

Boehm nabs award

Each U.S. territory selects one individual for the honor, given during the National Social Services Conference.

By Karen Gleason –

“Competent, professional and compassionate” are characteristics sought in recipients of The Salvation Army Award for Excellence in Social Work. Melanie Boehm, executive director of the Addiction Treatment Services (ATS) and Family Treatment Services (FTS) in Hawaii received the award for the USA Western Territory during the 2017 Salvation Army National Social Services Conference.



“I think the Lord led me to the work of the Army,” said Boehm, who began working for The Salvation Army over 16 years ago; she became executive director of ATS in 2013 and added the same role at FTS in 2014. “The mission of The Salvation Army is in perfect alignment with where I am now...I couldn’t be more pleased and yet challenged in my place of service.”

The ATS and FTS are two of Hawaii’s premier substance abuse treatment programs. ATS serves more than 1,200 people a year through its social detoxification, residential and outpatient treatment modalities, while FTS is Hawaii’s sole provider of residential substance abuse treatment services for women with children. Both programs are licensed by the Hawaii State Department of Health and accredited by the Commission for Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities.

For Boehm, the licensing and accreditation translate into quality of care.

“The most meaningful accomplishments are all about the lifestyle changes our clients make,” Boehm said. “As our programs develop...we become better equipped to meet their needs.”

In its FTS report, Commission for Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities wrote: “Salvation Army FTS is managed by a highly experienced, dedicated and supportive executive director and a management team that demonstrates commitment to maintaining quality services...FTS enjoys a positive presence in the community and a long and respected history of service in Honolulu.”

Boehm acknowledges the importance of getting, and keeping, a good staff.

“Qualified staff who embrace the mission of the Army [and who] touch lives and serve our clients each day is a huge accomplishment,” she said. “These talented staff—they are our greatest assets.”

Throughout her career, Boehm has demonstrated an understanding that both the FTS and ATS programs need to include effective and ongoing chaplaincy programs. Since these services cannot be billed to government contracts (which fund 80 percent of FTS and ATS costs), Boehm ensures that both programs include a Salvation Army chaplain—paid by non-government funds—who provides clients and staff with weekly pastoral counseling, prayer, connection to church services and advocacy.

Always looking to evolve the programs to better serve the clients, Boehm said her team is currently working to offer gender responsive substance use disorder treatment, with one treatment campus for women and another site for men. They are also participating in Hawaii's Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion, increasing involvement in the treatment of opioid use disorders, and with integrating primary care with behavioral health.

Boehm holds a master's degree both in marriage and family counseling and in religious education. Her certifications and licenses include both Hawaii State Certified Clinical Supervisor and Substance Abuse Counselor, Certified Criminal Justice Professional and Hawaii Licensed Mental Health Counselor.

Boehm and her husband, Joseph, have two children. They attend Calvary Chapel Honolulu, where Boehm taught toddler Sunday school classes for seven years.

"I like to think I have the best job since I can show up with God on my side and be myself—not have to pretend I like my job or pretend to be someone in my work that is different from other areas of my life," Boehm said. "I can just be who I am and enjoy it."