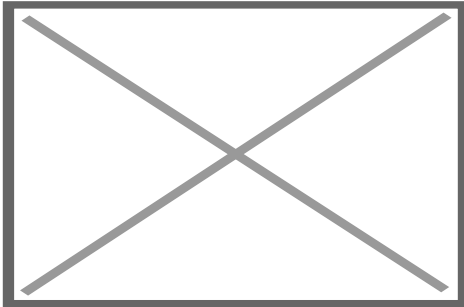


New corps dedicated on the island of Saipan

Divisional Commander Major Edward Hill visits outlying island.



Envoys Wayne and Annie Gillespie and Major Edward Hill pose with newly enrolled junior soldiers at the Saipan Corps [Photo by Tom Taylor].



Hawaiian and Pacific Islands Divisional Commander, Major Edward Hill, officially dedicated the Saipan Corps on October 5, 2008, after three years of Army work on the island.

“For me personally, it was a genuine thrill to be present for this event and witness the spirit and enthusiasm of the people of Saipan,” Hill said. “I have high hopes that over time we can expand the scope of the work of the Army in that distant region of the territory.”

The island is located 150 miles north of Guam and 3,800 miles west of Hawaii. The 60,000 inhabitants are part of the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands (CNMI). The U.S. maintains shipping and military rights in the area and the CNMI maintains self-government and citizenship rights, with financial assistance from the U.S.

The Army’s work in Saipan

In 2005, Wayne and Ana Gillespie, then corps sergeant-majors at the Guam Corps, were planning to relocate to Saipan to be near Ana’s family. Once there, they began holding services; a total of 36 people came to the first meeting. Soon after, the Gillespies initiated other activities, including Bible studies, a kids’ club, men’s and women’s ministries and Sunday morning worship. The programs take place in and around the Gillespies’ home, which they offered as a base for Salvation Army ministries.

Their work led to the official opening of the Saipan Outpost on February 18, 2007, led by Lt. Colonel Donald Bell, then territorial chief secretary, and Major David Hudson, then divisional commander.

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In May 2008, the Saipan Outpost was given corps status and was officially dedicated during Hill's recent visit to Saipan.

During the dedication ceremony before 45 people, Hill spoke about the growth of The Salvation Army in the Western Territory and how that mission-driven zeal continues today. He urged the Gillespies to be good shepherds of the congregation (1 Peter 5:2-4); appealed to the congregation to put on the full armor of God and be engaged in spiritual battle (Ephesians 6:10-17); and called all present to work together to "build an Army that will faithfully carry forward the holistic mission of our movement." Hill presented the Saipan Corps with a plaque marking the occasion that will be displayed in the corps facility.

The Saipan Corps also enrolled seven junior soldiers.

"The junior soldiers were well trained for this responsibility by Ana Gillespie and recited the junior soldier pledge flawlessly," Hill said. "They also sang two musical selections that brought delight to the crowd."

Hill encouraged the new young enrollees to follow the example of the boy who brought his loaves and fish to Jesus when Jesus fed the 5,000 (John 6).

He told them, "You are to be available to Jesus; offer all you have to him; and be prepared to share in his miraculous blessings."

The work of past and present Guam coordinators Majors Dave and Linda Harmon, Majors Brian and Leticia Saunders, and Captains Tom and Christie Taylor played a large role in bringing about the work in Saipan.