

What is the Christmas Kettle Campaign?

The tradition of Salvation Army kettles began in San Francisco in 1891 with Captain Joseph McFee. Captain McFee was looking for a way to help provide meals to families in need and recalled the “Simpson’s pot” – a large pot used in Liverpool, England into which passers-by threw charitable donations. Captain McFee decided to place a similar pot at the Oakland ferry landing. By strategically placing the kettle, he was able to attract donations from those going to and from the ferry boats.

Now, over 100 years have passed and beyond providing Christmas dinners, the money raised at kettles is also used to provide clothing, shelter, food, toys, financial assistance and counselling year-round. The Salvation Army’s holiday fund-raising activities play a crucial role in sharing the spirit of the season with families in need. The Salvation Army does its best to ensure that no family goes without food, no child is without presents under the tree and that Christmas is a time of hope and healing.

What is a Bell Ringer?

A Bell Ringer is someone who stands beside the iconic Salvation Army Christmas Kettle and receives donations from passers-by. They ring bells where permitted to subtly remind people of those in need at Christmas in our community. Kettles are typically located in malls and outside retail stores from mid-November to December 24th.

Where does the money go?

Donations collected in a Christmas Kettle stay in the neighbourhood in which it is located and are used to provide emergency food, addiction treatment, budget counselling, after school programs, and outreach to our friends living on the streets.

There are 29 Salvation Army Community & Family Services Offices throughout the GTA region and each office serves a designated postal code area. When you give to a Kettle, the funds stay in the community where the donation was made.

I’m nervous to ask people for money. Do I have to actually ask people for money?

No! Bell Ringers are not asked to solicit donations. Your job is to say “Thank You” and subtly ring the bell to remind people who pass by to give to those in need this Christmas.

How long will my shift be?

Bell Ringers typically stand by a kettle 2 to 4 hours at both indoor and outdoor locations. Ideally it is best if prospective volunteers can commit to 8 to 10 hours throughout the course of the Christmas Kettle Campaign which runs from mid-November to December 23th.

How old do I need to be to volunteer?

Bell Ringers can host a kettle at age 16 although some retail locations require that the volunteer be 19 years or older. We can accept students at age 14 however we may ask them to partner with someone 16 or older. Your local Kettle Coordinator can provide you with more information once you register.

Can our group sign up together to be Bell Ringers?

Absolutely! Your team, staff, organization or school group can sign up to host a Kettle. You can choose to host a kettle throughout the duration of the campaign or just for a day. A sign can be created for the Kettle stand recognizing your group's partnership with The Salvation Army.

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