

## First Red Kettle Club chapter celebrates 14 years of serving others

### Youth service club supports the mission of The Salvation Army.

This past school year marked the 14th anniversary of the formation of the [first high school Red Kettle Club \(RKC\)](#) at Corona del Sol High School in Tempe, Arizona.

There, in 2011, then junior Katie Wilkinson and fellow officers established a template of activities that remain a strong foundation for today's programs.



RKC is an opportunity for middle and high school students throughout the U.S. to serve those less fortunate in their communities. Named after The Salvation Army's [iconic red kettles](#), RKC students are encouraged to continue the spirit of the Army's mission throughout the year.

"Our RKC is regarded as a club where members help the community in fun, creative ways without requiring members to spend hours of their personal time to accomplish a goal," said Deborah Gile, the founding faculty sponsor of the club.

This school year's final activity for the RKC was a donation drive for the [Phoenix Adult Rehabilitation Center](#), an effort that has become somewhat of an annual tradition since the club's start.

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*Captain Brittany Baker*

The result? The collection of a few dozen large bags of clothing and a lot of furniture, all to benefit the Army's no cost rehabilitation program.

While club members are helpful in donating items for The Salvation Army, "they really love those service projects that involve creating something together," Gile said. "They make PB&J sandwiches for sack lunches, put together hygiene kits, care packages and Easter goodie bags. The fact that what they are spending their time creating will benefit those in need is powerful motivation that shows how

each one of them can make a real difference in someone's life."

Audra Ward, a senior headed to Arizona State University, has been a club member for four years, serving the last two as president.

"Donating my time was one of the things I am most proud of in my high school career," she said. "I loved how rewarding everything was, and it was great to do it with people I love most. I learned so many great lessons that I will never forget."

The Salvation Army Tempe Corps Officers Captains Brittany and Jeremy Baker have worked with the RKC for the last three years, and are grateful for the enthusiasm, goodness and contributions made by club members.



Red Kettle Club honoring their sponsor Deborah Gile for 14 years of service in this role. She was the founding sponsor. Photo courtesy Marlene Klotz-Collins.

“These students are an exceptional group of volunteers that truly represent our next generation of supporters,” said Brittany Baker. “These kids take seriously their role in fulfilling community needs. We consider them a vital part of our volunteer force and count on their time and talents to help accomplish the goals we set for our corps.”

The RKC is also open to non-members joining in on service projects, allowing students a chance to participate in making a difference in their community.

Staying true to its name, for RKC members, Christmas has always been one of the highlights of the year.

“My favorite memory is my senior year [bellringing](#),” said Ward. “I took a shift with all of my friends and met so many new people. It was a light and positive environment to contribute to the community spirit. We are proud and grateful to be involved.”

As students like Ward move on to the next phase of life, the RKC carries on.

“I think that the legacy of the Red Kettle Club as part of the Corona del Sol campus is that of a fun, welcoming group where members work together to serve their community,” said Gile. “The RKC provides an opportunity for students to work with a diverse group who all have the same goal—to ‘do the most good’ in our community.”

### **Do Good:**

- You’ve probably seen the red kettles and thrift stores, and while we’re rightfully well known for both...The Salvation Army is *so much more* than red kettles and thrift stores. So who are we? What do we do? Where? [Right this way](#) for Salvation Army 101.