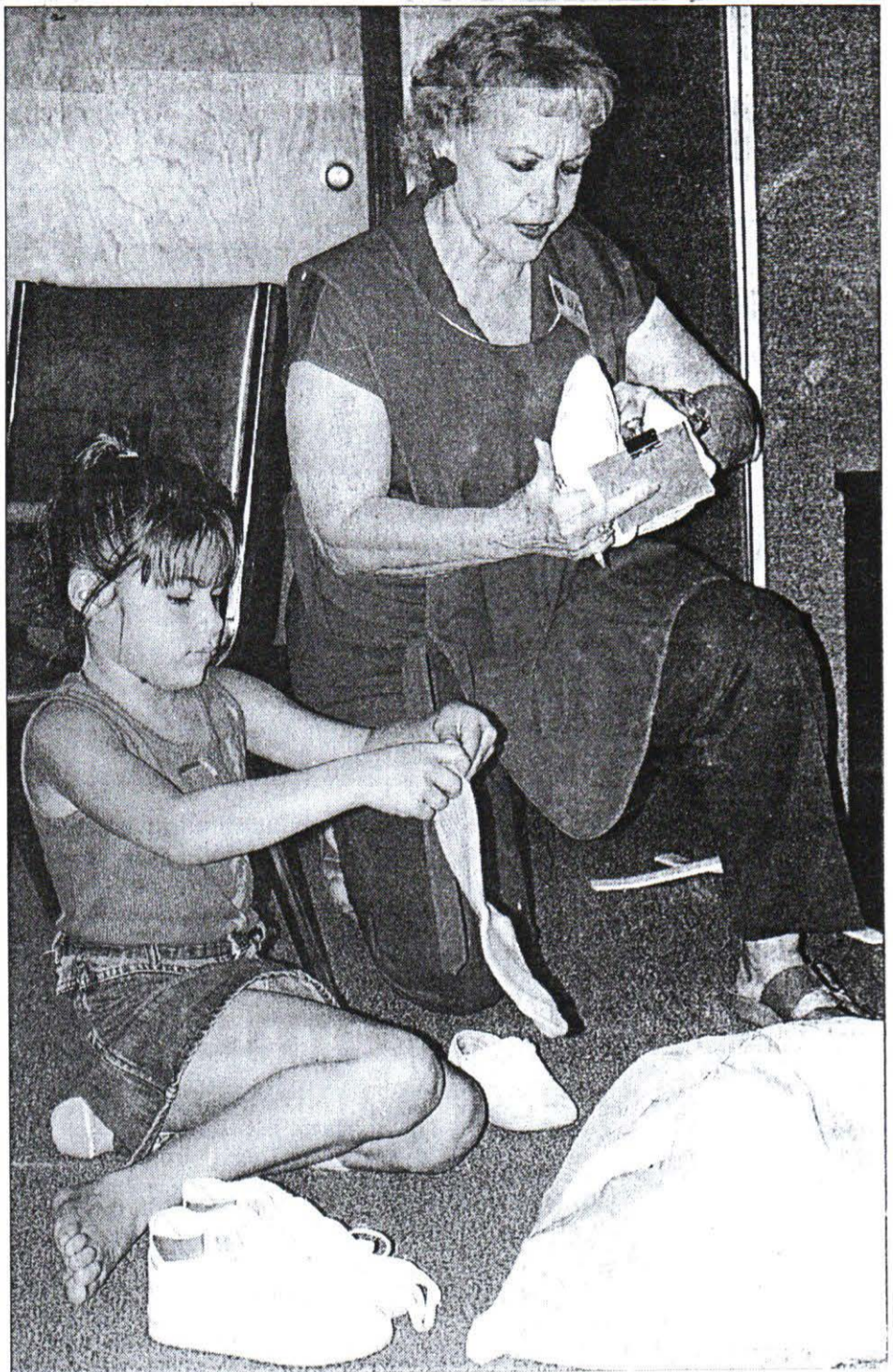
Dorothy Grigg, auxiliary chairman, said each child enters the room accompanied by a volunteer adult, who makes sure the youngster — kindergarten through sixth-grade students — gets their two shirts, two shorts, a pair of jeans a dress skirt, three pairs of underwear and socks and a new pair of shoes.

The students come from the neighboring Peoria and Dysart school districts.

When they weren't helping out elsewhere, Grigg and Selma Patterson, chairman of the back-to-school effort, helped staff a table checking children out, making sure that every one got a pencil case.

Many of the goods the Salvation Army distributes are donated by other church groups — Lutheran Brotherhood Branch 8292 gave \$400 — some are bought and many are made by auxiliary members.

Pat Dehne, a past auxiliary chairman, sews shorts for the children "in my spare time," she said.



Ian Mitchell/Daily News-Sun

Six-year-old Kristal Mendez gets ready to slip on a sock before trying on a pair of shoes selected by volunteer Edythe Bregnard. Kristal, a student at Peoria's Horizon Elementary School, was shopping Wednesday in the Salvation Army Chapel in Sun City.

'We are a church on Sunday, but we are a church in action, really.'

**Mrs. Major Dolores Austin
Salvation Army officer**

Actually, Dehne said she guesses she sews about 40 hours a week. This year she made 1,150 pairs of shorts.

"Last year I made 1,200, but this year I cut back," she said, "because I made 70 skirts."

Frances Lopez was waiting outside the chapel with her three children — a 5-year-old daughter

and two boys, 9 and 10 years old.

New clothes makes her kids look forward to the start of classes at Peoria's Alta Loma School, Lopez said.

Her daughter will head to kindergarten this year and "she wants to go already," Lopez said.

"This program sure helps us," she said.

BACK TO SCHOOL

Salvation Army clothes northwest Valley children

By MIKE RUSSO
Independent Newspapers

Approximately 400 northwest Valley students will be returning to the classroom this month dressed for success by The Salvation

Army. The Back to School program distributed clothing last week at The Salvation Army Chapel, 107 W. Union Hills Drive, Sun City, to qualified students from northwest Valley communities.

For more than 15 years, volunteers from the Women's Auxiliary of the Sun Cities Area Corps of the Salvation Army have knitted,

sewed, stitched crocheted, and shopped for clothing and shoes to outfit school children residing in the northwest Valley.

Co-chairing this year's effort were Selma Patterson and Ruth Swearingen, both residents of Sun City West.

"The students have to live in Peoria, El Mirage, Surprise, Sun City, Sun City West or Youngtown," said Elisabeth Vaillancourt, a Salvation Army board member. She confirmed that in previous years there have actually been applicants from Sun City, and with the changing demographics of Youngtown, more students may be eligible for the program from that community.

More than 300 students were pre-registered for this year's program, according to Major William J. Mulch. More were expected to register at the door.

If parents are unable to pre-register their children, The Salvation Army tries to accommodate the students' needs, Major Mulch noted.

"We try to make sure we don't skip anyone who needs assistance," he said.

Each youngster was escorted around the chapel by one of a cadre of volunteers who assisted the student in selecting two tops, two pairs of shirts, one pair of dress jeans or a dress, three items of underwear,

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Photo by MIKE RUSSO/Independent Newspapers
Shirley Wardrop, president of Women's Auxiliary of the Sun Cities Area Corps of The Salvation Army, helps Angelita Gutierrez, 7, an El Mirage Elementary School student, select a pair of shorts during last week's Back to School program clothing distribution. This year's Back to School campaign provided clothing for more than 400 northwest Valley students.

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three pairs of socks and one pair of shoes, all new. In addition, each student was also be permitted to select one item of used clothing.

The items of clothing meet the uniform requirements of the Dysart School District, Ms. Vaillancourt said.

"We have a tough time doing that but we meet the (uniform) requirements," Ms. Vaillancourt said. "That is an additional challenge."

"This is the first year we have had three schools requiring uniforms," added Shirley Wardrop, Auxiliary president.

Qualifying for the program is based upon family income, Ms. Vaillancourt noted, and applicants must have a Social Security number.

Applications are taken via telephone. "Telephone interviews are conducted by Salvation Army caseworkers," Ms. Vaillancourt said.

"People can either call The Salvation Army directly or they may be referred by another agency," she continued.

The expense of clothing each child is \$45 and the Salvation Army is still seeking donors to help defray the cost.

Donations may be sent to The Salvation Army, Sun Cities Area Corps Women's Auxiliary, 10730 W. Union Hills Drive, Sun City, AZ 85373. Checks should be made out to The Salvation Army and designated for the "Back to School" project.

"It's a great program," said Mrs. Wardrop, who has been involved with the program for five years. "We work all year preparing for this."