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News Release

For Immediate Release

"Spring Ring" red kettle campaign to help The Salvation Army make up for winter shortfall

After a long, hard winter, Springfieldians are ready for spring.

While many of us were inconvenienced by the extreme weather this winter, it caused major hardships for those already struggling to survive.

Each year, The Salvation Army provides an Extreme Emergency Cold Weather Shelter for those in our local community who need a safe, warm place to stay. During the harsh winter of 2013-2014, The Salvation Army not only experienced unprecedented costs to shelter more people than ever before, but the weather also significantly impacted financial donations received during its Tree of Lights Christmas Campaign.

The City of Springfield, Greene County, City Utilities, Mercy, Drury University, BKD and other area organizations, are helping The Salvation Army recover some of the expenses incurred this winter by asking Springfieldians to "ring in spring," with a special red kettle bell-ringing campaign on May 2, 10 and from May 12-16. This unique fund-raising event will also coincide with National Salvation Army Week.

Manned by staff representing various sectors of the community, The Salvation Army's iconic red kettles will be placed downtown during the May 2 First Friday ArtWalk; then at Price Cutter locations in Springfield and Bass Pro Shops Outdoor World, May 10 and 12-16 at the Battlefield Mall May 12-15. The 'Spring Ring' campaign will culminate with "Salvation Army Night" Friday, May 16 at Hammons Field during the Cardinals' game against the Arkansas Travelers, starting at 7:10 p.m.

Online Spring Ring donations can be given at <https://donate.salvationarmyusa.org/midland/2014-spring-ring>

To raise awareness about "Spring Ring," several "pop-up" musical performances will take place throughout the seven-day campaign. Onlookers are encouraged not only to donate, but to shoot video of the performances and post them to social media to help spread interest about the campaign.

The first "pop-up" performance showcased the piano stylings of Luke Cooksey, 18, who arrived on Park Central East at 6:30 p.m., Friday, May 2, to play a black baby grand piano staged on a red carpet on the sidewalk in front of the Gillioz Theatre. Cooksey played songs from a variety of genres, including the theme from "The Simpsons," music from the "Harry Potter" movies,

church hymns, country music, jazz, classical, "Misty," and music from the "Pirates of the Caribbean," movies.

Cooksey, who has Asperger's syndrome, began playing the piano at 14 and studies with Southwest Baptist University professor Dr. Robert Carney.

"When I was 15, I was diagnosed with Asperger's syndrome, a social disorder, that in my case, affects communication skills and narrows interests," he says. "On a positive note, Asperger's is the very thing that helps me focus on my music and further my piano skills."

Members of the Greater Ozarks Bluegrass Society and friends will make a surprise "pop-up" performance Friday, May 9 (location to be determined).

City Manager Greg Burris and the band "Roots & Fifths" will play at 11 a.m. May 12 at Bass Pro's main entrance. Additional band members include Brian Hickman and Bruce Murrell of The Loon Rangers and Dave Painter, former lead guitarist of the Ozark Mountain Daredevils.

Springfieldians can enjoy other surprise 'pop-up' performances throughout the campaign.

For more information, contact Cora Scott, City of Springfield director of Public Information & Civic Engagement, 417-864-1009 (office), 417-380-3352 (cell) or cscott@springfieldmo.gov, or The Salvation Army Springfield, MO Community Relations Director Audrey Esther at 417-862-5509 extension 116 (office), 417-763-1357 (cell) or audrey_esther@usc.salvationarmy.org.

About The Salvation Army

The Salvation Army, an evangelical part of the universal Christian church established in London in 1865, has been supporting those in need in His name without discrimination for 130 years in the United States. Nearly 30 million Americans receive assistance from The Salvation Army each year through the broadest array of social services that range from providing food for the hungry, relief for disaster victims, assistance for the disabled, outreach to the elderly and ill, clothing and shelter to the homeless and opportunities for underprivileged children. 82 cents of every dollar The Salvation Army spends is used to support those services in 5,000 communities nationwide. For more information, visit www.salvationarmyusa.org.