

## Others Award recipient ‘connects the dots’ for good in Las Vegas

When Majors Harold and Magaly Laubach, Divisional Secretaries for Clark County, Nevada, were asked which of the roughly 1,000 volunteers they encounter every year they would nominate for The Salvation Army Others Award, the choice was easy: Elise Noorda.

“My wife and I looked at each other, and it didn’t take us 30 seconds,” Harold Laubach, Jr. said. “Elise just stands out... She’s focused on others every minute of the day, and she doesn’t ask anything for it.”



At [The Salvation Army Owens Campus](#) in Las Vegas, Noorda has not only volunteered in a number of ways, she’s connected countless others with opportunities to do the same.

At the Jan. 23 National Advisory Board meeting held at the Hilton Lake Las Vegas Resort in Henderson, Nevada, Noorda was honored with the Others Award, which recognizes an individual exemplifying an extraordinary spirit of service for others and exceptional service benefiting The Salvation Army and the community. It is one of the highest national civic awards given by The Salvation Army.

“The Salvation Army is eternally grateful for her giving heart,” Western Territorial Commander Commissioner Douglas Riley said during the presentation. “Her selfless devotion does not go unnoticed.”

For Noorda, the experience was “truly humbling.”

“All of these people put in their entire lives to this work, and so to get an award for just the tiny little pieces that I’ve been able to be part of was really such a blessing,” she said.

Noorda first got involved with The Salvation Army in June 2020 after she began working with Just Serve, a platform for connecting individuals with opportunities to volunteer. The first project? A [backpack drive](#) for back to school.

“The Salvation Army is eternally grateful for her giving heart. Her selfless devotion does not go unnoticed.”

*Western Territorial Commander Commissioner Douglas Riley*

“I did not realize the many, many ways that The Salvation Army helps and works with our community,” she said. “It just went from there.”

She said the relationships she formed with the people at the Owens Campus motivated her to keep in touch.

“I really enjoyed getting to know them,” she said. “We would help each other in our work, and we’d connect all the time. It became a habit.”

In the last five years, Noorda has dedicated hundreds of hours to different programs and services of The Salvation Army in Southern Nevada.

One way is by volunteering at the Owens Campus kitchen for the Army’s daily community meal, serving around 300 people, many of whom are experiencing homelessness.

Laubach said when Noorda comes to serve at the community meal, she’ll often come with a group of 30 volunteers, most of whom are young men and women who are missionaries with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

“Elise brings her group, and she’s right there with them,” Laubach said. “She doesn’t bring them and walk away. She’s right there with them every time.”

Their impact extends beyond the meal line.

“They don’t just come to slop food onto a plate,” he said. “They serve the meal but then they go out into the dining room and they sit down, and they eat with people and have conversations with people and give them a hug and shake their hand.”

Laubach said for many of the meal attendees who are commonly not afforded dignity due to living on the street—people don’t look them in the eye and often avoid them—this [connection can be particularly impactful](#).



“They let people know that they are seen and loved and cared for and then they walk away, not expecting that you bring their name up, not expecting that they get an award, not expecting anything like that,” he said.

For Noorda, much of the difference she hopes to make involves bringing others in for greater impact.

“I really have started being more passionate about helping the community to find ways that they can become involved, almost like a concierge,” she said. “What is it that you’re passionate about? How can we find something for you? Because people really do get hooked once they find something that really fits their time and their heart.”

Beyond the daily community meals, she’s helped with back-to-school and toy drives, in addition to several other activities. She also acts as a liaison with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Church and Bishops Storehouse, which has led to meeting a number of The Salvation Army’s needs.

One way? Procuring beanies and winter coats for those in need through postings on the Just Serve website.

“The Salvation Army is just so well run, so reputable,” she said. “You want to donate there. They’re a trusted community partner.”

Additionally, a series of grants from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints led to more blankets and sheets for the Owens shelter and a pair of swamp coolers for the Henderson Corps food pantry.

Noorda said often surplus food comes down from Salt Lake City, and she’s been able to coordinate the donation of pallets of that food to the Henderson food pantry. Once, she got a call about pallets of action figures that were refused by a store and needed a place to go. She contacted The Salvation Army, asked if they could accept them and had the Army coordinate with the driver.

“It’s just really connecting the dots,” she said.

Another time, a local hospital had several pallets of unused raincoats purchased during the pandemic for emergency medical clothing. They asked her: do you know anywhere these could go?

They took a couple of the pallets to the Owens Campus that summer.

“That winter, when I had a group of carolers there on the day before Christmas Eve, and we were singing, and it was raining, there were all those multi-colored raincoats on all the people,” she said. “It came full circle.”

### **Do Good:**

- Did you know The Salvation Army served some 24 million Americans last year fighting hunger, homelessness, substance abuse and more? Where can you help? [Take our quiz](#) to find your cause and learn how you can join in today.

Caring Magazine logo