

## My first year



*By Anthony L. Poe, LT.*

It was an awesome feeling to walk across the stage at Commissioning and be appointed to Hemet, Calif. My wife Tammy and I had driven through Hemet the summer before but really knew nothing about it.

The excitement in that building in Pasadena was amazing. Little did I know how special those moments would be in the months to come—special because my mom came 2,200 miles with my sister to be there, even after a severe fall months earlier.

At 80 and now in a wheelchair after the fall, she felt she had to be there. We are so glad she came because three months later I would go to her in Kentucky and say goodbye for the last time. Four days later I spoke about her Christian influence in my life at her funeral.

Arriving in Hemet, we found a brand new building and a retired officer, Lt. Colonel Evelyn J. Hunter, who greeted us and showed us the business side of our appointment. That was truly a blessing. Our second day in the office included a visit to city hall where we participated in a Community Action Council meeting. We met with a city councilwoman and met two women who would, within months, become the newest members of our advisory board. We attended Kiwanis the next week and Lt. Tammy fit right in. The Kiwanis club has been a great asset to our corps programs. Later I would join the Sunrise Rotary.



One of our first requests to help our city was a call from the fire department to feed 200 families at a mobile home park that had lost power two days earlier. We fed them for two days until power was restored.

To let the city know we are serious about being involved in the community, we planned a Harvest Hoedown with the assistance of local businesses and the Kiwanis club. We had over 500 people from our community attend and we gained a new church family. We also held a Rock and Roll Easter event in April that brought in over 1,200 from the community, and we gained two new families.

One of our major accomplishments this year has been the SAM (Salvation Army Meals) backpack program. We found out many children in our community go home on the weekend and have no food until they return to school on Monday. We asked to meet with one of our local school superintendents and he agreed there was a great need. My wife investigated similar programs in other communities and began the process to seek approval from both divisional and territorial headquarters.

In April we handed out the first meals. We targeted one school and 50 students. As a result of faith in us from our advisory board, local residents and our divisional headquarters, we received three major donations totaling over \$40,000. We asked individuals in our community to sponsor students for one year—an estimated cost of \$240 each—and many have, including leaders from the Kiwanis and Rotary clubs and the fire chief. Many corps members also sponsor students—a total of 200 students in four schools.

Finally, we saw God pour out his blessings on our 2012 Red Kettle Drive with an increase of \$11,665.78 over 2011. What he will do through us tomorrow only he knows; what we need to do is be available today.