

How the Pocatello Salvation Army is bringing people in from the cold

Pocatello Outpost opens a daytime warming shelter during record cold temperatures.

When Pocatello (Idaho) Mayor Brain Blad asked The Salvation Army to help the community stay warm during a record-breaking cold winter, the organization's Pocatello Outpost got to work, opening a warming shelter the next day.

“When you wake up and your phone says four degrees, you're like, ‘Oh it is cold outside,’” said Mareah Makowski, who serves as Ministry Leader at the Pocatello Outpost with her husband, Bryan Makowski. The couple arrived to the post in November 2024.



According to Makowski, Pocatello's unhoused community is increasing as the cost of living rises—most of the calls she's received for requesting help are for rental assistance. [Assessments confirm the rising costs](#), particularly for housing, food and transportation, noting an increase in area prices of 2.5 percent from a year ago.

Makowski said during the Jan. 17 meeting, Blad first asked if The Salvation Army had the capacity to open an overnight shelter. While they didn't have the resources to do so at the time, Makowski offered an alternative.

“That's how we want to minister—that's how we want to tell people we love them—it's with the basics, the necessities.”

Bryan Makowski, Ministry Leader

“Let me see what I can do about a day shelter,” she told him.

While the [Pocatello Salvation Army](#) had acted as a daytime warming shelter in past years, the Makowskis aimed to elevate the services provided. After reaching out to Southern Idaho Coordinator and Boise Corps Administrator Major Premek Kramerius, they received permission to use funds allocated for extreme weather.

“The Ministry Leaders and staff of The Salvation Army Pocatello Outpost are working tirelessly to offer a [beacon of hope](#) to their community...offering individuals a place to restore their dignity, and a place for spiritual support,” he said.

With single-digit daytime temperatures forecasted that weekend, The Salvation Army worked quickly to open the shelter the next day, Jan. 18.

That weekend, the shelter served more than 75 hot meals to people coming in from the cold. Hot beverages and snacks were available throughout the day, along with warm clothes and blankets. Guests could receive information about further Salvation Army services, referrals to other agencies, and pastoral care and spiritual support. Cots were available for those who wanted to rest. People could watch TV or play games.

At closing time, they ensured people had what they needed to get through the night, providing warm clothes and blankets or referrals to overnight shelters. Makowshi said some who come in are couch-surfing—staying with friends while they look for permanent housing. And some, she said, prefer to stay in their car overnight rather than go to a shelter.

The daytime shelter will now remain open through February—from 8 a.m to 4 p.m., seven days a week—and into March if the cold weather continues.



Courtesy Pocatello Outpost.

Bryan Makowski has spent hours connecting with people at the shelter.

“That’s how we want to minister—that’s how we want to tell people we love them—it’s with the basics, the necessities,” Bryan Makowski told KIFI Local News 8. “It’s cold, come inside—warm up and get some coffee. Just the basics.”

And in a confirmation of God’s perfect timing, Mareah Makowski said, the building’s boiler, which had been out for months—since before the Makowskis arrival—was replaced just two weeks before the shelter opened.

“This tells me that this ministry and this program are God-ordained,” she said.

And the shelter is beginning to serve as a bridge between The Salvation Army’s social services and its worship ministries. Makowski said on a recent Sunday, three people who came in just to get warm joined them for church, while another woman who had visited the shelter during the week came in specifically for church.

“It’s really beautiful to see the intentionality behind people’s choices to come to God,” Makowski said. “To see somebody get up from a comfortable chair—maybe they’re watching a movie and drinking a coffee—and join us in the chapel and worship with us...We’re seeing the hearts of the people who are there, and that’s really cool.”

Do Good:

- What does it mean to do good? Where can we discover joy? What is it really like to be homeless? How can I raise a kind kid? [Subscribe to The Do Gooders Podcast](#) to find these episodes and much more—all to help you be inspired to do good right where you are.