

Caring Magazine logo

Building friendships in Fresno

Women of the corps and those in recovery get to know each other in an afternoon of tea.

Thirty-two women from the Fresno Citadel, the Gablecrest Women's Transitional Home and the Rosecrest Adult Rehabilitation Program for women recently joined together for an afternoon of fellowship.

"We wanted the program to encourage the women, to make them feel good and loved," said Major Orpha Moody, Chaplain at the Fresno Adult Rehabilitation Center (ARC) who helped organize

the event with Fresno Citadel Corps Officer Major Carole Abella and special guest Lt. Colonel Sheryl Tollerud, ARC Command Director of Special Services. "Most of the women we see are broken, and what do broken women need? Friends."

Intended as an expression of the Harvest Initiative, to join corps members and those in recovery, Moody noticed as everyone took their place around the room that they sat by those they knew. So she rang a bell and mixed everyone up.

"The women were given three questions to ask each other. The idea was for everyone to get to know someone new and make a new friend," she said. "It was interesting to see how much the women had in common with each other."

The group sang "What A Friend We Have In Jesus," and one attendee later said the words remind her that she will never be alone.

"I loved how the women deepened their connections joyfully and authentically," Tollerud said. "They became 'sisters in the Lord' that afternoon."

In Tollerud's devotional, she shared about Wilma, a retired officer who nurtured, loved and mentored Tollerud despite their 40 year age difference. "God proved that friendship is not limited by age, rank or experience," she said. "It's about unconditional love, acceptance, forgiveness and fun."

She reminded the women of John 15: 9-14, which tells us that Jesus, our friend, was willing to lay down his life for us. "He chose us. He loved us from the beginning, knowing we would mess up," she said. "But his love is greater than anything we can imagine."

Organizers wanted the day to help the women make friends.

"The true test was what would happen the next day when Rosecrest went to The Salvation Army Fresno Corps," Moody said. "Would anyone remember the tea and food, the games, the chocolate fountain, the devotional or most importantly, each other?"

Those from Rosecrest said they were greeted by name.

"I now feel like I belong to the church," one woman said. "I am no longer a visitor. This is my church and I have new friends."

